

Developing competencies through Environment Related Activities (ERA)

Today the life style of people have become more complex due to the advancement of science and technology and the future will be more demanding. Recent education reforms were introduced from grade 1-13 considering the needs of the society. Primary cycle of education has been divided into three key stages and its curriculum was planned to develop five basic competencies; competencies relating to communication, environment, ethics and religion, play and leisure and learn to learn. Environment Related Activities (ERA) is a broad-based new subject, in which competencies can be developed through activities. The purpose of this study was to introduce interesting and enjoyable activities in ERA to develop competencies in students at key stage one.

A preliminary study was carried out to find out the strengths and weaknesses in teaching ERA using classroom observation, questionnaire and interviews. ERA lessons of 13 primary teachers were observed and detailed field notes were made. By analyzing the data, it was found out that most of the teachers did not plan lessons considering the competencies to be developed through activities. In addition, they did not have a proper understanding of how to present activities. Lack of opportunities for children, passive participation of students and disorganized group work were found to be the weaknesses in most of the lessons. Based on the findings, some activities were developed and some were modified for all 16 ERA themes those observed earlier. Developed activities were planned to carry out using simple resources, which can be found out easily in schools. Those activities were tried out in three selected schools. Children enjoyed and actively participated the activities. Responses of the teachers towards suggested activities revealed that students are highly interested in learning through such activities. Therefore, it is necessary to update primary teachers knowledge and skills related to organize activities through properly planned seminars and workshops.