

**STUDENT AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ON ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING
SCIENCE IN GRADES 6 AND 7: A CASE STUDY IN KANDY EDUCATION ZONE**

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Online education has been vital due to the closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and, thereafter, fuel shortage in the country. However, teaching and learning science are most critical due to the practical nature of the subject. In this situation, online learning has to be empowered through necessary strategies to meet the challenges. Thus, this research aims to investigate issues related to online teaching and the learning process of science in grades 6 and 7. The data was collected through a convenience sample through teacher and student questionnaires. The sample comprised 84 teachers and 150 students from the Kandy Education Zone. Results revealed that 93% of students and 89% of teachers prefer face-to-face lessons. Moreover, 95% of teachers disagreed with conducting online lessons to deliver science due to the difficulty of teaching some scientific concepts. Further, 88% of teachers argued that assessing and evaluation could not be accomplished effectively in online mode. Around 93% of students agreed that online learning is ineffective in learning science. Though 79% of teachers have a good internet connection with powerful devices, 65% of students do not have individual devices with a good internet connection. Moreover, students in lower grades prefer face-to-face science lessons to online lessons. Lack of experience and knowledge of the technology of teachers badly affects the online teaching and learning process in Sri Lanka. Thus, it is suggested to remedy the above issues appropriately to enhance the science teaching and learning process in schools to meet national goals effectively to prepare students with 21st Century skills.

Keywords: Grade 6 and 7 students, Online teaching and learning, Science