

Title of the Study : **The Senior Secondary School Curriculum (Grades 10-13)**
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Objectives / Terms of Reference

- (1) Assess the extent to which these changes have been effected in the Senior Secondary school curriculum in well equipped as well as disadvantaged schools with reference to
 - (i) The distribution of opportunities for Senior Secondary Education
 - (ii) The range of subjects offered in the curriculum
 - (iii) The present structure of core and optional subjects in grade 10-11 and the allocation of subjects to each group
 - (iv) Reduction of subjects from four to three subjects in grade 12 and 13
 - (v) The introduction of the Common general Paper in the GCE/AL examination
 - (vi) The introduction of (a) General English (b) General Information Technology (c) Project Activities in grades 12-13
 - (vii) The proposal to introduce Technology as a subject at the GCE/AL examination
 - (viii) Curriculum streaming in grades 12 and 13
 - (ix) The adequacy and relevance of curriculum content
 - (x) Teaching-learning methodologies used in grade 10-13
 - (xi) The changes introduced in the medium of instruction
 - (xii) Quality of inputs provided
 - (xiii) Perceptions of (a) teachers (b) principals (c) parents regarding the reforms
- (2) Examine the impact of the reforms on (a) the quality of education and (b) access to alternate forms of higher education
- (3) Make suggestions for improvement in the provision and content of Senior Secondary Education

The objectives of the present study were considered as synonymous with the terms of reference, and therefore not spelled out separately.

Methodology adopted in conducting the Situation Analysis

(i). Sample for Senior Secondary G.C.E.A.L

Considering the broad scope of the study and the need to assess the extent to which the changes spelled out in the terms of reference have been effected in the Senior Secondary school curriculum in well equipped as well as disadvantaged schools, two school districts Colombo and Hambantota were selected for data collection. Using the survey method, data was obtained from the four most important categories of stakeholders, the students, teachers, principals and parents.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Reduction of Subjects from Four to Three in Grades 12 and 13, Adequacy and Relevance of Curriculum Content, Curricular Streaming

The findings are that students and other stakeholders welcome the change as a measure that gives them relief and flexibility to devote more time for learning activities in general and for each subject. It is however clear that the examination fear and press on A.L students has not significantly been reduced, by the change. Overall, students are dubious of the relevancy and adequacy of the content; relevancy to everyday life and the country's needs as per development orientation as opposed to mere examination orientation, adequacy in terms of comprehensiveness of knowledge imparted.

Students though satisfied with the present subject streaming would prefer more flexibility and freedom of choice in subject selection from more than one curricular stream, teachers are more in favor of the present system of streaming and parents from

the HD in favor of non streamed subject choices for students. Stakeholders acknowledge that the system of subject streaming is disadvantageous to students who fail to enter the university.

Suggestions: To achieve the objectives of the reduction in number of subjects in parallel with adequacy and relevance of what is being learnt, a realistic examination of the content coverage of subjects in terms of specified criteria and indicators is suggested. The issues of adequacy and relevance are closely tied up with the finding that the subject streaming is disadvantageous to students who fail to secure places in universities. If the criteria and indicators of adequacy and relevance continue to be determined solely on the fit between A.L and university curricula, the vast majority of A.L qualified students will continue to be doubly disadvantaged.

(i). The Present Structure of Core and Optional Subjects in Grades 10/11 Allocation of Subjects to Each Group, the Range of Subjects Offered in the Curriculum

Students consider the grouping of core subjects satisfactory, and that it is useful to study one or two additional subjects. They do not consider the increase in subjects from 8 to 10 as imposing a serious constraint on time management and teaching learning, although they do agree that adequate time cannot be devoted to each subject. The range of subjects and choices offered to students studying in schools by type and district however varies, from as many as 15 to as few as 6.3, mostly due to shortage of teachers to teach the respective subjects. There is limited choice to most students in the Aesthetic and Technical Studies subject groups.

(ii). The Introduction of the Common General Paper in the G.C.E.A.L Examination

The enhancement of students' self development by giving them a broader perspective and world vision envisaged by introducing the Common General Paper is being realized, although the pressure of the examination in general continues to color the perceptions of students. There seems to be some re-consideration on the part of stakeholders in favor of adding the marks of the CGP to the aggregate considered for university entrance.

Suggestion: A re-examination of the objectives and re-consideration of how best to assess and give credit to the desired outcomes of learning that are purported to be measured by the Common General Paper is timely. What lessons do we learn, from the case study of what is now termed the Common General Paper is worth focusing on, at a national level.

(iii). The Introduction of General Information Technology and the proposal to introduce a Technology Stream in Grades 12/13

All stakeholder groups are convinced of the benefits to be derived and the timeliness of the introduction of GIT to the A.L curriculum, yet are realistic in their aspirations and expectations, given the reality of contextual factors.

Suggestions: The servicing of the Technology Studies subject group in the lower secondary grades, and particularly in grades 10/11 which leaves much to be desired as reflected in the findings needs to be improved substantially if Technology as a subject or subject stream is to be introduced in the A.L curriculum. The foundation for GIT likewise, must be strengthened by wider and more equitable access to students in the lower secondary grades.

(iv). The Introduction of General English, the Changes Introduced in the Medium of Instruction

The stakeholder groups are equally convinced of the benefits to be derived and the timeliness of the introduction of General English to the A.L curriculum. The proficiency levels of students at entry to A.L classes as perceived realistically by the stakeholder groups vary to a significant degree, relative to variation in student motivation.

Suggestions: The Action Plan for English Education, MHRDE&CA, if implemented and monitored effectively, would be an extremely timely system-wide multi-pronged initiative that would address many of the ills that pervade the field of English language teaching and learning. However, the availability of funding is not the sole criterion of how effectively an initiative is effected, and therefore, close monitoring of the entire process of implementation will be vital.

(v). Project Work/Activities in Grades 10-13

Project activities in Grades 12/13 are acknowledged by students as a useful method of learning that do not confine students to classrooms, enabling them learn using varied sources and, experientially. In spite of this perception of positive outcomes, students seem to grudge the time that has to be devoted to project activities.

Suggestion: The incorporation of project work in the curriculum of subjects examined at the O.L and A.L. seems to be the only way in which legitimacy for project activities can be assured in the system. The assessment of project activities and giving weight to marks obtained will contribute significantly to legitimizing and better institutionalizing project activities in the system.

(vi). Teaching Learning Methodologies Used in Grades 10-13

The more commonly used methods in A.L classrooms are discussion, group work and projects, assignments, library work and practical exercises, whereas computers as a tool in teaching learning, and other more student interactive learning methodologies such as debates and contests are less used.

Suggestion: The promotion of the use of more creative and student interactive methodologies should be encouraged by school based modeling of their use in in-service training, and the conduct of In-Service sessions more in the mode of workshops that involve teachers in skill training in the use of appropriate methodologies.

(vii). Quality and Adequacy of Inputs Provided in Grades 10-13

The availability of quality inputs ranging from human resources – adequate numbers of qualified and trained teachers, to physical and all varieties of learning resources would be an important variable facilitating the use of appropriate methodologies in Grades 10-13.

Suggestion: Equitable provision of quality inputs to schools must be ensured, as well as their practical use, which should be the responsibility of provincial educational authorities. Sharing of resources, where practically feasible, such as facilities for ICT training may be alternatives to be considered.