EIU Best Case Studies Series **No. 10**

School as a Prism: A Case Study on Gender Equity and Democratic Participation in Sri Lankan Schools

EIU Best Case Studies 2008

UNESCO
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

APCEIU
Asia-Pacific Centre of Education
for International Understanding

Foreword

As a regional centre mandated to promote Education for International Understanding (EIU) towards a Culture of Peace in Asia and the Pacific region, Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) under the auspices of UNESCO has been engaged in various endeavors aimed at fulfilling its mandate since its inception. EIU Best Case Studies was launched by APCEIU in 2006 in cooperation with the Member States in the region to encourage local initiatives on EIU.

EIU aims to promote, in particular, "Learning to Live Together", among the four pillars of education set forth in the Delors report, through participatory learning and critical thinking. EIU Best Case Studies brings and explores various efforts in the region aimed at promoting "Learning to Live Together".

Asia and the Pacific region, with some of the major flashpoints of the world, have long been plagued by a history of socio-political conflicts often intersected by contending issues of ethnic and religious nature. In the era of globalization, ensuring education towards a culture of peace and a sustainable future has become critical more than ever for a common prosperous future of all humanity. Launched with this background, EIU Best Case Studies is an outreach effort that seeks to encourage and further local initiatives on peace, human rights, intercultural understanding and sustainability in different social and cultural contexts.

This series no. 10 brings a case from Sri Lanka on gender equity and democratic participation in schools. It should be acknowledged

that approaches to gender vary from country to country depending on the different situations and local contexts. As important and sensitive as the topic is, educators should avoid, at all costs, essentializing certain gendered behaviors and be open to all the potentialities. On balance, in the current Sri Lankan context, this kind of initiative on gender and democracy is indeed encouraging, and we hope that the researchers' commitment continues on to further efforts.

I hope that through the EIU Best Case Studies, various practices and forms of pedagogy for EIU can be shared among educators, scholars and policy makers who are committed to promoting a Culture of Peace in the region. I expect this project can provide a forum to share and exchange our experiences and perspectives.

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the National Commissions for UNESCO in the region, in particular, Sri Lanka National Commission for this case study, the experts and the selection committee members for their kind support and cooperation in carrying out this project.

November 2008

Kang Dai-Geun
Director

EIU Best Case Studies is…

APCEIU has been committed to the promotion of a Culture of Peace since its inception in line with one of the pillars of education, "Learning to Live Together". Education for International Understanding (EIU), a concept adopted by UNESCO that encompasses cultural diversity, human rights, peace and sustainability, focuses on increasing the capacities of learners to deal with issues of everyday life, to resolve community conflict and to enjoy human, political and civil rights to a greater extent.

APCEIU launched EIU Best Case Studies in 2006 in order to explore and encourage local initiatives on EIU in Asia and the Pacific region. It is an outreach programme that invites educators, researchers, activists and scholars to share their efforts in promoting education for a culture of peace in different social and cultural contexts. The programme further seeks to encourage critical reflections on the diverse forms of pedagogy used and the challenges encountered in the cases that are shared, through which optimal classroom conditions and activities, school climate and social atmosphere towards a Culture of Peace can be identified. EIU Best Case Studies envisions promoting a Culture of Peace at four different levels, namely, peaceful classroom, peaceful school climate, peaceful community and peaceful society.

The programme is conducted through the following steps: 1) announcement: APCEIU sends announcement letters along with application forms and guidelines to the 47 National Commissions for UNESCO of the Member States in the region; 2) screening and selection: submitted proposals are reviewed by the Screening Committee composed of experts, and the best proposals are selected; 3) field visit: APCEIU staff undertake field visits to the programme sites of the selected case study proposals to confer the EIU Best Case Studies awards, conduct field observation and interviews, and provide

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the researcher with the guidelines for the final case study report; 4) submission of the final case study reports: the researchers submit the final case study reports to APCEIU based on the guidelines; and 5) publication and dissemination: the final case study reports are published as monograph series and disseminated throughout the region.

Given the favorable and enthusiastic responses from the region and the support from the National Commissions for UNESCO, APCEIU wishes to build on the positive momentum thus far established and further its efforts for the coming years.

The Centre encourages educators, scholars and activists from Asia and the Pacific region to apply and share their experiences and perspectives. APCEIU expects that through the EIU Best Case Studies, various practices of EIU will be widely shared throughout the whole region, thus contributing towards a Culture of Peace.

Researchers

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APCEIU — Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU)
Under the Auspices of UNESCO

Department of Research and Development
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Sri Lanka
2008

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, we would like to extend our gratitude to APCEIU, Mr. KANG Dai-Geun, Director, and members of Research and Development Team, namely, Ms. EOM Jeongmin, Ms. Hye-Won JUNG and Ms. Ma. Johanna C. ENCABO for this innovative programme entitled EIU Best Case Studies and for selecting a case study from Sri Lanka and lending their continuous support, encouragement and academic input in completing this research in time. Our special thanks go to Ms. Hye-Won JUNG for her suggestions and encouragement during her field visit to Sri Lanka, and her valuable ideas for the research provided through email communications in the process.

We wish to acknowledge the mediator role of Mr. R. P. Perera and Mr. P. Chandith at Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO.

Two of the main objectives of the Sri Lanka National Institute of Education (NIE) are to conduct and promote studies on the education system including its performance, goals, structures, content and methodology and the social, economic and other aspects of education; and to initiate and promote innovative practices in the education system. We want to express our deep appreciation to Prof. Lal Perera, Director-General, and Dr. T.A.R.J. Gunasekara, Assistant Director-General of Research, Planning and Development for their commitment towards these objectives and guidance for this research.

We also appreciate the valuable ideas and concepts on gender equity provided by Dr. Lalitha Batuwitage and Ms. Wasantha Peeris

from GTZ, Sri Lanka.

The Department of Research and Development of the NIE, with ideas from Director, Dr. Godwin Kodituwakku and the academic support by four researchers/ practitioners, sent four research proposals for the EIU Best Case Studies Programme in 2008. Out of the four, two proposals were selected which were combined into the present case study report. As happy recipients of the EIU Best Case Studies award for 2008, we would like to extend our gratitude to Dr. Kodituwakku for initiating the research and his continuous involvement throughout.

We owe our special thanks to Mrs. M.D.L. Adikaram, Principal, Vidyakara Balika Navodya School, Maharagama for her active involvement in the research by way of preparing questionnaires, collecting and analyzing data from her school and writing a major part of the case study report. Her contribution to developing the school up to its present status provided the rationale for the second strand of this research and the major part of ownership of the case study is attributed to her.

November 2008
D.A.S.D. Ratnayake
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Contents

Abstract

Policies and practices on gender equity in Sri Lankan schools were analyzed based on the Education for International Understanding (EIU) theme of social justice. The democratic processes used in school management by women for school development as well as future plans to address relevant issues were studied in depth.

The objectives of the study were to identify study patterns of boys and girls; to analyze school and classroom-specific gender issues, if any, in Sri Lankan schools; to study, in depth, good practices related to democracy and gender in a school; to study the forces that influenced the current good practices; and to study the perceptions of stakeholders to generate future plans.

The study consists of two parts. In the first part, nine schools were selected to represent different ethnic groups and geographical regions of Sri Lanka. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data from students, teachers and principals with regard to gender equity. In the second part, an in-depth case analysis was conducted in a girls' school, and its historical development and good practices based on democracy and gender empowerment were analyzed. Based on the institutional memory and stakeholder inputs, a three-year plan was developed for the school.

The first part reveals gender-specific problems and trends hitherto not emphasized in Sri Lankan schools. Study patterns of boys and girls are identified and examined including career preferences and future expectations of boys and girls through a survey and interviews.

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The findings, for the most part, indicated a high degree of gender equality achieved in education in Sri Lanka, particularly in terms of access to education and academic performance. Based on the study patterns and trends identified, recommendations and implications were developed and presented.

The second part shows that with a participatory approach, females in leadership positions in schools can effectively collaborate together with school members and its stakeholders to develop action plans. Based on the challenges and problems faced by a female principal of a girls' school, democratic features in school management are identified.

The study suggests that schools should be more sensitized with regard to gender equity to provide a balanced learning environment for both boys and girls. Also highlighted is the necessity of plans for school development based on the concepts of EIU.

1. Introduction

1.1. Rationale

The ideology of democracy aims for a society that favours equal rights and treatment regardless of hereditary class distinctions, and tolerance of minority views. Democracy seeks social equality and rejects all sorts of unjustifiable discriminations including those based on gender.

Gender roles are behaviours and expectations based on social attributions of gender, which involve a multiplicity of rules that range from what is "proper" to what is "taboo" for men and women. In some societies, this has led to a strong dichotomy between femininity and masculinity, a situation that defies the values of equity and equality upheld by democracy.

In democratic societies, the foremost task of education is to produce informed, critical, competent and active citizens. At the intersection of the ideologies of democracy and gender, the role of education is to ensure access to schooling, retention and attainment, and to confer the benefits of equal education on both men and women, preventing occupational segregation. Hence, guaranteeing gender parity in education at all levels and career choices is an incumbent obligation of all democratic societies.

The present study is theoretically based on the interrelated concepts of democracy and gender equity. Using these concepts, it attempts to analyze the Sri Lankan scenario. Although Sri Lanka has been cited as

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a good example for democratic rule and gender equity, there is a need to research some grey aspects of school education to be able to get a true and accurate picture. Hence, the present study envisages exploring the nature of these two aspects at the school level.

With this background, the aim of the research is to identify the patterns of gender equity in Sri Lankan schools, based on the EIU theme of social justice. The main research questions are: "What are the patterns of gender equity in Sri Lankan schools?" and "What are the patterns of democratic processes used in school management by women for school development and future plans to address the present issues?" To answer these research questions, the research has been designed to be conducted in two strands. In the first strand, the historical development of policies with regard to gender equity according to the values of democracy will be explained; and using a survey, the existing patterns of gender equity will be explored. In the second strand, a case study on a girls' school will be introduced to highlight good practices.

1.2. Background

The early system of education in Sri Lanka was mainly centered around the Buddhist Temple, while the Sangha (Buddhist priests) served as primary education agents. With a doctrine that transcends all sorts of discrimination including those based on gender, both men and women equally enjoyed the benefits of temple education. This is testified by the poetic compositions of the mirror wall of Sigiriya, some of which have been attributed to women. The order of nuns also enabled spiritually inclined women to study the Buddhist scriptures.

This practice was discontinued with the conquest of lowlands by the Western colonial powers, namely the Portuguese, Dutch and British. Under the Portuguese system, girls were given an elementary education in parish schools, but were denied entry into secondary

schools. Under the Dutch who introduced free compulsory education, a large number of girls began to attend school. The contours of the present education system were developed in the 19th century after the establishment of the British colonial rule over the island under which several progressive steps were taken to promote the education of girls. These have resulted in a notable increase in the literacy rates of both males and females.

The two decades starting from 1930 were a remarkable period in the recent history of Sri Lanka. The introduction of universal franchise, enactment of an education ordinance, approval of free education regulations by the legislature, use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction and welfare measures to students favored egalitarianism. These were the underpinnings of the democratization of education. The cumulative benefits of these measures were reflected along several dimensions in the post-independent Sri Lanka after 1948 as listed below:

- The literacy rates of both males and females increased with the progressive narrowing of the gender-wise difference. By 2001, the literacy rates of males and females were 92.4% and 89.7% respectively.
- The gender-wise difference in the rate of participation of the school age population (from 5 to 19 years of age) disappeared by 1981.
- Grade 1 enrolments increased up to nearly 97% for both boys and girls and nearly 100 % of the completion rate of grade 5 was achieved.

As regards access retention and achievement, gender did not emerge as a serious issue in the educational scenario in Sri Lanka. Several other aspects of school education show the same trend. A study on the socialization of girls by Jayaweera (1998) found that there was no community whose members thought of their girls as unwanted children. Other findings were as follows:

- Parents take high risks on their daughters' education in terms of economic difficulties.

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- The aim of educating their daughters was to have a suitable foundation on which to build a good future for them.
- Parents had positive attitudes towards their daughters attaining higher education.
- Parents had equal expectations of the educational and professional development of their sons and daughters.
- Parents do not make gender-based decisions at home, e.g., there is no division of labor based on gender at home.
- Teachers had high expectations of their female students. They expected girls to get a job, attain higher social mobility and serve as good citizens.

Perera (1993) found that Sri Lankan science and English teachers showed unbiased attitudes towards girls and boys.

Jayaweera (2000) mentioned that the percentage of students who were admitted to grade one in 1995 and continued to stay in school until they were in grade five in 1999 were 96.2% for girls and 96.7% for boys. This reflects a high degree of gender equality in education.

Abhayadeva (2008) explored the development of gender perceptions in 4 to 5 year-old children in pre-schools and found that:

- Mental spatial abilities and verbal abilities did not indicate any gender differences.
- Boys were a little ahead of girls in problem-solving exercises.
- Majority of children have acquired gender identity by perceiving themselves as males or females. More girls than boys had reached this stage, perhaps, due to socio-cultural factors.
- More girls participated in indoor work at home such as helping in the kitchen, while more boys assisted in outdoor work such as sweeping the garden.
- Cultural background, practices and role modeling by parents appear to have influenced the extent of differentiation of tasks assigned to girls and boys. The majority of girls and boys said that, except for cooking and gardening, other tasks such as using

computers, changing electric lamps, carpentry, bicycle repair and driving are undertaken largely by males.

An in-depth analysis revealed that there are gender-bound differences, sometimes subtle, and sometimes more pronounced in relation to different aspects.

Dropouts in post-primary grades and around 18% of students failing to complete grade 9 indicate a failure in achieving universal compulsory education. In all post-primary grades, the dropout rate among boys always exceeds that of girls. At the end of the compulsory education cycle or grade 9, the completion rate of girls is 84% whereas that of boys is 81%.

The cumulative result of the difference in dropout rates between males and females is reflected in the gender-wise difference in the number and percentage of students taking public examinations. Recent data revealed the percentage of girls taking both G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) and G.C.E. (Advanced Level) examinations is greater than that of boys.

Grade repetition also follows a similar pattern. Girls repeat less in comparison to boys. In comparing the total performance in public examinations, females seem to surpass males in all stages. In the grade 5 scholarship examination and the G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) examination, females show a greater passing rate of nearly 3% and 4% respectively. When it comes to G.C.E. (Advanced Level) examination, in all streams, females nearly twice outnumber males in qualifying to enter university, while males who failed in all subjects also twice outnumber females. To cater to the needs of the truants and dropouts, non-formal literacy centers have been established. Out of nearly 20,000 children enrolled in these centers (2002), almost half were girls.

Facilities have also been provided for children with disabilities, but gender disparity is notable. Only 40% of girls with disabilities are reported to be enrolled in formal schools.

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In contrast to gender prejudices that have been almost totally obliterated with regard to the success in retention and achievement in education, recent studies highlight the constraints of social and cultural factors in the sphere of female education. It has been argued that gender role stereotypes inculcated through various means together with curriculum differentiation has influenced the vocational choices of women. For example, in 1984, girls made up 72.4% of arts students in grade 11, and only 46.1% of science students. In the 1983 G.C.E. (O/L) examination, 99.8% of home economics students were females, while the percentage in radio mechanics was 2.9%. In university admissions for 1984, females made up 41.7% of those selected for medicine, but only 13.6% of those selected for engineering. 90% of trainees in nursing colleges and over 60% of students in teachers' colleges were females. This gender stereotyping in some areas such as teaching, has become more pronounced over time.

The continuing gender differentiation in vocational training and formal educational courses has been slowly eroding, due to the increasing entry of women into what has largely been a male preserve. This is mirrored in the diminishing gap of the percentage of male and female students enrolled in streams like commerce and art with the passage of time. Yet there are some areas such as physical science which are still dominated by males, while others like biological sciences are preferred by females, and this is an issue that needs deeper attention.

With this background, these research gaps will be addressed in the present study as two strands:

- The study patterns of Sri Lankan school children and environmental factors related to gender; and
- The role of female leaders in developing the school system.

2. Methodology

2.1. Objectives

▶ To identify study patterns of boys and girls in Sri Lankan schools
▶ To analyze school and classroom specific gender issues, if any, in Sri Lankan schools
▶ To study good practices related to the role of women in democractic participation and gender equity in an all-girls' school

2.2. Research Method

Gender was considered as the case of phenomenon in the study. The study has two interlinked strands. In the first strand, a documentary survey was used to analyze available official statistics, while survey research was to identify gender-related patterns at nine schools.

In the second strand, an ex-post facto research method was used to investigate the causal factors for the existing developmental patterns of a girls' school, selected out of the nine schools. A female principal explored the past and conducted a school-level survey using questionnaires to identify the perceptions of parents, community members, students and teachers, and to analyze the present issues and develop future plans based on the participatory democratic practices. Due to the intervention by the principal herself to improve the school, the research method she used was participatory - collaborative action research. Action research provides room for using traditional research techniques with flexibility. Hence, ex-post facto research of quantitative paradigm (to study the causal factors for present developmental patterns), participant observation technique of qualitative paradigm (to study the present good practices) and action research method (to intervene to develop the school) were applied in the second strand of the research.

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2.3. Data Needs, Data Sources and Data Collecting Techniques

Data Needs	Data Sources	Data Collecting Modes/ Instruments
Strand 1: Statistics on gender-equity in education	Documents from - Ministry of Education - Department of Exams - Research reports	Documentary survey
Educational expectations/ Future aspirations/ Attitude towards education	- Teachers - Students - Parents	- Questionnaire: Attitude scale - Interview schedule for teachers and students - Self-report of students
Strand 2: History of a girls' school/ Current good practices	- Principal - School premises and practices	- Self-reflection report by principal - Unstructured observation
School practices	- School plant - Classrooms	- Observation
Stakeholder perceptions of the urban school	- Teachers - Students - Parents - Experts	- Questionnaire - Interview

2.4. Sampling

Nine schools (all boys' school-Sinhala medium; all girls' schools-Sinhala medium; Sinhala medium-mixed; all boys' school-Tamil medium with a majority of Muslim children; all girls' school-Tamil medium with a majority of Muslim children; Tamil medium with a majority of Muslim children-mixed; all boys' school-Tamil medium; all girls' school-Tamil medium; Tamil medium-mixed) were selected purposively.

Table 1. Sampling for the Survey

School	Grade 8		Grade 10		Grade 12		Total	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Sinhala Boys	50	-	48	-	50	-	149	-
Sinhala Girls	-	45	-	43	-	45	-	133
Sinhala Mixed	26	21	27	22	13	12	66	55
Muslim Boys	40	-	52	-	13	-	105	-
Muslim Girls	-	42	-	37	-	13	-	92
Muslim Mixed	21	25	14	22	-	22	35	69
Tamil Boys	50	-	41	-	28	-	119	
Tamil Girls	-	46	-	36	-	35	-	117
Tamil Mixed	02	03	03	03	-	-	05	06
Total	189	182	185	163	104	127	478	472

2.5. Research Procedure

Strand 1: The background of the issue and historical trends were probed into using historical research techniques.
▶ Available gender-specific data from across the country was collected and analyzed to identify countrywide patterns.
▶ Trends concerning the issue were studied using current research data, census data and policy documents.
▶ Present patterns of the selected nine schools were studied using

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questionnaires and interviews.

▶ Good practices were interpreted through the lens of EIU concepts of democracy and gender equality.

Strand 2: Good practices of an all-girls' Sinhala medium school were documented.

▶ The historical background was explored to identify causal factors for the present good practices.

▶ Present issues in the school were identified through a questionnaire, and interviews with teachers, students, parents and experts in the field.

▶ Possible solutions through the ideas of stakeholders of the school were identified.

▶ A plan of action was developed, incorporating EIU concepts to be implemented at the school within the next three years.

3. Presentation of Data and Discussion

This chapter contains two parts, with the first part featuring the analysis of the data collected from nine schools and patterns that emerged from the data. In the second part, a specific case analysis was conducted at an all-girls' school, selected out of the nine schools, in order to identify gender-specific school processes. The school's historical development, its present status and good practices, the challenges and problems faced by the female principal in developing the school were discussed. Also discussed was the process of developing a three-year school plan, based on democratic processes.

3.1. Strand 1. Patterns of Gender Equity in Sri Lankan Schools

The analysis of the data collected from the students of nine schools, according to the independent variables of ethnicity, gender and grade, showed that the more than 50% of the respondents agree with

the following, irrespective of differences:

- Female teachers act with great commitment and enthusiasm while teaching.
- Children's education will be adversely affected by mothers' migration abroad more than by the fathers' migration.
- Mothers pay more attention at home to matters pertaining to a child's education.
- Boys take more part in sports activities.
- Girls cooperate more with teaching in classroom activities.
- The career expectations of boys through education are higher than girls.
- Boys have more freedom in taking private tutoring than girls.
- Girls are more clever in memorizing the facts through rote learning than boys.

The responses that respondents did not agree with are:

- Girls need not pursue higher education.
- Gender differences cannot be seen in the number of students who pursue higher education
- There is relatively less female involvement in specific fields such as engineering and aviation.
- Girls show relatively higher performance in aesthetic studies.
- Teaching is the most suitable profession for females.
- The school development board meetings are mostly attended by females.
- Male parents are dominant when making decisions in the school development board.
- The migration of mothers adversely affects the students' education more than that of fathers.
- Female teachers are more successful in teaching.
- Girls remember facts mostly through rote learning.
- Boys acquire facts in a logical manner.
- Boys tend to learn by studying on their own.
- Boys are mostly involved in disciplinary activities.

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- Boys take the lead in developing interpersonal relationships.
- Boys take the lead in showing curiosity and asking questions in the classroom.

Teachers had a neutral viewpoint on whether or not girls show more leadership qualities. However, there was one statement that more than 50% of the teachers disagreed with:

- Wife should be equally qualified or less qualified than husband.

On the questionnaire given to the parents, more than 50% (n= 162) agreed on the following viewpoints:

- Mothers show greater enthusiasm regarding the child's education than fathers.
- Girls show more talent in learning than boys.
- The participation of females is higher in school development board meetings.
- Fathers make a greater contribution to school development.
- Female teachers engage in teaching with more enthusiasm and dedication.
- The migration of mothers adversely affects the child's studies more than that of the father.
- Boys take the lead in developing relationships with their parents and friends.
- Studying in mixed schools helps build a child's personality more than studying either in all-girls' or all-boys' schools.

More than 50% of the parents had a neutral view point regarding that:

- Boys study more at home than girls.
- Boys show high performance in competitive exams.

More than 50% of the parents did not agree with the statement: "Girls need not pursue higher education."

Based on the answers given by students, teachers and parents to the questionnaire, the findings show that irrespective of ethnicity, age, grades and gender, both girls and boys have the same opinion about attaining the highest level of education. The statements that students

agreed on show that they do not hesitate to admit that there are certain roles played by women as well as duties and responsibilities.

The students, teachers as well as parents disagreed with the opinion that girls should not pursue higher education. The study clearly shows that women should be given the opportunity to pursue higher education.

When analyzing the students' future career goals as seen in their responses to the question, "My future goals - I am now a student in a school. In 20 years time I will...." , there are significant gender-wise differences. More boys than girls aspired to be engineers, media persons, athletes, politicians, designers, inventors and pilots. Girls outnumber boys in their preferences to become school teachers or principals, artists, archaeologists, nurses, tourist guides, mathematicians and pharmacists. There is not much discernable difference in professions such as doctors, accountants, bankers, lawyers and judges.

Boys tend to be more ambitious than girls in acquiring physical resources and going abroad, having a great personality and aspiring for a happy married life. Nevertheless, more girls than boys have expressed their desire for a simple and happy life, and education.

The following findings have been identified through the student and teacher interviews:

- Majority of girls prefer to pursue arts and commerce streams at G.C.E. Advanced Level, but boys are more interested in the sciences stream.
- Majority of girls seek the assistance of private tutoring and also extra classes in school. More girls participate in extra classes in school than boys.
- Girls who are in grades 8 and 10 (between 13-14, 15-16 age ranges) prefer mathematics, English, sciences, commerce and aesthetic subjects. The boys who are in the same age group are fond of the mother tongue, religion and history subjects. This

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finding is confirmed by students' expectations.

- Boys receive more punishment than girls. The percentage of boys being punished is twice than that of girls. Various offenses include disturbing other students, bringing forbidden things such as mobile phones and CDs to school, and having various hairstyles. There are a few boys addicted to drugs, but no drug addicts are found among girls.

- More girls attend cultural events such as dramas, dances and musical shows. Girls tend to be more creative than boys, although more boys take part in stage events. Most boys learn art, while girls learn music.

- Sports: Boys participate in track and field events, while girls participate in organized games and indoor games. There are few chances for girls to participate in sports. Unlike Sinhala or Tamil girls, Muslim girls do not have opportunities for sports. Boys have greater participation in national level events than girls, and have more success in sports competitions.

- Religion: Girls are more religious than boys. Muslim boys and Buddhist girls have religious activities at home.

- Library: More girls use libraries than boys. Girls use the library when teachers are not in class. Both boys and girls read novels and short stories, while more boys read newspapers.

- Technology: More boys use computers, Internet and mobile phones than girls.

- Leisure time: Boys read books, engage in computer games and play other games, while girls watch television, do handicrafts, grow flowers and vegetables during their leisure time.

- Classroom culture: When it comes to relationships with other students, girls tend to share their food among themselves. The grade 8 and 10 students have better relationships among themselves than grade 12 students.

- Student participation: Girls are more forward in participating in classroom activities than boys.

Table 2. Students' Future Expectations

Students' Expectations	Number			Percentage	
	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys
To be a beneficial person to the country	66	88	154	42.9	57.1
To sacrifice one's life for the country	03	10	13	23.1	57.1
To lead a simple and happy life	21	19	40	52.5	47.5
To have exemplary character and be a humble, fair and law abiding citizen	51	124	175	29.1	70.9
To look after family members	75	87	162	46.3	53.7
To be a person with high expectations	07	26	33	21.2	78.8
To have a faith in religion and help others	07	13	20	35.0	65.0
To be environment-friendly	_	03	03	_	100
To be a doctor	51	75	126	40.5	59.5
To be an engineer	03	13	16	18.8	81.2
To be a media person	03	06	09	33.3	66.7
To obtain material necessities	04	16	20	20.0	80.0
To pursue education	09	06	15	60.0	40.0
To be a teacher /principal	31	05	36	86.1	13.9
To be a beneficial person to society	11	16	27	40.7	59.3
To lead a successful marriage life	02	06	08	25.0	75.0
To emigrate	05	14	19	26.3	73.7
To be commissioner of girls' guides/ artist/ male nurse/ tour guide/ mathematician/ A pharmacist /archeologist	06	02	08	75.0	25.0
To be an athlete	02	03	05	40.0	60.0
To face challenges	03	04	07	42.9	57.1
To be a lawyer/ chief justice	13	16	29	44.8	55.2
To be an accountant/ banker	05	05	10	50.0	50.0
To be a politician	_	02	02	_	100.
To be a pilot	_	04	04	_	100.
To build personality	_	02	02	_	100.
To be a designer/ an inventor	01	09	10	10.0	90.0

- Absenteeism: The major cause for absenteeism is sickness.
- Dropouts: Most of the dropouts are from grade 10 boys, followed by grade 12 boys. The major cause for dropout is

poverty, which is common for both girls and boys. In Muslim schools, marriages and the coming of age are the main causes for the dropout of girls.

3.1.1. Conclusion

- As supported by the findings, equal education is provided without a gender bias in Sri Lanka, confirming the findings of Jayaweera (1998). The survey on career preferences revealed that the highest expectation among girls is to become a teacher or a principal in schools. A low percentage of girls preferred to be doctors, accountants, lawyers and bankers. Boys aspired for various types of jobs.

- It was revealed that the causes for absenteeism of both girls and boys are mainly related to health. Therefore, schools should take steps to ensure that students stay healthy.

- Poverty has a direct impact on the dropout rate. More boys from grade 10 and 12 drop out of schools than students in other grades. It can be suggested that through an effective project involving the school community, the dropout rate can be minimized.

- The findings showed that boys tended to be relatively more active as they were given more freedom to go outside their homes than girls. Also it was shown that they tended to make their own decisions and were more inclined towards inquiry and logical processing of facts when learning. The findings also indicated that girls, despite and due to their less freedom, were brilliant thinkers and tended to be more considerate. It was shown that they were inclined to be more responsible and reliable. They cooperate with elders like teachers and parents, and they are more inclined towards books and memorizing.

- The higher achievement of girls in terms of examination results can be attributed to their affinity with books and a strong sense of responsibility. It is also due to less freedom of movement and

less social connections that the girls have. This may be considered an issue for further study.

- With cultural influences, girls prefer more artistic fields while boys tend to select the field of science and technology.
- Thus, sometimes, stereotypical patterns of behaviour such as the aforementioned can be observed. The processes of how such behaviours are induced and reinforced can be subjects for further research. What is important to educators is to avoid the pitfall of reinforcing stereotypical patterns of behaviour by mistaking them for inherent traits. Instead, educators should be open to all the potentialities.

3.1.2. Implications

Since gender-specific issues and culture hitherto not emphasized in the Sri Lankan school system were identified, it is necessary to pay attention to these trends when developing programmes and action plans for schools. The identified factors can be considered in curriculum development and implementation. There is a need to change the thinking patterns of principals and teachers, and to conduct guidance and counseling programmes for teachers and students on the new trends.

Since health and poverty affect the education of both boys and girls, any gender-related programme should include a component on the two areas. There is also a need for awareness-raising programmes for parents with regard to these aspects.

3.1.3. Suggestions

- Prepare suitable programmes to promote the schooling of poor students irrespective of their gender.
- Implement health programmes in schools in order to minimize absenteeism among students.

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- Give more opportunities to make informed career choices that are relevant to the economical status of the country through counseling programmes in schools.
- Prepare guidelines to raise awareness of teachers and parents with a view to supporting qualitative development and educational achievement of students while maintaining good practices in terms of gender equity.

3.2. Strand 2. Democratic Participation in Sri Lankan Schools

Good practices in a girls' school were analyzed to identify patterns of democratic management undertaken by a female principal in developing the school; and to develop future plans to address the present issues based on the stakeholders' ideas. The girls' school is situated in a semi-urban area, while its primary section is located in a rural area. There are 2,950 girls in the school and 112 teachers, of whom only 10 are male.

A self-report written by the principal for the research depicts the case of the school as follows. The case story in 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 is supported by ideas of the researcher (Box 1.).

3.2.1. Self-Report: Story of a Principal

I was appointed as principal of Vidyakara Girls' Navodya School on 1 January 2004. To date, I have 13 years' experience as a principal of an urban 1C type all-girl's school. Prior to that, I had served for 12 years as an assistant teacher in 4 schools. Before coming to Vidyakara Girls' Navodya School, I had developed the previous school where I had served as the principal up to its highest possible level. The improvements I carried out at the previous school are amply testified by the awards I have received at the provincial and national levels. I take pride in saying that I was selected as the best principal based on the following criteria which are related to democratic practices:

- Creation of a conducive and orderly physical environment for a school
- Inculcating conducive habits in students, teachers and parents to act in a systematic manner
- Conflict-reduction among staff by developing a healthy work culture
- Focusing the attention of students, teachers and parents on developing the school as a common institution of all
- Winning the confidence of the community and transparent management

I had a firm determination to improve my new school also along the same lines. As an initial step in fulfilling this expectation, I made an assessment of the progress achieved by the new school.

Based on the information gathered from the students, teachers and community, together with my experiences and observations, I identified 12 challenges and 28 related problems in the school. The challenges and problems could be categorized into seven themes.

The democratic processes I used in addressing these challenges and problems are described below.

(A) Physical Environment

(B) Planning

(C) Management

(G) Internal Peace

Challenges & Problems Related to Democratic Processes in School Management

(F) Educational Backwardness

(D) Peaceful Relationship

(E) Community

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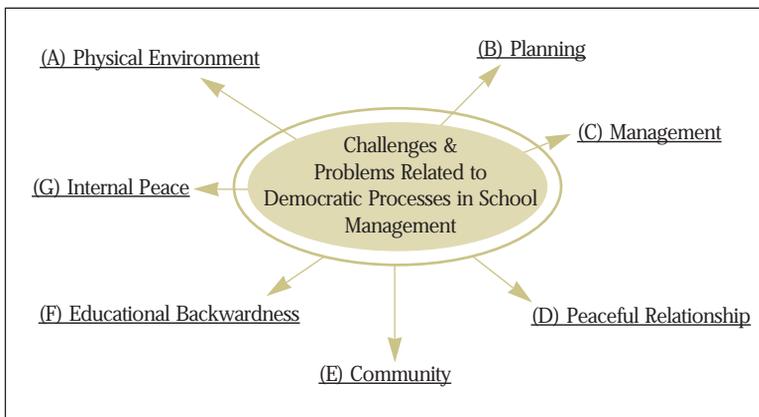
3.2.2. Challenges, Related Problems, Democratic Solutions and Resultant Good Practices

(A) Physical Environment

Challenges

▶ Unorganized and appalling physical environment of the school

▶ Dirt and waste accumulated in the classrooms and school compound

▶ The dearth of water supply

▶ Every class exceeded the optimum number of 35. The presence of around 50 students in a class rendered teaching-learning activity difficult.

Problems

- Non-availability of a gymnasium
- Inadequate number of classrooms
- Non-availability of a vehicle for the school
- Non-availability of wire fence for 15 classrooms
- Non-availability of electricity supply for 40 classrooms
- Lack of furniture in the primary section
- Inadequacy of sports gear
- Inadequacy of aesthetic instruments
- Non-availability of quarters for the principal
- No boundary wall for the primary section situated in a separate place
- Inadequacy of toilet facilities for the primary section
- Non-availability of a watcher for the primary section.

Box 1. Self-Report of the Researcher: After 10 years of service as a teacher, I was transferred to the present school. When I first entered the school, I saw a big heap of dirt, and the school premises were alarmingly unclean. I felt that this situation should be addressed. I also realized that the new principal at the

school had an intense interest in changing the status quo and improving the school. I also observed her integrity, democratic disposition, firmness and capacity to address the situation, which inspired me. Hence, I was determined to extend my wholehearted cooperation in all her projects and endeavors.

Democratic Solution - 1

The principal appointed a teacher in charge of the School Prefects Forum and the Environment Association. She drew up a daily cleaning chart in collaboration with the prefects. The group hired a tractor which was used to remove the big heap of dirt in front of the school as it was not attended by the local authority. The dedication of the female students could be observed.

Cluster of figures 1. Improving the physical environment

Democratic Solution - 2

A tree-planting campaign was implemented with the participation of students, teachers and parents.

Resultant good practices

Modern buildings were furnished with plants, flowers and signboards with inspirational axioms that provided thought for food for the students.

Democratic Solution - 3

A two-day Sharma Dana campaign was organized to address the aforementioned problems. The parents participated in carrying out necessary repair to the buildings, painting the walls using a single color, and also mending the broken chair and desks. All these helped to give a pleasant appearance to the school.

(B) Planning and (C) Management
Challenges

▶ Absence of initial basic plans at the beginning of the year (A time table was not prepared and approved).
▶ There was a lack of proper information management system in the office. This constrained obtaining and releasing necessary data on time.

Problems

- Increasing tendency of teachers to take a leave of absence
- The negative attitudes of the teachers
- Inadequate awareness of the staff about the projects
- Inadequate interest of the students in subject collaboration projects
- Inadequate participation of the staff in the administration of the school

Democratic Solution - 1

In the decentralization of the school administration, the principal, as the linear manager, needs the cooperation of the staff. The necessary cooperation of the staff is obtained through the assignment of responsibilities and supervision after observing the teachers' educational and professional qualifications and assessment of their performance. The principal assigned a measure of official duties, extra-curricular responsibilities and subject-related tasks to every teacher. The consultation of the school management board and the staff in all tasks and the due reference to their views highlighted the democratic element in the process.

Democratic Solution - 2 : School Management Committee (SMC)

Decisions related to current projects were often taken democratically with few exceptions. In this exercise, the views and proposals of the staff were frequently taken into consideration. Special consideration was given to the proposals generated by the school management committee as follows.
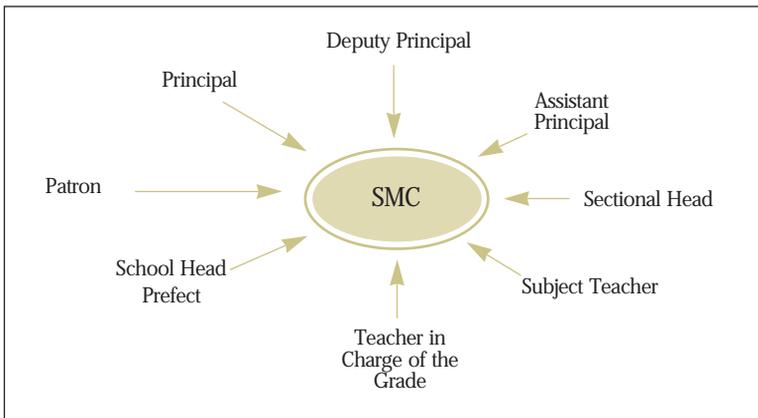
The school management committee made decisions on annual planning, internal supervision, implementation of different projects, distribution of responsibilities among the staff, approval for expenditure, disciplinary issues, and security activities.

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Democratic Solution - 3: Democratic Decisions

Decisions were also taken democratically in every possible situation except on few occasions.

- The students-parents record book was made a mandatory requirement in the determination of student identity in security matters.
- Approval of the extension of the service of a teacher over 58 years was not granted on the grounds of inefficiency.
- Schemes, lesson-notes, school-based assessment marks and annual activity records were made mandatory requirements for the approval of increments in the salaries of teachers.
- Prohibition of activities of any commercial nature carried out by the teachers within the school premises.

Democratic Solution - 4: Devolution of Power

- Based on their willingness, the responsibilities of projects and extra-curricular activities are given to teachers.
- Classroom-level duties are distributed among students.
- Day leaders apart from class leaders are appointed.

An opportunity was provided for each student to develop her leadership skills by a system of appointing a monitor for each class in addition to the chief monitor. This system was devised to assign special responsibilities to each student. This arrangement helped enlist all students to contribute towards the improvement of the school.

Democratic Solution - 5 : Suggestion Box

A suggestion box was introduced in each classroom to facilitate students to express their views for the improvement of the classroom environment. In addition, there was a main suggestion box for the whole school.

Resultant Good Practices

The school premises are developed in such a way that the children

are guided by instructional signboards. The greenery has also been developed to provide a shade for the girls. The school's environment has been made conducive to students' learning.

Cluster of figures 2. Efficient management of the school

(D) Peaceful Relationship

Challenges

▶ There was no proper relationship between teachers and students and also with the principal. This created a gap among them.

▶ There was no unity and cooperation among the staff. This prevents getting inputs from teachers.

Problems

• The gap in the relationship between teachers and students.

• The presence of a great number of students who have not received parental love and care.

• Undue influence exerted by the invisible hands of the staff and the parents, which resulted in confusion.

Democratic Solution - 1

A proper teacher-student interactive relationship is necessary for successful teaching-learning processes in the classroom. The distance between the two is reduced by an elucidation of the rights and duties of the students and teachers, through procurement of necessary information and supervision. The collection of personal information of the students was intended to identify those lacking in parental care and security. Projects desingned for providing special care to those

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students were designed and provided.

Democratic Solution - 2: Female Teachers as Role Models

The characters of girls are molded carefully with dedication. School activities were organized in the following manner to realize these goals.

- Discussions instead of lectures.
- Self-control instead of discipline.
- Giving greater importance to students than teachers.
- Taking into consideration the differences in the views of the lower social strata level and the upper levels, in the formulation of educational policies.
- Proper management of the teacher-student relationship
- Teachers should realize the capabilities of students and guide them to enhance their capabilities.
- Democratic implementation of curriculum.

Cluster of figures 3. Interactions between teachers and students

Democratic Solution - 3

The school set up a Tamil language unit to inculcate conducive attitudes in students towards national peace and cooperation. A plan was drawn to broadcast news to students daily in the morning in all 3 languages, Sinhala, Tamil and English. Tamil language and English language days were launched. Students commemorated different national festivals.

Resultant Good Practices

Girl students are directed to take different kinds of responsibilities with a sense of belonging to the school. And female teachers became proud to be part of the school's development.

Cluster of figures 4. Students' activities Ⅰ

Figure 1. Female teachers of the school

Cluster of figures 5. Students' activities Ⅱ

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(E) Community

Challenge

▶ The parents should have conducive attitudes towards the school.

Democratic Solution - 1

The school also organized community development activities. The principal undertook a special project to rebuild the primary section of the school. The school has been abused by the villagers around the area, so it was a great feat to attempt to rehabilitate its facilities. Nobody, not even the zonal education office, was prepared to take up this challenge. The villagers did not allow any principal to run this school. Under these circumstances, the initiative of the principal was remarkable. She has been able to improve the school, which was once a mixed school, as an effective and efficiently-run primary education section of an all-girl's school. Furthermore, she has been able to change the villagers' attitudes and to enlist their active cooperation in the school's improvement.

Democratic Solution - 2

The Prefects Day-2007 was organized with a focus on the community to upgrade their well being. The school was able to invite the students of a non- facilitated school, categorized as a very difficult school that children from low-income families attend, to attend a two-day workshop. We gave them an opportunity to visit important places in the capital and offer educational lectures and other gifts. We were able to provide them a novel experience.

(F) Aspects to be Improved

Challenges and Problems

- A low level of academic performance of students in general
- A higher level of daily absence of students
- Poor results at the year 5 scholarship examinations
- Minimum passing rate in science and mathematics at the GCE O/L

- Poor performance in science at the GCE A/L
- Minimum results in English at the GCE A/L
- Low interest in learning different languages
- Poor attendance of GCE O/L and A/L students prior to their public examinations

Democratic Solution - 1

Steps were taken to address these problems through supplementary teaching and testing, teacher-student awareness lectures and evaluation of those who obtained excellent examination results. There were also attempts to update the supervision in the school and to motivate the teachers.

Cluster of figures 6. Activities to improve academic performance

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Democratic Solution - 2

Competence in various international languages is essential for the exchange of opinions. The students' focus was drawn to the importance of foreign languages by creating an awareness of their use, providing necessary resources and expertise and by setting up a media unit and a language activity unit. The school provided various opportunities for the use of different languages.

Resultant Good Practices

A rich learning environment for girls, both inside and outside the classroom.

(G) Inner Peace
Challenges and Problems

- Poor exposure of students to artistic appreciation
- Lack of parental support
- Community's negative attitude towards education

Democratic Solution - 1

Various associations were organized and mobilized to provide facilities for art and culture subjects as well as to procure necessary equipment and resources for lectures. These actions enabled students to focus their attention on aesthetic appreciation.

Democratic Solution - 2

The habits of discarding unnecessary things, keeping necessary things in order and continued cleanliness are absolutely essential to help a child develop a proper personality. With instructions from the National Productivity Secretariat and through the observation of the schools which have won productivity awards, actions have been taken to develop plans that take everybody's views into consideration. This enabled the school to be ranked no. 2 in the country within a period of two years.

Democratic Solution - 3

Importance given to peace based on democracy

- Use of three languages in school activities such as morning assemblies.
- English and Tamil language units were established.
- English and Tamil language days were conducted.
- Celebrating different religious festivals in the school.
- Development of school programmes to instill inner peace
- A special cleaning programme was implemented.
- A song is aired while the cleaning process is going on.
- Every space of the school is used for a purpose including agriculture.
- The classroom environment was developed and decorated to enhance learning.
- Creating an outdoor science laboratory.

3.2.3. Democratic Vision of the Principal

Based on these challenges and problems the principal faced and plans she implemented, the following philosophical mission towards democratic management has been identified.

"Democracy is both an administrative system and a way of life. Throughout the school's existence, it is sine qua non to create an environment abounding with democratic ideas with liberty, equality and fraternity. Hence it is necessary to:

- *Work according to one's conscience*
- *Ensure the freedom of expression*
- *Ensure the respect for minority opinions*
- *Ensure the right of worship and the right to hold one's own views*
- *Ensure the freedom of association*
- *Ensure the claim for rights*
- *Discharge duties and responsibilities*
- *Act with discipline*

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• *Conduct training for students"*

3.2.4. Conclusion: Plans to Strengthen Democracy

Although the school has developed to its present position with democratic processes, it is necessary to have sustainable plans to maintain the current good practices. To achieve this objective, the ideas of different stakeholders were collected and triangulated using a questionnaire survey for students and teachers. Further ideas from the community were collected through group discussions. The issues that emerged from the survey and developed plans (Appendix 4) for the future can be summarized as follows:

• Necessity of developing physical resources
  - Development of science laboratories and enhancing examination results
  - Establish other buildings and sections necessary for student learning and welfare
• Development of the library and improvement of reading and writing competencies
  - Correct the language and grammar of sign boards and notice boards
• Organizing and implementing an internal supervision network for the devolution of activities
• Further enhancing the teacher-student relationships to raise the quality of the school
• Development of guidance and supervision processes in the school to promote gender equity
• Development of an environment to enhance national and international cooperation

3.2.5. Implications

An action plan for a school is developed collaboratively, using the

participatory approach, and also through a democratic process with the members of the school and its stakeholders. Since such an approach is in tune with the School Based Management emphasized by the Sri Lankan government, the experiences and good practices of the case study school can be disseminated among other schools. Since grassroots-level experiences are not effectively disseminated among practitioners in Sri Lanka, there is a necessity in developing a dissemination mechanism for the school system.

School action plans are normally developed in Sri Lanka, using educational concepts and policies. It is suggested that the EIU concepts be incorporated in this exercise.

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Appendix

1. Questionnaire for Students

Please indicate your response to each of the following statements by " ✓ " mark in the corresponding box.

No.	CRITERIA	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Girls need not pay attention to higher education					
2	Mostly mothers participate in school development society meetings					
3	Administration by a female principal is very good for school development					
4	Female teachers act with great commitment and enthusiasm while teaching in classrooms					
5	Child's education will be adversely affected by mother's migration abroad than by fathers					
6	Mothers pay much attention at home on matters pertaining to child's education					
7	Boys show much interest on sports activities					
8	Girls cooperate much with teachers on arranging classroom activities					

No.	CRITERIA	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9	Girls are clever in memorizing and remembering					
10	Girls are much accused at school for their indiscipline behaviours					
11	Boys have more freedom while participating in tuition classes					
12	Having to assist in domestic work is a hindrance to girls' education.					
13	Boys have more career expectation through education than girls					
14	Girls are more clever than boys in terms of organizational abilities and taking responsibilities					
15	Mixed school is more suitable for better learning compared to gender wise separated school					
16	Boys are more clever in learning than girls					

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2. Questionnaire for Teachers

Please indicate your response to each of the following statements by " ✓ " mark in the corresponding box.

No.	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	There is no difference in number of students gender wise who are directed towards the higher education in Sri Lanka					
2	Female participation is far less in specific fields like engineering and aviation in Sri Lankan society					
3	The girls are more skillful in aesthetic education					
4	Wife should have either equal or less educational qualifications than the husband					
5	Males are more suitable to be leaders than the females					
6	For females, teaching profession is more suitable					
7	Females are more talented in directing other personnel as a challenge to school administration than the males					
8	Participation of females in school development society meetings is high					
9	Out of the parents, the majority of the contribution is given by the male participants in the decisions taken by the school development board					
10	It's more suitable to have a male principal in developing the school					
11	The dedication and efficiency is more in female teachers regarding school					

No.	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
12	The male teachers do not have a high tendency towards their professional development					
13	The migration of the mother affects adversely the education of the child than that of the father					
14	The female teachers are more successfully engage in teaching					
15	Girls memorize facts mostly by rote learning					
16	Boys logically internalized facts while learning					
17	Boys tend to be self-educated more through learning by doing					
18	Girls show more leadership qualities					
19	Boys engage in discipline activities mostly					
20	Boys are in the lead in developing inter-personal relationship					
21	Girls are better than the boys in having good behavioral patterns					
22	Boys lead in asking questions and showing curiosity					
23	Boys express their ideas bravely					
24	The female employees of non-academic staff give a good support in the activities of the school					
25	The future professional expectations are higher in girls than the boys					
26	Boys perform remarkably well in examinations					

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3. Questionnaire for Parents

Please indicate your response to each of the following statements by " ✓ " mark in the corresponding box.

No.	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Mother pays more attention on child's education than the father					
2	Girls are more clever than boys in learning					
3	Boys are more able in taking responsibilities than the girls					
4	Participation of females in school development society meetings is high					
5	Involvement of gents in school development society activities is high					
6	A school can be well developed under a male principal					
7	Lady teachers are more interested and dedicated in learning - teaching process.					
8	Child's education will be adversely affected by mother's going abroad than by father's					
9	Boys attend more to the learning activities than the girls at home					
10	Girls tell more about problems that erupts in subjects during the learning than boys					
11	The girls tend to do undisciplined behaviours more					
12	The boys are able to have healthier public relations than the girls					

No.	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
13	Learning in a mixed school is helpful in developing personality than learning in schools only for girls or boys					
14	The boys get higher grades at the examinations					
15	The girls dislike to do jobs with high responsibilities					
16	It is not necessary to direct girls towards higher education					

4. A School Plan Developed by the School

No. of the project: 1

Name of the project: Organizing and implementing the internal supervision network for the devolution of activities

Objective: To improve the achievement of students through an effective decentralized supervision mechanism

Aims:

- To develop a supervision mechanism that involve teachers /sectional heads from various levels of the school
- To systematize pre-preparation of teachers for classroom lessons
- To emphasize student-centered learning in the school activities
- To enhance student achievement in exams
- To develop a culture of sharing of ideas

Responsibility: Deputy-Principal in charge of educational development

Sources of Resources: Facilities fees paid by students and quality inputs provided by the government

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Activity step	Time			Indicators	Responsibility
	2009	2010	2011		
1. Preparation of supervision plan	January			A plan of action	Management committee
2. Appointment of a supervision committee	January			Supervision committee	Management committee
3. Awareness-building of teachers on the plan	January			A meeting with teachers	Principal and supervision committee
4. Awareness-building of students	January			An assembly/ sectional meetings	Principal and sectional heads
5. Awareness-building among officials				Principals' meeting	Principal
6. Awareness-building among parents	January →			School Development Society (SDS) meeting	Secretary of SDS
7. Development of supervision schedules	January →			Printed schedules	Management committee and supervision committee
8. Discussion meeting by supervision team	January →			Meeting	Deputy Principal in charge of educational development
9. Implementing the supervision programme				Continuous monitoring	Supervision committee
10. Evaluating the results				Evaluation of reports	Supervision committee/ quality circles
11. Revision of the supervision plan suitably to overcome any problems that may arise					Management committee
12. Preparation of a report				Three reports	Supervision committee

Field Visit

On behalf of APCEIU, Ms. Hye-won Jung, Junior Programme Specialist, Research and Development Team, undertook a field visit to Sri Lanka from 8 to 11 September 2008 to carry out the following missions such as: 1) to confer the EIU Best Case Studies Award on the researcher, 2) to provide the guidelines on finalizing the case study report; and 3) to interview teachers, headmasters, scholars and students involved in the research and encourage them to continue and enhance further activities related to EIU.

▲ With the winners and distinguished guests including the Sri Lankan Minster of Education at the award ceremony held during the International Literacy Day Celebration at National Institute of Education (NIE)

▲ During the award ceremony, the field visit staff was given an opportunity to introduce APCEIU and EIU Best Case Studies programme

◄ Discussing the guidelines of the final case study report with the researchers and Dr. Godwin Kodituwakku, Director of Department of Research and Development, NIE, who provided substantial support for the case study

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▲ Observing a school management committee meeting

▲ Observing a civic education class

◀ Suggestion box installed in every classroom

◀ Students expressing their opinions about the survey conducted on their perceptions on gender equity