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Development of habits in primary school children

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A longitudinal study (2002-2006) was conducted to investigate the development of habits of the students in primary grades. Habits related to the competencies of communication, environment, value and religion, sports and learning to learn were addressed in the study. Four sub instruments were developed for grade one, two, four and five. Objectives of instrument were to identify relationships of the students to ethical and religious practices, identify the development of competencies related to health, food, and things related to human life, identify relationships with people and their immediate environment of the student, identify the development of leadership, identify the ways of resolving problems and identify the ways of engaging in work. The habits were categorized into nine groups. 27, 25, 33 and 37 criteria were included in the instruments for grade one, two, four and five respectively. The instruments for each grade were developed to measure a higher competency level than in the previous grade. The social relationship, responsibilities and human rights of the students were expected to be measured in grade four and five. The data were collected once in every school term. The valid student sample was 869. Students' development of habits was ranked as none, occasionally and always and numbered as 1, 2, 3. The data were analyzed by calculation of the percentage of each habit exhibited in each grade, calculation of mean and standard deviation and Histogram & Kurtosis. Analyzed data were first interpreted by student's habits in each term and during the whole year in each grade during the primary stage. Secondly, the distribution of groups of habits was discussed. Thirdly exhibition of separate habits was explained. Finally the distribution of habits according to media, gender, ethnicity, school type, school environment, religion and geographical factors was discussed. According to the findings, learning habits were exhibited less than other groups of habits, Social habits were exhibited more in grade one, grade four and grade five. Food habits were the weakest habits in grade one. The habits were stable in grade one. The habits were stable in Sinhala medium students and fluctuated in Tamil medium students. Girls exhibited better habits than boys. Students in 1AB and type 3 schools exhibited good habits more than students in 1C and 2 schools. Highly developed good habits were identified in rural schools. The slowest development of good habits was seen in plantation schools. The slow development of good habits was shown in upcountry schools relative to those in other geographical zones. The focal issue of habits was the poor exhibition of learning habits relative to other habits.

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