ABSTRACT

Education is a prime need for any society's development economically, socially and politically. Sri Lanka provides free education to all. The Millennium Development Goals require that by 2015 girls and boys alike complete primary schooling and Article 27 of the Constitution of Sri Lanka stipulates the right to education. Today however, Sri Lanka faces many challenges in this sector. According to the Department of Census and Statistics 2013, 1.3% children between the ages 5-11 years in Sri Lanka are engaged in some form of economic activities while 2.6% of children in the 12 -14 age group are involved in child labour. According to the UNICEF report 2013, it is estimated that 3.3 % of lower-secondary age children are out of school, and they are most likely to be boys from urban areas who are engaged in child labour.

The school dropout rate increases progressively. The primary dropout rate is the lowest. The grades 8 and 9 have the highest dropout rate. The Colombo District with all its facilities and favourable environment for education still has a dropout rate. In terms of grades, the grade 9 dropout rate is the highest. The dropout rate is increasing gradually from grades 6 to 9. In the year 2013 the grade 9 dropout rate was 5.3%. It was the highest rate for the past 5 years. It was 5.16 % in the year 2012, 5.33% in the year 2013 and 4.03% in the year 2014 for Colombo District. This study therefore focuses on the urban sector to determine the factors leading to this phenomenon. Some schools in the Dehiwela area were visited under the instruction of the Divisional Secretariat. This study examines the causes that led to dropouts through a multi-disciplinary analysis. The sample from the Dehiwela region revealed the school dropout rate as 2.7% out of the 2266 registered students, 1.4% in the primary and 1.3% in the secondary. The determinants are negligence of parents, poverty, parents abroad, lack of parental protection, drug addiction, poor health of students, child labour, broken families and low educational level of parents. The study analyses the available literature and data available on the subject and examines in depth, the samples of dropouts. An open multi-disciplinary framework of analysis which could capture a wide range of relevant variable was adopted. This study revealed there is no single cause that accounted for dropouts in the sample. This study therefore deals with the marginalized who dropped out from school for reasons which are specific to the households

where they come from. While there are general policies to deal with some of the causes such as poverty and drug addiction, these do not appear to be reaching out to the marginalized group. The study examines this particular phenomenon. A strategy which identifies these dropouts case by case and the determinants that led to dropouts need to be addressed individually.