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Development of art competencies during the primary stage of schooling

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The objective of this longitudinal research was to study the developmental patterns of creativity in art work in relation to concepts, shapes and colouring of primary school children across grade 1 to 5. A sample of children was selected from 43 Grade 1 classes from 41 schools (including two bilingual schools) to represent different socio-economic backgrounds of the Sri Lankan school system. The sample was gradually reduced from 1141 (Grade 1) students to 973 students in grade 5 (i.e., Grade 1 = 1141; Grade 2=1071; Grade 3=1019; Grade 4=983; Grade 5=973). Topics were decided based on grade level and the suitability of the developmental stage of the child. At grade 1 the children were directed to draw anything they liked, and at grade 2, an incident / rainy day, they experienced. At grade 3 they were instructed to draw a flower vase, a market and a playing event, and in grade 4 to draw on the topic "I am happy about flowers in the garden" and in grade 5 a "religious place". The instruments were administered by class teachers. In analyzing the data, a nine point rating scale was used, with "1" representing the lowest and "9" the highest. Weighted means of each grade level were calculated and were compared across grade levels. The main findings were that the mean values relating to "concept" and "shape" increased significantly from grade 1 to grade 2. However, a decreasing trend was observed from grade 3, with regard to colouring. The same trend was observed in grade 1 and grade 2, but again in grade 4 had an increasing trend as it was compared with grade 3, but again in grade 5 the mean value dropped significantly. The overall competency level with regard to concept and shape of drawing in grade 2 shows a significant increase when compared with grade 1 figures. However, from grade 3 to 5, a decreasing trend of the concept and shape was observed. With regard to the theme-colouring, a mixed pattern was observed between grade 1 and grade 2, an increment and a decrease again in grade 3. However, an increment in grade 4 and again a decline in grade 5 were evident. Further research is necessary to identify underlying reasons for the decreasing pattern in art development in second and third key stages of primary education.

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