

SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

A Sample of Adolescents in two housing schemes
in Colombo

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by

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ABSTRACT

This study has examined the link between Socio Economic Status and Educational Attainment of adolescents residing in two housing schemes in Colombo. Socio economic status has been examined directly and through its concomitants, namely the quality of the school attended by the sample population, parental encouragement, reading material, peer group influence and the adolescents' educational aspirations, in relation to educational attainment.

An attempt has been made here to explore the influence of socio economic status on educational attainment of urban adolescents in Sri Lanka by making use of a questionnaire survey as well as by observation and detailed interviews.

The study was carried out on a sample of adolescents in 2 housing schemes in order to



fathom the impact of a common residential pattern on adolescent educational attainment; the furtherance of Government policy pertaining to the expansion of housing scheme projects, could be guided by the experience of the adolescents of existing housing schemes, with regard to educational attainment and educational aspirations.

The analysis revealed a marginal link between socio economic status and educational attainment while parental encouragement emerged as the single, most powerful intervening variable affecting an adolescents' educational attainment and educational aspirations. No strong association is found to exist between housing scheme and educational attainment. Instead, family units are found to coverge on high or low educational attainment as units and not as individuals.

As a measure of socio-economic status, we were able to fall back on the oft accepted criteria of education, employment and income of the family. As for educational attainment we have had to look beyond actual attainment as, attainment and age seem to run parallel on account of automatic promotions in schools. The sample was not affected by educational certification at competitive levels like entry to the institutions of tertiary education. Therefore, we have taken into account the educational aspirations of our sample population. As the educational attainment of

many in our sample corresponded to their ages, it was in their perception of the future that we were able to recognise traces of possible differences in educational attainment in the future.

Equality of educational opportunity is found to exist with regard to admission to schools and in educational attainment between the sexes. However, schools are found to be ineffective in moulding the educational attainment and the educational aspirations of urban adolescents.

Finally, the significance of the above findings and their implications for educational policy were discussed and their potential for future research was explored.