

CHAPTER 5

CORRELATES OF EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

5.1 Introduction

Many factors influence the decisions of students in terms of educational choice. These factors are likely to vary from one place to another, country to country and across educational systems. As Malaysia increasingly becomes a part of the global information era, greater emphasis must be given to the development of higher level manpower, particularly scientific and technical manpower. In line with this development, it is important to ensure that an increasingly larger proportion of its students will continue into higher education, particularly into science and technical programmes. This study examines two principal issues. First, the factors that affect a student's choice to further his/her education. Secondly, the factors that influence the student's choice between the arts and science. An understanding of these factors enables policy makers to adopt measures aimed at influencing the demand for higher education, and the demand for scientific and technical education.

Toward this end, this study focuses on the choices of students in form four. Students in form four are at a stage where the decisions they will make in relation to further education and the field of specialization may still be subject to policy influence since they have the option to complete form five schooling and the option to proceed to tertiary education. If there are policy variables that significantly influence their choices it may be possible to steer these students in directions that are in line with the goals of national development.

5.2 Students' Aspirations or Desired Professions.

Table 5.1 shows the relative frequency distribution of students' aspirations classified at the 1-digit level and a detailed breakdown of occupations aspired by the students at the 2-digit level by gender and ethnicity.

Of the overall sample of 423 students (32 did not respond to the question on aspirations), 70.4 percent aspired to enter into professional and technical occupations (MOC 1). A further 2.8 percent desired administrative and managerial occupations (MOC 2), 1.7

percent clerical occupations (MOC 3), 10.2 percent occupations in sales (MOC 4), 13.9 percent occupations in services (MOC 5) and the rest (1 percent) in agricultural or production (MOC 6 and MOC 7). (See Table 5.1).

Among the boys, just over one-fifth (21.2 percent) aspired to be architects, engineers, technologists, surveyors, and related technicians (MOC 02-03). A further 14 percent aspired to be protective service and other service workers (MOC 58-59); 13 percent aspired to be working proprietors and other sales workers (MOC 41-49). Just over one-tenth (11.2 percent) aspired to be medical, dental and veterinary workers (MOC 06-07). Among the girls, on the other hand, almost 18 percent aspired to be teachers (MOC 13). A further 16 percent desired to be accountants and auditors (MOC 11), and 10 percent medical, dental and veterinary workers (MOC 06-07).

A higher percentage of the boys (41.7 percent) chose occupations in the science and technical fields⁴⁰ compared to girls (19.7 percent). However, more girls than boys aspired to be teachers (17.9 percent versus 6.9); jurists (MOC 12; 9.1 percent compared to 1.2

⁴⁰ Science and technical fields here refer to the occupations from MOC 01 to MOC 08. Teachers are excluded although part of the teachers population studied and teach Science subjects. Here we are unable to identify.

percent); accountants and auditors (MOC 11; 17.9 percent compared to 8.8 percent); and painters, photographers and related creative artists (MOC 16-17; 9.1 percent compared to 3.8 percent); see Table 5.2.

It is interesting to note that sex stereotyping is still prevalent in the nineties. The sample above shows that more boys opted for occupations which are stereotyped as 'males only' occupations such as engineers and architects while the girls opted for profession such as teachers and creative artists. This reinforces the findings by Marceau (1979), Harnqvist (1979) and Cibois (1979) in *General Report and Case Studies, OECD, 1979*. Their studies reinforced the image of the 'right' choice for girls and suggested a sexual 'dimorphism', with girls taking options which have stronger 'general culture' components and boys looking towards a more economical profession. Sex-role stereotyping determined the range of possibilities seen as reasonable by boys and girls.

Looking at the distribution by ethnicity, among the Malays the two most aspired occupations are teachers (MOC 13; 16.5 percent) and protective service and other service workers (MOC 58-59; 14.6 percent). Among the Chinese, the two highly aspired professions are

accountants and auditors (MOC 11; 19.3 percent) and architects, engineers, technologist, surveyors and related technicians (MOC 02-03; 15.9 percent) as well as working proprietors (MOC 41-49; 15.9 percent). Among the Indians, over one-fifth (23 percent) aspired to be medical, dental and veterinary workers (MOC 06-07). A further one-fifth (19.7 percent) aspired to be architects, engineers, technologist, surveyors and other related technicians (MOC 02-03). On the whole, 22.6 percent of the Malay, 31.0 percent of the Chinese and 45.9 percent of the Indian students desired occupations in the science and technical fields. Overall, however, only 27.8 percent of the students desired occupations related to the science and technical areas. Looking at national statistics, the number of students enrolled in the science stream is actually about 27 percent of the total enrollment in the academic stream (Table 3.4).

It looks like the boys as well as the Chinese and Indian students have a higher affinity towards the science and technical fields. This lends support to the findings by Wang (1977) who found similar differences in attitudes between ethnic groups in their choice of further education. Her study showed that the Malays had relatively less enthusiasm for the science stream as compared to the non-Malays.

Table 5.1 : Breakdown of Occupations Aspired by the Students according to Gender and Ethnic Groups.

Selected occupations	Gender		Ethnic Group				Total
	Boys	Girls	M	C	I	O	No(%)
0/1 Professional, Technical and related Workers							298(70.4)
01 Physical Sciences and related technicians	3 (1.9)	1 (0.4)	-	4 (2.8)	-	-	4 (0.9)
02-03 Architects, Engineers, Technologist, Surveyors and related technicians	34 (21.2)	18 (6.8)	17 (8.0)	23 (15.9)	12 (19.7)	-	52 (12.2)
04 Aircraft and Ship's Officers	9 (5.6)	2 (0.7)	5 (4.2)	5 (3.4)	1 (1.6)	-	11 (2.6)
06-07 Medical, Dental, Veterinary and related workers	18 (11.8)	27 (10.3)	22 (10.4)	8 (5.5)	14 (23.0)	2 (4.0)	45 (10.7)
08 Statisticians, Mathematicians, Systems Analyst and related technicians	2 (1.2)	4 (1.5)	-	5 (3.4)	1 (1.6)	-	6 (1.4)
09 Economists	2 (1.2)	1 (0.4)	1 (0.5)	1 (0.6)	1 (1.6)	-	3 (0.7)
11 Accountants and Auditors	14 (8.8)	41 (15.6)	21 (9.9)	28 (19.3)	4 (6.6)	-	55 (13.0)
12 Jurists	2 (1.2)	24 (9.1)	12 (5.7)	5 (3.4)	8 (13.1)	1 (2.0)	26 (6.1)
13 Teachers	11 (6.9)	47 (17.9)	35 (16.5)	13 (9.0)	10 (16.4)	-	58 (13.7)
15 Authors, Critics, Journalists, Editors and related workers	-	4 (1.5)	3 (1.4)	-	1 (1.6)	-	4 (0.9)
16-17 Painters, Photographers and related Creative Artists, Composers and Performing Artists	6 (3.8)	24 (9.1)	20 (9.4)	10 (6.9)	-	-	30 (7.1)
18 Athletes, Sportsmen and related workers	2 (1.2)	-	1 (0.5)	-	1 (1.6)	-	2 (0.5)
19 Librarians, Social Workers, Translators and other professional and technical workers	2 (1.2)	-	-	2 (1.4)	-	-	2 (0.5)
2 Administrative and Managerial workers							12 (2.8)
21 Managers	5 (3.1)	7 (2.7)	9 (4.2)	3 (2.0)	-	-	12 (2.8)

Table 5.1 (Continued):

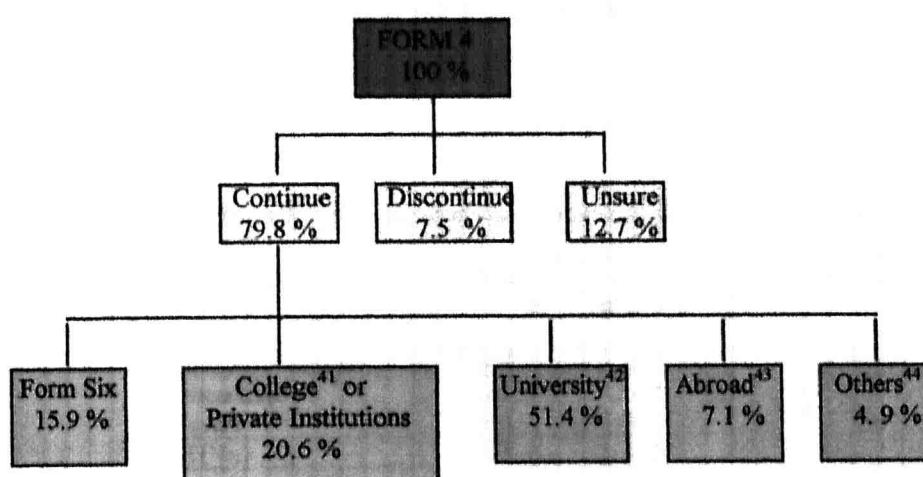
	Gender		Ethnic Group				Total
	Boys	Girls	M	C	I	O	No.(%)
3 Clerical and related workers							7 (1.7)
31 Government Executive Officers	1 (0.6)	-	1 (0.5)	-	-	-	1 (0.2)
33 Bookkeepers, Cashiers, Clerical and related workers	1 (0.6)	5 (1.9)	-	5 (3.4)	1 (1.6)	-	6 (1.4)
4 Sales Workers							43 (10.1)
41-49 Working Proprietors and other Sales workers (Wholesale and Retail Trade)	20 (12.5)	23 (8.7)	18 (8.5)	23 (15.9)	2 (3.3)	-	43(10.1)
5 Service Workers							59 (13.9)
50-56 Managers, Working Proprietors, Cooks and other related workers (Catering and Lodging Service)	2 (1.2)	15 (5.7)	13 (6.1)	1 (0.6)	2 (3.3)	1 (20.0)	17 (3.9)
58-59 Protective Service and other Service Workers	22 (13.8)	20 (7.6)	31 (14.6)	6 (4.1)	4 (6.6)	1 (20.0)	42 (9.9)
6/7/8/9 Agricultural and Production Workers							4 (1.0)
60-61 Plantation Managers and Supervisors, Planters and Farmers	2 (1.2)	-	2 (0.9)	-	-	-	2 (0.5)
84 Mechanics	2 (1.2)	-	1 (0.5)	1 (0.6)	-	-	2 (0.5)
Total number of students	160	263	212	145	61	5	432 (100)

5.3 Correlates of Educational Choice.

5.3.1 Student's Educational Decision or Choice.

Figure 5.1 shows the distribution of the respondents in terms of their educational decisions.

Figure 5.1
The Distribution of Students' Educational Decisions in the Sample.



(All percentages refer to the total sample)

More than three-quarters of the students in the sample intended to continue their education while about 12.5 percent were undecided and 7.5 percent would not like to continue.

⁴¹ College includes teachers training colleges, MARA colleges and other government aided colleges, and private colleges offering twinning programs, certificates and diploma courses.

⁴² University here refers to the Pre-University and diploma courses offered to students after the SPM examination by the local universities.

⁴³ Abroad means going overseas for A-levels or pre-university education.

⁴⁴ Others mean options other than those specified above, in footnote 2, 3 and 4. For example, furthering studies in off-campus courses, distance learning etc.

Table 5.2 below gives the distribution of educational decisions by gender. Comparing the educational decisions made by the girls and the boys, among the girls a higher percentage indicated a preference to continue their education after the upper-secondary level (85.8 percent). Only 4.4 percent did not wish to continue and 9.8 percent were unsure. On the other hand, among the boys, 70.9 percent wished to continue while 12.3 percent did not wish to continue and 16.8 percent were unsure.

Table 5.2
The Distribution of Students' Educational Decisions by Gender.

Decision	Male (in	Female percentage)	Total(No.)
1. Definitely Continue	70.9	85.8	163 (79.8%)
2. Discontinue	12.3	4.4	34 (7.5%)
3. Unsure	16.8	9.8	57 (12.7%)
Total (No.)	179	275	454

Among the students who wished to continue education, 17.5 percent of the male students reported that they would like to go to Form Six, 22.2 percent to attend college or private institutions. Over forty-five percent desired to continue to a local university while 7.1 percent wished to go abroad. Among the female students, 15.0 percent reported that they would like to go to Form Six, 20.1 percent to college or private institutions, 55.6 percent to university, and 7.3 percent

to go abroad. On the whole, 15.9 percent of the students intend to proceed to Form Six, 20.6 percent to enroll in a college or private institution, 51.4 percent to study in a university, and 7.1 percent to go abroad (Table 5.3).

Among the Malay students, the highest percentage wished to go to a university (72.0 percent) and 10.1 percent abroad. Very few intended to go to form six unlike the other two ethnic groups. Among the Chinese students, the modal choice was college or a private institution (37.4 percent), followed by Form Six or university (both 26.1 percent). Among the Indians, 45.8 percent wished to study in a university, and 26.4 percent wished to continue studies in Form Six or go to college or a private institution (Table 5.4).

Table 5.3: Distribution of Students' Educational Choice by Gender.

Choice	Male (in	Female percentage)	Total(No.)
1. Form Six	17.5	15.0	57 (15.9%)
2. College and Private Institutions	22.2	20.1	75 (20.6%)
3. University	55.2	55.8	187 (51.4%)
4. Abroad	7.1	7.3	26 (7.1%)
5. Others	8.0	2.1	15 (4.9%)
Total (No.)	126	234	360

Table 5.4: Distribution of Student's Educational Choice by Ethnic Groups.

Choice	Malay (in	Chinese percentage)	Indian	Total (No.)
1. Form Six	5.4	26.1	26.4	57 (15.9%)
2. College and Private Institutions	7.2	37.4	26.4	75 (20.8%)
3. University	72.0	26.1	45.8	186 (51.7%)
4. Abroad	10.1	5.2	1.4	16 (7.2%)
5. Others	5.4	5.3	-	15 (4.2%)
Total (No.)	180	125	50	360

The main reasons put forth by those who wished to continue are given below in Table 5.5. The questionnaire cited 6 choices: higher financial gains (salary), better employment prospects, parent's wish, higher social status attainment, to improve and expand knowledge for self-satisfaction and other. Higher financial gains refer to the monetary aspect of the occupation in terms of better salary. Better employment aspects refer to greater job opportunities. Most students select 'better employment prospects' as the main reason for continuing education and a high percentage selected 'to improve and expand knowledge for self-satisfaction' as the main reason. It is not very surprising to find that a number of students selected 'parents' wish' as the main reason. The incidence is higher among the boys than girls.

A breakdown by ethnic groups shows similar results. Among the three major ethnic groups, most students selected 'better employment prospects' as the main reason, followed by 'to improve and expand knowledge for self-satisfaction' (Table 5.6).

Table 5.5
The Distribution of Students' Reasons to Continue
Further Studies by Gender.

Reasons	Overall (100%) (in percentage)	Males (39.7%)	Females (60.3%)
1. Higher financial gains (salary)	11.3	9.9	14.5
2. Better employment prospects	40.1	41.2	40.3
3. Parents' wish	11.3	12.9	8.9
4. Higher social status attainment	9.9	9.0	12.17
5. To improve and expand knowledge for self-satisfaction	25.3	27.0	23.4
6. Other	2.2	-	0.6
Total (No.)	364	138	226

Table 5.6
Distribution of Students' Reasons to Continue
Further Studies by Ethnic Groups.

Reasons	Malays (51.0%) (in percentage)	Chinese (34.5%)	Indians (13.4%)
1. Higher financial gains (salary)	13.3	6.1	13.9
2. Better employment prospects	45.2	43.9	27.8
3. Parents' wish	13.9	4.4	16.7
4. Higher social status attainment	7.8	8.8	18.1
5. To improve and expand knowledge for self-satisfaction	19.9	36.0	23.6
6. Other	-	0.9	-
Total (No.)	186	126	48

The main reasons put forth by those who indicated a desire to stop schooling are given in Table 5.7. The majority of the students selected 'to enter

employment or obtain a skill' as the main reason. Among the boys, 43 percent selected 'lack of financial resources' as their main reason while the majority of the girls selected 'to enter employment or obtain a skill' as the main reason and 22.7 percent cited 'likelihood of failing the SPM examination' as the main reason.

Among the Malays and the Indians, the highest percentage cited 'to enter employment' as the main reason for choosing not to continue schooling. On the other and, among the Chinese, the highest percentage cited 'likelihood of failing the SPM examination' as a factor which would force them to discontinue schooling (Table 5.8).

Table 5.7
The Distribution of Students' Reasons for not Continuing Studies by Gender

Reasons	Malays (51.0%) (in percentage)	Chinese (33.3%) (in percentage)	Indians (66.7%)
1. To enter employment / obtain a skill	47.1	38.4	50.0
2. Lack of financial resources	17.6	43.0	4.5
3. No interest in studies / bored with school	8.8	2.5	13.6
4. Parents' wish	5.9	9.1	4.5
5. Likelihood of failing SPM examination	17.6	9.1	22.7
6. Other	2.9	-	4.5
Total (No.)	34	22	12

Table 5.8
Distribution of Students' Reasons for not Continuing Studies
by Ethnic Groups.

Reasons	Malay (in percentage)	Chinese (in percentage)	Indian	Total (No.)
1. To enter employment / obtain a skill	58.8	18.1	80.0	48.5
2. Lack of financial resources	29.4	9.0	-	18.2
3. No interest in studies / bored with school	11.8	9.0	-	9.0
4. Parents' wish	-	9.0	9.0	6.0
5. Likelihood of failing SPM examination	-	54.5	-	18.2

5.3.2 Student's Choice of the Science or Arts Fields

Table 5.9 reveals that among those who wished to continue studies, 31.0 percent desired to enter professions in the science field and 69 percent desired professions in the arts. Among those who decided to discontinue, 18.2 percent wished to enter the science field and 81.8 percent desired the arts field. Among those who were unsure, 15.1 percent desired the science field and 84.9 percent desired the arts field.

Table 5.9: Occupations in the Science and Arts Fields by Student's Decision.

Field of Occupations	Continue (in percentage)	Discontinue (in percentage)	Unsure	Total (No.)
1. Science	31.0	18.2	15.1	118 (27.9%)
2. Arts	69.0	81.8	84.9	304 (72.1%)
Total (No.)	336	33	53	422 (100%)

It is interesting to note here that most Malays desired to enter the university and few intended to go to Form six, unlike the Chinese and the Indians. This reinforces the findings by Wang (1980) who found that Malays are more optimistic about university admission after Form six. Wang (1980, p.S148) attributes this difference to favourable admission quotas for university education set by the government for the Malays. Almost 100 percent of the Malays expected to qualify for university admission.

In this study perceived earnings (higher financial gains) do not seem to be the main influence in the decision to continue schooling. Overall only 11.3 percent cited this as a reason to continue education. Most cited 'better employment prospects' as the main reason. It should be noted that there is often a high correlation between better employment prospects and higher earnings.

Among the reasons for not continuing education, most of the students (particularly the Malays and Indians) cited 'to enter employment or to obtain a skill' (58.8 percent and 80.0 percent respectively). However the Chinese students tend to cite 'likelihood of failing the SPM examination' as the main reason. In all

probability, the Chinese are concerned about their performance in the *Bahasa Melayu*⁴⁵ language paper in the SPM. Under the present educational system a failure in this paper leads automatically to a failure in the entire SPM examination.

Lastly, among the students, only about 28 percent desired to enter occupations in the science and technical fields. This is consistent with national statistics that show that only about 27 percent of degree-level students in local universities were enrolled in science and technical courses, and about 17-20 percent in the case of diploma-level enrolment (see table 1.2).

5.4 Factors that Influence the Decision to Continue Education⁴⁶

This section looks at a few cross-tabulations to examine the importance of certain factors that influence the decision to continue education.

⁴⁵ Bahasa Melayu is a compulsory language subject in Form five. The students sit for the Bahasa Melayu paper in the SPM examination. The marks obtained determine the grades of the students in the SPM.

⁴⁶ Factors that influence the choice of science and technical or arts fields will not be examined by cross-tabulations. A test run was done and the results were in fact almost the same as those covered in the decisions to continue education. For instance, irrespective of the choice of the students, whether science or arts, most of the parents of the students work as production workers or labourers and most of the mothers were not working or were housewives. Moreover, the main idea of this study is to look at the quantitative factors which influence the choice of the science or arts fields within the same framework as the decision to continue.

Table 5.10 looks at the aspirations of the students in terms of their desire to continue schooling or not to. Of the three hundred and thirty-six students who choose to continue schooling, 75.3 percent wanted to be professional, technical or related workers (MOC 1). It would suggest that students who have high aspirations tend to choose to continue.

Table 5.10
Distribution of Aspirations by Students' Decisions

Occupational Groups (MOC)	Continue (in percentage)	Discontinue (in percentage)	Unsure (in percentage)	Total
1. Professional, Technical and Related Workers	75.3	51.5	50.9	29.8
2. Administrative and Managerial Workers	3.3	-	1.9	1.2
3. Clerical and Related Workers	0.6	-	9.4	7
4. Sales Workers	8.3	21.2	15.1	43
5. Service Workers	12.2	24.2	18.9	59
6. Agricultural, Animal Husbandry and Forestry Workers, Fishermen and Hunters	0.3	-	1.9	2
7. Production and Related Workers	-	0.3	1.9	2
Total (No.)	336	33	53	423

Table 5.11 gives the occupations of the parents by students' decisions with regards to furthering their education. It can be seen that among the students who decided to continue, most of the fathers (26.8 percent) worked as production workers and labourers (MOC7). Likewise for those who indicated a desire to discontinue, and for those who were unsure, most of the fathers were from the production and labourers group.

(MOC7). Irrespective of the decision to continue or to discontinue schooling, most of the mothers of the students were not working or were housewives.

Table 5.11
Distribution of Parental Occupations by Students' Decisions (in percentage).

Occupational Groups (MOC)	Father:			Total	Mother:			Total No. (%)
	1	2	3		1	2	3	
1. Professional, Technical and Related Workers	15.8	6.1	7.0	62 (13.6%)	5.1	-	3.5	20 (4.4%)
2. Administrative and Managerial Workers	2.0	-	3.5	9 (0.02%)	0.6	3.0	-	3(0.7%)
3. Clerical and Related Workers	5.6	-	1.8	21(4.6%)	3.7	3.0	-	14(3.1%)
4. Sales Workers	15.8	12.1	19.3	71(16.0%)	5.1	3.0	5.3	22(4.8%)
5. Service Workers	15.0	18.2	7.0	64(14.1%)	1.7	3.0	1.8	8(1.8%)
6. Agricultural, Animal Husbandry and Forestry Workers, Fishermen and Hunters	9.0	6.1	19.3	45 (9.9%)	4.2	3.0	10.5	22(4.8%)
7. Production and Related Workers	26.8	33.3	31.6	124(27.3%)	7.0	6.1	14.0	35 (7.7%)
8. Retired, deceased, not working / housewives	9.9	24.2	10.5	49 (10.8%)	72.8	78.8	64.9	323(71.0%)
Total (No.)	354	34	57	445	350	33	57	447

1 = Continue , 2 = Discontinue , 3 = Unsure

Tables 5.12 and 5.13 show the distribution of parental education by students' decisions. Among the students who indicated a desire to continue schooling over one-third (34.3 per cent) of the fathers have had upper-secondary education while 44.5 per cent of the mothers had primary education only. Among the students who indicated a desire to discontinue, 46.7 percent of the fathers and 46.9 percent of the mothers had only primary education. Likewise for those who were unsure, the majority of both parents had only primary education.

Table 5.12
Distribution of father's Education by Students' Decisions.

Level of Education	Student's Continue	Decision: (in Discontinue	percentage) Unsure	Total
1. Higher Institutions of Education (University or Equivalent)	6.0	-	-	21 (4.8%)
2. HSC/STPM/ Form Six/College	7.7	13.3	1.8	32 (7.3%)
3. MCE/SPM/Form 4/ Form 5	34.3	20.0	17.5	136 (31.1%)
4. SRP/Form 1- 3	23.7	13.3	24.6	101 (23.1%)
5. Primary School	27.1	46.7	49.1	138 (31.5%)
6. No formal schooling	10.2	6.7	7.0	10 (2.3%)
Total (no.)	350 (79.9%)	30 (6.8%)	57 (13.0%)	436 (100.0%)

Table 5.13
Distribution of Mothers' Education by Students' Decisions.

Level of Education	Student's Continue	Decision: (in Discontinue	percentage) Unsure	Total
1. Higher Institutions of Education (University or Equivalent)	1.7	-	-	6 (1.3%)
2. HSC/STPM/ Form Six/College	3.9	3.1	-	15 (3.4%)
3. MCE/SPM/Form 4/ Form 5	20.8	21.9	14.0	89 (20.0%)
4. SRP/Form 1- 3	22.5	21.9	21.1	100 (22.5%)
5. Primary School	44.5	46.9	56.1	205 (46.1%)
6. No formal schooling	6.5	6.3	8.8	30 (6.7%)
Total (no.)	350 (79.9%)	30 (6.8%)	57 (13.0%)	436 (100.0%)

Apart from the above, there are other social or familial factors which impact indirectly on the educational choices. Parental interest in the student's education may be an important influence. The students were asked to indicate whether their parents often encouraged them in their studies and who exerts the greatest influence on their lives. They were also asked to state their parents' expectations with regards to their future.

Table 5.14 shows that 59.5 percent of the boys reported that their parents always encouraged them, 34.1 percent 'sometimes' and 6.4 percent 'seldom or never'. Among the girls, 58.8 percent reported that their parents always encouraged them, 33.9 percent 'sometimes' and 7.3 percent 'seldom or never'. Overall, 59.1 percent reported that their parents always encourage them in their studies, 34.0 percent 'sometimes' and 6.9 percent 'seldom or never'.

A breakdown by ethnic groups gave the similar results. Among the Malay students, 64.7 percent reported that their parents always encouraged them, 29.3 percent stated that their parents sometimes do so and only 6.0 percent stated they seldom or never do so. Among the Chinese students, 44.8 percent reported that their parents always encouraged them, 43.1 percent stated they sometimes do and 12.1 percent stated they seldom or never do. Among the Indian students 69.4 percent reported that their parents always encouraged them while 29.2 percent stated they sometimes do and only 1.4 percent stated they seldom or never do so (Table 5.15).

Table 5.16 reveals no major differences in terms of parental interest in their children's education across income levels.

Table 5.14 : Parents' Encouragement by Gender (in percentage).

	Male (35.1%)	Female (64.9%)	Overall (100%)
Always encourage	59.5	58.8	59.1
Sometimes	34.1	33.9	34.0
Seldom or Never	6.4	7.3	6.9
Total (No.)	160	295	455

Table 5.15 : Parents' Encouragement by Ethnic Group (in percentage).

	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Total No (%)
Always encourage	64.7	43.1	69.4	259 (7.4)
Sometimes	29.3	43.1	29.2	150 (34.6)
Seldom or Never	6.0	12.1	1.4	36 (8.0)
Total number	223	155	66	445 (100)

Table 5.16 : Parents' Encouragement by Income Group(percentage).

	Income Group							Total No.
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Always encourage	62.0	59.5	60.0	57.1	62.5	50.0	53.8	25
Sometimes	27.0	39.9	40.0	35.7	37.5	50.0	30.8	154
Seldom or Never	11.0	7.7	-	7.1	-	-	15.4	36
Total number	163	183	30	28	8	16	13	441

Note: 1= below RM500, 2= RM501 - RM1000, 3=RM1001 - RM1500, 4=RM1501 - RM2000, 5=RM2001 - RM2500, 6=RM2501 - RM3000 , 7=above RM3000.

Table 5.17 below gives a breakdown of parents' expectation with regards to the student's future. It is clear that almost all parents want their children to further their studies (95.5 percent).

Table 5.17: Parents' Expectations by Gender (in percentage).

	Male (35.1%)	Female (64.9%)	Overall (100%)
1. Continue studies and become a professional	92.0	97.4	95.5
2. Continue but help in the family business	1.6	0.004	0.8
3. Stop schooling and work to support the family	-	0.008	0.6
4. Stop schooling and learn a skill	1.6	0.004	0.8
5. Other	4.8	0.008	2.2
Total (No.)	160	295	455

Overall, the greatest influence on the student's life is the student's mother (41.6 percent); see Table 5.18. Over one quarter (26.1 percent) of the respondents indicated that their fathers had the greatest influence. Over one-fifth (21.3 percent) indicated peer influence (the influence of their friends) had the greatest impact on their lives. Teachers do not seem to have an important influence on the lives of the students - only 6.2 percent of the respondents indicated that their teachers had the greatest influence on them.

Table 5.19 show that among the Malay students almost one-half (49.7 percent) indicated that their mothers had the greatest influence on their lives, followed by fathers (39.0 percent of the respondents) and 18.0 percent indicated that their friends exerted the greatest influence on them. Among the Chinese students

the corresponding were 30.2 percent each for mothers and friends, and 25.9 percent for fathers. Among the Indian students, 43.7 percent selected 'mother' and 33.8 percent 'father'. Overall, mothers appear to exert the greatest influence on the lives of the respondents.

Table 5.18: Greatest Influence in Student's Life by Gender (in percentage).

	Male (35.1%)	Female (64.9%)	Overall (100%)
Father	26.6	25.9	26.1
Mother	37.1	44.0	41.6
Relatives	5.6	4.3	4.8
Teacher	8.1	5.2	6.2
Friends (Peer Group)	22.6	20.7	21.3
Total (No.)	160	295	455

Table 5.19: Greatest Influence in Student's Life by Ethnic Groups (in percentage).

	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Total No.
Father	23.4	25.5	32.1	114
Mother	49.3	30.6	42.9	183
Relatives	4.0	5.1	2.4	18
Teacher	3.5	8.3	10.7	29
Friends (Peer Group)	19.9	30.6	11.9	98
Total (No.)	223	155	66	442

Table 5.20 shows the distribution of family size (measured in terms of number of siblings in the family) by students' decisions with regard to furthering their education. Most of the students come from families with 4 to 5 siblings (44.7 percent). However, comparing those who indicated a desire to continue and those who do not wish to continue, those who

desire to continue generally come from families with smaller number of siblings.

Table 5.20
Distribution of Students' Family Size by Students' Decisions

No. of Siblings	Continue (in	Decisions Discontinue percentage)	Unsure	Total no.
0 - 1	3.6	2.0	1.8	14 (3.1%)
2 - 3	29.5	18.2	21.0	124 (27.5%)
4 - 5	42.9	54.5	50.9	201 (44.7%)
6 - 7	16.7	18.2	15.8	76 (16.9%)
8 - 9	5.6	9.1	7.0	27 (6.6%)
above 10	1.7	-	3.6	8 (1.7%)
Total number	359 (79.8%)	34 (7.5%)	57 (12.7%)	450 (100%)

Tables 5.21 and 5.22 give the distribution of students' form three (PMR) results and form four grades by students' decisions. Among those who decide to continue their education after form five, 38.8 percent scored one to three distinctions while another 38.8 percent did not score any distinctions in the PMR examination. However, by looking at the form four grades, it can be seen that 36.0 percent obtained Grade 2 while 28.1 percent obtained Grade 1. Among those who decide to discontinue schooling, most of the students scored no distinctions (64.7 percent) in the PMR examination and a high percentage of them failed in their form four examination (40.9 percent). There is a quite a strong relationship between form four grades and the decision to continue. In this case, a better result

indicates that the student has a higher desire to continue his/her education. Form four grades in this case seem a better determinant of the students' decision than the PMR results. Most likely, the students' at that age (in form three) are confident of entering form four irrespective of the results they obtain in the PMR examination.

Table 5.21 : PMR Results by Students' Decisions.

No. of Distinctions	Continue	Decisions: Discontinue (percentage)	Unsure	Total
more than 6	28.1	13.6	13.6	24.9
4 - 5	14.3	14.7	3.5	13.0
1 - 3	38.8	20.6	36.8	37.4
none	38.8	64.7	56.1	42.9
Total (number)	363	35	57	455
percentage	79.8%	7.7%	12.5%	100.0%

Table 5.22. : Four Four Grades by Students' Decisions (in percentage).

Grades	Continue	Discontinue	Unsure	Total
1	28.1	13.6	13.6	24.9
2	14.3	14.7	3.5	13.0
3	14.5	22.7	15.9	15.2
0 (fail)	21.5	40.9	40.9	25.6
Total (number)	242	23	44	309
percentage	78.3%	7.1%	14.2%	100.0%

Table 5.23 gives the distribution of students' educational decisions by family income group. Most students from, regardless of income level, chose to continue their studies if they are given a choice and if they could.

Table 5.23
Distribution of Students' Educational Decisions by Family Income Groups

Decisions	Income Group							Total No.
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1. Definitely continue	75.9	79.8	83.3	89.3	87.5	81.3	91.0	354 (79.8%)
2. Discontinue	13.3	12.6	16.7	10.7	-	18.8	8.3	33 (7.5%)
3. Unsure	10.8	7.7	-	-	12.5	-	-	57 (12.7%)
Total number	167	183	30	28	8	16	12	444

Note: 1=below RM500, 2= RM501-1000, 3=RM1001-1500, 4=RM1501-2000, 5=RM2001-2500, 6=RM2501-3000, 7=above RM3000.

A cross-tabulation of the distribution of students' reasons for deciding to continue by income groups indicates that most students select better employment prospects as their reason for choosing to continue studies (Table 5.24).

Table 5.24
Distribution of Reasons for Selecting the Decision to Continue by Income Groups.

Reasons	Income Group							Total No. (%)
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1. Higher Financial gains (salary)	13.8	9.0	4.3	20.0	-	8.3	16.7	39 (11.2)
2. Better employment prospects	40.7	44.1	43.3	46.0	42.9	50.0	33.3	142 (40.9)
3. Parents' wish	12.2	13.1	17.4	12.0	-	-	-	41 (11.8)
4. Higher social status attainment	6.5	10.3	4.3	16.0	28.6	25.0	8.3	34 (9.8)
5. To improve and expand knowledge for self satisfaction	26.8	25.5	30.4	16.0	28.6	16.7	41.7	90 (25.9)
6. Other	-	0.7	-	-	-	-	-	1 (0.3)
Total number (%)	123 (35.4)	145 (41.8)	23 (6.6)	25 (7.2)	7 (2.0)	12 (3.5)	12 (3.5)	347 (100.0)

Note: 1=below RM500, 2= RM501-1000, 3=RM1001-1500, 4=RM1501-2000, 5=RM2001-2500, 6=RM2501-3000, 7=above RM3000.

Students were asked to indicate what they expected to earn if they did not continue studies, that is after form five (SPM), and their expected earnings if they were to further their education. Table 5.25 shows the distribution of perceived earnings by students' decisions. Most students from the three ethnic groups, perceived earnings between RM200-500 (53.2 percent) and between RM501-1000 (41.5 percent) after SPM. Among those who would continue their education, 51.7 percent perceived earnings of RM200-500 while 42.6 percent perceived earnings of RM501-1000.

Table 5.26 shows clearly that most students are aware of the high correlation between education and earnings. Among the respondents who indicated that they would continue into further education, only 2.7 percent perceived earnings of RM200-500 upon completing further education. Most of the students expected much higher earnings. More than one-third (37.9 percent) of the students expected to earn in the range of RM501-1000 (37.9 percent), 21.9 percent in the range of RM1001-1500 and 19.8 percent in the range of RM1501-2000.

Table 5.25: Distribution of Students' Perceived Earnings after SPM by Students' Decisions (in percentage).

Perceived earnings	Students' Continue	Decisions: Discontinue	Unsure	Total No. (%)
200 - 500	51.7	78.8	46.3	223 (53.2%)
501 - 1000	42.6	18.2	50.0	174 (41.5%)
1001 - 1500	3.6	-	1.9	13 (3.1%)
1501 - 2000	1.8	3.6	-	7 (1.7%)
2001 - 2500	-	-	-	-
2501 - 3000	-	-	-	-
above 3000	-	0.3	1.9	2 (0.5%)
Total no.	331 (79.0%)	34 (8.1%)	54 (12.9%)	419 (100%)

Table 5.26: Distribution of Students' Perceived Earnings (after further education) (Students who decide to Continue Studies)

Perceived earnings	Students who decide to continue further education (in percentage)	Total number
200 - 500	2.7	9
501 - 1000	37.9	128
1001 - 1500	21.9	74
1501 - 2000	19.8	67
2001 - 2500	3.3	11
2501 - 3000	5.3	18
above 3000	9.2	31
Total no.	-	338

5.5 Summary of Findings

Chapter 5 examined students' aspirations or desired professions and their educational choices. Their aspirations in relation to the science and technical or arts field were highlighted. The factors which affect the students' educational decisions or choices were examined by using correlates and cross-

tabulations of the factors and the students' decisions. The findings revealed that 70.4 percent of the students desired to enter the professional and technical occupations. A higher percentage of boys as compared to girls aspired to enter the science and technical fields. Here it was found that sex-role stereotyping does seem to determine the range of possibilities seen as reasonable by boys and girls in terms of occupational choices. By looking at ethnic groups, the Malay students were the least likely to enter the science and technical fields as compared to the Chinese and Indian students (the most likely, being the Indians). Overall, only 27.8 percent aspired to enter the science and technical fields.

In the study of students' educational decisions or choices, the majority chose to continue further education (79.8 percent). Among those who wished to continue, 65.2 percent were girls. However, more boys than girls chose to enter the labour market, among those who wished to discontinue. Most Malay and Indian students desired to enter a university and most of the Chinese chose to continue in a college or private institution.

In studying the factors which affect educational choices by cross-tabulations, it was found

that most students chose 'better employment prospects' as the main reason for their decision to continue education. For those who decide not to continue, most wished to enter the labour market. Of those who wished to continue, 75.3 percent aspired to be professional and technical workers. 31.0 percent chose to enter the science and technical fields while 69.0 percent the arts field.

This section also found that most fathers work as production workers or labourers while most mothers are not working or are housewives. Most fathers have had upper-secondary education while most mothers had only primary education. Most of the students come from families with 4 to 5 number of siblings but comparing those who wished to continue and those who wished to stop schooling, those who wished to continue generally come from families with a smaller number of siblings. Other familial factors of influence were: almost all students reported that their parents always encourage them, the greatest influence appear to be the mother, and almost all parents want their children to continue further education.

Taking cross-tabulations of students' decisions with PMR and form four results show that the

majority of the students who wished to continue scored one or no distinctions in the PMR while the majority scored Grade 1 or 2 in their form four examination. Among those who wished to stop schooling, the majority scored no distinctions in the PMR while most of them failed in their form four examination. Looking at the decisions across income groups show that most students irrespective of income groups wished to continue education, and most select 'better employment prospects' as the reason to continue studies. Finally, those who wished to continue education expect higher earnings after further education as compared to earnings after SPM.