

Educational and Occupational Mobility of Plantation Youths in Sri Lanka

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Introduction

National and international studies reveal that education is one of the key instruments for occupational mobility. Educated workers are more likely to move to a high level of occupation, and schooling has a strong effect on the likelihood of moving to a high level of occupation (Nachumn Sicherman, 1990). The impact of further education on occupational attainment is greater than the impact of basic education (Konig, Bachman and Sacchi, 2000). Occupational mobility via education is a cherished dream of many people who are in the lower strata of society. Divergence in educational and occupational mobility is aggravating the problems of social inequality (Ray, Jhilan, Majunder and Rajashi, 2010).

Even though the education of plantation children has become part of the national education system, the educational attainment level of plantation youths is still far behind the national education attainment level, and the occupational attainment too remains without much change (Karunanithy, 2001). This study examines the extent of intergenerational mobility in both educational and occupational mobility of youths in the plantation.

Objectives of the study

- To identify the differences in educational attainment levels between two generations.
- To analyse the differences in occupational mobility between two generations.
- To identify the relationship between educational and occupational mobility among youths in plantation.

Methodology

In this intergenerational study, the objective of the researcher was to record, analyse and interpret the existing situation in educational and occupational mobility. Therefore, the method of descriptive survey research was employed. One hundred youths including male and female and their fathers from the Pedro Plantation, Nuwara Eliya were selected randomly. In intergenerational mobility studies the comparison is usually between children and fathers. Data and information were gathered using a questionnaire and focus group interviews. Frequencies, cross tabulation and chi – square test were used for data analysis. The occupational prestige scale for Sri Lanka constructed by Chandra Gunawardene (1987) was used to categorise the occupational class.

Findings

Results indicate that there is a vast difference in the educational attainment between the two generations. In the fathers' generation the percentage attained for Grade nine and below is 52% and Grade nine and above is 15%. Thirty percent of fathers had no schooling. In the respondents' generation the percentage attained for Grade nine and below is 19%, Grade 10 and above is 61%

and Grade 13 and above is 19 %. It is evident that there is an upward educational mobility in the respondents' generation than that of the fathers' generation.

Further the results reveal that there is stickiness in occupational mobility. In the fathers' generation the percentage falling into the categories of Class VI and Class V are 35% and 25% respectively. Forty percent of fathers responded as unemployed. However, the occupational attainment level of respondents in different classes are as; Class VI = 34%, Class V = 46%, Class IV = 07 %, Class III = 05 % and Class II = 04 %. Out of one hundred youths only two are graduates and they are in the teaching profession. Those who fall in to the category Class V are mainly involved in self employment, apparel industries, driving, or working as sales assistants in shops. These results indicate the disadvantaged position of plantation youths and inequality in socio economic status.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Findings reveal that the educational attainment level of youths in the plantation is not adequate to face the challenges in the job market. It hinders upward movement in the occupational ladder. Since a substantial percentage of youths have obtained G.C.E O/L and A/L qualifications, opportunities for developing diversified skills in the fields of technical and vocational education to suit the needs of present job market should be introduced.

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