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## Introducing meaningful activities for primary students

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Acquiring basic knowledge and skills in science is very important to cope up with the present world as it is changing rapidly with new science discoveries. As students in the primary stages of education are very active and curious, they can be easily directed to achieve this objective. In the primary curriculum introduced under the 1997 education reforms, science is integrated with several other subjects under Environment Related Activities (ERA) subject. There are many themes in ERA syllabuses from grades one to five in which many activities that are related to science can be introduced as collaborative groupwork. However, the analysis of the content in teacher guides for ERA in these classes showed that there were no such inclusions in the teacher guides. If such activities are introduced, it would help the students to acquire science process skills that are very useful to build up the knowledge on science concepts when they are in upper grades. This study was

aimed to understand the problems in introducing science related themes in ERA subject from grades one to five. For this purpose, twenty ERA lessons in grade two classes were observed. Ten subject experts and twenty primary teachers were interviewed to understand their views on teaching ERA lessons. Triangulating the collected data it was found out that teachers rarely did activities in the classes and the limited occasions they introduced activities were not focused to develop expected competencies or science process skills in students. Most of the teachers did not have favorable attitudes in introducing science-based activities as they thought that they had to explain the principle behind each activity. When they tried to explain such things, most of the time their explanations were incorrect because they did not posses adequate knowledge. After identifying these problems, an activity booklet was prepared for primary grades. When preparing the activities special attention was given to achieve the expected objectives mentioned in the teacher guides. It was also focused to help the students to develop competencies and acquire science process skills that are suitable for the level of maturity of the students. Some of these activities were tried out in primary workshops and the teachers participated in these activities enthusiastically and were eager to do the activities with the students. As this study was a part of a study which was aimed to develop general chemistry concepts at school level, only the activities related to chemistry were introduced in the activity booklet. It is recommended to prepare activities related to other science subjects so that a basic foundation for leaning science can be introduced as an enjoyable experience.

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