

ABSTRACT

The study sought to measure some aspects of home environment that affect the educational attainment of Form V students in Trinidad. Rather than view the home environment as a single entity, it was defined and measured as consisting of the following five sub-sets:

1. Socio-economic status or SES (heads of households' main occupation).
2. Attitude
3. Achievement Syndrome (comprising of values, motives and aspirations).
4. Race (phenotype) and
5. Sex.

Information on these home environmental variables was obtained from responses of 192 students, their heads of households and or mothers to anonymous questionnaire. Both the students and the schools from which they were selected were obtained by the cluster sampling technique. Educational attainment or achievement was defined and measured in terms of the number of subjects passed in the General Certificate of Education (G.C.E.) (Ordinary Level) Examination.

The hypotheses tested were:

1. Students from higher socio-economic status homes would do better at the G.C.E. examination than students from lower SES homes.
2. An East Indian of a given social class would do better than an Afro-Trinidadian of the same social class.

3. Given the same social class girls would do better than boys.
4. Favourable parental attitude to a child's education accounts for variations in academic attainment.
5. Variations in academic attainment due to differences in parental attitude to a child's education is a function of the parents' achievement syndrome and social class status.

A partial regression analysis of the data revealed that, in the general analysis, the factors contributing most to the students' success in the G.C.E. examination were firstly school and secondly social status of origin. These two variables, school and SES, when considered singly and in combination with other variables, had significant effects ($P < .01$) on educational attainment. The contributions made by race, attitude and achievement syndrome were not significant. Sex was confounded with school. With school effect removed, the effect of sex was non-significant while the effect of SES was still significant ($P < .01$).

Within schools, SES was also the main factor influencing educational attainment. This effect, however, differed from school to school. While in School B, the effect of SES was significant ($P < .01$), in School A it was not but accounted for most of the variation in the educational attainment of the students, in School C the effect of attitude ^{ranked} came first and in School E attitude and race contributed more to the variation in educational attainment than the effect of social class. None of the other independent variables examined had any significant effect in educational achievement except attitude ($P < .05$) in Schools C and E. Race had no

significant effect in any of the schools. In none of the schools did its percentage contribution (R^2) ^{rank} come first. The effect of race in the general analysis as also at the individual school level was non-significant. Sex effect, too was non-existent.

In the general analysis of the combined effects of the variables, (first in twos and then in threes) most of the combined effects were meaningful except race and achievement syndrome together which was found to be not only non-significant but also made the least contribution ($R^2 = 3.3\%$) as opposed to the combined effect of SES and school which was significant ($P < .01$) and accounted for most of the variation in educational attainment ($R^2 = 41.3\%$). Any combination involving SES or school was found always significant ($P < .01$).

In considering three variables at a time, race combined with achievement syndrome and attitude was found non-significant and accounted only for five per cent while the effect due to SES plus school plus race was significant ($P < .01$) and high ($R^2 = 42.1\%$).

At the individual school level, the combined effects of some of the independent variables (in twos and threes) on the dependent variable were looked at. In most cases, these made no significant contribution especially in Schools A, D and E while in Schools B and C the combined effect of social class and attitude was significant ($P < .05$).

Thus for the overall analysis, the first hypothesis guiding this study was upheld. Hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 were nullified while the fifth hypothesis was modified. It was found that, though the combined effect of social class and attitude exerted a significant effect on educational attainment ($P < .01$), its percentage contribution being 15.4%, when school

was considered along with attitude, its combined effect was also significant ($P < .01$) but made a higher percentage contribution ($R^2 = 38.2\%$). The same trend was observed when achievement syndrome was combined with SES and then with school. Attitude and achievement syndrome in this study, therefore, were associated more with school than with social class.

Attempts at explaining the non-significant differences in the educational attainment of the Africans and the East Indians could be made in terms of the "creolization process" especially among the young generation as they mix together in the schools. ^{probably}

Sex differences, if any, in educational attainment, could be accounted for in terms of SES or school differences. Girls did not do better than boys as reported in the Trinidad Guardian (Trinidad Guardian, Friday August 27, 1976: 1). Rather the denominational girls' schools significantly did better ($P < .01$) than the denominational boys' schools and the government school.

The educational system in Trinidad (the Grammar School System), it was here argued, could help to explain the great school effect ($R^2 = 37.8\%$) on educational attainment in such a small and fast developing society as Trinidad in spite of the appreciation of education as a major source of gaining upward mobility by its people (Dyer, 1967; Rubin, 1969). Consequently, any variable when considered along with school made a significantly higher percentage contribution to the variation in educational attainment than that particular variable combined with another variable. School, in turn, was closely associated with social class. The whole association was thus found complex and intertwined.

From the findings of this work, the conclusion is that a child's

success at school depends to a large extent on the type of school attended and secondly the type of home he comes from, with the former (school) deriving its character and influence from the latter. This has a lot of implications for both the theory and practice of Educational Sociology and suggests that in the Trinidad situation further research should focus first and foremost on the school variables.