



802/F

Views of chemistry teachers about peer-assessment

M M Jamila* and S Karunaratne

Postgraduate Institute of Science, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya

Peer-assessment has been identified as a key factor in effective assessment for learning. The present study was conducted in order to determine the opinions of advanced level chemistry teachers about peer-assessment and the ways these are translated into classroom teaching. Semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were used in this study in order to collect data. The sample included fifteen schools from the Central Province. Two chemistry teachers from each school were selected and in-depth interviews were conducted. Subsequently, one of the classrooms of two teachers from five schools was selected and observed for a two-week period paying attention to practice of peer-assessments in learning chemistry. Data gathered from interviews and classroom observations were triangulated in the analysis.

The findings showed that participant teachers did not recognize the usefulness of peer assessment in learning chemistry. Teachers viewed that assessment needs to be teacher centered as they are the masters of subject matter. Hence, they took the major responsibility in administering assessment; making decisions about what is learned and how it is assessed. They demonstrated a shallow understanding of what constitutes peer-assessment. Hence, they did not include peer-assessment as a part of assessment practice. The teachers had reservations about the appropriate use of peer-assessment strategies. They felt that students lack the ability to perform peer-assessment indicating that without teacher intervention, students may misinform each other. They perceived that the teachers should be the centre of the assessing process to maximize learning. Hence, the findings of the study reveal that beliefs about learning and assessment are important factors affecting how the participant teachers included peer-assessment as part of their classroom practice. To make use of peer-assessment as an effective part of students' learning, a favorable classroom environment has to be created. Hence improved and more targeted professional development is a very important lever to create such a positive classroom environment for practicing peer-assessment successfully.