

Relative effect of home and classroom on a girl-child in grade 1: A longitudinal case study

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In order to study how a Sri Lankan child develops her competencies by participating in school education, in grades 1 & 2 of the primary stage, a case study was conducted on Sudumali who studies in a rural school in the Kandy district. Data were collected using 16 structured research instruments, observations, interviews with parents & teachers, teacher perceptions, and classroom artifacts. Data were analyzed qualitatively to identify patterns. Sudumali is a child of a mother suffering from mental disorder, and her father is a labourer living in a deprived economic environment. She was absent from school for 22 days in 2002. But this was reduced to 3 days in 2003 due to her teacher's efforts. Participation in learning the subjects showed a remarkable improvement in 2003 in relation to that of 2002. The gradual disappearance of the effects of shyness, fear, suspicion and timidity, has been a major reason for this change. Even though she did not bring food from home, teacher was able to intervene and get other pupils to contribute to her meal during the school interval. She was dirty and disorderly at the beginning but after providing the equipment she needed, she came to school in an orderly manner. The workbooks, equipments, aids, play area - all helped to increase her participation in curricular and co-curricular activities.

A fluctuation in her development of competencies was noticed during two years. Sudumali, who was far behind in language skills even in April, 2002 reached the level of competent children at the end of 2003. Her abilities in creative work and drawing were noticed from the beginning of 2002. But her competencies in singing and dancing developed slowly. However, getting her involved in concerts and other such activities helped the gradual development of her competencies in such areas towards the end of 2003. Thus, Sudumali, who was a backward child at the beginning of 2002, displayed a considerable improvement in education. The conclusion one can arrive at, from this observation is that even though the home background is not conducive, still, the school and the classroom environment that provides a free education, has contributed to the education development of this child during these two years.

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