

ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS OF GRADE THREE SRI LANKAN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN FIRST LANGUAGE AND MATHEMATICS

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The present primary education system in Sri Lanka introduced under the Education Reforms of 1972 was implemented with modifications over the years. The primary school curriculum in Sri Lanka is considered well planned and structured and many of its features are on par with world accepted primary school curricula. This study is focused on the learning achievement of Grade 3 students and attempts to assess the level of students' achievements in relation to the subject competencies of First Language and Mathematics at Grade 3. The research design was a survey. The sample was selected using the random sampling method, in mixed schools. A total number of 10,140 students were included in the target students' sample. The sample was selected from 507 schools from all 9 provinces, representing 25 districts as well as the 92 educational zones in the country. The quantitative method was applied to analyze the achievement levels of Grade 3 students in selected competencies of the First Language and Mathematics and to find out their levels of achievement at Grade 3. Data were analyzed using SPSS on a national, provincial, and district basis. Quantitative techniques were used for analysis of students' achievement and qualitative techniques were used to analyze the data obtained from teachers and ISA's interviews. Achievement levels of the students were measured using a written and practical test in the First Language (Sinhala/Tamil) and Mathematical competencies were measured using a written test.

The findings showed the existence of gaps in expected and achieved levels of students at Grade 3. In Mathematics, attention should be focused on the aspect of number especially in the districts in Central and Northern Provinces and the aspect of Money, especially in the Central, Eastern and North-Western Provinces, in considering the percentages that have given correct answers. Performance of male and female students varied across provinces and districts in the areas evaluated in Mathematics. In the Sinhala Language, female percentages were higher generally except in Comprehension and Listening and in Vocabulary, Grammar and Listening in certain provinces. In the Tamil language, it is significant that in the total sample in all the areas tested higher percentages of female students have given correct answers for the questions and that the mean scores of female students are higher than that of males in the total sample. Thus the gaps appear to exist in the performance of male students.

Keywords: Primary education, Education Reforms, Achievement level, Competencies

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