

THE ROLE OF THE UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER IN DESIGNING AND
USING INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES :
A CRITICAL REVIEW WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SRI LANKA

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A Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Faculty of Education, University of Colombo December 1996

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ABSTRACT

The present research study investigates the role performance of the upper primary teacher in environmental studies. The current re-awakening on primary education, efforts to promote environmental education both locally and globally as well as the researcher's own experiences as a teacher educator at pre-school and primary school level greatly inspired this study. It was envisaged to examine the feasibility of finding a 'realistic approach' to teaching environmental studies to the primary students, specially due to the specific nature of the subject. Observation of teaching practice of student teachers convinced the researcher, that the teachers in environmental studies had no clear perceptions on teaching strategies or performed their role successfully. The study was made at three levels, a pilot study, a survey and an in-depth study. The sample of the survey comprised of 300 trained and untrained teachers, randomly selected from seven districts. The in-depth study was carried on a stratified sample consisting of 30 teachers from 15 schools representing 3 districts.

The perceptions of the teachers on the role of the EVS teacher was investigated by the survey, while the in-depth study examined the instructional strategies adopted by the teachers. The results of the achievement test given to the students of the teachers observed were correlated with the scores of the particular teacher to assess the impact of the performance of the teacher had on the achievement levels of the students. Thus the perceptions, performance and the product of the teacher came under close scrutiny, in the present study. Finally on the basis of the major findings of the study, conclusions related to the instructor and facilitator role of the teacher were arrived at and the strategies designed and used in their performance were examined. In this process a feasible instructional strategy model for the upper primary EVS teacher, and on instructional design for the teacher-trainee were derived. Statistical procedures adopted in the analysis of data, Spearman's rank order correlation, Analysis of variance, Duncan procedure test and the Factor analysis substantially strengthened the efficacy of the findings.

The suggestions of this research study were intended to effect an attitudinal change in the EVS teachers, and bring about necessary changes in the EVS curriculum, the mode of instruction and the professional advancement of the EVS teacher in particular. It was also expected to promote the national effort in environmental education. The philosophy underlying this research study is envisaged as accountability of the teacher and the competency based teacher's task which strongly contribute to the achievement of the student.

