

## **Achievement and Under-Achievement in Sri Lanka A Survey of Navodaya Scholarship Winners**

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### **Introduction -**

Policies were initiated in Sri Lanka forty years ago to extend educational opportunities to all sections of the population and to change the elitist based education system in operation at the time. Among these policies were;

- (a) the provision of rural secondary schools (Central Schools),
- (b) the introduction of a system of free primary, secondary and tertiary education in state and aided schools as a result of the abolition of fees in English schools,
- (c) the adoption of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the primary school, and subsequently in the secondary school and
- (d) the development of a system of scholarships for secondary and higher education.

In the examination-oriented education system that had developed in Sri Lanka education was closely linked with school achievement, and was in the employment context, an important agent of socio-economic mobility. While the free education and educational medium policies benefitted the large majority who had been hitherto educationally disadvantaged, the system of scholarships was and is intended to select those with high ability and to assist such students, particularly those from economically deprived families, to develop their potential and to facilitate their vertical mobility. Such a measure is of substantial practical value in view of the high incidence of early school leaving in Sri Lanka as a result of economic constraints.

### Objectives -

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of the scheme of awarding annual scholarships (known as the Jathika Navodaya scholarships) to approximately 2500 students in Grade 7 on their performance at an island-wide competitive state examination. The sample selected for the study were the 2446 winners of the Navodaya scholarships awarded to Grade 7 students on the basis of this examination in 1970. The former schemes of Grade 5 scholarships (at the termination of primary education) and Grade 8 science scholarships (at the end of junior secondary education) were reorganized in 1969 and an annual island-wide examination held for Standard 7 students to select approximately 2500 scholars. As this investigation was a longitudinal study encompassing the secondary and a part of the tertiary educational career of the selected student group, the scholars selected in 1970 were chosen as the subjects for this investigation.

Students are selected annually on the basis of the results of an examination in General Intelligence, mother tongue and arithmetic and there is no evidence that the selection process at that time took into account regional population distribution. All scholarship winners are given the option of transferring to and continuing their education in better equipped secondary schools in the island. Those whose parents are in receipt of an income of less than Rs. 3600/- per year are given financial assistance (Rs. 30/- per month) to complete their secondary and higher education if they are successful at the relevant qualifying examinations.

The scholarships, therefore, meet two important needs - they provide access to schools with facilities and they reduce the cost of education and therefore enable students from low income families to utilize secondary and higher education opportunities and thereby achieve socio-economic mobility.

The assumption on which this study was based was that these students formed a group of secondary students with relatively high ability. Given the requisite environmental and educational facilities they should be "achievers" in secondary schools and they should qualify for higher education in the competitive whirlpool of university admissions in Sri Lanka and enter the professions or other forms of employment associated with academic achievement.

The study was to be undertaken in two stages. Stage I had as its objectives;

- (i) to follow the educational careers of these students,
- (ii) to estimate the extent of educational wastage caused by "dropping out" and by underachievement, and
- (iii) to attempt to assess, on the basis of available information, the impact of these scholarships in promoting educational participation and performance and socio-economic mobility.

In the second stage of the study it is intended to explore the causes of underachievement through an in-depth study of a small sample of "under-achievers".

This report relates to the first stage of study - the preliminary investigation of the educational and subsequent activities of these students.

### **Methodology and Sources**

In addition to the information available in the records of the Ministry of Education and the Admissions Office of the University Grants Commission, data was also collected by means of a questionnaire designed to ascertain the following information pertaining to each student;

- (i) the present location of the student,
- (ii) academic record, and
- (iii) parental occupations.

These questionnaires were sent to the Heads of the schools from which the students had appeared for the scholarship examination, as the information in the Ministry files did not include the home addresses of the students. Questionnaires were sent repeatedly to schools from which no responses were received and were also sent to homes of students where such addresses had been given by schools.

Despite these efforts information was received relating to only 1452 or 59.4% of the scholars (Table I). Some Heads of schools stated that they had no records of these students. Visits to some of the schools were not always fruitful since no records could be located. Some forms were incomplete but all information received was tabulated in the hope that such data would assist in assessing the total situation.

T A B L E 1

(a) Number of Navodaya scholarship winners  
(b) Number of scholars regarding whom responses were obtained

(By sex and regions)

DISTRICT	(a) Total No. of Scholars				(b) No. of Scholars regarding whom responses were obtained			% Response	
	Male	Female	Total	% Distribution	% Female	Male	Female		Total
Colombo South	275	210	485	19.8	43.2	167	117	284	58.5
Colombo North	150	105	255	10.4	41.2	71	56	127	49.8
Kalutara	60	67	127	5.2	52.7	29	25	54	42.5
Kandy	156	136	292	11.9	46.6	81	103	184	63.0
Galle	93	78	171	6.9	45.6	62	66	128	74.8
Ratnapura	48	58	106	4.3	55.2	25	38	63	59.4
Kurunegala	74	81	155	6.3	52.3	37	77	114	73.5
Matara	102	82	184	7.5	46.1	77	60	137	74.4
Chilaw	50	42	92	3.8	45.7	26	23	49	53.3
Bandarawela	47	28	75	3.1	37.3	39	17	56	74.7
Nuwara Eliya	47	27	74	3.0	36.5	17	25	42	56.8
Kegalle	62	61	123	5.0	48.6	43	43	86	69.9
Anuradhapura	52	35	87	3.6	40.2	19	12	31	35.6
Batticaloa	56	36	92	3.8	39.1	13	8	21	22.8
Jaffna	66	62	128	5.2	48.4	35	34	69	53.9
TOTAL	1338	1108	2446	100.0	45.3	739	713	1452	59.4
Sinhala Medium	1163	957	2120	86.7	45.1	677	642	1319	62.2
Tamil Medium	175	151	326	13.3	46.3	62	71	133	40.8

The data presented in this study is therefore of two types;

- (a) Data relating to all scholars was obtained from the records of the Ministry of Education with regard to names, schools and districts of scholars and whether financial aid was received, and from the Admissions Office, University Grants Commission with regard to those admitted to the universities.
- (b) Data pertaining to transfers, parental background, length of schooling and academic achievement are based on replies to the questionnaire and relate therefore to only a proportion of the scholars. No generalizations are possible from this data but since the schools that did not respond included both large and small, and urban and rural schools, the information is indicative of the position of a substantial proportion of the scholars.

On the basis of this data the efficacy of the scholarship scheme can be assessed in;

- (a) its immediate impact on the educational opportunities of the recipients, and
- (b) its impact on the subsequent academic achievements and on educational and socio-economic mobility.

### **Educational Opportunity**

The scholarships appear to have had an immediate impact in their role as a mechanism to provide economic support and to facilitate access to senior secondary education.

It will be seen from Table 2 that 48.1% of all scholars received financial assistance. These students who were found to be economically disadvantaged were provided with some financial incentives to continue their education and to defray at least a proportion of their private costs. The regional distribution of those who received assistance indicates that a substantial proportion of scholars in Colombo and even other urban areas come from more economically favoured families, and that environmental factors would inevitably have influenced performance at the scholarship examination. Nevertheless the responses relating to 917 of these scholars show that 42% of this group were children of agricultural, industrial and service workers and that some parents were even unemployed (Table 3). To scholars from low income families the scholarship extended educational opportunity and to some at least opened vistas of future success.

TABLE 2  
Number and percentage of scholars who received financial aid  
(By sex and regions)

DISTRICT	Total No. of responses			No. who received financial aid			% who received financial aid		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
	Colombo South	275	210	485	73	48	121	26.5	22.8
Colombo North	150	105	255	81	52	133	54.0	49.5	52.2
Kalutara	60	67	127	36	40	76	60.0	59.7	59.8
Kandy	156	136	292	72	59	131	46.2	43.4	44.9
Galle	93	78	171	34	31	65	36.5	39.8	38.0
Ratnapura	48	58	106	31	31	62	64.6	53.4	58.5
Kurunegala	74	81	155	48	51	99	64.9	62.9	63.9
Matara	102	82	184	67	54	121	65.7	65.9	65.8
Chilaw	50	42	92	36	28	64	72.0	66.7	69.6
Bandawela	47	28	75	21	12	33	44.7	42.9	44.0
Nuwara Eliya	47	27	74	18	16	34	38.3	59.3	43.6
Kegalle	62	61	123	36	39	75	58.1	63.9	60.9
Anuradhapura	52	35	87	38	13	51	73.1	37.1	58.6
Batticaloa	56	36	92	33	15	48	58.9	41.7	52.2
Jaffna	66	62	128	39	24	63	59.1	38.7	49.2
TOTAL	1338	1108	2446	663	513	1176	49.5	46.3	48.1
Sinhala Medium	1163	957	2120	564	446	1010	48.4	46.6	47.6
Tamil Medium	175	151	326	99	67	166	56.6	44.3	50.9

Source - Ministry of Education, Colombo

TABLE 3  
Occupation of Parents

(Percentage distribution)

	Male	% distri- bution	Female	% distri- bution	Total	% distri- bution
Professions	15	3.4	32	6.7	47	5.1
Teachers	104	23.5	118	24.8	222	24.2
Supervisory/Clerical Services	119	26.9	144	30.3	263	28.7
Farmers	122	27.6	110	23.2	232	25.3
Industrial/Service Workers	62	14.0	44	9.3	106	11.6
Unemployed	20	4.5	27	5.7	47	5.1
TOTAL	442	100.0	475	100.0	917	100.0

Table 4 gives the type of schools from which the students had appeared for the scholarship examination. Opportunities for transfer from educationally disadvantaged schools to schools with superior facilities were extended to these scholars but the Ministry records giving the number of scholars who obtained such transfers could not be located.

Information was received, however, regarding the schools in which 1452 of the scholars continued their secondary education, and it was found that 62.9% of them have transferred from their original schools to better equipped schools (Table 5). It is interesting to note that the proportion is low in Colombo and Jaffna (where the scholars were evidently in privileged schools), and very high in ten of the fifteen regions. The replies to the questionnaire showed that only 20% of the scholars remained in rural Maha Vidyalayas.

Another interesting feature of the scholarship scheme is that the overwhelming majority were admitted to the science stream in the G. C. E. (Ordinary Level) class (Grade 9). Of the students regarding whom information is available and who appeared for the G. C. E. (Ordinary Level) examination (854 in number) only 10 scholars offered Arts subjects and 2 were in the Commerce stream. Five others transferred to Arts from Science after the G. C. E. (Ordinary Level) examination. This phenomenon reflects the reaction of schools, parents and students to the unemployment situation among Arts graduates and their implicit faith in the value of a science-based education as an avenue to remunerative employment and socio-economic mobility.

TABLE 4

## Schools from which scholars appeared for the scholarship examination

District	Type of School Males				Total	Type of School Females				Total	Type of School Total				
	A	B	C	D		A	B	C	D		A	B	C	D	
	Total	Total	Total	Total		Total	Total	Total	Total		Total	Total	Total	Total	
Colombo South	147	49	24	55	275	107	62	8	33	210	254	111	32	88	485
Colombo North	-	28	16	106	150	-	33	3	69	105	-	61	19	175	255
Kalutara	-	9	13	38	60	-	21	7	39	67	-	30	20	77	127
Kandy	50	21	4	81	156	63	26	4	43	136	113	47	8	124	292
Galle	24	36	-	33	93	-	38	-	40	78	24	74	-	73	171
Ratnapura	-	3	-	45	48	-	22	1	35	58	-	25	1	80	106
Kurunegala	10	4	3	57	74	5	-	6	70	81	15	4	9	127	155
Matara	-	27	6	69	102	-	30	8	44	82	-	57	14	113	184
Chilaw	-	3	1	46	50	-	9	1	32	42	-	12	2	78	92
Bandarawela	-	12	-	35	47	-	11	-	17	28	-	23	-	52	75
Nuwara Eliya	-	5	3	39	47	-	4	3	20	27	-	9	6	59	74
Kegalle	-	7	4	51	62	-	16	1	44	61	-	23	5	95	123
Anuradhapura	-	5	7	40	52	-	18	-	17	35	-	23	7	57	87
Batticaloa	-	8	5	43	56	-	20	2	14	36	-	28	7	57	92
Jaffna	10	26	8	22	66	-	31	3	28	62	10	57	11	50	128
TOTAL	241	243	94	760	1338	175	341	47	545	1108	416	584	141	1305	2446

Type of School

A—Urban large schools

B—Urban small schools

C—Central schools

D—Rural schools

**TABLE 5**  
**Number and percentage of scholars who obtained transfers to better equipped schools**  
 (By sex and regions)

District	Total No. of responses			No. of scholars who transferred to other schools					
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	% Male	% Female	% Total
Colombo South	167	117	284	34	31	65	20.3	26.5	22.9
Colombo North	71	56	127	63	49	112	88.7	87.5	88.2
Kalutara	29	25	54	20	24	44	68.9	96.0	81.4
Kandy	81	103	184	42	57	99	51.8	55.3	53.8
Galle	62	66	128	34	42	76	54.8	63.6	59.4
Ratnapura	25	38	63	23	29	52	92.0	76.3	82.5
Kurunegala	37	77	114	34	58	92	91.9	75.3	80.7
Matara	77	60	137	60	42	102	77.9	70.0	74.4
Chilaw	26	23	49	25	20	45	96.1	86.9	91.8
Bandarawela	39	17	56	27	14	41	69.2	82.3	73.2
Nuwara Eliya	17	25	42	17	20	37	100.0	80.0	88.0
Kegalle	43	43	86	39	42	81	90.7	97.7	94.2
Anuradhapura	19	12	31	19	12	31	100.0	100.0	100.0
Batticaloa	13	08	21	8	4	12	61.5	50.0	57.1
Jaffna	35	34	69	6	18	24	17.1	52.9	34.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>713</b>	<b>1452</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>913</b>	<b>61.0</b>	<b>64.8</b>	<b>62.9</b>

The scholarships were therefore fairly effective in extending educational opportunities and access to secondary education particularly in Science to a group of economically deprived and educationally disadvantaged students.

### Outcomes

Access, however, is only one facet of the problem of educational opportunity. In a meritocratic system of selection such as the Navodaya scholarships what is envisaged is the provision of an educational ladder that will promote educational achievement and the satisfaction of high vocational and social aspirations.

In Sri Lanka the apex of the educational system is the University and the goal of the majority of achievement oriented students is a science-based and preferably professional course such as engineering or medicine which is widely accepted as an avenue to remunerative employment with high social status. It may be expected, therefore that a substantial proportion of Navodaya scholars would with their combined resources of general ability and educational opportunity gain admission to the University among the annual intake of approximately 4000 university students.

The first year in which the 1970 scholars could have entered the University was in 1977. If their admission was delayed as a result of repeating examinations or for any other reason they are likely to have entered in 1978 or in 1979. Table 6 gives the numbers of the 1970 scholars, who according to the records in the University Grants Commission's Admissions Office gained admission to the Universities in 1977, 1978 and 1979.

In 1977 only 9.9% of the 2446 scholars of 1970 entered the universities. Contrary to popular assumptions sex disparities are relatively wide and 13.2% of men students and only 5.9% of women students were successful. Another 8.9% entered in 1978 and 4.4% in 1979. Altogether a total of 569 scholars or 23.3% of the 1970 scholars (26.8% of the men and 19% of the women) have entered the universities.

The stark fact is that over 75% of the scholars have not so far reached the goal of most achievement oriented secondary school students in Sri Lanka, and have not presumably 'realized' their potential abilities. Two factors, however, preclude any clear analysis of causal relationships.

A test such as the G. C. E (Advanced Level) examination which places so much reliance on rote memory is hardly an adequate measure of general ability or aptitude for higher education. Secondly, the basis of

TABLE 6

## No. of scholars admitted to Universities

	1977 Admission			1978 Admission			1979 Admission			Total Admission 1977-1979			Total No. of scholars 1970			% scholars entered Universities		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
	Colombo South	54	26	80	35	24	59	5	4	9	94	54	148	275	210	485	34.2	25.7
Colombo North	19	6	25	16	9	25	4	5	9	39	20	59	150	105	255	26.0	19.0	23.1
Kalutara	9	6	15	8	4	12	2	4	6	19	14	33	60	67	127	31.7	20.8	25.9
Kandy	13	6	19	13	11	24	5	14	19	31	31	62	156	136	292	19.9	22.8	21.2
Galle	20	10	30	9	10	19	6	2	8	35	22	57	93	78	171	37.6	28.2	33.3
Ratnapura	3	1	4	8	4	12	1	6	7	12	11	23	48	58	106	25.0	18.9	21.7
Kurunegala	11	2	13	5	1	6	3	2	5	19	5	24	74	81	155	25.7	6.2	15.5
Matara	9	—	9	10	10	20	7	5	12	26	15	41	102	82	184	24.8	18.3	22.3
Chilaw	2	1	3	2	1	3	4	1	5	8	3	11	50	42	92	16.0	7.1	11.9
Bandarawela	6	2	8	1	1	2	4	1	5	11	4	15	47	28	75	23.4	14.3	20.0
Nuwara Eliya	3	—	3	3	1	4	2	3	5	8	4	12	47	27	74	17.0	14.8	16.2
Kegalle	5	—	5	3	1	4	2	3	5	10	4	14	62	61	123	16.1	6.6	11.4
Anuradhapura	1	1	2	7	1	8	1	2	3	9	4	13	52	35	87	17.3	11.4	14.9
Batticaloa	5	—	5	4	3	7	3	2	5	12	5	17	56	36	92	21.4	13.9	18.5
Jaffna	16	5	21	6	9	15	3	1	4	25	15	40	66	62	128	37.9	24.2	31.3
TOTAL	176	65	242	130	90	220	52	35	702	358	211	569	1338	1108	2446	26.8	19.0	23.3
% distribution	13.2	5.0	19.9	9.7	8.1	8.9	4.9	4.4	26.8	19.0	23.3	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0			

selection has differed from year to year and is so unnecessarily complicated that the term 'achievement' appears to have several connotations. In 1977 70% were admitted in order of merit on the basis of standardized marks and 30% were selected from disadvantaged districts. In 1978 students were admitted on raw marks but several adjustments were made on the basis of standardization and district quotas. The scheme of selection in 1979 was again different - 30% on all island order of merit on non-standardized marks, 55% on district-wise population and 15% from 'deficient' districts.

In terms of socio-economic mobility university admission is tantamount to achievement. Nevertheless the findings of this survey indicate that the meritocratic principle of selection which was the basis of the scholarship scheme and the objectives which determined the policy of transfer of scholars to well-equipped schools have been negated. Scholars appear to have less opportunity for 'achieving' in the competitive environment of large towns in which they have been placed than non-scholars in their home districts. It would seem that access to science education in prestigious schools which was an integral feature of the scholarship scheme has militated against achievement as perceived in the current educational context.

Table 7 and 8 give the distribution by areas of study of the scholars who entered the universities. 58.4% have enrolled in prestigious job-

TABLE 7  
Scholars by areas of study in Universities

(Percentage distribution)

Courses	Male	% distribution	Female	% distribution	Total	% distribution
Engineering	101	28.2	21	9.9	122	21.4
Medicine	83	23.2	79	37.4	162	28.5
Dental, Vet. Sc., Agriculture	19	5.3	15	7.1	34	5.9
Architecture	10	2.8	5	2.4	15	2.6
Phys, Bio, Applied Sc., Maths						
Statistics	143	39.9	88	41.7	231	40.6
Law	1	0.3	2	0.9	3	0.5
Arts	1	0.3	1	0.5	2	0.4
Total	358	100.0	211	100.0	569	100.0

TABLE 8

## Scholars by areas of study in Universities and Regions

Areas of Study	Engineering			Medicine			Dental, Vet. Sc., Agriculture			Architecture			Phys. Sc., Bio. Sc., Maths Statistics, Applied.			Law			Arts			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Colombo South	31	5	36	22	21	43	4	2	6	3	1	4	32	24	56	1	1	2	1	1	1	94	54	148
Colombo North	12	2	14	8	9	17	—	—	—	2	1	3	17	8	25	—	—	—	—	—	—	39	20	59
Kalutara	6	1	7	7	6	13	—	2	2	—	—	—	6	5	11	—	—	—	—	—	—	19	14	33
Kandy	6	5	11	7	9	16	3	3	6	1	—	1	14	14	28	—	—	—	—	—	—	31	31	62
Galle	11	2	13	6	10	16	2	3	5	—	2	2	16	5	21	—	—	—	—	—	—	35	22	57
Ratnapura	7	—	7	4	6	10	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	12	11	23
Kurunegala	4	—	4	6	4	10	1	—	1	—	—	—	8	1	9	—	—	—	—	—	—	19	5	24
Matara	5	1	6	3	4	7	—	—	—	—	1	1	18	9	27	—	—	—	—	—	—	26	15	41
Chilaw	1	1	2	2	—	2	—	1	1	—	—	—	5	1	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	8	3	11
Bandarawela	3	1	4	3	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	3	8	—	—	—	—	—	—	11	4	15
Nuwara Eliya	1	—	1	1	—	1	1	1	2	1	—	1	4	3	7	—	—	—	—	—	—	8	4	12
Kegalle	2	1	3	3	1	4	1	—	1	—	—	—	4	2	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	4	14
Anurachapura	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	—	2	—	—	—	5	2	7	—	—	—	—	—	—	9	4	13
Batticaloa	6	—	6	1	2	3	2	1	3	—	—	—	3	2	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	12	5	17
Jaffna	5	1	6	9	6	15	2	2	4	3	—	3	6	4	10	—	—	1	1	1	1	25	15	40
Total	101	21	122	83	79	162	19	15	34	10	5	15	143	88	231	1	2	3	1	1	2	358	211	569

oriented and economically rewarding science-based courses, 40.6% are in science faculties and less than 1% are studying Law or in Arts-based faculties. In 1978, of the total intake of 4831 students to the Universities, 20.8% were admitted to science-based professional courses, 18.2% to science faculties and 61.0% to Arts-based courses and Law<sup>1</sup>. In comparison therefore the 'achievers' among the scholars have gained access to those courses which operate most effectively as agents of socio-economic mobility.

### Wastage and Under-achievement

It is apparent from the statistics relating to university admissions that there is a high incidence of 'wastage' and 'under-achievement' among the 1970 scholars. Unlike the university data there is no information in official records relating to their achievement in secondary schools or in post school activities. It is probable, however, to glean some information from the replies to the questionnaire relating to 1280, or just over half the scholars.

As Table 9 indicates 44.2% of these 1280 scholars have continued their secondary education to Grade 12, about 25% have left school after Grade 10 and nearly 30% have "dropped out" before Grade 10. The

TABLE 9  
School Leaving by Grades

GRADE	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
	No	Distribution	No	Distribution	No	Distribution
Grade 7	53	8.3	41	6.3	94	7.3
Grade 8	135	21.2	125	19.3	260	20.2
Grade 9	16	2.5	5	0.8	21	1.6
Grade 10	124	19.5	190	29.4	314	24.6
Grade 11	18	2.8	7	1.1	25	1.9
Grade 12	288	45.4	278	43.0	566	44.2
TOTAL	634	100.0	646	100.0	1280	100.0

1. Admissions Office, University Grants Commission, Colombo.

incidence of early school leaving from secondary schools among the scholars has been much less than that among the secondary school population at large. The regional disparities in length of schooling presented in Table 10, however, show that the policy of financial assistance and transfers have not helped substantially to eliminate such imbalances.

Little information is available regarding the post-school activities of the scholars who are not in universities. Of the 1280 students 12 are reported to be enrolled in Polytechnics and 79 are employed in occupations such as teaching, nursing, technical and clerical jobs and in business and industry (Table 11). The rest are presumably unemployed or are still striving to gain admission to the universities or to other secondary or tertiary educational institutions.

Of these 1280 scholars 854 appeared for the G. C. E. (Ordinary Level) examination and 518 for the G. C. E. (Advanced Level). Their performance at those examinations (Tables 12 and 13) naturally reflect a higher standard of achievement than the general body of candidates who appear for these examinations but falls short of the achievement expected of scholars. 15% have failed to obtain even six passes and according to the criteria used in Sri Lanka 78.6% qualified for senior secondary education by obtaining three or more credits, and 63.3% have obtained at least five credits. Similarly 67.2% reached the standard of eligibility for university admission on the results of the G. C. E. (Advanced Level) examination. One third of the scholars who appeared for these examinations have therefore failed to reach the minimum achievement level required to qualify for senior secondary and higher education. Regional disparities between educationally developed areas such as Colombo and Jaffna and other districts are marked particularly at the highest level of performance and this could well reflect the attraction of scholars to urban areas and especially to Colombo and Jaffna.

Achievement at these levels, however, is most rewarding if it culminates in higher education and in this context the large proportions qualifying at each stage offer further evidence of wastage.

One other facet of the relationship between education and social mobility was explored in this study. In a country like Sri Lanka in which the western-oriented English-speaking elite still dominates the commanding positions of the socio-economic structure, proficiency in the English language operates as an agent of mobility, particularly in the expanding private sector of the economy. Among the 854 scholars whose G. C. E. (Ordinary Level) records are available it is significant that 51.6% have either failed in

TABLE 10

## Scholars who completed 12 years Secondary Education

	Total Response			No. of scholars who completed Grade 12			% scholars who completed Grade 12		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Colombo South	122	98	220	84	60	144	68.8	61.2	65.4
Colombo North	59	48	107	29	20	49	49.2	41.7	45.8
Kalutara	23	24	47	8	1	9	34.8	4.2	19.1
Kandy	76	91	167	25	50	75	32.9	54.9	44.9
Galle	54	63	117	20	33	53	37.0	52.4	45.3
Ratnapura	23	37	60	5	12	17	21.7	32.4	28.3
Kurunegala	34	69	103	10	21	31	29.4	30.4	30.1
Matara	67	58	125	38	27	65	56.7	46.6	52.0
Chilaw	25	20	45	5	6	11	20.0	30.0	24.4
Bandarawela	32	14	46	10	4	14	31.2	28.6	30.4
Nuwara Eliya	15	24	39	6	8	14	40.0	33.3	35.9
Kegalle	48	41	89	18	15	33	37.5	36.6	37.1
Anuradhapura	18	12	30	8	4	12	44.4	33.3	40.0
Batticaloa	11	17	28	2	-	2	18.2	0.0	7.1
Jaffna	27	30	57	20	17	37	74.1	56.7	64.9
TOTAL	634	646	1280	288	278	566	45.4	43.0	44.2

TABLE 11  
Scholars in Polytechnics and in Employment

	Colombo South	Colombo North	Kalutara	Kandy	Galle	Ratnapura	Kurunegala	Matara	Chilaw	Bandarawela	Nuwara Eliya	Kegalle	Anuradhapura	Batticaloa	Jaffna	Total
No in Polytechnics																
Male	1	1	1	—	2	1	1	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	10
Female	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	2
Total	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	12
Total No. Employed																
Male	1	4	2	6	2	2	1	3	—	1	1	6	5	2	3	39
Female	4	4	6	7	3	1	1	1	—	3	2	3	1	—	4	40
Total	5	8	8	13	5	3	2	4	—	4	3	9	6	2	7	79
Teachers																
Male	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	2	—	1	6
Female	1	1	6	2	—	1	—	1	—	2	—	2	—	—	3	16
Total	1	1	6	3	—	2	—	2	—	2	—	2	—	—	4	22
Nurses																
Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Female	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	3
Total	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	3
Clerks																
Male	—	1	—	1	1	—	1	1	—	—	1	1	—	1	1	9
Female	1	2	—	3	1	—	1	—	—	1	—	1	1	—	—	11
Total	1	3	—	4	2	—	2	1	—	1	1	2	1	1	1	20
Technicians																
Male	1	2	2	2	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	4	1	—	—	14
Female	—	—	—	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4
Total	1	2	2	3	2	1	—	—	—	1	—	4	1	—	—	18
Accountants																
Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	3
Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Total	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	4
Business																
Male	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	2
Female	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Total	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	3
Industry																
Male	—	1	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Total	—	1	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Security																
Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	2
Female	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Total	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	2



T A B L E 13

Performance at G. C. E. Advanced Level (Grade 12)

	Colombo South	Colombo North	Kalutara	Kandy	Galle	Ratnapura	Kurunegala	Matara	Chilaw	Bandarawela	Nuwara Eliya	Kegalle	Anuradhapura	Batticaloa	Jaffna	TOTAL	%
1 to 4 As	22	7	—	1	1	—	—	4	—	—	—	1	—	—	6	42	16.0
Male	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	1.2
Female	25	7	—	1	1	—	—	4	—	—	—	1	—	—	6	45	8.7
Total	17.0	14.5	—	1.5	2.1	—	—	7.1	—	—	—	3.2	—	—	18.8	8.7	
%																	
1 to 4 Bs	13	8	1	—	4	1	1	3	—	2	2	2	1	1	—	39	14.9
Male	4	1	—	—	4	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	26	10.2
Female	17	9	1	5	8	1	2	5	—	2	2	3	1	1	8	65	12.5
Total	11.6	18.8	20.0	7.4	17.0	6.7	8.0	8.9	—	18.2	18.2	9.7	10.0	50.0	25.0	12.5	
%																	
1 to 4 Cs	13	6	2	7	4	1	—	4	3	1	1	2	3	—	4	51	19.5
Male	25	5	—	7	8	2	2	6	1	1	—	1	—	—	1	60	23.4
Female	38	11	2	14	12	3	2	10	4	1	1	3	3	—	5	111	21.4
Total	25.8	22.9	40.0	20.6	25.5	20.6	8.0	17.9	36.4	9.1	9.1	9.7	30.0	—	15.6	21.4	
%																	
3 to 4 Ss	8	1	1	2	3	1	1	9	2	2	2	3	—	—	5	39	14.9
Male	22	6	—	21	9	6	4	8	—	3	3	6	—	—	3	88	34.4
Female	30	7	1	23	12	7	5	17	2	5	5	9	—	—	8	127	24.5
Total	20.4	14.5	20.0	33.8	25.5	46.7	20.0	30.4	18.2	45.4	45.4	29.0	—	—	25.0	24.5	
%																	

Contd....



English or have not offered it at the examination, and 5% have obtained a distinction and 21.8% a credit pass (Table 14). Regional disparities are marked and while only 20% have not obtained at least a pass in Colombo, over 70% have failed to do so in 8 of the 15 regions. The efficacy of these scholarships in promoting mobility is therefore affected by the influence of one more variable—knowledge of English.

### **Conclusion**

This study of achievement and under-achievement attempts a follow-up of the 1970 group of Grade 7 scholars. A considerable proportion of the scholars were found to have received some financial support and easier access to senior secondary education. It is apparent, however, that the impact of this substantial number of island-wide scholarships has been very limited from the standpoint of the aspirations and expectations of parents and students. Less than one-fourth achieved the goal of university education. At each grade in the secondary school students “dropped out” or were “pushed out” because they did not qualify for further studies. Since even entrants to the labour force with G. C. E. (Ordinary Level) qualifications are often unemployed or employed in low income jobs, only the small proportion of the scholars who are in higher educational institutions are likely to improve their socio-economic status.

The causes of under-achievement leading to the waste of potential in this “pool of ability” could well range from economic constraints to the rigidities of the educational system and the vagaries of the selection process and to the motivational pattern of Sri Lankan youth. They will be explored in stage 2 of the study through a study of “case histories”.

Meanwhile a few issues have emerged from this study as focal points for further policies:

1. While scholarships are a pre-requisite for equalizing educational opportunity, in Sri Lanka as elsewhere compensatory mechanisms have not been successful in ensuring equal educational opportunity and expected outcomes in a competitive educational environment and a socio-economic milieu bristling with inequalities. Education cannot change the lives of even a small group of individuals unless supported by dynamic social and economic policies.
2. The assumptions underlying the operation of the scholarship scheme need re-examination in the light of the unhappy experiences of scholars in prestigious schools and in science courses. Questionable policies have been.

TABLE 14

## Performance in English at G. C. E. (O/L)

DISTRICT	MALE										FEMALE										TOTAL				
	Total	D	C	P	F/N	Total	D	C	P	F/N	Total	D	C	P	F/N	Total	D	C	P	F/N					
	(No) %																								
Colombo South	98 100.0	11 11.2	46 46.9	17 17.3	24 24.4	78 100.0	14 17.9	35 44.9	17 21.8	12 15.4	176 100.0	25 14.2	81 46.0	34 19.3	36 20.4										
Colombo North	39 100.0	—	8 20.5	14 35.9	17 43.6	30 100.0	—	5 16.7	14 46.7	11 36.7	69 100.0	—	13 18.8	28 40.6	28 40.6										
Kalutara	9 100.0	—	2 22.2	—	7 77.8	11 100.0	—	—	2 18.2	9 81.8	20 100.0	—	2 10.0	2 10.0	16 80.0										
Kandy	34 100.0	2 5.9	4 11.8	7 20.6	21 61.7	60 100.0	6 10.0	20 33.3	14 23.3	20 33.3	94 100.0	8 8.5	24 25.5	21 22.3	41 43.6										
Galle	25 100.0	1 4.0	3 12.0	11 44.0	10 40.0	45 100.0	4 8.9	18 40.0	11 24.4	12 26.7	70 100.0	5 7.1	21 30.0	22 31.4	22 31.4										
Ratnapura	11 100.0	—	3 27.3	—	8 72.7	18 100.0	—	4 22.2	7 38.9	7 38.9	29 100.0	—	7 24.1	7 24.1	15 51.7										
Kurunegala	15 100.0	—	1 6.7	1 6.7	13 86.7	33 100.0	1 3.0	4 12.1	6 18.2	22 66.7	48 100.0	1 2.0	5 10.4	7 14.6	35 72.9										
Matara	46 100.0	—	5 10.9	6 13.0	35 76.1	47 100.0	—	6 12.8	10 21.3	31 65.9	93 100.0	—	11 11.8	16 17.2	66 70.9										
Chilaw	11 100.0	—	—	—	11 100.0	10 100.0	—	—	2 20.0	8 80.0	21 100.0	—	—	2 9.5	19 90.5										
Bandarawela	10 100.0	—	—	—	10 100.0	8 100.0	—	—	2 25.0	6 75.0	18 100.0	—	—	2 11.1	16 88.9										
Nuwara Eliya	11 100.0	2 18.2	—	2 18.2	7 63.6	18 100.0	1 5.6	2 11.1	7 38.9	8 44.4	29 100.0	3 10.3	2 6.9	9 31.0	15 51.7										
Kegalle	28 100.0	—	2 7.1	5 17.9	21 75.5	33 100.0	—	1 3.0	7 21.2	25 75.8	61 100.0	—	3 4.9	12 19.7	46 75.4										

Contd.....

TABLE 14 (Contd.....)  
Performance in English at G. C. E. (O/L)

DISTRICT	MALE						FEMALE						TOTAL					
	Total	D	C	P	F/N	Total	D	C	P	F/N	Total	D	C	P	F/N			
Anuradhapura (No) %	17 100.0	—	1 5.9	1 5.9	15 88.2	11 100.0	—	—	2 18.2	9 81.8	28 100.0	—	1 3.6	3 10.7	24 85.7			
Batticaloa (No) %	11 100.0	—	—	2 18.2	9 81.8	14 100.0	1 7.1	2 14.3	2 14.3	9 64.3	25 100.0	1 4.0	2 8.0	4 16.0	18 72.0			
Jaffna (No) %	45 100.0	—	7 15.6	11 24.4	27 60.0	28 100.0	—	7 25.0	4 14.3	17 60.7	73 100.0	—	14 19.2	15 20.5	44 60.3			
Total (No) %	410 100.0	16 3.9	82 20.0	77 18.8	235 57.3	444 100.0	27 6.1	104 23.4	107 24.1	206 46.4	854 100.0	43 5.0	186 21.8	184 21.5	441 51.6			

D — Distinction C — Credit P — Pass F/N — Failed or not offered

- (a) the transfer of scholars to alien and inhospitable environments followed by a system of district - based selection for higher education.
  - (b) the relative neglect of educationally disadvantaged districts which are considered to be adequately served by the system of scholarships and the application of a district quota selection process.
  - (c) the allocation of scholars to science education regardless of their aptitudes and interests.
  - (d) it may perhaps also be necessary to examine the adequacy of the testing instruments used in the selection of scholars.
3. The present system of selection to universities which tends to stifle creativity and innate abilities and aptitudes is clearly in need of review in order to reduce the waste of human resources through the educational process and to promote both individual and national development.