National Report

National Assessment of Achievement of Students Completing Grade 8 in Year 2016 in Sri Lanka

Ministry of Education
National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC)

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Senior Professor Marie Perera
Director
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Message from the Secretary, Ministry of Education

I consider it is a privilege for me to write this message to the report on 'National Assessment of Achievements of Grade 8 students in 2016 in Sri Lanka'. Conducting periodical national assessments has been one of the major activities of the Education Sector Development Framework and Programme (ESDFP) (2012-2016). This is an important national action which is exercised with a view to reveal in the achievement levels of students in various grades. Findings of these assessments help teachers to understand the levels of achievement of students and policy-makers and planners to determine the performance of the education system by means of learning outcomes, to what extent the educational development programmes and investments have been successful and what further steps should be taken in order further to upgrade the performance of the system considering the importance of this exercise, the Ministry of Education has planned to continue these assessments regularly and effectively.

In this context the Ministry of Education, with the financial assistance of the World Bank, has commissioned the National Education Research and Evaluation Center (NEREC) of the Faculty of Education, University of Colombo the task of conducting national assessments to determine the levels of achievements of students in grades 4 and 8, during last several years. Its latest national assessment report reveals factors that are particularly significant in order to enhance teaching and learning, analysed by various aspects such as types of schools, gender, medium of instruction, location, and competency levels of students who completed grade 8 in the year 2016.

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to Hon. Akila Viraj Kariyawasam, Minister of Education for providing guidance to implement this activity which has a national importance. Further, I also wish to thank Dr. Harsha Aturupane, Lead Education Specialist, Education Global Practice of the World Bank for providing technical guidance to carry out this assessment and appreciate the financial assistance extended by the World Bank through the 'Transforming School Education Project (TSEP)' for this purpose. I also appreciate the Dean, Faculty of Education University of Colombo, and Director NEREC, Professor Marie Perera and NEREC research team

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Abbreviations

EFA	Education for All
ESDFP	Education Sector Development Framework and Programme
ESS	Effective Sample Size
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
NEREC	National Education Research and Evaluation Centre
PPS	Probability Proportional to Size
roh	Rate of homogeneity
SD	Standard deviation
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

Executive Summary

Assessment of student learning has become a major tool of governments to collect high-quality data on education in order to inform effective policies and practices. In keeping with this trend in Sri Lanka the Ministry of Education has entrusted the National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) of the Faculty of Education, University of Colombo to conduct these assessments.

NEREC has conducted National Assessment of Learning Outcomes both at primary as well as at secondary level. At secondary level National Assessment of learning outcomes were conducted at Grade 8 in 2005, 2008, 2012 and 2014. This report presents the findings of a National assessment conducted in grade 8 for English, mathematics and science in the year 2016.

The national assessment of learning outcomes of 2016 used instruments designed in 2012 to test cognitive skills in English, mathematics and science in keeping with the new competency based curriculum which was introduced in 2009 in grade 8. Same instruments were used in the 2014 national assessments. The findings of the 2016 assessment were compared with the findings of 2014.

The national assessment covered the entire country and the sample was drawn to enable analysis by province, type of schools, gender and medium of instruction. The sample consisted of 12,971 students drawn from 442 schools.

Patterns in learning achievement was discussed using measures of central tendency mean and median, skewness values of the distribution, cumulative percentages and percentile ranks. In addition, graphs – frequency polygon and box plots were also used

Data gathered through the achievement tests were analyzed on a national and provincial basis in relation to medium of instruction, school type, and gender.

The findings revealed that national averages of achievement for the three subjects mathematics, science and English in 2016 were 51.11, 41.76 and 35.81

respectively. Compared with the findings of 2014 it was found that in 2016, there is a slight increase in performance in all three subjects.

There is disparity in achievement in all three subjects in relation to provincial performance, school type, gender and medium of instruction. However, the comparison between the achievements in 2014 -2016 revealed that in science and English achievement male performance, in rural area and Tamil medium schools and 1C and Type 2 schools has increased. These findings implies that bridging the gap is possible, Therefore, is necessary to identify best practices that contributed to these increases and disseminate them to other schools.

It was also revealed that the competency based curriculum needs to be revisited. Achievement of majority of the competency levels in all three subjects is not satisfactory. However, when compared to 2014 in 2016 there is an improvement. Yet, the areas that were very weak continues to be weak and in some competency levels the achievement has decreased. Achievement of writing skills in English continues to be weak.

The National Institute of Education should examine whether these findings have been incorporated to the curriculum revisions in 2015. If not measures need to be taken to address these issues.

Dissemination of these findings at provincial and zonal level is recommended. It is necessary for the findings to be feed into future developmental plans. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out further small scale research, conduct workshops as to identify how best the findings could be utilized at grass root levels.