

# **CHAPTER 9**

## **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 in relation to the specific objectives of the study are presented in section 9.1. Based on the findings in section 9.2, broad recommendations have been made for education strategies and activities to promote the competencies that the education system seeks to develop in students.

### **9.1 The findings of the Civic Education Study 2017**

#### **9.1.1 Findings on Civic Knowledge of students 2017 and 2003**

In this study it was found that students have fared poorly in items that test their interpretive skills in particular. While the content knowledge was 65, the skill knowledge was 42. Consequently their overall Civic knowledge was 55. When the responses to the 16 questions were analyzed it was found that the percentage of responses to the questions that demanded higher order thinking skills were low.

When compared with the 2003 study, in 2017 students' content knowledge has increased by five points but their interpretive skills have decreased by three points. As a result the students' Civic knowledge has increased only marginally by one point. On the other hand, even though content knowledge has increased in 2017 it is still below the international value. The lowest mean score in both studies is in civic skills. Even though International students mean score is also lowest in civic skills, the Sri Lankan students score is very much below and there is a decline in 2017. The low score for civic skills has adversely affected the overall score for civic knowledge.

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.

The students' civic average scores by selected school variables has highlighted the differences in student achievement by school type and medium of instruction, and gender 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.

In the 2017 study the 1AB schools in the sample have a 9 percentage points' lead in the civic knowledge mean score of 59 respectively, over the school type 1C schools with the next higher mean score of 50. The comparable mean score of the Type 2 schools is 48. The mean scores in civic knowledge, civic content and civic skills respectively of 59, 69 and 46 of 1AB 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. Tamil medium students' performance is lower than Sinhala medium students in both content knowledge and skills in 2017. A similar pattern had been observed in 2003 as well. However, in 2017 Sinhala medium students' Content knowledge has increased while the skills have decreased. This has adversely affected the overall Civic knowledge of the Sinhala medium students in 2017. On the other hand Tamil medium students' achievement has declined in all three areas in 2017.

Tamil medium students' performance had been lower than the Sinhala medium students even in the National Assessments of achievement of learning outcomes at the end of grade 4 and 8 over the years 2003 to 2016.

There appears to be a relationship between students' ethnicity and medium of instruction. In Tamil medium schools both Sri Lankan and Indian Origin Tamil students as

well as some Muslim students study. The content score as well as the skill score of all these groups have declined. As a result, the overall knowledge score has also declined. This could be one reason for Tamil medium students' performance to have declined. On the other hand, even though Sinhalese students' skill mean has declined their content mean has increased. As a result, their overall knowledge mean has increased and this is reflected in the Sinhala medium school students' performance.

The Buddhists have scored highest in both content, skill and overall knowledge with scores of 68, 44 and 58 respectively. Catholics and Christians are ranked second and third with Muslims being fourth. In 2003 the Muslims and Christians both had similar scores for overall knowledge but the Muslims content knowledge was higher though their skill knowledge was lower. In 2017, the skill scores of all denominations had declined

Boys performance in 2003 had been better than the girls in content as well as skill knowledge. As a result, their overall knowledge mean was higher than the girls. However, in 2017, the content mean of both girls and boys had increased and the increase in girls' performance is more than the boys. The skill mean has declined in both groups. The increase in content mean has resulted in a slight increase in the knowledge mean of the girls.

Provincial wise in 2017 there are only four provinces scoring above the island mean. In 2003 there had been five provinces in which students' knowledge score was equal or above the island score. On the other hand, when the content mean in 2003 is considered the same five provinces have scored above the island mean. However, in 2017, this number had increased to seven provinces. In 2003, when the students' skill mean is considered six provinces have scored above the island mean. However, in 2017 this number had decreased to four provinces. Consequently, in 2017 the overall knowledge mean had decreased.

### **9.1.2 School based and non-school based factors that affect the development of democratic and Civic competencies of students**

#### **Findings on the school and classroom context of civic knowledge**

A contextual basis for the identification of curriculum areas that need to be strengthened, in both coverage and in teacher training is provided by an assessment of coverage of secondary school civic related curriculum, the importance accorded by teachers to topics and, their level of confidence in teaching these topics.

In both 2003 and 2017 citizens' rights, human rights, environmental issues and media have been the highest priority. However, 61% and 42% teachers in 2003 and 2017 respectively claim that there is very little opportunity for students to learn these topics.

Some of the topics that the teachers claimed as not important are among the topics rated by them as topics they were not at all/ little confident to teach.

In the 2003 study, the model that integrates civic education into other social sciences was the most popular among teachers, in indicating how civic education should be taught. On the other hand, in 2017 the majority of the teachers favoured teaching Civics as a separate subject.

Teachers strongly affirm that schools are places where civic education ought to be taught and can be taught effectively and that civic education matters a great deal in facilitating students' civic development.

It is noteworthy that 58 percent (2003) and 65 percent (2017) teachers in Sri Lanka agree with the statement that education authorities pay little attention to civic education, indicating perhaps that more support is needed for the school system to forge ahead with this task of the school. It is significant that this percentage has increased in 2017, perhaps due to the fact that Civics is one of the 'basket' subjects in grades 10 and 11 and all students are not learning Civics after grade 9.

Teachers believe that agreement on what is worth learning in civic education is possible but doubt societal consensus, accept official curriculum as points of orientation and are willing to negotiate with students over what is to be studied.

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.

Some teachers in Sri Lanka 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.

Teachers in Sri Lanka 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.

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.

In 2003 according to teachers the teaching learning methodologies used more frequently in civic education classrooms in Sri Lanka were didactic teaching focused than learner initiated and inquiry based learning focused, with interactive approaches used sparingly. However, teachers report in 2017 that they use more projects, role plays, group work in their civic education classrooms.

The responses of teachers regarding their priority needs are quite similar in 2003 and 2017. However, in 2017 percentage of responses for special projects has declined and the percentage for more cooperation with experts and more time for teaching has increased.

The methods of assessment used more frequently in civic education classrooms are written compositions, oral participation and multiple-choice tests.

Students are inclined towards proactive participation in school life, have very positive perceptions on their own capacity to bring about change and to democratize the way schools function.

In Sri Lanka, the participation of students in the political life of the school is minimal. However, they cooperate with teachers to solve problems of discipline, resolve problems among students, between teachers and students and, school problems in general.

It is noteworthy that compared to 2003, in 2017 function of school assemblies has increased. Even participation in the political life of the school which was considered a function of school assemblies by only 15 percent of the teacher has increased to 40%. However, even with escalating indiscipline and school violence, the percentage of teacher responses regarding student assemblies being called upon to cooperate with teachers to solve problems of discipline has declined.

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.

In 2003 Principals of schools reported that negative behaviors such as truancy, bullying, vandalism and violence occurred sometimes in more than half the schools in the sample. Responding to this item, in 2003, 74, 66, 63 and 50 percent of the principals reported that truancy, bullying, vandalism and violence respectively occurs sometimes in their schools

On the other hand, in 2017 truancy and bullying percentages have declined from 74 to 72 and 66 to 61 percent respectively. However, use of drugs which only 24% of principals claimed happens in their schools has increased to 53%. This is a very sad situation. The

use of drugs and vandalism incidents may be interconnected. The percentage for vandalism and violence are 77 and 48.

### **Findings on the impact of out of school variables on civic knowledge**

The selected out of school variables, particularly home literacy and, family and home environment variables were found to correlate positively with mean scores both in 2003 and 2017.

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.

However, in 2017 viewing television more than 5 hours a day had reduced their civic knowledge. On the other hand, there is a positive correlation of higher mean scores with reasonable amounts of time spent with friends after school.

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

In the analysis students' mean scores by memberships and participation in organizations, a negative correlation is shown between the variables in 2017. The finding therefore is that as the number of memberships in organizations and active participation devoting a fair percentage of time each month to activities conducted by organizations is negatively correlated with civic achievement scores.

On the other hand, in 2003 Students' memberships and active participation in organizations was positively correlated with Civic achievement scores.

### **9.1.3 Findings on Students' concepts of Democracy Citizenship and Government**

The findings on SL students' concepts of democracy, citizenship and government in general are similar in 2003 and in 2007 and are consistent with the pattern of responses of the INT student sample.

On the concept of democracy, citizens' freedom to express opinions, free elections, strong civil society in the form of organizations are attributes that the vast majority of SL students believe to be good for democracy; attributes that are judged to be bad for democracy are monopoly newspaper ownership, political influence in the judicial sphere, and special influence by the wealthy on the government.

Most students considered 'obeying the law' 'Taking part in activities' and 'participating in activities to benefit people in the community' as the three most important factors in being a good citizen in 2017. In contrast to 2017, in 2003 the first three choices of importance have been 'knows about the country's history, shows respect for government representatives and follows political issues on the newspaper, on the radio or on TV. Country's present political situation appears to influence the students' choices. Their respect for government representatives have diminished. On the other hand, students have realized the need to obey the law and to protect the environment.

On the concept of citizenship, 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 and engaging in political discussions.

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.



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.

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 Students' views on opportunities for Civic engagement in school and interest in future political activities**

A relatively high percentage of SL students have trust in the government-related institutions listed. Courts and the Police are trusted the most, followed by national and local governments. Political parties are trusted very little.

In 2017 most trusted institution is the school, which is a positive sign.

The trust indicated by students in the CESL sample relative to comparable data from the CIVED study 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.

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.

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.

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 Students' attitudes toward social cohesion and diversity**

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.

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 needed to be addressed urgently in 2003, if the process of schooling was to contribute to social cohesion.

It is noteworthy that this situation has improved in 2017 and students claim that they have more opportunities. Yet there are still a percentage of students who claim that they do not have opportunity to learn 2NL.

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.

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.

The findings on gender rights and equality indicate that the vast majority of students in Sri Lanka takes 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).

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.

### **9.1.6 Comparison of pilot and non- pilot schools**

There are differences in the achievement of the two samples. While there is two points difference in the achievement of skills in the Pilot and Non pilot school samples, the non-pilot schools have performed better in content knowledge and as a result in overall knowledge.

Non-pilot schools have scored higher than the pilot schools in all three categories of Civic knowledge in the different types of schools. Both males and females in the non –pilot sample have performed better than the pilot sample. Within the samples both pilot and non – pilot, there is only a slight difference of one point with regards to Civic knowledge.

Provincial wise there are differences in the achievement of Civic knowledge. The pilot schools in the Sabaragamuwa Province have performed better than the non- pilot schools in all three categories of Civic knowledge. Pilot school Students’ overall Civic knowledge in Central and in the Eastern and Uva Provinces is almost similar. While the knowledge mean of the Uva Province pilot schools is higher than the non-pilot schools in the Northern Province content mean in the pilot schools is higher than the non-pilot schools

Achievement of social cohesion was also examined by analysing students’ opportunities for learning the Second National Language, learning together with other ethnic groups, Opportunities to do fun activities and associate as pen or online friends. Unfortunately in most of these activities the positive responses of the non –pilot school students are higher than the pilot school students.

Compared to non-pilot student responses the pilot sample responses are higher for participating in student parliaments. Similarly, school partnership programmes, environmental clubs, Art, music or drama clubs and sports are other activities that the pilot sample claimed more than the non-pilot school sample.

Therefore, there appears to be a mismatch between the opportunities provided to the pilot school students and their use of such opportunities and the transfer of experience to knowledge and skills.

## **9.2 Recommendations of the CESL Study**

### **9.2.1 Recommendations for improving students' Civic knowledge**

Measures should be taken to improve students' interpretive skills in Civics. As the findings revealed interpretive skills of students' island wide had decreased between 2003 – 2017. This low interpretive skills are visible provincial wise as well.

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.

The disparities in student achievement both in knowledge of content and in skills by school type, gender, ethnicity 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. Students' learning outcomes in respect of civic values and social cohesion should be one target area focused on in the school development plans.

### **9.2.2 Recommendations for improving Civic knowledge through school based and non-school based factors**

Civics textbooks should provide adequate activities for students to use interpretive skills. Although curriculum revisions had taken place more focus appears to be on content rather than on skills.

According to teachers some of the topics universally accepted in Civic education, which they also endorse are not well represented in the Sri Lankan curriculum. These topics should be accommodated in the curriculum.

An analysis of the Civics textbooks is recommended based on the findings of this study.

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.

Civics should continue to be taught as a separate subject in the curriculum. However, 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.

Civics should not be a basket subject, but should be taught to all students.

Teacher development programmes should include the pedagogy of teaching Civics related topics which the teachers are not confident to teach.

As recommended in the NEC (2003) issues and activity based approach should be used in the classroom to enable students to use interpretive skills.

Television viewing and reading of newspapers could be used to discuss issues and problem solving. The findings revealed that reasonable amount of TV watching had a positive effect on students' civic knowledge. On the other hand having newspapers at home did not have an impact. Therefore students should be encouraged to read newspapers critically.

All schools should collaborate with the Educational authorities, religious organizations, health ministry parents and the community to implement programmes to eradicate the use of drugs by the school children.

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.

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.

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.

Negative behaviors such as truancy, bullying, vandalism and violence as well as use of drugs 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.

### **9.2.3 Strengthening students' concepts of democracy, citizenship, and government**

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.

### **9.2.4 Strengthening students' current and expected participation in political action**

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 Sri Lanka needs citizens in the future who are engaged in the democratic process, much work will need to be done to convince them that it is useful and beneficial. Schools appear to be a good place to engage in some of this work.



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.

Negative behaviors such as truancy, bullying, vandalism violence and use of drugs 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.

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.

### **9.2.5 Comparison of pilot and non- pilot school performance**

As discussed in chapter 8, GIZ support the pilot schools. However, students' responses do not indicate positive impact of these interventions.

Provincial wise there are differences in the achievement of Civic knowledge. The pilot schools in the Sabaragamuwa province have performed better than the non- pilot schools in all three categories of Civic knowledge. While the knowledge mean of the Uva Province pilot schools is higher than the non-pilot schools in the Northern Province content mean in the pilot schools is higher than the non-pilot schools.

Therefore, it is necessary to identify the best practices in these provinces and introduce them to the other provinces as well.

Especially the Ministry of Education and the Provincial Ministries of Education should ensure that administration and monitoring of these programmes.

There should be a proper impact evaluation of each activity. Further, stakeholder feedback should feed into the programme to develop them further.

Activities such as school parliament and student exchange programmes should not be mere activities but these experiences should be utilized by teachers to develop students' concepts as well as interpretive skills. They should lead to sustain social cohesion. For example once a exchange programme is concluded for students to correspond with each other as pen friends or online friends.

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

### **9.2.6 Promoting social cohesion through the school system**

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.

The potentially most proactive and effective measure in facilitating social cohesion through 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.

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.

Opportunities for students to interact with the other ethnic groups should be provided by the Educational authorities. Students are willing to learn together, exchange ideas with other ethnic groups and visit each other. However, opportunities for such activities are even less than in 2003.

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.

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.

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.

Further research based on students completing Civic Education in Grade 11 should be conducted based on the findings of 2017 study.