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### Sustaining Bilingual Education Effectively in a Rural School

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Main objective of bilingual education policy which replaced the English education in 2001 in Sri Lankan schools was promoting bilingualism and bi-literacy among the students while respecting and maintaining the value of national languages. It was under the national school amity project and the utmost expectation was social cohesion. English medium education created a gap between the English speakers and non-English speakers and an alternative bilingual model was replaced as a remedial measure to inculcate cultural values and tolerance towards cultural diversity. The objective of the action research was to identify the effectiveness of the aforesaid concept and its related activities developed by the researcher at grades 6-9 in a selected school in a rural area. Intervention strategies developed were student centered learning activities, ICT assisted learning sessions, English language and cultural development programs and exposure to different local and foreign cultures through Skype etc. It was mainly expected to create a generation of thinkers with cultural values and virtues with the support of developed cognition gained by being bilingual or multilingual. The effectiveness of implemented strategies was assessed using focus group discussions with parents, questionnaires for students and interviews with teachers. As a result of the intervention the bilingual stream is continued in the school from 2013 up to date with the increase of the number of the students. Further, the qualitative aspects of the research process which were the main objectives of sustaining this new trend are clearly apparent in relation to the national aims of bilingual education.

**Key words:** bilingual education, cultural exposure, social cohesion