

**A STUDY OF THE FACTORS INFLUENCING
THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF
INSTITUTIONALIZED CHILDREN IN
SRI LANKA**

(With special reference to the Colombo District)

SCAN

By

Thantrige Srini Visaka De Zoysa
B.A. (Cey.), PG Dip. Ed. (OUSL), M.Phil (Col.)

REFERENCE ONLY

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**The Open University of Sri Lanka,
Faculty of Education,
Dept. of Education.
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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on orphans, deserted and destitute children who are being compelled to spend their childhood in Children's Voluntary Homes (CVHs) that come under the purview of the Department of Probation and Child Care Services. These children are socially and economically deprived and have faced a variety of problematic experiences in their lives. Education represents perhaps the only promise for a better future both socially and economically for these children. This study is designed to assess the educational achievement of institutionalized children and also to investigate the factors that affect their achievement.

The objectives of the study consist of the identification of the factors that led to the institutionalization of children, comparison of the educational achievement of institutionalized children (IBC) and home based children (HBC), the identification of the factors influencing educational achievement of institutionalized children and proposing a framework to support institutionalized children to overcome their difficulties in education.

The study was conducted in two stages. In Stage One the survey method was selected and two documentary surveys were conducted accordingly. Case – files of IBC were perused in order to identify the factors that led to institutionalization. A documentary survey of test results was conducted to examine the similarities and differences in educational achievement of institutionalized children and home based children. One hundred and eighty institutionalized children were selected for the sample by using the purposive sampling method and a similar number of home based children were selected by using systematic sampling method. In the Stage Two case studies of 10 institutionalized children were selected from among the high achievers and

low achievers. Interviews were conducted with those 10 children to identify factors influencing their educational achievement. Further interviews were conducted with principals of schools, class teachers, subject teachers, carers and Probation Officers to supplement and for the purpose of cross checking the information obtained from the above 10 children. Observations, check lists, Emotional and Behavioural Scales and the Socio-Metric method were also used for data collection.

The study showed that many and varied factors i. e. social, economic, political, natural and child abuse aspects have contributed for the institutionalization of children in isolation and vice-versa. All children who entered CVHs have been affected by distressing and damaging experiences, including physical and sexual abuse and also neglect. The educational standards achieved by institutionalized children are relatively low and as such there is a significant difference in educational achievement of the institutionalized children and the home based children groups. Multiple interrelated factors, both facilitating and hindering, which influence educational achievement of institutionalized children were identified. Child-friendly physical infrastructure models such as 'Village settings' and 'Family Home Models' have had their beneficial effects in the education of the inmates. Residential homes, which gave an impression of regimentation, do not seem to exhibit outstanding educational performances. Not a single excellent model of a CVH that has created an atmosphere conducive to educational achievement of children was not encountered within our study. Carers in most CVHs do not appear to possess the relevant professional qualifications and training needed for the task. Most of the carers had negative attitudes towards education of the children in their care. Further the

physical resources possessed by schools have not made any substantial direct impact on the education of IBC. Majority of the principals and teachers were having negative attitudes towards IBC. At school greater majority of IBC have formed 'Isolated Social Circles' and in general they do not receive any educational support from HBC. Past problems continue to affect the children's present and as a result of which many children suffer from emotional and behavioral disorders. Children who possess self-strength, strong characters and ability to overcome all problems have reaped benefits from the given education. Children who receive constant encouragement for education from their surviving parents and relations possess educational achievement of a high order. It was revealed that the administrative system does not give any priority to education.

Care services should be based on a clear philosophy, so that administrators, care staff and teaching staff could make a commitment to support and promote education of the institutionalized children. These care services should include the provision of sufficient physical infrastructure facilities to Voluntary Homes, introduction of efficient and flexible management structures, supply of effective joint training being to carers and teachers, allow provisions to develop self-esteem and self-reliance of institutionalized children, development of positive peer culture and, make intensive interactions to give priority to education, administrators, care staff and the teaching staff to make corporate commitment to support and promote education of the institutionalized children.