

IMPROVING STUDENTS' GENERIC SKILLS THROUGH SKILL-ORIENTED TEACHING: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY IN CENTRAL PROVINCE, SRI LANKA

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In today's education system, especially in Sri Lanka, teaching and assessment are mostly examination-focused, often leaving less space to develop essential life skills. This study aimed to compare traditional teaching methods with skills-oriented instruction to find out which approach better supports the development of generic skills in junior secondary science students. An experimental research design was used in nine government schools in the Central Province. The sample included 320 Grade 7 students and 20 science teachers. Two science lessons Domestic Chemicals and Earth Resources were selected from the syllabus. In each school, one class was taught using the traditional method, while another class was taught using a skill-oriented approach that encouraged communication, collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving. Later, the methods were switched between the classes for the second lesson. Students' performances were assessed using scoring rubrics, and data were analysed using SPSS software. Pre-tests confirmed that both groups were at similar levels before the intervention. Post-tests showed significant improvement in the group taught with the skill-oriented method. The *t*-test results showed a statistically significant difference in post-test scores between the two groups ($t = 4.87, p < 0.01$), favouring the skill-oriented group. Observations using rubrics also confirmed higher scores in generic skills for this group. Additionally, focus group discussions with 20 students and 20 teachers were held. Thematic analysis of these discussions showed strong support for the skill-based approach. Students reported better understanding and more engagement, while teachers observed improved classroom participation and real-world thinking. Overall, the study concludes that skill-oriented teaching methods are more effective in enhancing generic skills and should be integrated into science instruction in Sri Lankan junior secondary schools.

Keywords: Experimental research, Generic skills, Science education, Skill-oriented teaching, Sri Lanka