

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### 1.0 Background

The government of Sri Lanka is committed to promoting a multicultural, peaceful and cohesive society through education. Therefore, it strives to develop a comprehensive long-term program to promote democratic and pluralistic values through the school education system. Policy documents such as the First Report of the National Education Commission (1992), the General Education Reforms (1997) and the National Education Commission Report (2003) have defined a set of social and civic competencies, to be developed and assessed within the school education system. The first national goal expected to be achieved through education according to the National Education Commission is

“ nation building and the establishment of a Sri Lankan identity through the promotion of national cohesion, national integrity, national unity, harmony, and peace, and recognizing cultural diversity in Sri Lanka’s plural society within a concept of respect for human dignity” (NEC, 2003, p.71).

The school system has to orient itself to the challenges of promoting these competencies in students, through the formal school curriculum, co-curricular and other school-related initiatives. In this regard it was felt that, an assessment of the status of civic and democratic competencies in school children in Sri Lanka should be undertaken.

In the context of an ongoing civil war and negotiation through a peace process in 2003 an assessment of the status of democratic and civic competencies of a sample of 14 year old (Grade 9) secondary school students in Sri Lanka and an analysis of the school-based and non-school based factors that affect the development of these competencies was therefore considered particularly timely. The analysis it was hoped would provide a credible base of evidence to inform the development of future strategies and activities to promote democratic and pluralistic values through school education. Further, the belief was that the impact of future interventions can be measured against the baseline provided by the research study on civic education.

Thus the National Research Study on Civic Education in Sri Lanka was conducted in 2003. It was basically a replication of the Civic Education Study (CIVED) conducted in 28 countries in 1998 by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), using three instruments developed for students, teachers and the school - for the Principal. The items were developed over the period from 1996 through 1998 by the International Steering Committee and the National Research Coordinators of the IEA Civic Education Study, and validated using appropriate statistical procedures.

As expected the findings of this study were able to inform the development of a long term plan to promote democratic and pluralistic values through the school system. National Policy and a Comprehensive Framework of Actions on Education for Social Cohesion and Peace 2007 was developed. In addition in place of the subject social studies which was a combination of history, geography and civics new subjects were introduced for Life competencies and Civic Education (grades 6-9) and Citizenship Education and Governance (grades 10 -11) in 2007. Unfortunately majority of the actions recommended through the Framework were not put into action. For example, the suggestion that the impact of the new curriculum should be monitored through research (2008, p.70)

At present the war has ended and reconciliation process has commenced. A review of the national policy on Education for Social Cohesion and Peace has taken place in 2016. One of the recommendations of the report (2016) is the 'rerun of the NEREC 2003 Civic Education Study in order to assess changes in learning and therefore inform curriculum revision. Peace Education and Reconciliation Unit (PERU) has been established in the Ministry of Education with the support of the Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR). This unit has developed a road map. Activity 2.1.3.a of this Road Map is to rerun the NEREC 2003 Civic Education Study.

Further in certain provinces in 200 pilot schools targeted activities have been conducted with GIZ support to improve social cohesion. Therefore, there is a need to find out whether there is a difference in civic competencies in students in the pilot schools in comparison to schools where there had not been targeted intervention. If the findings reveal a positive outcome these interventions could be extended to non- piloted schools.

Therefore, there is a need to replicate the NEREC 2003 Civic Education study and compare its findings with the previous findings. Further, a comparison between the pilot and non-pilot schools is also a necessity.

## **1.1 Main purpose of the study**

Assess the changes in civic and democratic competencies in school children in Sri Lanka since 2003.

To provide input to develop a plan to promote democratic and pluralistic values through the school system.

### **1.1.1 Objectives of the study**

1. Assess the Civic Knowledge of the students in 2017 at national level by school type, ethnicity, gender, and medium of instruction.
2. Compare the students Civic Knowledge in 2017 with that of 2003 and in relation to International norms.
3. Identify the school based and non-school based factors that affect the development of democratic and Civic competencies of students.
4. Assess students' concept of Democracy, Citizenship and Governance.
5. Examine students' views on opportunities for Civic engagement in school and interest in future political activities.
6. Examine students' attitudes toward social cohesion and diversity.
7. Compare Civic knowledge, democratic and Civic competencies and attitudes of a sample of Pilot and non-Pilot school students.

## **1.2 Sample**

### **1.2.1 Sampling methodology**

#### **1. Desired target population:**

All students (except those in the international schools) who were studying in Grade 9 in year 2017 in Sri Lanka.

The target population was 328259 (+ the number of students in the private schools)

**2. The main elements of the target population were**

No. of students : 328259

No. of schools : 6112

No. of classrooms : 11283

**3. Selecting the relevant classroom of the selected schools**

Based on cumulative frequency value and no of classrooms of the selected school, the specified classroom was selected.

**4. Selection of pilot schools**

Same procedure was followed to select 100 pilot schools from the Ministry data base.

Propensity score matching was done to reduce the bias due to confounding variables.

**5. Total Sample**

<b>Main Sample – Sample for Objective 1</b>			
Province	Number of Schools	Number of classroom	Achieved Sample
1. Western	47	47	1445
2. Central	25	25	792
3. Southern	23	23	820
4. Northern	10	10	224
5. Eastern	17	17	387
6. North Western	22	22	662
7. North Central	13	13	305
8. Uva	13	13	334
9. Sabaragamuwa	17	17	563
Grand Total	<b>187</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>5492</b>

<b><i>Pilot sample: Sample for Objective 2- Pilot Tamil and Non-Pilot Tamil</i></b>				
<b>Province</b>	<b>Achieved Sample</b>			
	<b>Non-Pilot</b>		<b>Pilot</b>	
	<b>No of Schools</b>	<b>No of Students</b>	<b>No of Schools</b>	<b>No of Students</b>
1. Western	4	103	0	0
2. Central	11	311	12	471
3. Southern	0	0	0	0
4. Northern	8	179	21	421
5. Eastern	10	237	28	698
6. North Western	4	100	0	0
7. North Central	1	28	0	0
8. Uva	2	26	3	125
9. Sabaragamuwa	2	81	2	59
Grand Total	42	1065	66	1774

### **1.3 Data collection instruments**

The same three instruments used in the 2003 study was used with slight modifications. The section on the peace process in the earlier study was removed.

#### **Student questionnaire**

This comprises of three sections and a special country specific section.

Section 1 - Assesses civic knowledge of the students

This section had two types of items

- Type 1 items: assessing *knowledge of content*.
- Type 2 items: assessing *skills in interpretation* of material with civic or political content (including short text passages and cartoons).

Types 1 and 2 items formed the *test*. These items had keyed correct answers.

Section 2 - Solicit demographic, socio economic and family background data and information on student involvement in various organizations and leisure activities. Country specific section on the reconciliation process.

### Section 3 - Concepts, attitudes and behavior

This section covered three domains

#### *Domain I: Democracy*

What does democracy mean, and what are its associated institutions and practices? The three sub-domains were:

- A) Democracy and its defining characteristics
- B) Institutions and practices in democracy
- C) Citizenship—rights and duties.

#### *Domain II: National Identity, Regional and International Relationships*

How can the sense of national identity or national loyalty among young people be described, and how does it relate to their orientation to other countries and to regional and international organizations? The two subdomains were:

- A) National identity
- B) International/regional relations.

#### *Domain III: Social Cohesion and Diversity*

What do issues of social cohesion and diversity mean to young people, and how do they view discrimination?

Three other issues identified as important—the media, economics and local problems (including the environment)

- Type 3 items: assessing how students understand *concepts* such as democracy and citizenship.
- Type 4 items: assessing students' *attitudes* (for example, feelings of trust in the government).
- Type 5 items: assessing students' current and expected participatory *actions* relating to politics.

Types 3, 4 and 5 items formed the survey. These items did not have correct answers.

These five item types intersected with the three study domains in the student questionnaire.

### **Teacher questionnaire**

Information on teacher education, work experience, views on civic education, instruction on learning goals.

### **Principal's questionnaire**

Their education and work experience, views on civic education. Attitudes relating to school climate and information on perceptions and behavior of students, teacher and parents.

## **1.4 Pre testing of the instruments**

After the revised questionnaires were finalized and translations verified by the team they were pretested in six schools outside the sample. Data entered and ready to obtain Prof. Lehmann's expertise on data analysis and the finalized questionnaires were administered to the sample.

## **1.5 Data collection**

Achievement tests were administered on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2017. Questionnaire administration was done in collaboration with Provincial Directors of Education. For supervision of questionnaire administration, assistance of academics, M.Phil, M.Ed and PGDE students of the Faculty of Education were obtained. Training workshops prior to the questionnaire administration was held at NEREC (for Western, Central, North Western and Sabaragamuwa Provinces) and at twelve provincial centers (for Northern, North Central, Eastern, Uva and Southern Provinces) for the supervisors.

## **1.6 Data analysis**

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the questionnaire data. Furthermore, frequency polygons and bar graphs were also used.

## **1.7 Summary**

This chapter discussed the background to the study and the research design.

