

Abstract

This study evaluates students' perception of laboratory practical sessions of Biology in Advanced Level classes in Kuliyaipitiya Zone in Kurunegala District in North Western Province.

A total of 155 students of Biology in Grade 13 of six schools in Kuliyaipitiya Zone , six teachers and six lab assistants\ those who are in charge of Biology laboratories in respective schools were used for the study. A questionnaire for students, observation schedule and unstructured discussion with teachers and lab assistants were used as data collecting instruments.

According to results, students perceive that attending practical sessions has a positive impact on their academic achievement in Biology. The results also indicated that all the schools with science stream for Advanced Level do not have a separate Biology laboratory to conduct practical sessions and all Biology laboratories are not provided with a qualified lab assistant. Findings further showed that there is a shortage of laboratory equipment and materials, furniture, space and technology involvement in Biology laboratories. Teachers' contribution in assessing and evaluation of practical work done by students and provision of opportunity for open-endedness is not satisfactory.

In the light of study it is recommended to improve the material environment in Biology laboratories, to implement a systematic assessment procedure to form basis to collect information about the existing situation of the laboratory environment and also to increase the technology involvement. Regular in-service training opportunities on effective use of laboratory equipment should be provided for teachers of Biology and lab assistants. Also an open-ended divergent approach should be introduced to practical sessions encouraging creativity within students by allowing them opportunities occasionally to pursue their own interest and design their own experiments. The study further recommends to increase the time allocated for practical work.