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Effectiveness of year end achievement tests to assess the achievement level of the students

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Background of the Study

Though the school based assessment was introduced in 1998, term tests play an important role in assessing the achievement level of the students. To judge the achievement levels of the students correctly, these tests should be valid, reliable and practicable.

Methodology

The study investigates validity, reliability and practicability of year end achievement tests conducted by the provincial level to assess the achievement level of grade 11 students in Sinhala language and literature. The study was limited to three provinces: Western, Uva and Southern and they were selected randomly. As the year end term test is conducted at provincial level, only four 1AB schools were selected from each province. There were altogether nine question papers, as Sinhala Language and literature paper consists of three papers. The total number of answer scripts was nine hundred. Twenty four teachers were selected those who teach Sinhala language and literature in selected schools. The data gathered from question papers, answer scripts, observations and teacher questionnaires were analyzed using con-Quest and qualitative methods.

Outcomes of the Study

Face validity and content validity can be seen in average level in Sinhala language and literature paper I, except in the Southern province, though there were some spelling and grammar mistakes. Face and content validity consist in paper II in all selected provinces. But the marks had not been allocated to measure the expected learning outcomes or abilities. Content validity was low in paper III in all provinces. With regard to the disparities in paper III was high and very much significant among the provinces. Reliability of paper I was high while the paper II of average level. Paper III showed low reliability. Some problems such as a marking scheme not been available except Western province, allocating marks, lack of proper guide lines to administrate the test, difficulty in getting enough copies of papers and distribution problems were identified.

Conclusion

Steps should be taken to improve the face validity and content validity of the year end test papers. Many spelling, grammar mistakes and printing errors indicate that papers should be proof read before printing. When grouping items specially in multiple choice question papers, increasing difficulty level should be considered. When allocating marks, expected abilities and intended learning outcomes should be considered. Marking scheme should be prepared with the setting of the question paper. Assessors should be educated further about the test blue print, test construction and marking. Steps should be taken to avoid the factors that can reduce the reliability of marks from the stage of test construction. The mechanism of term test administration should be supervised and monitored.