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A school for mothers: An experiment in Batticaloa

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A school for mothers was conducted for eight months in the Village Thalankudah in the Batticaloa district from June 2003 to February 2004. The focus was on child development through mothers who have children from age 1-6 years. Mothers were mostly illiterate and were not aware of the importance of early childhood development and pre school education. One of the objectives of the school was to raise the awareness of mothers on child rearing practices and child development activities and to create a home environment for child development.

The total number of mothers in the school was one hundred and ten, and the total number of teachers was eleven. All teachers were trained especially on the objectives. The activities of the school were divided into three categories: Saturday classes, Special projects and Home visits. The curriculum was designed on the advice of persons experienced in the field. Thirty-two themes, which were related to child development were emphasised. On the completion of school activities, an evaluation was made and the results were encouraging. In the following six areas, positive results were observed: child development and child protection; home environment; nutrition and health; home based economic activities; improvement in knowledge, attitudes and skills; and views regarding the education of the children.

In the evaluation, 93% of the mothers said "very good" for the overall benefit they got from mothers' school. Ninety five point six percent of mothers said that they practiced at home what they learnt from school. About the usefulness of the class, 96.7% of them said "satisfactory" and 80% of them said that they were able to establish a healthy relationship with the neighborhood. Ninety nine percent said that they were able to better manage their families. Ninety eight percent said that they had started a savings account in their children's names, and 100% of them said that they gained a good understanding and knowledge of child development and education of the children. On the whole, in all six areas mentioned above, mothers had gained knowledge, attitudes, and skills for better family life, and child development.

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