

Reading development of the grade 1 children: A longitudinal study

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A longitudinal research was initiated in 2002 to study student participation in primary school education and the way the students develop their competencies. Forty-three classrooms from forty-one schools were the school sample and all the children in Grade 1 in 2002 were the student sample (1178). Teachers in the selected classrooms collected data and a researcher was appointed to each school for the guidance. Three sub-instruments were used to measure the reading competence. Fifteen alphabets in the first term, 22 alphabets and thirteen words in the second term, and four sentences including same alphabets and words in the third term in Grade 1 were used to measure the reading competency. The second instrument was used to measure the competencies of the students who obtained the relevant competencies in the first term and the third instrument was used to measure the competencies of the students who obtained the relevant competencies in the second term. At the end of the year, the data were analysed using 13 variables. Achievement of competencies was shown in percentages, which were classified into three main areas as, those who had gained competencies (81-100), those who were approaching the competencies (61-80) and those who had not gained the competencies (0-60). The identified relationships were subjected to chi-square test. Findings are: both Sinhala Medium and Tamil Medium students read the first letters of their own alphabets. A higher percentage of Sinhala and Tamil students read the alphabet / i / secondly. Sinhala Medium students found it difficult to read the alphabet (|n ^|) (aspirated) and for Tamil Medium students, it was (|j ^|). Throughout the year, girls led the way in the reading competency. Muslim students studying in Sinhala, showed equal competence levels with the Sinhala students. Sinhala students showed a higher competence level in reading. Although Muslim students showed equal achievement levels in the first and second terms, in the third term, only the Sinhala students were at a higher level. In the

first term, a low competence level in reading was shown by Sinhala students and it was Indian Tamil students in the second and third terms. Throughout the year, a higher reading competence could be seen in 1AB schools. A low competence in reading could be seen in Type 2 and 1C schools. With regard to the provinces, North-Western province in the Sinhala Medium and Northern province in the Tamil medium showed a higher competence level. As a whole, the Central province showed a lower competence level in reading.

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