

**Researchers' experiences on the sampling in a longitudinal study:  
Issue of balancing representativeness**

G Kodituwakku\* and D A S D Ratnayake

*Department of Research and Development, National Institute of Education, Maharagama*

This study, a research on research methodology, focuses on structured experiences on the sample of an ongoing five-year longitudinal study (2002-2006) started to identify the patterns of participation in primary school education and the competency development of primary school children. 1000 children were selected to represent Sri Lankan children entering into government school system in 2002. Sampling was done considering the diversity of Sri Lankan school system and student population. The objectives of the study are to identify the changes occurred in the sample, reasons for the changes, the influence to the changes made to the sample and the impact made by remedial measures. The researchers, teachers of the selected classrooms, who collected data from students and researchers who helped teachers by keeping diaries, collected data. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> Instruments, focused on the participation of students in school education were also used in the analysis of data.

1021 (Boys: 558 Girls: 493) children who entered the first day of 43 classrooms in 41 schools were selected as the sample. Schools were representative to social economic zones used by Central Bank to conduct socio economic surveys, provinces, climate zones, relief zones, different social cultural backgrounds and school types. The student sample was representative to the variables of ethnicity, religion and medium of learning. In the analysis of data,

data collected on the variables of way of coming to school and the distance from home to school were also taken into consideration. As a longitudinal study the justification of the sampling procedure was not ended at the beginning of the study. It was a continuous process of maintaining the balance of sample representation throughout the study period. The researchers had to face two fold problems of sampling i.e. maintaining the original sample as it is and collection of data continuously from the sample to have sufficient data for each and every month/ term for comparison purpose. Increase of the student sample due to late entrance of children to the selected classrooms throughout the year, the readjustments of parallel classes and their children, changing of schools, emigration and passing away of children altered the sample. Employing research assistants to collect data solved teacher and researcher related problems.

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