

Two learning media; two school environments: A longitudinal case study of learning patterns of a Muslim child in grades 1 and 2

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This longitudinal case study is on a student called Rahul in the Nuwara Eliya district. For the study on Rahul, data were collected and triangulated from 16 structured instruments, researcher's monthly observations, once a term observations of home environment, interviews with teacher, teacher's perceptions, assessment records and exercise books of the child.

In 2002 and the first term of 2003, Rahul lived with his parents and younger brother in a wattle and daub house devoid of a good learning environment and lacking water and electricity facilities, in a new colony with rainy weather, where people of different cultural backgrounds lived together. Rahul attended a Sinhala medium school. There were 12 pupils belonging to different cultures in his class. In the second term of year 2003, Rahul moved into a Tamil medium school in the upcountry dry zone, residing in an environment of Muslim community where his grandmother and uncle were living in a more comfortable house with water and electricity and a good learning environment. There were 37 Muslim children and two Tamil children in his class. Change of environment and the medium of instruction have led to an increase in motivation for learning. Rahul, who was at medium level among the other 12 children, remained the same even in the new school. The changes found in the development of competencies in the child and his participation in education were notable.

In the first school there was no opportunity to learn religion or to learn in his mother tongue and the dirty, disorderly and desolate nature of the classroom devoid of any learning needs failed to motivate the child for education. Further, the teacher's negative attitudes, lack of commitment and inactivity, exerted a harmful influence on the development of competencies in the child. In the second school the attractive and stress free environment with plenty of learning materials motivated learning. The teacher's positive attitude, activeness, encouraged the child to learn and there was a higher level of participation in education and greater development of competencies than in 2002.

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