

## **Developing observation skills of children at primary level**

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The basic skills of science are required for each and every individual to live successfully in the modern complex world. In order to develop these skills, it is essential to provide opportunities at the primary stage of education. The primary cycle of education has been divided into three key stages, namely; key stage one-grade I and II; key stage two-grade III and IV; and key stage three-grade V. The purpose of this study was to provide children at key stage one with enjoyable opportunities to

develop observation skills-one of the important skills that is needed to develop during primary stage of education by planning hands-on science activities through the subject Environment Related Activities (ERA.)

The study was conducted in three phases. In the first phase, thirteen classrooms were observed when teaching ERA lessons at three selected schools at Kegalle district to understand the existing situation in teaching learning process. All the lessons were tape recorded and detailed fieldnotes were prepared. Interviews were conducted with randomly selected teachers to make clarifications of weaknesses observed in classroom observation in developing observation skills of children. A questionnaire was administered to primary teachers to understand the difficulties in planning and presenting activities to develop observation skills. Data obtained from different sources were analysed using triangulation. It was found out that 90% of teachers were incapable of organising their lessons with activities to provide children with enjoyable opportunities to develop observation skills. They were not competent enough to get the active involvement of children. During the second phase of the study, activities were planned for each theme to provide children with various opportunities to develop their senses essential to become keen observers. The planning stage was done with lengthy discussions with teachers in order to get the clear understanding of the activities. These planned lessons were tried out in five classrooms in three selected schools in the third phase of the study. Necessary improvements of the activities were made with the help of feedback obtained from the teachers.

Children were very active in gaining experiences by developing their senses through seeing, touching, tasting, hearing and smelling. They were so curious to observe the outcomes of the activities and to record what they observed. Teachers' responses indicated that children were very interested in learning science through such activities and they were so inquisitive to find out things by themselves. Therefore, it is recommended to organise continuous collaborative work with primary teachers to strengthen the capabilities of planning lessons with activities in order to provide children with early experiences needed for developing observation skills.

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