

School - based assessment practices in classrooms

School-based assessment (SBA) was introduced to Sri Lankan Schools as a part of a proposed national evaluation programme with the introduction of the 1997 education reforms. It has the characteristic of respecting the uniqueness of each student in learning. This study was carried out to find out how the teachers implement the SBA program in sixth grade classroom in teaching environmental studies. The sample was drawn from three schools from the educational districts Kandy, Kurunagala and Nuwara-eliya. In each district, a school from type 1AB, 1C and 2 was selected considering the easy access and convenience in conducting the study. Two classrooms from each school were selected for the study. In each classroom assessment practices of two units of the syllabus were studied by observing the teaching-learning situations, and detailed field notes were made. Students' answers for assessments and their written work were also collected. The students and teachers were interviewed to get a clear understanding of some of the happenings in the classrooms. The lessons and interviews were tape recorded to get accurate verbal data.

By triangulating the data collected from various sources, it was found that the teachers were not aware of the concept behind the SBA and considered it an additional burden to them. Performance records were not used by the teachers to help the students in their learning. Although these findings are based on 18 classrooms it is suggested that teachers should be trained to understand the competency level of students by involving them in a variety of assessment activities in in-service training sessions.