

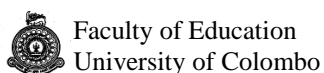
**NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF ACHIEVEMENT OF
GRADES 08 STUDENTS IN SRI LANKA**

National Report

**Dr. M. Karunanithy
A.A. Navaratna**

National Education Research and Evaluation Centre
NEREC
Faculty of Education
University of Colombo
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Preface

I am very much delighted to write the preface to this research study conducted by NEREC. Since its establishment in 2000, NEREC has been conducting several research pertaining to Sri Lankan education in an era in which education policies are formulated based on educational research. The functions of NEREC have become important in respect of educational research. Reputed international funding organizations have understood the research capacity of NEREC and therefore have commissioned several important studies to NEREC. It is encouraging to find that the NEREC has now completed around 22 studies on various aspects of Sri Lankan education.

The present study on National Assessment of Achievement of Grade 08 Students in Sri Lanka being the 4th study in this series of paramount importance in respect of educational research in Sri Lanka. Studies of this nature have been conducted internationally for the purpose of comparative analysis and understanding the efficiency of the school system in fulfilling the educational objectives and providing quality education to the students. In addition, this study could be helped to promote Sri Lankan school education to reach the standards attained by developed nations.

Studies of this nature would help us to identify the shortcomings and gaps in the school education system and it could help the policy makers to formulate new policies and strategies to rectify the situation. Moreover, it would help them to think about suitable and best practices in teaching the main subjects that were taken for the study.

At this juncture it is relevant to mention that the findings of the NEREC studies related to this aspect of education has received international attention. The findings are frequently quoted in several international studies on this theme. NEREC studies have provided a database and findings to undertake a comparative study of school achievements and give a clear indication of the status of Sri Lanka. We are happy to understand that the Sri Lankan policy makers have shown a keen interest in making use of the finding of NEREC studies in their attempts to improve the qualitative aspects of school education in Sri Lanka.

I take this opportunity to thank the researchers in completing this study. This study was carried out under the efficient guidance given by the team leader, Dr. M. Karunanithy. He was responsible for coordinating all matters pertaining to the study. I also would like to thank Mr. A.A. Navaratne, the National Coordinator for assessment studies for his contribution to make this study a success.

I thank the team members, Mrs. R.D.C. Niroshini and Mrs. Prasadi Jasinghe for their overall contribution to this study. I also wish the research assistants, report writers and editor of the report for their assistance and support to complete this study.

It should be emphasized that the World Bank and its Senior Economist, Dr. Harsha Aturupane were of great assistance to NEREC in undertaking this study and their interest in developing the capacity of faculty and its members. In fact NEREC would not have been able to accomplish this research work if not for the interest and understanding emerging from the World Bank and the Ministry of Education.

Dr. W. Chandradasa
Acting Dean, Faculty of Education
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21st December 2008

Message from Director - NEREC

It is my pleasure and privilege to write the directors message to this report “National Assessment of Achievement of Grade 08 students in Sri Lanka. This report highlights the findings of a national level research conducted by the National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) in 2008. The present study is a second round of the 2005 study and attempted to identify the patterns and trends in the Junior Secondary school cycle in Sri Lanka.

The national Assessment of Grade 08 students in Sri Lanka was on three subjects First Language (Sinhala and Tamil) Science and Technology and Mathematics and the findings of this report reveal the achievement levels on variables such as gender, school type, location of schools and medium of instruction at national and provincial levels.

The studies conducted in 2004, 2007 by NEREC, in Grades 04, 08 and 10 have remarkably contributed in formulation of policies and tremendously encouraged educational planners , curriculum developers and provincial and zonal educational officers to take corrective action towards the improvement of grade 08 students’ achievement levels. The findings of the present study too will support the relevant authorities to identify effective strategies to improve the learning - teaching in classrooms and improve the achievement levels of students in Junior Secondary level.

I am glad to express my gratitude to all those who contributed to complete this study successfully.

I take this opportunity to thank Professor. Kshanika Hirimburegama, Vice Chancellor, University of Colombo and Professor. S. Sandarasegaram, Dean Faculty of Education for their encouragement and guidance in initiating the activities of this project.

The credit for this national initiative goes to the Ministry of Education and the World Bank. I wish to thank Dr. Hasha Aturupane, Senior Economist World Bank, Sri Lanka,

Professor U. Sonnadara, consultant, and Dr. Thomas Kellegan for providing direction and expertise.

Mr. S.U. Wijeratne, Additional Secretary, Mrs. Madura M. Wehella and Dr. Jayantha Balasooriya, Planning Division, Ministry of Education for their unstinted support to the NEREC for launching various project activities.

I am very much thankful to the members of the research team Dr. W. Chandradasa, Mrs. Prasadi Jasinghe and Mrs. R.D.C. Niroshini for their valuable contribution in various activities of the study.

The experience and expertise gained over time by Mr. A.A. Navaratne in coordinating national level research on student achievements was invaluable in the conduct of the present study. Mr. A.A. Navaratne served as the national research coordinator and also the main writer of this report. His support in numerous ways helped to complete this report successfully.

I express my gratitude to Prof. Swarana Wijetunge, former Director, NEREC for editing the report.

I acknowledge with special gratitude the role played by the support staff of the NEREC and specially Mr. K.U. Senaka for assisting us in statistical analysis of the data and the Project Management Unit of Colombo University for the support extended.

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- Professor (Mrs.) Kshanika Hirimburegama, Vice Chancellor, University of Colombo for her encouragement.
- Professor S. Sandarasegaram, Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Colombo for extending cooperation.
- Dr. M. Karunanithy, Director, NEREC and Leader of the research team for coordinating and contributing to all activities.
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- Dr. W. Chandradasa, Head, Department of Psychology for conducting training programme for Zonal Education Officers and contributing in all other activities.
- Ms. Prasadi Jasinghe, Lecturer, Department of Science and Technology for selecting the sample and other related activities of the study and conducting training programme for Zonal Education Officers.
- Ms. R.D.C. Niroshini, Lecturer, Department of Psychology for writing chapter one of the report and conducting training programme for Zonal Education Officers.
- Prof. Swarna Wijetunge, former Director, NEREC, for editing the report.
- Mr. K.U. Senaka for shouldering all statistical analysis activities.
- All members of the Project Management Unit of the University of Colombo for the cooperation extended.
- The three research assistants Mr. S.O. Fernando, Mr. Premathilaka Serasinghe and Ms. R.A. Sunica for the services rendered.
- All members of NEREC, for their contribution.

- All other personnel from the provincial, zonal and school levels who contributed in numerous ways in carrying out this project.
- All others who assisted me in their respective capacities in making this venture a success.

Let me thank all of them, once again.

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Executive Summary

National Assessment of achievement of Grade 08 students in the year 2007 in Sri Lanka is a national level study carried out by the National Education Research and Evaluation Centre, Faculty of Education, University of Colombo. This study conducted on 5th July 2008 is aimed at assessing the achievement levels of students who have completed Grade 08 in the year 2007. The total number in the sample was 10882 from 364 schools. The same test papers used for measuring achievement levels in First Language, Science and Technology and Mathematics were utilized for this study too.

Chapter one of the report outlines the international background of National assessments. Various steps taken by the Sri Lankan governments since 1940's to the improvement of general education are discussed. The findings of the grade 08 study conducted in year 2005 are also summarized in this chapter.

In the second chapter the objects of the former study, framework of the present study sample of students selected, achievements tests used, data collection process adopted, methods of data analysis, limitations of the study and the format of the research reports are discussed.

The chapter three mainly concentrates on discussing the general patterns in performance in Grade 08 students in the three subjects tested. In chapter four attention is focused on how the provision of equal opportunity in education has happened in relation to various groups. Achievements of Grade 08 students by the various abilities in these subjects is discussed in chapter five.

Chapter six highlights how the Grade 08 students have reached the level of mastery in the three subjects tested.

Findings

On average there is an improvement in Science and Technology and Mathematics. No improve is seen in First Language achievement levels. In all the provinces there is an improvement in Mathematics achievement levels. There are large inequalities in the provision of education at junior secondary level for the various categories such as provinces, male female, urban rural and medium of instruction. Emphasis of the curriculum developers and teachers on developing various abilities of students in the subjects has been inadequate. This has resulted in low achievement levels of students in sub skills. The percentage of students reaching the levels of mastery seems to be inadequate.

Suggestions:

To overcome the shortcomings identified through this study, improvement in curriculum designing and implementation, reconsidering, revitalizing and evaluation in general education, introduction of diagnostic and remedial intervention programmes, introducing action research programme at school level and minimizing differences among schools are recommended.

