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Schools projects of the G.C.E. (A/L) curriculum (science stream): General views with special reference to students in three districts of the Central Province

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The school education of Sri Lanka is highly examination centered and therefore, the students have to concentrate in the formal curriculum with traditional teacher centered learning. This approach has produced a young generation without practical skills, curiosity and innovative thinking. To bridge this gap, the National Educational Reforms of 1997 introduced the schools projects to the GCE (A/L) curriculum with an objective to create a path to produce students who would fit to the global trends. Nevertheless, it was observed that the students usually conduct these projects as it was a compulsory requirement to sit for the final examination. Therefore, a study was conducted in 2008/09 to investigate whether the introduction of schools projects has a positive outcome. The Questionnaire survey method and the direct interview method were employed to collect the data. 1AB schools of three districts namely Kandy, Matale and Nuwaraeliya of the Central Province were selected as the total sample. Information was gathered from students of the Grade 12 and 13 science stream of these schools and the past pupils of all three medium (i.e. Sinhala, Tamil, and English). Separate questionnaires were prepared for school students and past pupils. Formal and informal interviews were also conducted for non respondent student sample, parents and educational authorities of the three districts to obtain in-depth information for filling the gaps. The data were analyzed percentage wise, statistically and as well as by incorporating the qualitative data obtained at the interviews. The collected data were entered in to the computer and SPSS analysis was performed. The results revealed that 98% of students felt that handling schools projects consumes their study time. While a majority of students did not show any interest towards the projects, a more than 50% liked to do the projects. There were no relationship between project title and the field of interest of the student. 80% of past pupils said that conducting projects was not very much useful to them when securing jobs. 75% of students believed that it was a stress instead of relaxing their minds. Most of the parents also believed that the projects grasp the study time of their children. The Educational authorities strongly felt that the topic selection was the major reason for failure of projects. They also accepted the fact that the school projects have not reached the intended goals and hence, intervention at the policy level becomes important.