

Situational Analysis of Bilingual Education Approach (English Medium Instruction) in Sri Lankan Government and Government-Assisted Schools: Towards Informed Policy Recommendations



**NATIONAL EDUCATION COMMISSION
1ST FLOOR, BLOCK 5, BMICH,
COLOMBO 07,
SRI LANKA**

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Approach (English Medium Instruction) in Sri
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**National Education Commission
2024**

Published by

National Education Commission, 2024

1st Floor, Block 5, Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall, Bauddhaloka Mawatha,
Colombo 07, Sri Lanka

Telephone: + 94 11 2662064 Fax : + 94 11 2662064

Email: chnec@slt.lk Web: www.nec.gov.lk

ISBN 978-955-9448-20-4

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Research Consultants

Dr. Harsha Dulari Wijesekera, *Assistant Professor, Head, School of Education, Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology. (Formerly: Open University of Sri Lanka and Visiting Fellow, Australian National University)*

Mrs. Priyatha Nanayakkara, *Former Director of Education (Bilingual Education), Ministry of Education*

Preface

The National Education Commission (NEC) established by the National Education Commission Act No. 19 of 1991, functions as the apex policy formulation body to make recommendations to the president on Education Policy and on a wide spectrum of matters connected with education reforms and development.

In executing this mandate, NEC has recognised the importance of encouraging education related research contributing to the extension of the knowledge base necessary for educational change and to stimulate interest and participation in improving quality of education in Sri Lanka. In this context, the situational analysis of Bilingual Education (BE) approach in Sri Lankan government and government assisted schools is an important study conducted by NEC with particular emphasis to explore how the BE approach is implemented in schools.

The implementation of Bilingual Education in Sri Lanka stemmed from educational reforms proposed by the Presidential Task Force on Education (1997), mainly aiming at introducing English Medium Instruction for the purpose of enhancing English Language proficiency which has been depleting with the conversion of general education to Mother Tongue Instruction. The present BE approach to education was initiated in 2001 in Advanced Level Science and was subsequently extended to the lower secondary level - Grade six, in 2002 with little consideration given to aspects such as policy formulation, planning, and implementation. Presently there are only 757 public schools out of 6237 schools that have BE. Even after two decades, only 4 per cent of the students has access to BE out of nearly 2,422,780 secondary level students due to failure in expanding BE as initially anticipated.

This report presents the findings of the study on implementation and practice of the BE approach in delivering the National Curriculum, with the ultimate goal of assisting the National Education Commission (NEC) of Sri Lanka to develop evidence-based policy and practice principles for BE in Sri Lanka.

Padmini Ranaweera
Chairman
National Education Commission
May 2024

Executive Summary

The escalating demand for English Medium Instruction (EMI) and failure to fulfil the same is evident in increasing Human Rights cases by parents against schools. The Supreme Court Judgement (SC Appeal No. 52/2020: 13/01/2023) clearly illustrates the urgent need for evidence-based informed policy on Bilingual Education (BE) approach (BE/EMI) approach to education in Sri Lanka. This report presents the findings from a situational analysis of current BE practices in government and government-assisted schools in Sri Lanka. The study intended to provide the National Education Commission (NEC) with recommendations to formulate an evidence-based BE (EMI) policy.

Currently, the absence of a clear policy has led to inconsistent implementation of EMI in schools. This study explores the effects governmental decisions made through the Ministry of Education (MOE) on BE and how these decisions are perceived and experienced by various stakeholders. Qualitative data were collected through surveys, focus-group-discussions (FGDs), interviews and through document analysis (see Section 3). Based on the analysis, 14 comprehensive recommendations are provided (see Section 4). The key areas of recommendations include

- a) Formulation a clear policy on BE to ensure equal access to EMI,
- b) Revising existing circulars
- c) Addressing aspects such as textbooks, methodology, assessment procedures
- d) Improving teacher administration (recruitment, deployment and transfers) and teacher development (Section 4).

The analysis indicates the great demand for EMI among parents and children across diverse social, geographic and economic contexts. The lack of policy from planning to implementation and monitoring is evident. BE/EMI success in schools often depends on dedication of individuals such as principals and teachers. However, when these individuals are transferred or retire, BE program often deteriorates. A significant challenge to BE/EMI is the negative attitudes and lack of awareness among decision-makers and stakeholders at all levels, from the central government to the school level. The study also concludes that centralized, mandatory one-size-fits-all policy may not address the varied challenges in diverse contexts, such as the availability of qualified/skilled EMI teachers. An accelerated program with short-, medium- and long-term objectives, along with clear Key Performance Indicators, is essential. Ensuring access to EMI through non-fee levying public schools has become a national issue. To implement the evidence-informed new policy, a comprehensive Strategic Implementation Plan is vital. The researchers are confident that funding from regular contributors to Sri Lankan education, such as World Bank, and Asian Development Bank, will not be an issue with a comprehensive Strategic Implementation Plan.

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1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of a comprehensive situational analysis of the Bilingual Education (BE) approach to education in Sri Lankan public schools and government-assisted schools. The study investigated the implementation and practice of the BE approach in delivering the National Curriculum, with the ultimate goal of assisting the National Education Commission (NEC) of Sri Lanka to develop evidence-based policy and practice principles for BE in Sri Lanka. The study utilized a multi-faceted approach, to analyse the ‘experienced policy’¹ in the three moments of policy continuum (Lo Bianco, 2021; Lo Bianco & Aliani, 2013; Davis, 1994). It delved into actual implementation of BE ‘policies’ or ‘laws’ in classrooms exploring how these ‘policies’ manifest and are perceived by intended recipients or stakeholders of BE. Data were elicited through the encounters and judgements of these ‘recipients’ (students, teachers, parents, school authorities, teacher educators, etc) using surveys, focus-group-discussions (FGDs), interviews representing all layers of BE stakeholders as well as through the analysis of documents and secondary data. It sought to understand how governmental announcements and decisions made through the Ministry of Education (MOE) translated into tangible experiences within classrooms.

1.1. Background

Bilingual Education (BE) is regarded as an essential educational approach globally due to its inherent characteristics that align with concepts such as 21st-century education, sustainable development goals, transversal competencies, global dimensions, and linguistic justice and democracy. Moreover, UNESCO, through its resolution 30C/Res 12, advocates linguistic pluralism and promotes early acquisition of multiple languages in addition to a child’s mother tongue. Further, language learning trends are moving towards learning across the curriculum involving every teacher in fostering language development throughout students’ academic career. Rather than learning a language as a separate subject, language learning through subject content provides more real-life context-embedded learning opportunities for students. Confirming the fact in Sri Lankan context too, NEC (1997; 2000) states that the main reason for introducing English Medium Instruction (EMI) through BE in Sri Lanka is due to the very reasons of inadequacies in teaching English as a second language.

BE not only addresses language and content simultaneously, but also offers numerous other benefits (Rose et al, 2019). Its significance lies in its ability to foster flexible brain functioning, thereby enhancing memory, problem-solving skills, and overall learning outcomes (Hamid, Nguyen & Baldauf, 2013). Further by Coyle (2005), teaching and learning methodology for English Medium Instruction (EMI), known as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) along with its 4C framework serve not only to enhance English language proficiency but also to promote social cohesion, critical thinking and soft skills. Sri Lankan BE has shown its potential to create ethnolinguistic harmony, cohesion and inclusivity in multiethnic BE

¹ The other two moments are intended and implemented policy. The ‘experienced policy’ (and ‘policy’) is used within inverted commas because there is no legitimate policy on bilingual education but a collection of documents (Supreme Court Appeal Judgement No: 52/2020; NEC, 2014; 2020). Experienced Policy can become a catalyst for modified or new policy.

classrooms (Wijesekera, 2018; 2022) compared to the ironic spread of ethnic polarization and exclusivity by the public school system resulting from medium of instruction (MOI) against its very own goals.

Bilingual Education (BE) in Sri Lanka is particularly associated with the English language, offering individuals opportunities to accumulate social, economic, and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1994). However, this association also underscores the disparities that exist between those who have access to English and those who do not. Moreover, despite this, there is a prevailing misconception that transitioning to English Medium Instruction (EMI) serves as a quick and cost-effective solution to mastering the English language, perceived as essential for success in competitive job markets and higher education (Hamid, Nguyen & Baldauf, 2013). This highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding language education policies and their implications for social equity and linguistic diversity.

While English's involvement in BE enables accruing social, economic, cultural capitals and hence symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1994), simultaneously it contributes to widening the gap in social, economic and cultural inequalities between those who have access to BE and those who do not. This has given rise to critical issues. The Supreme Court judgment (SC Appeal No. 52/2020) sheds light on the dual nature of the issue: on one hand, it underscores the demand for education through English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), while on the other, it exposes the discrepancies inherent in the BE approach to education. There are many Human Right Cases and appeals to the Ombudsman by parents seeking resolution for issues related to access to education through EMI. Due to this deficiency, in Sri Lanka, there is a growing demand for International Schools (IS). Regardless of economic hardships, parents are increasingly inclined to enrol their children in ISs, as they have been left with no other option for their children's acquisition of English language skills. This assertion is certainly justifiable, as the hegemonic status of English also functions as a gatekeeper in numerous domains; unequal access to EMI may lead to social demarcation subsequently dividing the society into different classes inevitably affecting social justice.

The complexities of BE in Sri Lanka also involve absence of proper management; curriculum standards; pedagogical approaches; classroom language policy; criteria for learning material development and assessment procedures; teacher (and other carder) professional development; stakeholder relations and most importantly public awareness. Sri Lankan BE context (particularly its involvement with EMI) aptly provides evidence for the lack of these which was evident in the Supreme Court (SC Appeal No. 52/2020) judgement that says "...there is no clear Government policy on bilingual education" (p.32). Similarly, NEC (2022) also points out the "[a]bsence of a sound bilingual education policy and discrepancies in implementing the Ministry of Education directives on bilingual education in schools" (p. 141).

The issues and opportunities involved in BE are related to Medium of Instruction (MOI). A country's MOI policy is a part of its language planning (LP). A robust LP should acknowledge the specific context and history in which LP problems become the object of policy writing activity. (Bianco, 2021). Additionally, new situations and perspectives emerging globally which are given below add to the Language policy and planning through MOI in education.

- No societies are monolingual in the era of dramatically increasing immigration and advanced virtual social spaces through technology
- Raising individual capacities to enhance better competitiveness in the global job markets [Particularly, when Sri Lanka aims at sending professionals/skilled to the international job market, tourism, IT industry as means for economic revival, the English Language (not only General English but field/discipline specific English) enhancement through general education becomes important].
- Internationalization and Englishization of universities in non-English-dominant countries, linking linguistics to the political economy - Universities are increasingly converting to EMI. Hence, secondary levels need to make the students ready for this challenge
- “Neither language could be separated from content, nor content from language” and language is learned across the curriculum
- Rather than learning as a subject, ‘acquiring’ a language through content has the Potential to serve as a context for meaningful language use and situated language learning (Nikula, 2017)
- Policy for language across the curriculum establishing every teacher’s involvement in language and reading development throughout the years of schooling.

The new BE/EMI policy must be fair by all and very cautiously deliberate the children’s and their parents’ aspirations, who attend all educational systems in the country, public, assisted or private. It is hypocritical to have one set of standards for international schools and another for government schools as argued in the SC Appeal No. 52/2020 judgement. The new policy must avoid being double-standard - one policy for international and private schools and another for public schools. An education policy must treat all citizens equally not violating fundamental rights of individuals, not compelling the parents to seek legal assistance when their children are deprived of access to EMI in public schools which is the situation now. This backdrop highlights the significance of evidence-informed careful policy making (Lee, 2018), and strategic planning for proper implementation of the BE program which is the aim of this report.

1.2. The Overarching Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to explore the current practices of BE approach to education to make informed recommendations to the NEC. Thus, the objectives of the study were:

- To explore how BE approach to the delivery of National Curriculum is implemented and practiced in schools
- To make recommendations to NEC enabling formulation of a policy on BE/EMI
- To make recommendations for a Strategic Implementation Plan

2. Methodology

As previously mentioned, the analysis focused solely on the "experienced policy" of the three stages of the policy continuum. The intended and implemented policies were not examined, as

they are not accessible due to the lack of an established policy framework on Bilingual Education. Consequently, the study delved into understanding the practical manifestation of "policy" or "law" in classroom settings. It aimed to investigate how recipients of the "policy" perceive and experience what the government, specifically the Ministry of Education (MOE), has announced and implemented regarding BE in schools. Thus, a qualitative approach was followed to have an in-depth exploration. The initial exploration, research foci, participants, data collection and analysis process are explained under this section.

2.1. Preliminary Exploration and Foci of the Study

It was deemed vital to integrate the professional judgment and feedback of all stakeholders, into the planning and structuring process. Thus, with the three main objectives in focus, an in-depth Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was held with former and present BE Directors and Deputy Directors of MOE. We considered the professional judgement and feedback of the people involved including the two researchers² is vital in planning/structuring the investigation. Based on their views, it was decided that the following challenges and issues warrant in-depth examination.

- Discrepancies in existing circulars, letters, memos, and other related documents
- The lack of an explicit policy on BE to guide the implementation at the administrative/management levels and below
- BE Model and terminology
- Access to BE and selection procedures
- Enrolment and entry point to EMI
- Physical space: separate classroom for EMI/BE
- Equity issues and social cohesion
- Pedagogical approach/methods,
- Domain-level language policy
- Textbooks and text adaptation
- Assessment procedures and issues
- Cadres: teachers and other related officers
- Teacher recruitments and deployment
- Teacher education: proper policy and strategic plan for teacher education both pre-service and in-service.

To explore, analyze and interpret the above foci, following research methods/instruments were utilized.

- a) Analysis of related documents and primary/secondary data
- b) Questionnaire for BE teachers

² The lead researcher's PhD is on BE which involved in-depth analysis using ethnographically informed data. She conceptualized, designed, wrote and implemented the only postgraduate level teacher/teacher educator professional development program in Sri Lanka and has been continuously working with BE practitioners. She has also published internationally on BE/EMI of Sri Lanka. The other researcher was the founding Director of BE and presenting reading for PhD which is also on BE. She teaches in the above program.

- c) Questionnaire for BE students
- d) Focus Group Discussions/Interviews

2.2. Participants

Purposive sampling was used to represent all layers of BE stakeholders, followed by snowball sampling. The participants comprised all layers of BE stakeholders as shown in Table 1: students, parents, teachers, principals, teacher educators, in-service advisors, zonal and national level coordinators, present and former directors, and deputy directors of BE, National Institute of Education) (NIE) and MOE officials, former secretary and activist. There were 176 BE teachers and 776 BE students among the participants. Other stakeholders represented all levels of the system: schools (including principals and deputy principals), Zones (zonal level coordinators and in-service-advisors), Provincial (provincial level coordinators), National (relevant directors, deputy directors, former secretaries, former directors etc.).

Table 1 : *List of Participants*

BE teachers	176 (1AB - 127; 1C - 46; Private/Assisted Schools - 3
Officers/Coordinators	16 MOE; NIE 2; Principal - 2; Zonal - 7
NCOE Teacher Educators	6
Principals	7
Other stakeholders	9
BE students	776

2.3. Secondary Data: Documents and Other Sources

Secondary data included NEC Reports, World Bank Education Sector-wise Development Frameworks & Programs (ESDFP - 1) 2005-2011 and ESDFP 2 – 2012-16); databases available at the MOE, NIE, DOE, NCOE and NEC and other government sources, the published and unpublished research on BE as shown in the following list.

- Circulars and cabinet memoranda related to BE
- Examination results (GCE/OL)
- Data at MOE, DOE
- NCOE syllabuses
- Supreme Court Appeal Judgement
- Two PhD studies on BE in Sri Lankan government and government-assisted schools (Ethnographically informed/qualitative) including raw data of classroom observation, FGDs, interviews (Medawattegedera, 2012; Wijsekera, 2018)
- Master of Arts qualitative study in a government-assisted school
- Teacher survey for a book chapter (Padwad, et al 2023)
- A zonal project
- A public school as a ‘case’ presently undergoing BE enhancement

2.4. Primary Data: Methods and Data Collection

The data collection was an iterative process that went back and forth between secondary and primary data for triangulation – looking for corroboration or contradictions. To elicit primary data, questionnaires, FCDs and semi structured interviews were utilized. Google survey forms, interview protocols etc. were used to structure data collection procedures framed by the themes emerged in the preliminary exploration (see 2.1).

2.5. Ethical Considerations

The following ethical measures were implemented.

- Written/recorded verbal informed consent
- Guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity
- Use of pseudonyms

3. Data Analysis and Interpretation: The ‘Experienced Policy’

3.1. Bilingual Approach to Education in Sri Lanka

The implementation of Bilingual Education in Sri Lanka stemmed from educational reforms proposed by the Presidential Task Force on Education (1997), mainly aiming at introducing English Medium Instruction (EMI) for the purpose of enhancing English Language proficiency which has been depleting with the conversion of general education to Mother Tongue Instruction (MTI): Sinhala and Tamil (NEC, 1997). The present BE/EMI³ approach to education was initiated in 2001 in Advanced Level Science and was subsequently extended to the lower secondary level - Grade six, in 2002 with little consideration given to aspects such as policy formulation, planning, implementation strategies, teacher education, and monitoring procedures. This top-down EMI introduction aimed at addressing opportunity for English Language learning equity issues seemed to primarily emphasize only on its positive impacts, with limited or no consideration given to potential issues such as access to EMI, and the absence of adequate support mechanisms.

BE in Sri Lanka is now two decades old. According to the school census reports from 2002 to 2021, its implementation in public schools has been very slow, yet progressing as shown below in Table 4.

Table 2: No. of BE Available Schools and Student Population

Year	No of schools out of 6237 approx..	No. of students
2002	56	1862
2007	547	49291
2015	739	76167

³ Bilingual Education is commonly called as English medium and hence are interchangeably used.

2020	714	99396
2021	754	103, 667

Source: School Census, MOE 2021

There are only 757 public schools out of 6237 schools⁴ that have BE. This is only 12% of schools with secondary grades. Even after two decades, only 4 per cent of the students has access to BE out of nearly 2,422,780 secondary level students due to failure in expanding BE as initially anticipated. Though the NEC report (2003) proposes to establish a school as a Centre of Excellence with EMI availability in every Divisional Secretariat area, that has never been materialized. There are nearly 92 government-assisted schools and according to our knowledge, all the 92 government-assisted schools offer EMI. Moreover, some so-called ‘International Schools’⁵ also teach the national curriculum in EMI. Unfortunately, statistics are not available in the MOE. The failure to expand BE in public schools and its availability in fee-levying schools deprive many students of English medium education, contributing to disparities in access to English, in complete opposition to NEC’s expectations of eradicating disparities to acquire English through BE.

3.2. Objectives of the Present BE Approach to Education in Sri Lanka

The initial objectives of Bilingual Education (BE) were designed to ensure that all students, regardless of socio-economic or regional disparities, have equal opportunities to attain proficiency in English for higher education and career advancement (NEC, 2003, xviii). This shift stemmed from the recognition of the shortcomings of teaching English as a second language (NEC, 1997) from Grade 3 to 13, which resulted in a highly stratified acquisition of English skills (Lo Bianco, 1999). Later, the objectives underwent revision, leading to the following changes.

- i. To develop social harmony and social cohesion in a pluralistic society using English as a link language both locally and globally,
- ii. To provide opportunity to all students at secondary level, irrespective of socio-economic and regional disparities, to acquire proficiency of both first language and English as a second Language without jettisoning Sinhala and Tamil as national and official languages,
- iii. To enable students to use local languages and English as a source and a means to reach knowledge society through information literacy
- iv. To link academic aspects with socio-economic political and cultural aspects of the world of work through national languages and the link language at local and global levels. (Handbook on CLIL, 2016: p.7).

It is observed that the objectives of BE align with the national goals of education: national cohesion, national integrity, a pervasive pattern of social justice, a sustainable pattern of living,

⁴ There are nearly 10,146 public schools in Sri Lanka. Only 6237 school have secondary education. BE starts from secondary education.

⁵ Though they are called ‘international’ no foreign students study in most of these schools. These school mainly follow Edexcel or Cambridge curriculum.

partnership in nation building activities, learn to adapt to changing situations, and to ensure sense of deep and abiding concern for one another (NEC, 2003). This is mainly due to the teaching/learning methodology prescribed for BE/EMI pedagogy CLIL whose 4C framework is almost similar to 21st century educational aims: 4Cs. Therefore, it is observed that it is worthy if the MTI classes also considered an adaptation of the same methodology when delivering the content.

3.3. The Type: Categorizing the Present BE Approach to Education in Sri Lanka

The categorization of Bilingual Education worldwide is mainly based on broader goals related to linguistic, social, and cultural aspects which are further categorized considering contextual and structural characteristics (Hornberger,1991). The available typologies are generic and inherently limited (Baker, 2011). Hence, exact categorization of actual BE programs cannot be done using them. Hinkel (2005) defines Sri Lankan BE as “...dual language education conforms to local curriculum standards, but the curriculum is delivered through two languages, with special attention to second language development and content learning through a second language” (p, 6). According to Nanayakkara (n.d.), Sri Lankan BE would enable using “... English as a tool for linking with the global while protecting and caring [for] local languages and cultural identity. [...] and defines the Sri Lankan BE as a ‘developmental model’ where English as a second language is enhanced “without jeopardizing the first languages...” (MoE). Wijesekera (2018) categorizes the present BE in Sri Lanka as depicted in Table 5 below.

Table 3: Categorizing BE Type in Sri Lanka (adapted Baker,2011)

Type of program	Typical type of child	Language of the Classroom	Societal and Education Aim	Language outcome aims
Strong form	Mixed – Language (Minority or/and Majority Sinhala and/or Tamil +English)	Bilingual in L1 and L2 with equal emphasis (L1- Sinhala/Tamil L2-English as a second Language)	Maintenance, Pluralism and Enrichment, Additive	Bilingualism & Biliteracy

Source: Wijesekera (2018: p.35)

3.4. Analysis of Policy-Related Secondary Data: Circulars and Other Documents

As depicted earlier too, Supreme Court (SC) judgment declares “the circulars issued by the Ministry of Education from time to time display a clear lack of vision” (P. 27), and the NEC (2022) mentions the “[a]bsence of a sound bilingual education policy and discrepancies in implementing the Ministry of Education directives on bilingual education in schools” (p 141). These were reconfirmed through the professional judgment made by former Directors and Deputy Directors of BE at the preliminary exploration (see 2.1) as summarized below.

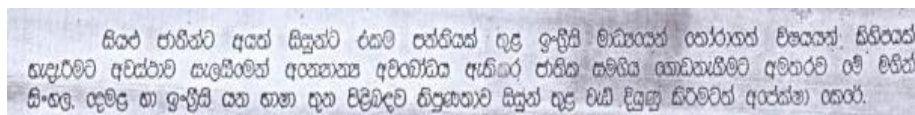
- Least stakeholder relations: working in opposite directions/confusions about roles
- Lack of knowledge about reality/ground situation [or mere negligence] in making decisions [E.g. implementation of mixed classes and time waste]
- No teacher recruitment/training
- Ad hoc decisions resulting in confusion in planning, implementation, management, pedagogical approaches, criteria for material/lesson development, assessment procedures, teacher (and other carder) professional development
- No policy; No strategic plan; No monitoring
- The ‘program’ lies in the hands of a few principals/teachers who have a passion for it
- The consequences have led to slow improvement, malpractices, manipulations, strong gatekeeping and equity issues due to limited availability

In the next section, the above views are further triangulated through a critical analysis of available circulars, circular letters, cabinet decisions, etc.

3.4.1. *Circular Paradox*

The enactment of decisions taken by the authorities (MOE) are directed through circulars/circular letters [12], cabinet memos [03] and other documents. There are many discrepancies due to lack of evidence-informed policy decisions in these circulars. The disempowerment of the MOE due to discrepancies in their own circulars is well documented in the SC Judgement. Due to the limited space only two examples are discussed here.

- a) [Circular Ref HRD/EQD/2002/12](#) dated 2002.05.10 directs the relevant officials to make opportunities available for diverse ethnolinguistic groups to study in one classroom (see below)–



When the above circular is enactive another circular was issued restricting separate classrooms for EMI students (Circular No2008/12 dated 21.04.2008) based on anecdotal evidence (Wijesekera, 2018). Both circulars and the decisions therein show lack of critical thinking and inadequate understanding of the ground situations. For instance, as Wijesekera (2018) pointed out , when banning the separate classrooms for EMI students the officials have not thought about advantages that can yield concerning social cohesion through such classes by bringing together students of diverse ethnicities in multiethnic schools. Further, the very directives by authority have been neglected or violated and the quotes given below exemplify it.

2007 විරෂයේ සිට ද්විතියික මට්ටමට (6-11) ක්‍රියාත්මක වන නව විෂයමාලාව යටතේ මෙම ද්විමාධ්‍ය පාඨමට්ටමට පත්වනු ලබන විෂයයන් සඳහා මින් ඉදිරියට පහත සඳහන් විධිවිධාන බලපැවැත් වේ.

4.3 පාසලවල ද්විමාධ්‍යයෙන් ඉගෙනුම ලබන සිසුන් සඳහා වෙනම පාඨයක් ආරම්භ නොකළ යුතුය. සිංහල හෝ දෙමළ මාධ්‍යයේ සිසුන් සමඟ ඉගෙනුම සිසුන් ද එකම පාඨයේ සිටිය යුතු අතර අදාළ විෂයයන් ඉංග්‍රීසි මාධ්‍යයෙන් ඉගෙනගන්නා අවස්ථාවන්හි දී පමණක් වෙන්වී යා යුතුය. මේ ආකාරයට ක්‍රියාත්මක විය හැකි පරිදි පාසලේ කාලසටහන සකස් කර ගැනීම විදුහල්පතිගේ වගකීම වේ. (2009 වසරේ සිට අතිවාරයෙන්ම ඉගෙනුම ලබාදීමේ පරිදි ක්‍රියා කළ යුතු ය). තෝරාගත් විෂයයන් ඉංග්‍රීසි මාධ්‍යයෙන් ඉගෙනීම සඳහා තෝරාගත යුත්තේ පාසලේ 6 ශ්‍රේණියේ සිසුන් අතරිනි. පාසලට ඇතුළත්වීම සඳහා ද්විමාධ්‍ය පාඨය ලබාගැනීම සඳහා සෑදීමට ඉඩකඩ නොදීම යුතුය.

- b) Circular 2010/27 attempts to curb malpractices and manipulation in the process of student admissions to schools. (These malpractices were confirmed at the interviews and FGDs). Clause 4 of the circular prohibits admissions to Grade 7 without considering that students must have the opportunity to enter schools at this grade level if vacancies are available in such schools (there are some schools with less than 20 students in BE classes). By denying students the opportunity to join a school with available BE vacancies, it not only squanders public money but also exacerbates equity issues stemming from limited access to EMI. This failure in management/administration ultimately deprives students of valuable learning opportunities in EMI, solely due to authorities’ inability to control malpractices.

These are only a few examples. Please refer to Annexure I for a comprehensive analysis of circulars and other documents. Refer to [4.1](#) for the related recommendations.

3.4.2. Model and Terminology Controversy

The cautious use of terminology in policy and implementation documents is very vital to prevent misinterpretations and ambiguities. At the inception, the term English Medium Instruction was the choice (NEC, 1997; 2003), and even today this term is utilized in NEC reports. However, the NIE (2009) claims naming BE as "English Medium Instruction" is a “wrong start”, yet does not provide a justification for the claim. EMI is the popular term used in schools, as well as among teachers, students and parents. NEC, in this regard, has been consistent in using the terms BE and EMI in their documents as depicted below.

- a) “[b]ilingualism should be promoted by using *English as a medium of instruction* in selected subjects” (p. 116. emphasis added).
- b) NEC (2020) acknowledges that doing away with *English medium instruction* was “a setback for individuals concerned and society” (p.140) and “the vacuum created by the neglect of teaching in the *English medium*” (emphasis added).
- c) The report also states that the “promotion of *English medium* in the last decades is a consequence of this change of perception” (emphasis added).

The Oxford University’s global survey (2013/14) places Sri Lankan BE under EMI programs (Dearden, 2015). Macaro’s (2018) defines EMI as “[t]he use of English Language to teach academic subjects (rather than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English” (p. 19) emphasizing content learning through EMI. Here, with the greater exposure, English is incidentally or implicitly learned and more or less acquired than learning English explicitly as a subject. This type of EMI

has the double benefit of learning both language and content (Gronchi, 2023). Galloway & Ruegg, (2020) argue that the demand for EMI among the students and parents is coming from their urge to improve English, and “[i]n many contexts, EMI is being pushed alongside government goals to improve English language proficiency...” Galloway & Rose, 2021, p.34). All these arguments are valid to Sri Lankan EMI in the BE approach. Moreover, the Sri Lankan EMI in BE could be placed on the right end of the Continuum of Approaches (Galloway & Rose, 2021) to language content teaching – Hard CLIL.

Figure 1

Continuum of Approaches to Language and Content Teaching



Source: Galloway & Rose (2021)

Irrespective of all above explicit evidence, the terminology debate, whether BE or EMI seems to continue, especially among the decision makers such as NIE, NEC and MOE. The survey question no. 6 requested BE teachers to select the most used term in schools and the term they prefer. The following illustrations show the results. Whereas the most used term is English Medium (63%), most teachers prefer it to be called as Bilingual Education (56%), yet 29% still prefer the term English Medium.

Figure 2

Most Used Term in Schools among and Teachers, Parents Students

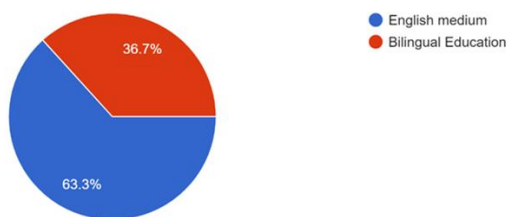
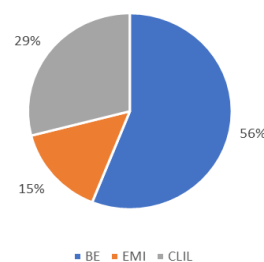


Figure 3

Term Preferred by Teachers



However, it is pertinent that terminology in a program is very vital. Terms and names must reflect what they represent and ambiguities will hinder a proper implementation of any program. It is also pertinent that stakeholder views i.e. those who experience the ‘policy’ must be taken into consideration. Therefore, our recommendations given in this document are based on a) the

arguments b) the views of the participant stakeholders and c) BE models discussed earlier. [Refer to 4.2.](#)

3.4.3. Access to BE, Selections and Gatekeeping

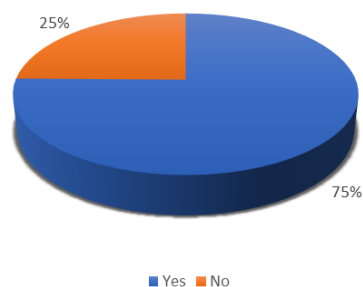
There are disparities in the availability of BE. i.e. English Medium and Less opportunities to educate in English is highly discriminatory which exists mostly between rural and urban. The available statistics shows the number of students in provinces like North Central and Uva being significantly less when compared to the Western Province. This is contradictory with the NEC recommendations on ‘equal access’ to BE. Even in the schools where BE/EMI is available all students cannot embark on EMI due to limited resources.

Circular No. 2002/12 (10.05.2002) defines two ‘selection⁶’ criteria to BE/EMI classes: students’ willingness and resource availability. Nevertheless, school authorities are compelled to use gatekeeping mechanisms to limit students due to resource constraints, especially due to lack of capable EMI teachers. The most alarming is there is no uniformity in these selection procedures. According to teacher response to survey 75% of schools conduct selection tests to limit the students. Out of the remaining 25%, fewer students seem to be choosing BE. Hence, there is no need to have a selection test.

Figure 4

The Percentage of Schools Showing How to Enrol Students for BE Classes

Using of selection procedure in the school to select students for English medium (BE)



Source: Teacher Survey Reconfirmed in FGDs

As revealed in secondary and primary data, schools use varying mechanisms as selection procedures – English knowledge and Knowledge pertaining to Grade 5; Written test to assess English competences; Test English Language proficiency + content knowledge such as Mathematics, Environmental studies; English and IQ; Test English language skills and interview the child. The demand is too high so that in a government-assisted school the school authorities not only interview the child but also his/her parents to see if the parents can converse in English

⁶ We use selection/select with the quotation mark since the work used in these circulars does not represent the literary/dictionary meaning though this was misinterpreted later by the MOE in response to clarification given to the Ombudsman (See appendix 2)

to ensure that the child is coming from an English-speaking background (Wijesekera, 2018). These examples highlight the constraints on educational opportunities provided by BE, which significantly contribute to social division and hinder the economic, cultural, and social benefits offered by the English language. Students also expressed their concerns on access to BE in the survey. One such vital issue is absence of EMI at collegiate level (Advanced Level) in some schools where students complete secondary education in EM.

“I hope that all government schools will start to teach in English medium for the students that who like to do it.” [student survey]

“I like to study A/L in English medium. There are no teachers for A/L in English meadium.so I am requesting to Ministry of education to add A/L English medium teachers.” (Student survey]

A survey conducted in the school we took as a ‘case’ (School A, a prestigious School) for this study revealed that

For the past so many years, hundreds of children have been denied access to Bi-lingual education annually, despite repeated appeals. As per a current survey conducted by the Academic Advisory Committee of the Royal College Union (RCU) involving 200 parents whose children plan entering Y6 in January ’22, 75% are desirous of admitting their children to the Bi-lingual stream. (*Survey at School A*)

In this school, parents have sought redress from the Ombudsman and Human Rights Commission. Therefore, the access to EMI issue is not limited to remote areas. Though the public perceive these are children from privileged families, many of them are Grade five scholarship holders from rural areas. The complexity of access and gatekeeping in EMI is demonstrated in cases where bureaucratic barriers hindered expansion of EMI despite available funds through Old Pupils’ Association and parents of this school.

Another concern that leads to malpractices and injustice is lack of transparency in these so-called ‘selection tests’. There are many human right cases and appeals to Ombudsman which are not publicly reported unlike in the case of Asoka Vidyalaya. The study also found misinterpretation of the word ‘select’ in the Circular 2012/12. In the answer to the Ombudsman (RC/VP/2022/03 Dated 18.11.2022- See Appendix 2) justifying the ‘selection tests’ in contrast to their own circular. Also, this response to the Ombudsman was misleading and inappropriate for English Medium or Bilingual Education is not only for the students who have English Language proficiency. Instead, it is meant for the development of English Language proficiency.

To address these inequalities and ensure equity, policy actions are suggested in the section of suggestions and recommendations of this report based on the above arguments and the findings of the study. These are of long term and short-term purposes. The short-term actions are to address anomalies in the present BE/EMI selection procedures and to maintain transparency and consistency until the demand for BE is fulfilled and all students who are willing to embark on EMI is provided the opportunity. As such, evidence-based decisions must be taken in policy formulation. In our recommendations, we point out the strong need to bring all systems of schools under one accreditation body to eliminate division and exclusion of private schools from the education system. It is reiterated that these institutions educate Sri Lankan children and that education produce productive people to fulfil national demands. We also have proposed a

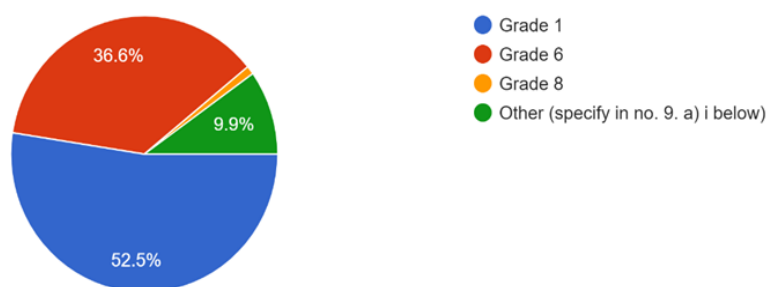
‘selection’ mechanism until the schools can fulfil the demand for EMI by all of its students. Refer to [4.3](#).

3.4.4. *When to Start or Transitioning to BE/EMI*

According to Circular 2008/12 dated 21.04.2008 transition to EMI is Grade 6 and the Circular 2003/18 dated 05.05.2003 bans the starting of BE at primary level or from Grade 1. Yet, there are many government-assisted schools where EMI/BE is offered from Grade one. The SC Appeal was also concerned with the Ministry of Education's request to halt the introduction of BE/EMI from Grade one at Asoka Vidyalaya, Horana, an unaided private school. Our survey findings indicate that slightly more than half of the participating teachers (52.5%) consider Grade one as the optimal starting point for implementing English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), while 36.6% prefer starting at Grade six.

Figure 5

Starting Grade for BE



Source: Teacher Survey Reconfirmed/Triangulated with FGDs

Furthermore, there were other stakeholders and teacher educators who advocate Grade one as the ideal starting point for EMI. During focus group discussions (FGDs), many participating teachers and other stakeholders echoed the reasons presented by Zein (2021), emphasizing the ease of language development during the early stages. Participants highlighted the absence or low levels of students' language anxiety and shyness in the early grades. They argued for initiating EMI from Grade one as an effective strategy to compete with international schools. They also raised concerns about the inconsistency of authorities, questioning why international schools are permitted to start from Grade one while public and government-assisted schools are not. Both teachers and zonal teacher-educators suggested introducing English instruction for environment-related themes in primary classes. Many who are against implementing BE at the primary level justify their arguments quoting the Constitutional provisions and UNESCO declaration on access to MT education. Hence, a brief analysis of these is noteworthy. We first take the Constitution followed by UNESCO declarations.

3.4.4.1. (Mis)interpretation of the Constitutional Provisions and UNESCO Declarations

The Constitution of Sri Lanka comprises provisions on the Medium of Instruction in Schools and in Tertiary Education in Chapter IV, Article 21, regarding the medium of instruction in general education (primary and secondary).

21. (1) A person shall be *entitled* to be educated through the medium of either of the National Languages: Provided that the provisions of this paragraph shall not apply to an institution of higher education where the medium of instruction is a language other than a National Language of Sri Lanka's Constitution. [*our emphasis*]

According to above, student "...shall be entitled to be educated through the either Sinhala or Tamil as medium of instruction, and it does not use shall be educated. However, the first part of Article 21 has always been interpreted with its succeeding part on MOI in higher education. Consequently, the first part on primary education is (mis)interpreted that the access to education at primary level must only be in either Sinhala or Tamil expelling primary education in another language/s particularly bi/multilingual. This (mis)interpretation invites an analysis of UNESCO declaration on right to mother tongue instruction at primary level. UNESCO's (2003) Education in a Multilingual World: UNESCO Education Position Paper defines three basic principles on language and education. ([Language of instruction – IIEP Policy Toolbox \(unesco.org\)](#)).

- mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers [bring with their home languages]
- bilingual and/or multilingual education at all levels of education as a means of promoting both social and gender equality and as a key element of linguistically diverse societies.
- language as an essential component of inter-cultural education in order to encourage understanding between different population groups and ensure respect for fundamental rights.

According to the second and third points above, UNESCO's stance is supporting bi/multilingual education **at all levels of education**. They further state "Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) is composed of at least two different languages. The democratization of the English language teaching and practice, for instance, helps pupils to access to higher education, thus it enables social mobility and employment." ([Language of instruction – IIEP Policy Toolbox \(unesco.org\)](#)). Additionally, UNESCO also recommends early acquisition of a second language in addition to mother tongue that may be implemented through media of instruction. The same article mentions that "[c]ountries see the political value of language as a unifying force, and, increasingly, as an economic passport into the global economy for their citizens." English in Sri Lanka has this political value of inclusion and unifying and economic values. In BE classrooms of multiethnic schools, the students declare that English has been a 'neutral language' that neutralizes the tensions and divisions based on Sinhala and Tamil in ethnically diverse BE classrooms reducing xenophobia (Wijesekera, 2018; 2021;2022 Wijesekera, Alford & Mu, 2019). Wijesekera's ethnographically informed study also shows how student and parents see English as an all-encompassing capital that accrues social, economic, cultural and symbolic capital. Most importantly, concerning early bi/multilingualism, there are overwhelming research that support higher metalinguistic knowledge, cognitive and problem-solving abilities, cognitive

flexibility in bilingual children compared to their monolingual counterparts (Barac & et, al. , 2016; Cummins, 2000, Mackey, 2007; Peal & Lambert, 1962; Zein, 2021).

Considering above arguments and the stakeholder views it is suggested that Bi/multilingual education be introduced from the primary level using one or two subject areas/topics/themes - potentially environmental related themes - while all other subjects/areas must be taught in child's mother tongue. This can be implemented initially in schools where teachers are available, and then expanded to all schools once the government fulfils the teacher availability in all schools. Until the latter is achieved, the schools can alternatively offer some topics/themes bilingually (use of English and Mother-Tongue) using translanguaging (Garcia & Wei, 2014) as a pedagogic tool which is in other words improving the provision of Activity-Based-Oral English program. These suggestions could easily be achieved if the MOE/NIE take accelerated action to introduce a compulsory English language module for both Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1984) to primary teacher trainees at the National Colleges of Education. These steps will also accommodate achieving the NEC's expectations towards equal access to English Language.

Overall, limited access to EMI through BE resulting from slow progress/expansion of BE creates equity and inclusive issues that questions social justice the restricted availability of EMI due to the slow advancement BE raises concerns about equity and inclusivity, that questions social justice. . It is vital to mention that while international schools are mushrooming expanding access to EMI for those who can afford, the majority is excluded from EMI due to limited availability of BE in public schools as also emphasized in the SC Appeal Judgement. Another vital aspect is the disparity in allowing EMI from Grade one in private/international schools i.e. for those who can afford it while prohibiting it in public and government-assisted schools, including those with financial support from old pupils' associations and other benefactors. This discrepancy highlights the inconsistency and hypocrisy in our policies as evident in the SC judgement.

This issue is not beyond resolution. But it seems that the primary causal factor that hinders the progress is often the hypocrisy and duplicity of authorities. As one of the stakeholders, former Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Education reiterated during the interview:

“The problem or the fault is there is no direction, there is no one clear message. It's, you know, duplicity, hypocrisy. They are the people who decides on policy and tell to roll out policy have one set of standards for themselves and another set of standards for the children in the government schools”

Based on these findings, and the analysis of related literature we have made several important recommendations. Though these recommendations focus on BE and EMI they are also important for general education policy. Refer to [4.4](#) .

3.4.5. *Subjects to Teach/Learn through EMI/BE*

What subjects to teach through EMI is another concern. Currently, six subjects are allowed: Science, Math, Citizenship Education, Health and Physical Education, Information Technology, Geography at the secondary level while making History and Religion compulsory to be taught in mother tongue (Circular 2008/12 Dated 21.04.2008). The survey asked the views of BE

teachers and teacher educators on what subjects are more suitable to be taught in EM. The following are the findings. The respondents have selected Math and Science as the most suitable subjects to teach in English.

Table 4

BE Teachers and Teacher Educator Views on What Subjects to be Taught in BE

Subjects to teach in BE	Science	Math	Geography	Civic	H & PE	ICT	Commerce	Religion	PTS	History	Agriculture
%	65.5	68.14	42.48	39.82	36.28	22.12	10.61	8.0	6.12	5.04	3.53

According to above, many teachers and teacher educators perceive Science, Math, Geography, Citizenship Education and Health & PE as the best five subjects to be offered under BE. This may be due to the broader spectrum of subjects available in the higher education in relation to these disciplines. There appears to be consensus about the subjects to be taught and the subjects allowed though the circulars. It is recommended that the present circulars related to subjects be continued. However, reducing the number of subjects offered in the secondary curriculum subjects is strongly recommended irrespective of the MOI. It appears that the secondary curricular is too broad and spans over varying disciplines. What is more vital is to enhance the depth with the focus of promoting 21st century skills, attitudes and knowledge, not surface knowledge of everything. Refer to [4.5](#)

3.4.6. Separate Classrooms for BE Students

This is another issue debated over the years. Allocating separate classrooms for BE students was banned by the Ministry (Circular 2008/12) based on anecdotal evidence (see Wijesekera, 2018 for analysis). The main reason was an incident occurred in a leading girls' school where a BE student had called a Sinhala Medium student as "You Sinhala medium B...h". There is a common perception that BE students form a different 'class' in the school. This may be either an actual or imagined perception according to the views of the participants of this study. If actual, taking remedial measures to avoid such class separations by making the students consciously aware of their behaviours is the responsibility of school authorities and teachers.

3.4.6.1. Creating Shared Lived Experiences for Ethnically and Religiously Diverse Students

Social integration is one of the objectives of BE and more importantly in National Goals of Education. Yet, it cannot be achieved due to the ethnically polarized state school system. The circular 2008/12 that advocates not to have separate classrooms is ignorant about the fact that BE classrooms in multiethnic schools (where both Sinhala and Tamil media are available) can bring all ethnic groups together in one social space where they can share each other's' lived experiences and thereby become inclusive groups with supraethnic identity [Please refer to 3.4.7 below].

3.4.6.2. Learning Loss

The main disadvantage of not having separate classrooms for BE students is the waste of learning time due to movements. For instance, BE students have to move to another place when they have subjects taught in English. Students and teachers complain that permanent spaces for EMI subjects are not allocated compelling them to find a ‘classroom or space’ to have the class. Even if they are given a separate place for subjects, student movements take time. The following are excerpts from a student’s views elicited from the survey followed by a BE teacher view (FGD).

“In our school we do not have a place to do studying activities because our class has both Sinhala and English Medium students therefore from month to month we go outside, and we do not have a place for our academic studies. Please if you can fix the problem” [Student]

“Since there's no classroom for Bilingual subjects, time is wasted in finding a place to teach and thereby students are discouraged to select bilingual education.” [BE Teacher]

In fact, although they would like to, some students and their parents are hesitant to take BE due to this classroom issue. The participant in the survey and FGDs disclosed that having a separate class for BE would encourage more students to enrol in BE and prevent learning loss that occurs due to movement and other constraints. Refer to [4.6](#) for recommendations.

3.4.7. Social Impact: Focusing on Equity, Inclusivity

Considering the uninformed arguments and perceptions by learned as well as laypersons that contribute to uproars about the English medium, and based on previous research (Wijesekera, 2018; Wijesekera, 2022; Wijesekera & Alford, 2019; Wijesekera, Alford & Mu, 2016), we investigated the following aspects through the present study.

- a. How BE shapes ethnic and national identity and social cohesion
- b. How EMI could shape attitudes towards languages (especially MT/cultural language) and national identity
- c. How BE can shape ethnic and religious polarization in the school system

3.4.7.1. BE in Multiethnic Schools: The Only Place to Bring Inclusivity in the System

The above three aspects are directly related to one of the main objectives of the Sri Lankan BE: “[t]o develop social harmony and social cohesion in a pluralistic society using English as a link language both locally and globally” (MOE, 2010), and several National Educational Goals (NEC, 2003; 2022) To answer the above four concerns some primary data and secondary data: data available at the BE Branch, School Census and qualitative data in Wijesekera (2018) were utilized. The primary data gathered from Wijesekera (2018) is examined from various perspectives to analyse and interpret equity, diversity responsiveness, inclusion, and exclusion issues in BE concerning ethnic and linguistic polarizations. Wijesekera (2018) indicates, with strong evidence from a number of schools, how BE positively shapes ethnic inclusivity and

supranational identity in multiethnic bi-media schools⁷ through shared lived experiences when the students of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds work together to achieve common educational targets. This is the only opportunity that the country gets to bring the students of all ethnicities together. Nevertheless, sadly, there are only about 35 such schools in the country. Please also refer to the related discussion under the sub-heading Circular Paradox. The present discussion provides strong justification that BE classrooms in multiethnic bi-media schools are the only social space that can create shared lived experience for ethnolinguistically and religiously diverse students. Hence, it is critically pertinent that these spaces be utilized to bring the nation together using this extremely limited opportunity at any cost. It is also vital increasing such opportunities by establishing classrooms/schools, especially expanding the medium of instruction variations in the available schools. Refer to [4.7](#).

3.4.7.2. *The Relegation of English Medium Students by M Teachers and Students of Mother-Tongue Instructions*

Though the authorities are focusing only on avoiding a *new affluent class* of English medium students, no research has looked into the issue of relegation of EM students and illtreating them by teachers and students of MTI, except the sociological analysis of BE by Wijesekera (2018) through ethnographic means. This is mainly reported among Tamil Medium students and teachers in the schools under study and this has gone to the extent that Tamil medium teachers calling the Tamil EM students “English Dogs” and resort to corporal punishments (Wijesekera & Obaid, 2023). Refer to [4.7](#) for recommendations.

3.4.8. *Language Policy at the Domain Level: Classroom Language Policy*

Teachers and students equally claim that the use of L1 in the BE’s EMI class is necessary in order to enable an environment that promotes students’ voluntary discourse, dynamic participation/engagement, and comprehension of the content by bridging the language gaps. They also argue that use of L1s in the BE class ensures a student-friendly learning environment. The figure 4 indicates the views of BE teachers who participated in the survey.

Figure 6

Views of Teachers on Language Use in Content Delivery in BE Classrooms



⁷ These are the school where both Sinhala and Tamil media are available along with Bilingual or English medium education.

As depicted, the majority of teachers (87.8%) prefers more English and less Sinhala/Tamil in the learning – teaching process. The ethnographically informed study of Wijesekera (2018), where she conducted classroom observation, provides evidence that the heteroglossic classroom language policy promotes learner participation, right to expression, comprehensible input, and social cohesion among the students who speak different languages, e.g. Sinhala and Tamil. However, during FGDs it was revealed that the teachers and teacher educators have no understanding of the present practices in the world and they still believe that using L1 in the BE class is ‘bad’. Even though they know the value of L1 in scaffolding and actually use L1 as a pedagogic tool, they still do it with guilt and shame. They believe that the others might judge this as their lack of or insufficient English language proficiency (Wijesekera, 2018).

The students also advocate the inclusion of all languages in the BE class, especially in remote areas and in lower grades i.e. Grade 6-7 who are in early transition period. The students also claim that use of all languages in the class will help them improve their L1 and 2NL, the latter if it is a trilingual multiethnic school.. In Wijesekera’s study (2018) as quoted below, the students expressed these views when asked what languages should be utilized in the BE classroom.

All three languages [in chorus] then it is easy to understand what they [teachers] teach.

Even if we study maths in English, but we are thinking in Tamil, in our mother tongue because we can ask and learn from Sinhala friends.

Now in civics class, Sir doesn’t use any Tamil to explain. But he gives a lot of work to do in all three languages. So *we can learn all those words in other languages.* [emphasis added]

It’s like studying in all three languages. According to textbook the lesson is in English but when he is explaining in Sinhala we can get the idea. And when we do group work in all three languages like writing definitions in all three languages, we can get the idea of that lesson in our mother tongue also.

Further, this study revealed another aspect related to the use of all languages in BE; students begin to respect each other’s languages. Motivated by this exposure some students have selected 2nd NL as one of their basket subject for GCE Ordinary Level. Considering the above analysis including participants stakeholder views and other research findings, recommendations are made in Section [4.8](#) .

3.4.9. Academic and Linguistic Performance of BE Students

There are many beliefs and debates about BE students’ performance or in particular learning subjects through English. Among many such aspects, we identified three main aspects that warrant investigations :

- a) EMI/BE’s impact on L2 (English): The cross-fertilization of the English language through BE/EMI (learning content through English)
- b) EMI/BE’s impact on academic achievement: Are those students learning in English language equally competent as those who learn the same subjects in their mother tongue
- c) EMI/BE’s impact on L1 (Sinhala or Tamil).

Tracking educational progress is one way to assess the BE’s performance to counter-argue these debates. In this regard, we focused on both academic and linguistic achievements/failures. We

analysed the academic subject performance of BE students in comparison to that of learning through L1. The research has proven the Cross-fertilization of the English language through EMI (Rose & Galloway, 2019). Nevertheless, local empirical research is absent concerning this cross-fertilization phenomenon except for Wijesekera’s study. There are also growing concerns about less emphasis by BE learners on their mother tongue and many fear potential language attrition: Sinhala and the Sri Lankan variety of Tamil at least among certain social groups in the country. Hence, we also analysed language performance of BE students – both English language and Mother-tongue by taking a representative sample of GCE (O/L) and GCE (A/L) examination results of English language and National language performance of BE students in comparison to Sinhala/Tamil media students. We mainly used secondary data available at the Department of Examination for both of these. We also utilized primary data from a case study and another qualitative study (Arachchige, 2022; Medawattegedera, 2012)

3.4.9.1. Cross-fertilization: English as a Second Language

One of the main objectives of BE is to improve English proficiency in order to produce school-leavers who are able to secure better paid employment in the local and global job market, in addition to provide English required in higher or tertiary education. The participant students, teachers and other stakeholders in the present study confirmed the achievement of this aim by BE students. Moreover, the overall achievement of BE/EMI students at GCE (O/L) seems higher than that of their MTI counterparts as the table below depicts.

Table 5

Achievement of BE Students in Comparison to MTI Students at GCE (O/L)

Year	BE Sum Passed %	MTI Sum Passed %	BE Sum 'W' %	MTI Sum 'W' %
2018	95.64	84.68	4.36	15.31
2019	95.75	85.36	4.24	14.63
2020	94.98	86.42	5.04	13.57
2021	95	86.94	5.01	13.05

As depicted in the table, which is based on the GCE (O/L) results from the relevant years provided by the Department of Examination (DoE), the academic performance of students in the BE program appears notably better compared to students in the Mother Tongue Instruction (MTI) program, as indicated by the percentages of results in the GCE (Ordinary Level) Examinations spanning from 2018 to 2021. For example, BE students had an average pass rate of 95%, whereas MT students had 87%. Likewise, the fail rate was 5% and 13% respectively. Teachers who took part in FGDs further affirmed the superior performance of BE students and confirmed the potential for BE students outperforming Grade 5 Scholarship holders in the long run.

The cross-fertilization of English Language by BE is evident in statistics, FGDs revealed by students and teachers. The study's primary data collected from BE students express the same. In fact, the participant students claim that ESL textbooks and the test papers are dull for them and request that they need to be assigned with higher competency levels. The following excerpts are taken from views of BE students which triangulated with teacher Focus group discussions.

“At first, it's quite hard to study in English but as the time passes, you'll get used to it so not much difficulties are there when it comes to English [language]”

“It (BE) improves my English. And also, it inspired me to speak English and use it without any hesitation. And also, it is easy to get a lot of extra information over internet for complex subjects like science as many websites possess information in English”.

“I'd like to be more fluent in English so in school there's a particular period only” [but through BE I can learn English more]”.

The fact is confirmed further from the G.C.E. (O/L) examination results which shows better results for ESL where results of BE students is 100% and many of them are ‘A’ passes. The two main public examinations also provide evidence for this cross-fertilization i.e., BE students achieve EL proficiency. For instance, BE students’ achievement at GCE (O/L) is higher than their MTI counterparts both in EL and MT. One example of evidence comes from Galle Education Zone where 556 BE students from 21 schools sat for G. C. E. (O/L) in 2021. According to the analysis of the BE Zonal Coordinator, all the students (100%) passed English language and 72% obtained 'A' passes Another example is KM/ST/Sammanthurai Muslim Madhya Maha Vidyalaya (NS). In that school, the pass rate for English language in G. C. E. (O/L), 2021 was 100% and out of them, 50% of students got 'A' passes. The majority of the other 50% (about 75%) obtained ‘C’ or above. The pass rate of English language of their MTI counterparts was 74% and only 12% of them obtained ‘A’ passes for English. The BE/EMI students who participated in the study disclosed that the ESL curriculum and textbooks are not up to their proficiency levels and hence they become bored during ESL class. They, in fact, requested a separate ‘higher standard’ English Language paper for GCE (O/L). For this, some examples are given below further triangulated from teacher FGDs.

“In grade 8 English pupils’ book is not suitable for Grade 8 students because it is more easy [*sic*] to study. There is no excitement when I study this book”

“Conduct hard English exam for English medium students in different ways”

The above analysis provides strong support for NEC’s expectation that English Language should be promoted through BE. In the NEC Report (2003), under the proposals on promotion of English education, it states that,

A bilingual policy should be introduced in junior secondary classes to provide an enabling environment to ensure that all students, irrespective of socio-economic and/or regional disparities, have the opportunity to acquire a level of English proficiency adequate for higher education and career advancement. (56, iia, p.xviii).

Cross-fertilization has a strong research support, in parts of the world as well as Sri Lanka. Teaching of ESL can learn several lessons from new trends in the world as well as from cross-fertilization of language through content. Hence, there is a need to revisit ESL teaching as well

focussing CLIL (soft-CLIL where the focus is language learning but via content). Refer to [4.9](#) for recommendations.

3.4.9.2. Fearing Linguistic Loss

The public, including stakeholders, holds a general perception that EMI threatens MT leading to linguistic loss. However, empirical research confirms the opposite that BE consolidates literacy and academic knowledge, improves target language learning while reinforcing students' MT (Lo Bianco, 2023). The local studies reconfirm this (Medawattegedera, 2012; Wijesekera, 2018) including the present study. Medawattegedera (2012), based on evidence, claims that “concerns about possible language loss and a decrease in written Sinhala...” due to EMI “are completely unfounded” in public schools, instead EMI nurtures cognitive academic proficiency in the MT. Moreover, Wijesekera’s study (2018) confirms that not only EMI enhances subject-specific literacy in MT but also EMI in multiethnic classrooms encourages learning of the 2nd National Language, the language of the ‘other’, supports growing respect for diversity, and social cohesion⁸. These findings are triangulated by the participant teachers and teacher educators of the present study during FGDs. However, there are tendencies towards failing mother tongue at GCE (Ordinary Level) examination in some government-assisted schools resulting from lack of respect and interest towards MT and poor teaching of MT (Sinhala/Tamil). A case study in a government-assisted school that explored reasons for increased failure rate of MT among BE/EMI students reveals that it was mainly due to neglect or unsuccessful teaching/learning of MT (Arachchige, 2022). For recommendation refer to [4.9](#).

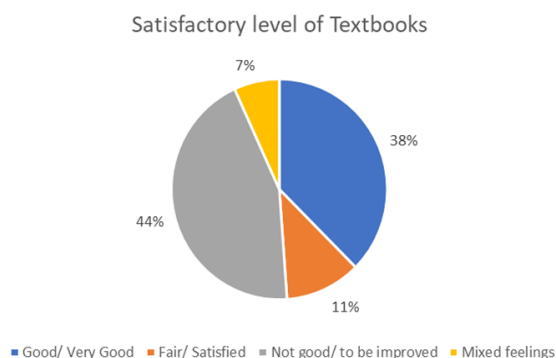
3.4.10. Textbooks/Instructional Material and Adaptation

A majority (44%) of the BE teachers in the sample reported that the textbooks are not satisfactory. Little below this i.e. 38% of the participant teachers are happy with the existing books. But, when these data were triangulated with FGDs, many teachers were in the opinion that some textbooks should be improved. They said that some textbooks in mother tongue are also not well-prepared. In particular, they reported that there are errors in mathematics questions and some mathematics lessons are redundant since some lessons are repeated again from Grade 6 to 11. They also complained that there are some paragraphs in subjects like health science which are complex and hard to understand. The figure 7 below shows the satisfactory level of textbooks as rated by teachers.

⁸ This, reconfirms the achievement of the second objective of BE if BE classrooms are ethnolinguistically diverse (Wijesekera, 2018).

Figure 7

BE Teacher Views on Satisfactory Level of Textbooks



In addition to the previously mentioned concerns about textbooks, teachers emphasized the following issues regarding BE learners using the same materials designed for MTI students.

- Direct translation with complicated words
- Long paragraphs
- Not adopting CLIL methodology
- Require adaptation

The claims of teachers are proven by one of the former Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Education reiterating issues with regard to textbooks at the interview with her. The following excerpts were taken from that interview.

“Textbooks... if I am to rewind the clock and today, I will never want to print new books. [...] Whether you're living in Sri Lanka or in Singapore or in Korea or in your case, like Math and Science, shouldn't be the same? so why reinvent the wheel when those countries are far ahead of us in education? [...] take those books and offer it to our children. I hope my answer sufficed for the moment.”

The former Secretary reiterated that the government should seriously consider borrowing books which may be done under an Asian Development Bank project. The participant teachers in this study made the following suggestions to improve textbooks.

- Must meet international standards
- Separate book for BE should be prepared considering the fact that BE students are learning through a language in which they are not adequately proficient yet.
- Elaboration with more examples
- Include technical terms in all three languages
- Include definitions at the end of each lesson
- Should be simple with more illustrations to explain the content
- Increase activities for student

Based on these stakeholder views, especially teachers and teacher educators, we make several recommendations for textbook and other material writing/presentation to support students as well as teachers. They are given in Section [4.10](#)

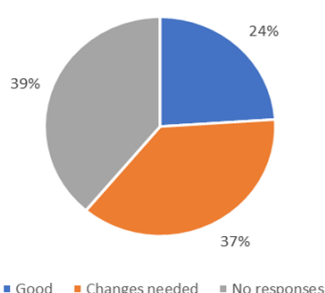
3.4.11. Assessment Procedures

To the questions included in the Survey about the assessment of BE students, the majority of teacher participants have not responded. This might be due to the lack knowledge about testing among teachers. However, as shown in the figure 6., 37% of the respondent teachers have expressed that the test papers/tools need to be changed.

Figure 8

Teacher Views on BE Assessment of Students

Satisfactory level of Assessment



This was further discussed at FGDs. The following were traced at FGDs.

- The test papers at zonal and provincial level are full of translation errors.
- Translation of papers from MT to English is not successful. Some translators do not have adequate English proficiency though they teach the subject in English.
- Translated papers use more complex words, phrases and sentence structures.
- Students find it difficult as the paper is given only in English (at the term test).
- No Mother tongue paper is given to students even in Grade 6, the transit grade.

During the FGDs, it was also revealed teachers' lack of knowledge about assessment and testing in general and particularly about the issues and challenges in testing the students who study in a foreign/second language. For instance, none of them was aware of test fairness, accommodation, and the construct irrelevancy etc. Refer to [4.11](#) for recommendations.

3.4.12. Teacher Awareness about the Pedagogic Approach: Primary Data Analysis

Introduced in 2016, Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is the prescribed methodology for BE/EMI classroom. This is a very significant initiation. Yet, it appears that even the teacher educators who conduct pre-service (initial) teacher training/education for BE/EMI teachers are not aware of CLIL. The survey results show that only 15.9% of teacher participants of this study uses CLIL methodology in their classrooms. Most teachers in this 15% may be the teachers who completed the Postgraduate Diploma in Bilingual Education at the Open University of Sri Lanka, the only postgraduate diploma specialized for BE teachers. 54.86% teachers in the survey have said only general methodology is taught to them at NCOE. The others have not responded to this question item. The teacher participants in FGDs reiterated the lack of proper

guidance even during in the service. The NCOE lecturers confirmed that they do not teach the student-teachers CLIL methodology but just the general strategies such as groupwork, lectures just as they were taught to Sinhala or Tamil medium teachers. These findings prompted us to explore more about in-service and pre-service continuing teacher professional development, which are discussed in the next section.

3.4.13. BE/EMI Teacher Education

The access to EM education relies on BE availability in schools which in turn relies on the availability of EMI teachers. In this regard, BE teacher recruitments, recruitment policy, teacher preparation through well-thought and planned pre-service education, in-service continuing professional development and teacher language proficiency are very vital.

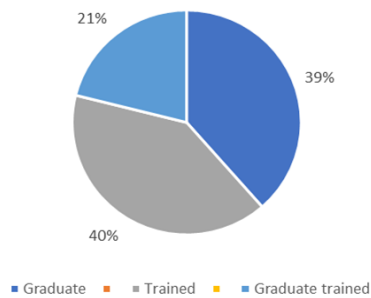
3.4.13.1. Types of Teachers

As depicted in Figure 9, there are three types of teachers who teach subjects in EM: graduates, graduates and trained, and trained according to survey results. Graduates do not usually have any professional qualification other than their degree until they complete the postgraduate diploma in education.

Figure 9

Categories of BE Teacher Appointments

Composition of BE Teacher Appointments



As shown above, there is a substantial number of directly recruited graduates. These graduates do not have any professional qualification until they complete the postgraduate diploma in education. The followings qualifications were mandated in the Western Province advertisement for the recruitment of ‘English Medium’ teachers at the time this study was conducted.

- “a degree related to the subject & medium
- Pass a written examination (aptitude + general knowledge) – the medium of test is the medium of teaching i.e. English
- Pass general interview and a practical test (5-minute presentation)”

According to this advertisement, English language proficiency is not tested. But candidates should acquire proficiency in Sinhala Language as per the Public Administration Circular

18/2020. According to this advertisement there is an Aptitude Test for teacher recruitment: Unfortunately, it was revealed that these so-called ‘aptitude tests’ are not testing aptitude for BE teaching, but aspects such as general knowledge. Hence, these test makers must be carefully selected by the Department of Examinations.

Usually, the provincial or central government conduct an orientation program to give the teachers a pre-service exposure before they assume duties in relevant schools. Yet, such short orientation courses are not at all adequate to get a minimum understanding of the BE pedagogy and the scaffolding strategies. At FGDs, it was revealed that this short-term pre-service training/education does not include any areas related to CLIL. They further revealed that even the Postgraduate Diplomas in Education offered by several universities do not include any specialized component on BE or CLIL. Only those who followed PGDip in BE conducted by the Postgraduate Institute of English, OUSL have received a comprehensive education and training on EMI/BE teaching.

3.4.13.2. Pre-Service (Initial) Teacher Education/Training

The second group of teachers are trained BE teachers. The National Colleges of Education that trained BE teachers who are to teach the prescribed subjects (science and Mathematics) through EMI are Siyane, Nilawala and Jaffna. Ruwanpura and Maharagama NCoES have ICT courses in English. These teachers are usually recruited based on their Advanced Level results and there is also a district quota. As revealed at the FGDs with lecturers, English Language proficiency is not tested in trainee recruitment. Similar to m MOI teachers, these teachers undergo four-year pre-service education that also include a one-year supervised internship. We analyzed the curriculum and course related syllabuses. The following discrepancies were found in these pre-service education courses conducted by NCOEs.

- i. No BE focussed and CLIL related education/training included in the curriculum or taught by the lecturers.
 - No specialized curriculum for BE/EMI teachers – just the MTI translated version.
 - Lecturers blame the outdated curriculum and express helplessness
 - CLIL Methodology: No knowledge even about the terms and other challenges of BE.
- ii. No education/training required to educate BE/EMI teachers is received by the NCOE lecturers. For instance, the lecturers are unaware of concepts such as CLIL, the pedagogical approach in EMI/BE, and hence not taught to trainees. The lectures participated in FGDs revealed that they are helpless since the syllabus is designed and written by the NIE, and they are teaching more than ten years old content.
- iii. The NOCEs seem to be not performing to their capacities and the NOCEs can increase the annual recruitment of BE teacher trainees.

FGDs with Lecturers at two NCOE that train BE teachers revealed that they do not even use the term CLIL in teacher education. The lecturers participated revealed that they do not teach Language learning concepts, methodologies unique to CLIL, etc. since such concepts are not included in the curriculum designed by the NIE about ten or so years back. It also appeared that

the lecturers are not trained for self-regulatory independent learning in addition to their hesitance to deviate from the set syllabus.

3.4.13. 3. In-Service Education/Training – Continuing Teacher Professional Development

It was disclosed that the in-service training received by BE teachers are not at all satisfactory or rather nil. The following were revealed through the survey and these were confirmed during the FGDs and interviews.

- Almost all teachers have not got access to Continuous Professional Development (CPD) (except teachers who received PGDip in BE at PGIE)
- A few teachers who received only one or two-day seminar said they had no impact.
- Teacher educators/officials confirmed lack of funds for BE.
- Subject seminars – mostly attended by SM/TM teachers.

Therefore, there is a dire need for well-structured, regular and CPD, not one in three years for a few but on regular basis for everyone. Nevertheless, it was revealed by the provincial authorities that the funds allocated for BE are very low or nil. For instance, one provincial coordinator for BE said they are given only Rs. 200,000 -300,000 for BE whereas other areas are allocated millions.

The students also expressed their views of teacher efficiency and capacities in the survey. They pointed out the need for a careful selection procedure when teachers are selected for BE. Some stressed that just because teachers have done ‘some English Courses’ they should not be selected to teach through English. The following excerpts represent these concerns of students. Some students pointed out the standards of BE teachers must be upgraded.

Since the teachers did some English courses and not familiar to a natural English communication [...] So for this I personally think there should be more teachers who are perfectly ok in both the English and the subject they are teaching.

Also, now a day some teachers teach us only because some lecturers are coming to judge them and only then they teach us properly. So, my opinion is the teachers who teach Bilingual subjects should be more standard. (Source: Student Survey)

The students have also pointed out that teaching methods must be changed. They viewed that teaching is limited to pupil’s textbook and no practical things are done by most of the teachers. They are also of the view that teaching of English Language as a second language should also undergo changes in addition to EMI because of the importance of English language proficiency for EMI. They propose to emphasize on the productive skills of language, especially speaking. To exemplify, we depict an extract from the survey.

It is better that you can change the style of teaching the English language in schools. Because it is only limited to the pupils’ book and no any practical things. When we talking in English, we couldn't do it correctly. I suggest it is better if you can change way of teaching English language in schools [Source: Student Survey]

On the whole, it is emphasized that the expansion of the BE approach depends on the availability of teachers who can teach through EM. Recruitment and training of these teachers must be given the utmost importance and the immediate steps must be taken to provide necessary funds, expertise, etc. without further delays. Based on the understanding on teacher/teacher trainee recruitment, pre- and in-service teacher education/training, several suggestions are made in Section [4.13](#).

3.4.14. English Medium Teacher Transfers and Deployment

There are many issues in this sector which are not only limited to BE teachers. However, with BE teacher transfers, the issues become worse due to several factors. The first is that some teachers are not appointed as BE or English medium teachers. There seems to be no uniformity among the provinces. The Circular No. 06/2021, which seems a positive step, determines regulations on the academic staff of a school. The Circular says:

In schools implementing bi-lingual education program, where certain subjects are being taught in English, the academic cadre only for the aforesaid subjects should be calculated considering English medium as a separate medium. The students in the school should be divided according to the medium of study only for calculating the academic cadre and the required cadre of teachers should be separately calculated based on the number of classrooms required under each medium. (Should follow the instructions in Annexure 01 – I did not analyze this what is this) However, if the bi-lingual teachers cannot be assigned with adequate number of periods in the time table in English medium, they may be assigned to teach in Sinhala or Tamil medium according to their competency.

Our analysis shows 4 types of teachers in the system concerning BE.

- Direct graduate appointments as English Medium teachers
- NCOE teachers professionally trained as EM teachers
- English Language Teachers who have volunteered/requested to teach content subjects
- Other teachers (Sinhala or Tamil medium) volunteered/requested to teach content subjects

The data elicited through FGDs with teachers and other stakeholders such as Directors provide evidence that the transfers are done ‘head-to-head’ not considering subject/s and the medium a particular teacher involved with. For instance, when a science teacher is transferred, the replacement is a science teacher and the medium is not considered. One reason for this, as the respondents disclosed that this happens because the appointment letters are issued mentioning the discipline or subject but without the medium. Adding to this is that some subjects such as Health, Citizenship are taught by English Language teachers. When such teachers are transferred the replacement is another English language teacher that may not have the capacity to teach the content subjects or s/he may even refuse to teach the content subjects. The FGD participants (principals) also reported that when the appointment letter says English medium, the teachers refuse to teach in mother tongue classes. Refer to Section [4.14](#) for recommendations.

3.4.15. Monitoring System of the BE Approach to Education

It was revealed that there is no monitoring system either internal to schools or externally by zonal/provincial/central authorities. Internal monitoring is also inadequate and mostly depends on school head's English language proficiency and attitudes.

Most coordinators are primarily specialized in Mother Tongue Instruction of their subject areas. As a result, their involvement in EMI of those subjects is comparatively minimal or even non-existent. Also, these subject coordinators, for example, provincial mathematics and science coordinators, do not go to BE classes when they go for observation because of the language problem they face. Refer to section [4.15](#) for recommendations.

4. Suggestions/Recommendations

Next, we summarize the recommended policy suggestions based on the findings of this study. This may shed light to looking forward: where we want to be with regard to Bilingual Education approach to education in Sri Lanka. We hope these recommendations and suggestions will provide a strong support to formulate a clear and explicit policy on BE and a strategic plan of implementation and monitoring of the same. Before, moving to making recommendation corresponding to each Section from 3.4.1 to 3.4.15 discussed above in the report, we make some general recommendations based on the wide understanding of grassroots issues, challenges and opportunities. These must be taken into consideration when formulating a policy on BE as appended below.

- a) A clear Policy on BE and EMI therein must be formulated going through thorough examination and careful decision making.
- b) The Policy must clearly define the responsibilities of the institutions involved MOE, NIE, etc. with clear framework for these stakeholder institutions to establish working relationships. The new policy must include stern guidelines to prevent institutions from working in silos and, at times, even against each other.
- c) The new Policy must include all categories of schools – schools that come under MOE's purview and those which are not.
- d) Special attention should be given to avoidance of discriminatory aspects such as one MOI policy for private/international schools and another for public schools. This will suffice the Supreme Court Judgement requirements referred to in this discussion.
- e) No gatekeeping must be allowed concerning access to EMI through BE.
- f) 'Selection tests' may be conducted only till the State makes EMI through BE available to fulfill the demand of all students who are willing to study in English Medium.
- g) A strategic implementation plan (SIP) or Master plan on BE should be developed, implemented, monitored and evaluated every three years.
- h) Funds to implement the designed SIP should be prioritized and we believe INGOs will be willing to consider this if properly presented.
- i) This SPI should include sound strategies and suitable measures for massive expansion of the program.

- j) With regard to recommendation (e), NEC's initial plan be implemented together with an accelerated SIP and a program to increase the number of schools offering BE/EMI.
- k) To mitigate the issue to shifting to MOI in Advanced Level due to unavailability of English Medium Advanced Level establishment of BE Advanced Level at least in one school (1AB) in a cluster of school is recommended.
- l) Clear policy decisions should be taken on the key issues related to BE such as terminology issues, entry point, number of subjects to be taught in English medium, separate classrooms, classroom language policy.
- m) With reference to bi –medium schools where both Sinhala and Tamil media are available at present, we suggest that all such schools must be given priority to start BE/EMI classes.
- n) There should be a massive teacher recruitment and education program with stipulated basic qualifications which must also include English Language Proficiency test for recruitment.
- o) Immediate steps, both short term as well as long term measures, must be taken for proper and transfer mechanism that not hinder BE program and the waste of state funds as evident in the study.
- p) Awareness programs using electronic media, social media, etc., be conducted to mitigate misconceptions among the stakeholders at all levels as well as the general public.

4.1. Circular Paradox

Based on our critical analysis of the circulars, circular letters, cabinet memos and other available documents on BE presented in Section 3.4.1 and in Annex1, the following recommendations are made. Based on the (g) in the general recommendations, the prevailing circulars should be revisited, reviewed and revised as necessary.

- a) A comprehensive policy on Bilingual Education Approach, its two pedagogical approaches: English Medium Instruction (EMI) and Mother Tongue Instruction (MTI), and the methodology – Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLILL) should be formulated.
- b) It is suggested to consider the topics and sub-topics in this report and the contents therein when formulating a new policy.
- c) In the event of issuing circulars, the instruction therein should be critically looked into through different perspectives based on actual ground situations.
- d) When the circulars are scrutinized and revised, it should be done by an expert team appointed by the relevant authorities.
- e) No Circulars must be issued based on ad hoc decisions.
- f) No circular must be in contradiction to a circular or circulars issued previously, as discussed and elaborated in the report.
- g) The critical analysis in Annex 1 and the findings of the present study will be helpful in this regard.
- h) The instructions in circulars should be evidence-based. And for this, the present study's findings can be taken as a springboard.

- i) The terms (e.g. Bilingual Education, English Medium Instruction, Mother tongue, etc.) should be clearly defined in the circulars. Consideration of recommendations given in 4.2 will assist this.
- j) A new circular should be issued on CLIL with a guideline.

4.2. Recommendations on Model and Terminology Controversy:

Based on i) the arguments ii). the views of the participant stakeholders and iii) considering the BE models in Section 3.4.2, the following are suggested.

- a. BE is the *overarching educational approach* where two (bilingual) or more languages (multilingual) are used as Medium of Instruction (MOI) to deliver the curriculum which may occur at some point during school career of a student (Cummins, 1997 p. xii).
- b. Sri Lankan BE is considered a “Strong Form” since it aims to produce “students who are proficient in two languages and *biliterate* as well” (Baker & Wright p, 469): enhances English and Sinhala/Tamil for both basic interpersonal communication (bilingualism) and academic purposes (biliteracy). This in Cummins (1997) terms is promoting BICS and CALP⁹ in English and mother tongue.
- c. English medium instruction (EMI) and Mother-tongue instruction (MTI) are the two *pedagogical approaches* within BE.
- d. The main focus of teaching/learning during EMI in BE is ‘the content’ (subject matter such as Science, Math) delivered by subject specialized teachers.
- e. The *teaching/learning methodology* is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) for EMI in BE classrooms. More precisely, this methodology where ‘content’ is the main focus, is called *Hard CLIL*.
- f. In this pedagogical context, it is intended that the students will ‘acquire’ English language rather than conscious ‘learning’ unlike in learning English as a subject (second language: ESL).
- g. It is required that the subject-specialized teachers make special pedagogical efforts to help student scaffold language comprehension gaps that impacts on content learning.

4.3. Access to BE/EMI: Selection and Gatekeeping

Under this section the recommendations are made under two categories: Access to EMI and on reducing malpractices reported by all participant stakeholders in ‘selection’ procedures such as selection tests. It is emphasized that the school authorities are compelled to conduct ‘selection tests’, especially in popular schools due to high demand for EMI that the school cannot fulfil. When the facilities are established to fulfil the demand, all types of ‘selection’ procedures must be stopped.

⁹ BICS and CALP – Introduced by Cummins (1997) mean Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency: subject/s specific language

4.3.1. Access to BE/EMI

- a) The recommendations given under general recommendations should be considered for a massive and accelerated expansion of BE and thereby access to EMI., NEC's initial plan may be considered in this regard.
- b) Until then, the selection procedures should follow the recommendation under 4.3.2.
- c) To mitigate the issue to shifting to MOI in Advanced Level due to unavailability of English Medium Advanced Level, establishment of BE Advanced Level at least in one school (1AB) in a cluster of school is recommended.

4.3.2. Recommendations on Selection Tests

- a. At present, schools are instructed not to conduct formal evaluations¹⁰ at the primary level (Grade 1-5) and advised to exclusively rely on competency-based formative assessments. These assessments encompass two categories of competencies: Essential Learning Competencies (ELCs) and Desired Learning Competencies (DLCs). For each key stage (Key stage 1, 2, and 3), specific ELCs and DLCs are outlined, with the expectation of achieving all ELCs (100%). DLCs, which are more advanced competencies, are delineated by subject, and the goal is to attain 80% of DLCs for each subject.
- b. The attainment level of DLCs in subjects such as Math, MT, Science, and English Language in key stage 3 (Grade 5) can serve as a criterion for selection into BE. A Zonal-based criterion-reference assessment tool can be established to identify eligible students for BE.
- c. This approach is anticipated to boost motivation for learning English in primary grades, an aspect often overlooked due to the emphasis on Grade-5 Scholarship examination preparation in many schools.
- d. The ranking of students be determined by computing the average of marks after calculating the total DLC marks a child has attained in all four subjects.
- e. The cutoff mark for each school be determined based on student performance, demand for that school, and the number of available student vacancies.
- f. Answer scripts of this competency-based formative assessment (or any other 'selection test' must be made available to parents upon request to maintain transparency while avoiding potential malpractices.
- g. This assessment should be conducted at the end of the second term, allowing schools and Zonal Offices to determine the quantity of textbooks to be ordered for the following year for each medium and thereby minimizing potential wastage.
- h. 'Selections' to BE or any type of gatekeeping and the above outlined criteria for selecting students for BE must be discontinued in the future when facilities are provided to meet the demand for BE/EMI.

¹⁰ Irrespective of government regulations not to conduct formal evaluations such as term and year-end tests many schools conduct term and year-end tests as revealed in the interviews and FGDs.

4.4. When to Start or Transition to BE/EMI

It is pertinent to mention here that the Sri Lankan authorities appear to mis-interpret the UNESCO policy advice for Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education, and the related provisions of the Sri Lankan Constitution. Based on these misinterpretations, they argue that Content through English must not be allowed in lower grades. In this regard, we hope that our critical analysis in 3.4.4. would work as a guide for authorities.

- a) Public and government-assisted schools with adequate resources should be permitted to introduce Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MLB-MLE) as UNESCO advises. In Sri Lanka this will be Mother-Tongue-Based-Bilingual-Education.
- b) MOI for <75% of subjects/areas/topics of the integrated primary curriculum is delivered through mother tongue (Sinhala or Tamil) while a few topics/themes are through English which will strengthen the ABOE program. For instance, introduce teaching a few themes/topics focused on Environment through English: Modular CLIL¹¹ using translanguaging as a pedagogical tool: using both languages at the primary level. This is to enhance CALP (Cummins, 1984) in both languages- mother-tongue and English.
- c) Furthering above in (b), it is also suggested that CALP in the 2nd National language may be enhanced if subject-based trilingual vocabulary/glossaries are provided.
- d) It is very important to note that the suggestion to teach some topics through CLIL (modular CLIL) is not to suggest monolithic ‘English only’ teaching/learning, but rather a bi/trilingual approach where teachers and students use both languages (MT and English) for meaning-making, and even the 2nd National Language wherever possible.
- e) Simultaneously, immediate steps be taken to strengthen the teaching of child’s mother-tongue and his/her 2nd National Language while English Language is taught as separate subject from Grade one. This will address UNESCO’s MLB-MLE suggestions.
- f) International/private schools that are attended by Sri Lankan children and delivering foreign curricular must be given clear instructions to improve the child’s MT to maintain and enhance linguistic diversity in Sri Lanka. The new policy must stipulate a relevant proficiency level (e.g. B2 or C1/C2 of CEFR) as compulsory.
- g) Incorporate environmental-related content in the English as a Second Language (ESL) textbooks.
- h) Introduce Soft-Content and Language Integrated Learning (Soft CLIL: language through content) as methodology for ESL pedagogy.
- i) Decentralize the decision-making process (e.g. which grade to start BE/EMI) – power should be shared between school/provincial/zonal authorities and parents considering the resource availability. For this purpose, the central government may provide a comprehensive guideline scheme, whereas the new Provincial Boards of Education proposed in the NEPF2023-2023 should have autonomy for decision-making.

4.5. Subjects to Teach/Learn through EMI/BE

- a) The present circulars concerning subjects to offer through EMI should be continued.

¹¹ Modular CLIL is based on modules. A part of the syllabus (lesson or unit/theme) in the mother tongue and another part in a foreign language.

- b) Yet, we recommend that the subjects offered in the secondary curriculum be critically rescrutinised and reduce the number of subjects to avoid surface levels of knowledge. We believe that this is a remedial measure to address the problem of “heavy on content and examination-driven” outdated education in Sri Lanka (NEPF 2023-2033, p. 2).
- c) For schools where BE is not available at present should be encouraged to start Modular CLIL if the teaching of a full syllabus of a subject is not possible due to lack of teachers
- d) Also important is to avoid misinterpretation of the circular by the principals and school authorities that all six subjects must be introduced if to start BE in schools. Awareness must be raised via a new circular that a school can start BE approach to education even with one subject (e.g. Science or Math) through EM.

4.6. Separate Classrooms for BE Students

Based on the arguments made in Section 3.4.6, it is recommended that :

- a) All bi-media schools attended by both Tamil-speaking and Sinhala-speaking students must be provided with a separate classroom where they can claim ‘our class’.
- b) Present circular banning this practice must be amended allowing multiethnic schools to have separate classes for EMI students.
- c) BE teachers must specially use cooperative work in heterogeneous groups.
- d) Teacher education programs must teach strategies to enhance shared lived experiences among students.
- e) Teachers, students and parents must be made aware of the benefits of heteroglossic language policy at classroom level.
- f) Separate classrooms should be given to BE/EMI students if available in other schools also to reduce time wasting in movement and hence learning loss.
- g) Schools must be made aware of diversity responsiveness (Wijesekera & Obaid, 2022) and encourage to explicitly discuss the matters pertaining to classism, exclusivity in schools.

4.7. Social Impacts: Focusing on Equity, Inclusivity, etc.

- a) EMI/BE must be introduced in all bi-media schools attended by multiethnic student population.
- b) New schools where Tamil, Sinhala and English medium be established in demographically diverse areas.
- c) English Medium students also be made aware of the fact that English is an instrument or tool not an ornament.
- d) Cocurricular activities should be promoted where both BE and ME students have opportunities to participate together.

4.8. Language Policy at the Domain (Classroom) Level

Considering the participants views and other research findings, following recommendations are made.

- a) Introduce and implement a classroom domain level language policy.
- b) This policy must be heteroglossic where teachers and students can navigate among emphasizing not only all languages in the linguistic repertoire of that classroom but also other semiotic resources.
- c) To avoid 'English only' misconceptions, awareness programs must be conducted for all stakeholders.

4.9. Academic and Linguistic Performance of BE/EMI Students

In this section, recommendations are made based on the analysis and arguments discussed on cross-fertilization of English as a second language in BE/EMI students and also on assumed fear of linguistic loss (mother tongue) in BE/EMI students.

- a) The system should rethink about English language teaching and assessment of EMI/BE students.
- b) A parallel ESL books strongly supporting Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency enhancement be introduced using Soft-CLIL as the methodology for the English Language Teachers.
- c) The book proposed in (b) may be commonly used among both EMI and MTI students.
- d) MOI policy should consider 'languages in education' in Sri Lanka not only English.
- e) "The proper implementation of the language policy and ensuring trilingual (Sinhala, Tamil, English) fluency of future generations becomes vitally important" (310) as LLRC (2011) recommends.

4.10. Textbooks/Instructional Material and Adaptation

Based on the findings, it is recommended:

- a) To write the English Medium textbooks first especially for subjects such as Math, Science and Geography since the contents of these subjects are taken from the Western world, and then translated to Sinhala/Tamil.
- b) To consider borrowing carefully written text books written for English as a second/foreign language CLIL learners available in more developed countries such as Japan, European Union, Singapore, Korea.
- c) To seek assistance from World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Australian, US or EU aids for this purpose.
- d) If textbooks are originally written in MT (should not be the case since access to new knowledge is always available through English), BE textbooks must not be just the translations or transliteration of the mother tongue textbook. The principles of adaptation

and scaffolding must be carefully followed. For instance, lucid language, more elaborations, illustrations and trilingual glossaries.

4.11. Assessment Procedures

As revealed in the study, it seems that test-makers are not aware of the importance of applying principles of ‘construct validity’ when testing subject knowledge in a less-proficient language. Therefore, concerning the test papers, we recommend the following. We strongly believe that the present National Education Reforms that emphasize on continuous assessment will have a positive impact on BE as well and our recommendations also promote alternative ways of assessment.

Accelerated program be conducted to create awareness among test-makers, and other relevant authorities concerning BE paper preparation, marking and answer keys.

- a) Awareness programs for stakeholders like Examinational Department, Zones/Schools. translations/adaptations must be done by a qualified and experience panel, reducing language use
- b) To use minimum language where possible in questions and also to use simplified language (plain language) with illustrations in early grades.
- c) Take actions to make the teachers and other authorities aware of adaptation/accommodation to increase test fairness
- d) Allow students to use S/T words/phrases (translanguaging) in early grades as a must; Use Alternative ways of assessment as a must in BE which also on a par with CLIL principles; Reduce ‘teaching’ by teacher and utilize strategies such as ‘assessment as learning’, flipped classroom, flipping the teacher role to students, etc. Employ the same strategies in teacher education programs as well making the teachers familiarize with the same.
- e) Essentially include new concepts such as ‘reengineering of assessment process’, test fairness/accommodation, etc. in assessment and evaluation courses.
- f) Use BE hubs to increase awareness and also to create sample question banks and finally, and most importantly,
- g) Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in self and peer assessment is recommended.
- h) Reduce examination-oriented education as NEPF 2023-23 advocates.

4.12. Teacher Awareness about the Pedagogic Approaches

The recommendations on teacher awareness raising are also included in 4.13. Please refer to the succeeding sections. In addition, we present the following recommendations.

- a) Create a repository of Open Education Resources (OER) for BE teachers
- b) Create and update a repository of lesson planning containing language as/for/through learning,
- c) Encourage team lesson planning in cluster schools or/and introduce pairing and collaboration between schools through an online community of practice
- d) Facilitate access to technology

- e) Use online teaching and activities using Nanasa, e-thaxalawa, tv educational platforms for BE
- f) Create repository of recorded lessons with hands on activities for students to engage independently
- g) Enhance key CLIL principals and create an interactive BE hub for teachers/teacher educators
- h) Create an interactive BE hub for students (with Q & A, resources)
- i) Use strategies and programmes like immersion or additional support program for students
- j) Use the period after Grade 5 scholarship exam to enhance English in all students
- k) Explore and implement an online EL improvement programs for teachers and students

4.13. BE/EMI Teacher Recruitment and Teacher Education/Training

No educational program will ever be successful unless the teachers are properly recruited and trained. There should be a massive teacher recruitment and education program with proper recruitment policy and transfer mechanism. In this regard, we make following recommendations on teacher/trainee recruitment; pre-service and in-service continuing professional development and teacher education curricular as well as teacher educator education.

4.13.1. Teacher and Teacher Trainee Recruitment

- a) In recruitment and the appointment letters uniformity among the provinces and the central government be maintained and for this, the central authority (MOE) should issue an unambiguous circular.
- b) Teachers must be made aware that they have to take Sinhala or Tamil medium (as relevant) when the required number of teaching periods are not adequate to fulfil weekly timetable requirements. It is suggested to include this in appointment letters.
- c) Criteria for BE/EMI teachers and teacher trainee recruitment should be changed. This may equally be valid to MTI teachers as well.
- d) Teacher recruitment criteria should be uniform and it is advisable that all provinces should follow the criteria designed by the MOE.
- e) Teacher trainee recruitment be based on basic qualifications such as Advance Level.
- f) English Language Proficiency must be tested and only trainees who attain a certain level should be recruited as trainees.
- g) Those who completed their education in English Medium be given priority.
- h) District-basis for recruitment should be the second criterion whereas the first criterion must be educational and English Language Proficiency for BE/EMI teacher trainees.
- i) Addressing ‘attitudinal issues’ of teachers is the top most priority and teacher pre/in-service education must immediately take precautionary action, short and long term.
- j) Include Aptitude Tests for teacher recruitment. Also important is proper ‘aptitude tests’, testing general knowledge is not an aptitude test.
- k) The test makers for teacher recruitment competitive examinations be carefully selected by the Department of Examinations.

- l) By the end of three-year program, all trainees must achieve B1 level of English Language Proficiency and the government must conduct a criterion-reference examination for this (equivalent to IELTS/TOFEL), probably through the Department of Examinations. Only those who achieve this level must be given the appointments.
- m) For direct graduate appointment selection procedures, English Language proficiency must be included.
- n) Those who have already been appointed and in-service English Language proficiency test must be conducted and increment may be withheld until a teacher attain the stipulated level. This criterion may be utilized for the confirmation of the appointment after the 3-year probationary period.
- o) Government must conduct an accelerated English Language enhancement program with no fee using technology and media/social media.
- p) It should be recognized that the teachers who have volunteered to teach EM subjects have taken extra effort and responsibility. They must be appreciated and incentives such as an extra increment should be offered.
- q) A special salary increases or step is suggested if criteria such as English Language proficiency is made compulsory only for EMI/BE teachers. This will also enable attracting more talented teachers to the service.
- r) There should be a Scheme for Incentives for a stipulated EL proficiency test band and money reimbursement.
- s) More importantly, a Professional Body for Teacher License, (similar to the Medical Council for doctors and nurses) must be introduced for all teachers in the country where they have to upgrade their professionalism to renew the license without which they cannot continue practice in Sri Lanka.

4.13.2. Teacher and Teacher Educator Education/Training

It is necessary to roll-out an accelerated teacher and teacher educator education/training system. Our recommendations include complete overhaul of NOCE curricular as well as all other graduate (pre-service) and postgraduate (in-service) programs for teachers.

- a. Curriculum must strictly follow concepts such as self-regulatory independent learning, collaboration, exploration and assessment for/as learning, flipping the student/teacher roles, etc. to address 4/5C of CLIL and 21st century skills.
- b. Hard CLIL/BE must be a compulsory component of all training programs. English Language Teacher training may include Soft CLIL as well.
- c. Pre-service education (NCOEs) must emphasize language development of teachers, methodology, strategies for Hard CLIL.
- d. Concepts such as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, translanguaging, Second Language Acquisition/Learning Theories such as Input - Interaction Hypothesis, Ecological Perspectives of Language Learning should be included in the curriculum.
- e. All NCEO curricular must include English for Basic Communication and English for Academic Purposes courses.

- f. There should be an accelerated curriculum development for teacher education and teacher educator/lecturer education for proper education/training.
- g. An accelerated education for Teacher educators/NCOE lecturers must be introduced along with a structured continuing professional development for teacher educators in NCOEs.
- h. Benchmarking of English language proficiency of teacher educators and teachers is necessary. It should be made compulsory for NOCE lecturers who teach EMI/BE teachers to pass an English Language Proficiency test conducted either by the government or any other reputed testing authority. They must provide evidence that they have reached minimum B2 level of Common European Framework of References for Language (CEFR) for English. This requirement should be compulsory for confirmation of appointment and/or increments.
- i. Teacher education curricular must emphasize on enhancing teacher agency and teacher autonomy through creating communities of practice. For this purpose, cluster schools can be considered as one community.
- j. This Continuing Professional Development must use technology to cater to mass.
- k. An accelerated language development program for BE/EMI teachers, teacher education must be introduced and implemented which can also be via technology.
- l. All teacher and teacher educator programs must include compulsory CLIL module and English Language Proficiency Module.
- m. Autonomy for NCOEs to adapt their curriculum and delivery mechanisms should be granted. The main framework for these curricular may be suggested by NIE supported by university level experts.
- n. It has to be made a certain proficiency level of EL compulsory for all other teachers as well especially primary teachers to promote ABOE program through modular type CLIL or delivering some areas of the primary curriculum in using both English and MT.
- o. Bring National Colleges of Education together which conduct programs for EM and EL teachers enabling to offer such contents/components in the same NCOE, so that the academic staff can be shared for the two.
- p. NOCEs should guarantee that the English Language teachers are able to teach a subject in English. This may be extended to all content subject teachers that they are able to teach both in English and Mother tongue.
- q. All NOCEs must guarantee that all the content subject teachers must be able to help students improve language because language cannot be separated from the content
- r. It is worthwhile for the MTI classes to consider adapting the same methodology (i.e. Hard CLIL and its framework) when delivering the content.
- s. Reducing the number of subjects offered in the secondary curriculum is strongly recommended regardless of the medium of instruction. It appears that the secondary curricular is too broad and spans over varying disciplines. What is more vital is to enhance depth with the focus of promoting 21st century skills, attitudes and knowledge, rather than surface knowledge of many things.
- t. All undergraduate and postgraduate programs offered by Universities/Higher Education Institutions catering to teachers must include components such as CLIL methodology, language learning/acquisition, English and MT proficiency enhancement, testing in EMI, etc.

- u. Ministry of Education may send a formal circular letter to all Higher Education Institutes that offer teacher programs to include such components so as to consider the inclusion of those courses in the Service Minutes.

4.14. Monitoring Process

In the study, it was apparent that there is no monitoring process concerning BE approach to education in Sri Lanka. BE needs a two-pronged monitoring system with Internal and External strong monitoring mechanisms. It is recommended:

- a) A separate carder for BE officers at zonal and provincial levels.
- b) Develop clear monitoring guideline and tools as a part of national level quality assurance guideline.
- c) Develop standards for each level with explicit job roles: teachers, ISAs, officers, educators etc.,
- d) Facilitate Professional networking (local as well as global, e.g., BE teacher association.
- e) When ISAs/Provincial or Zonal Coordinators for main subjects such as Math and Science are selected, their English Language fluency and training on CLIL must be considered.
- f) If not, separate ISAs and Coordinators must be appointed for BE subjects.

5. Concluding Remarks

There is a great demand for English Medium Instruction (EMI) through Bilingual Education (BE) among parents and children irrespective of social, geographic and economic differences. Lack of policy at all levels from planning to implementation to monitoring and evaluation are clearly indicated in the present study. As one prominent educationist pointed out with regard to BE - “the proof of the pudding is in the eating” (Cumarnanatunga, 2023). She also pointed out that the program’s slow progression and hesitance towards improving it, is due to lack of correct awareness about bilingual education and how it is working among the people and amongst the personnel at policy level and the authorities at institution level those who implement it. The present study reveals that BE ‘program’ seems in the hands of a few principals/teachers who have a passion for it. When an enthusiastic principal is there, BE in that particular school thrives and with his/her transfer or retirement the program begins to collapse. Though we can disclose names of schools with evidence as examples, we refrain from it due to ethical issues.

Also reported were attitudinal issues at all decision-making levels and other stakeholders. For instance, the lack of political willingness and especially the lethargy or even step-motherly thinking and treatments by the decision-making bodies at all levels from the central government to zonal level, and also school authorities are another challenge that hinders the improvement of the BE approach to education in the country. One of the interviewees pointed out duplicity and hypocrisy as reasons for slow development of the program, which was confirmed by the majority of the participants of this study. The failure of authorities is also well evident in the Supreme Court Judgement No. 52/2020. As promptly mentioned in the new National Education Policy Framework (NEPF) 2023-2022, all stakeholders need to be “attitudinally advanced” (p. 3). Moreover, careful critical reflection is required when deciding on terms, approaches and

methodologies pertaining to BE. Because, some segments of stakeholders/policy makers tend to harbor suspicion about the terms such as “English” Medium Instruction (may be resulting from post-colonial resisting mindset). This is just one example, and in such situations, those who involved in policy decisions might baselessly refuse what is good for the country. This type of ignorance can easily be avoided through a well-structured awareness program using both mainstream and social media.

It is reiterated that country-wide mandatory single policy that one-size-fits-all may not consider the challenges in different contexts such as the availability of EMI teachers with pedagogic, content and language competence together with regulated support and funding. Centralized policy will not yield the expected results of any policy and so will the policy on BE. The findings also support the notion that the new BE/EMI policy must avoid having one policy for public schools and another policy for international schools, as both are attended by Sri Lankan children, which is also pointed out in the Supreme Court Judgement. By making EMI available in public schools through BE approach, those who cannot afford fee-levying schools to learn through English. If not, the public education system will continue to exacerbate linguistic and social inequalities. Essentially, these complex links between language, power, and inequality highlights the significance of evidence-informed careful policy making (Lee, 2018), and strategic planning for proper implementation of the BE program.

Finally, it should be noted that the recommendations of the present study align closely with the key objectives and overarching goal of NEPF 2023-2033 whose aim is to “Sustainably enhance the Access, quality and Relevance” in the education system. This overarching goal includes “Creating citizens who are productive, innovative and informed” as well as making “Sri Lanka increasingly attractive as an education hub”. Moreover, it emphasizes “equal opportunity for digital learning and digital literacy for all children” which is challenging without proficiency in the English language. Additionally, as emphasized, we reiterate the significance of “access to education for all children irrespective of [...] income” through English if they choose to pursue it (NEPF 2023-2033, p. 5). Therefore, we emphasize the availability of the “choice of education in the English medium in any school” (p. 6).

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APPENDIX 1

Analysis of Circulars/Circular letters/Cabinet decisions, Documents issued on BE since 2001

Cabinet decisions Circulars		Key directives and highlights	Critical Observations by the Experts
1	No. 01/0981/11 /067 21.12.2000	The cabinet decision which allows commencing of teaching science subjects in EM in the Science stream in G.C.E. (A/L).	Aim of introducing EMI is to develop competence in English as an international language in the context of globalization and rapid changes in communication - facilitate higher education and job requirements
2	2001/05 23.02.2001 (Circular)	Allows teaching Biology, combined Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics and Agriculture in English medium in the Science stream in GCE A/L. - Optional - Applicants can decide the medium according to their discretion when they sit for GCE A/L - Applicants can appear even for one subject in EM at GCE A/L	The circular mentions that before taking the decision to start teaching Science subjects (GCE A/L) in the English Medium, an island wide survey was conducted. To take evidence-based decisions, this is a good move. <u>However, the time difference between the circular issuance (23 Feb 2001) and commencing of the program (It is instructed in the circular to commence the program in May, 2001.) was only three months. When a new implementation is introduced, the relevant circular should usually be issued at least two years prior to the implementation, allowing adequate time for preparations. Nevertheless, this move indicates rushing of policies and implementation without readiness, for instance, not having proper teacher training which resulted many chaos later.</u>
3	No. 00/2164/11 /016 14.06.2001	The cabinet decision which allows to commence the National Amity Schools Project. [The next circular directs the relevant officials to activate the decision]	The main focus was social cohesion i.e., to bring the two linguistic communities (Sinhala and Tamil) through common EM in BE classes. It is observed that the decision makers have not considered the ground situation. The number of schools attended by all ethnic groups is very limited in many provinces making it unfeasible to implement this program in most areas in the country.
4	2002/12 2002.05.10 Subject: National Amity schools Project	-To enhance social harmony and develop proficiency of students in Sinhala, Tamil and English providing opportunities to study selected subjects in English medium - Subjects be offered in EM: Mathematics, Science, Social studies, Health & Physical Education -Stipulated 'selection criteria' for BE/EMI – Students' willingness and capability, and availability of competent subject teachers	<u>The aim of Amity program is different from the BE/EMI. The latter focuses on developing English proficiency to fulfil higher education and job market demands. The former (Amity program) focuses on social cohesion by bringing Sinhala and Tamil speaking students together via common English Medium.</u> Expansion of pilot program on National unity and cohesion to Grade 6 onwards It is assumed that mother tongues (including 2 nd National Language) and English will also develop when students of all linguistic groups work together in one class Grade 6 – 3 subjects, Gr 7 increases to 4 subjects in EM Refers to schools already implementing the pilot project but other schools are also eligible
5	2002/17 2002.07.30	GCE A/L Examination Applicants in the Science stream can sit either for all subjects or selected subjects in EM. Students must decide the medium when	Allowing the students discretion in selecting the medium and providing MT paper are positive steps. Lack of long-sighted policies and prior planning is evident in this circular issuance. Authorities have now realized it takes time to develop academic language so that option must be granted i.e., it takes 5 to 7 years to develop Cognitive


		applying for the examination, cannot change later. Enable BE/EMI applicants to request the question papers in their first language, in addition to EM paper.	academic Language Proficiency (CALP) even in an acquisition rich environment when learning in a second language.
6	2003/18 2003.05.05	Medium of instruction at Primary level must be the first language; Sinhala/ Tamil	<u>Prohibit schools starting BE/EMI from Grade 1 – after this circular, the schools that had already started EMI from Grade 1 were compelled to shift to MTI. This restriction on government schools is completely against equal rights to education, as International Schools (IS) are allowed to offer EMI from Grade 1.</u>
7	ED/01/12/ 01/01/13 2003.09.30 Circular letter	MOE’s prior approval needed to commence EM classes to teach selected subjects in English from Grade 6	Issued mainly for 2 reasons: verify the no. of EM textbooks for distribution purpose and get statistics on actual no. of BE teachers for training purposes
8	2007/05 2007.03.02	-Extension to the circular 2002/12. This circular mentions the subjects that the BE/EMI students can/cannot appear in EM at GCE (O/L) - necessary resources to be provided by the schools for the subjects not included in the circular 2002/12	Issued to address NEC recommendation (Ref 2007/05) providing directions to students who started EM in Grade 6 and now sitting for GCE (O/L). The subjects mentioned in the circular are culturally and emotionally close to ethnicities– e.g., MT, Barath Natyam, Eastern music, Hinduism). Interestingly, Buddhism is not included in the ‘could not be appear’ list without giving any justification. <u>This exemption might be done deliberately because by that time government assisted schools offered religion in EM.</u> <u>This exemption appears very similar to what happened in 1920 when the Education Ordinance No. 1 that imposed regulations on MOI was introduced. In this ordinance as well, there is no mention of fee-levying missionary government-assisted schools, allowing them to continue with EM.</u> The circular says ‘necessary resources’ but not defines what they are. <u>This shows the irresponsibility of authorities that cause many ambiguities among implementing institutions and also fund allocation.</u>
9	2005/30 2005.09.29 (Not implemented)	Paragraph 4.2 of the circular “If a school has necessary physical and human resources, the school can decide to teach any subject in the English medium”	This is a common circular that aligns with the implementation of new curriculum reforms introduced in 2007. <u>Though the circular was issued it was abolished with the changes in higher positions in the education. This provides a good example for uncertainty and lack of common vision, accountability in decision making and implementation.</u>
10	No. 08/0368/31 6/026 27.02.2008 Cabinet decision	This circular allows offering some subjects in the curriculum in EMI in the other two streams (Commerce and Arts) as well. (Teaching through EM in the Science Stream was allowed earlier by Circular 0/2164/11/016 of 14.06.2001)	This is a good example for repeating the same mistake which shows lack of long sightedness in policies. The first batch of BE/EM students sat the G.C.E.(O/L) in 2007, the cabinet decision was taken after the examination which resulted in poor preparation for the event.

11	<p>2008/12 2008.04.21 [This is one of the most discriminatory circulars]</p> <p>(Under Ed reforms and implemented since 2007 to the present)</p> <p>Clause 4 Refers to conducting Bi-medium classes</p>	<p>Clause 4 -Maximum of five subjects – two core subjects excluding English (Science & Mathematics) & three category subjects {Geography, Citizenship education, Entrepreneurship, Western Music, ICT, Health & Physical Education)</p> <p>-History cannot be taught in EMI - effective from grade 6 in 2009)</p> <p>Schools can start BE even with one subject based on the resources of the school</p>	<p>Ban schools from allocating a separate classroom for BE/EMI students. Directs the schools to mix them with SM and TM students in one class (bi-medium classes) where EMI students have to move to another class for EMI instruction. <u>Not consider the potential social cohesion gains in multiethnic schools; time waste in moving between periods which affects BE/EMI students mentally and educationally as revealed by students and teachers]</u></p> <p>Also stipulates BE/EMI must not be taken as a criterion for school admissions. BE/EMI students must be ‘selected’ only from Gr 6 students in the school [<u>Not consider the vacancies that a school may have in BE/EMI and giving opportunities at least for the students in surrounding schools – usually in some EMI classes there are a very few students such as 10 in some schools outside urban areas]</u></p> <p>4.4. & 4.5 Limit the number of subjects to maximum five. Prohibit History through EM without justification.</p> <p><u>Private candidates [mainly from International/Private Schools] are exempted from this ban. Highly discriminative towards the students in public schools and sometimes government-assisted schools also]</u></p> <p>This Circular also implies an attempt to expand BE/EM by providing directives to schools to initiate the BE/EMI program, offering at least one subject through English. BE/EMI students’ discretion to select the medium when applying for public examinations</p>
12	2008/12(i) 2008.09.15	Amendment to 2008/12 including the subject ‘Commerce and Business Studies’ in addition to Entrepreneurship Studies	Number of category subjects increased. This change was done due to the change made to the main circular on the curriculum reform.
13	2008/43 2008.11.03	<p>- Allows 10 subjects to teach in GCE A/L classes including Commerce and Arts streams.</p> <p>- Schools can start to teach other subjects in EM as well based on resource availability with the approval of MOE.</p>	It seems lack of preparation and long sightedness. This caused many issues, shortage of teachers as the most critical factor. Though the program was expanded to other subject streams as well even now there is a limited number of schools with A/L classes in EM.
14	2010/27 2010.08.26	Circular to emphasize matters in the previous circulars more Specially provides directive to the admission of students to BE classes.	<p>It seems this circular mainly focuses on stopping malpractices related to admissions to EM classes.</p> <p>e.g., “...It is not allowed to use the bi – medium class as a privilege for the admission of students to any school”:</p> <p>“Students who are not learning in bilingual education, should not be admitted to the grade 7 as bilingual students”</p> <p><u>Again not consider the vacancies that may exist in BE/EMI and providing opportunity for learning through EM in surrounding schools where EM is not available. The NEC’s policy aims to provide equal opportunities (and those who are willing) for EM is restricted by this circular just to stop malpractices at school level without giving much thought to opportunities losing.</u></p>

15	2012	Introduction of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) as the learning teaching methodology under the umbrella term of BE	There is no circular related to this. But a Handbook on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) published was issued by the MOE in 2016. <u>Though this is a good action it again shows the lack of planning and evidence-informed policy. The schools were instructed to start BE/EMI in 2000 but the teaching/learning methodology is introduced in 2012.</u>
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APPENDIX 2

Letter to Ombudsman

	අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය கல்வி அமைச்சு Ministry of Education	'ශුරුපාය', බත්තරමුල්ල, ශ්‍රී ලංකාව. 'இசுரூபாய்', பட்டரமுல்ல, இலங்கை. 'Tsurupaya', Battaramulla, Sri Lanka. ☎ +94112785141-50 📠 +94112784846 ✉ tsurupaya@moe.gov.lk 🌐 www.moe.gov.lk			
ඔබගේ පණිවිඩය Your Ref.	ED/01/06/11/(Ombudsman -WP)2018	ඔබගේ පණිවිඩය Your Ref.	OMB/P/2/4/5282/2021 OMB/P/2/4/5283/2021 OMB/P/2/4/5287/2021	දිනය Date	2022.07.29

පරිපාලන කටයුතු පිළිබඳ පාර්ලිමේන්තු කොමසාරිස් (සම්බුද්ධිමත්),
 පරිපාලන කටයුතු පිළිබඳ පාර්ලිමේන්තු කොමසාරිස් (සම්බුද්ධිමත්) කාර්යාලය,
 අංක 14, පාර්.ඒ.ද. මල් මාවත,
 කොළඹ 04.

ඉංග්‍රීසි මාධ්‍යයෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය ලැබීමට අවස්ථාව ලබා ගැනීම සඳහා
 මියා සහ මියා සහ මියා - ඉල්ලුම්කරුවන්.

උක්ත කරුණ සම්බන්ධයෙන් ඔබගේ සමාක හා 2022.05.05 දිනැති ලිපිය හා බැඳේ.

02. ඒ අනුව, ඉහත ඉල්ලුම්කරුවන් විසින් යොමු කරන ලද පෙන්සමෙහි සඳහන් වන්නේ, මියා දැනට වයස 10කට පමණ පෙර සිට, 06 ශ්‍රේණියේ සිට සිසුන්ගේ ඉල්ලීම් අනුව ඉංග්‍රීසි මාධ්‍යයෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය හඳුන්වීමට අවස්ථාව ලබා දී ඇති බවත්, මේ සඳහා වැඩි සිසුන් සංඛ්‍යාවක් ඉල්ලුම් කළ ද අවස්ථාව ලබා දී ඇත්තේ සිසුන් 30කට පමණක් බවයි.

ද්වි භාෂා මාධ්‍ය පන්ති සඳහා සිසුන් බඳවා ගැනීමේ ක්‍රමවේදය කුමක් ද යන්න පිළිබඳව සවිස්තර වාර්තාවක් විද්‍යාලයේ විදුහල්පති වෙතින් කැඳවන ලදී. එම වාර්තාවට අනුව, (වාර්තාවේ සිටපතක් අමුණා ඇත.) ද්විභාෂා සිසුන් ඇතුළත් කර ගනු ලබන්නේ සිංහල හා දෙමළ මාධ්‍යවලින් වන අතර 6 ශ්‍රේණියේ සිට ඉංග්‍රීසි ද්වි මාධ්‍යයෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය හඳුන්වීමට අවස්ථාව සලසා ඇති බවයි.


04. දැනට මෙම පාසලේ 6 වසර සමාන්තර පන්ති සංඛ්‍යාව 15ක් වන අතර ඉන් පන්ති 13ක් සිංහල මාධ්‍ය පන්ති ලෙස ද පන්ති 02ක් දෙමළ මාධ්‍ය පන්ති ලෙස ද වේ. මෙම පන්ති අතුරින් පන්ති 10ක් ද්වි මාධ්‍ය පන්ති ලෙස පවත්වාගෙන යනු ලබන අතර එයින් පන්ති 02ක් දෙමළ/ ඉංග්‍රීසි ද්වි මාධ්‍ය ලෙස ද ඉතිරි පන්ති 08 සිංහල/ ඉංග්‍රීසි ද්වි මාධ්‍ය ලෙස පවත්වා ගෙන යනු ලබයි.

05. අධ්‍යාපන ලේකම්ගේ 2006.03.07 දිනැති 2006/09 දරණ ද්විතියක ශ්‍රේණි (6-11) සඳහා විෂය මාලා ක්‍රියාත්මක කිරීම පිළිබඳ ව්‍යුහලේඛය හා එයට අනුගාමීක 2007/6, 2008/12, 2008/12 (1), 2010/27 සංශෝධන වලට අනුගත වෙමින් මෙම පාසලේ 06 ශ්‍රේණියට ඇතුළත් වන සිසුන් තෝරා ගනු ලබන්නේ ලිඛිත ඉංග්‍රීසි භාෂා පරීක්ෂණයක් පවත්වමින් පසුවය.

06. 2008/37 ව්‍යුහලේඛයේ 2.1 (ආ) වගන්තියට අනුව එක් පන්තිය රඳවාගත හැකි උපරිම සිසුන් සංඛ්‍යාව 45ක් වන අතර එම සිසුන් ඇතුළත් කර ගනු ලබන්නේ ප්‍රාථමික අංශයේ සිට 06 ශ්‍රේණියට ඇතුළත් වන සිසුන් හා ශිෂ්‍යත්ව විභාගය සමත්ව කඩඉම් ලකුණ ඉක්මවා පාසලට ඇතුළත් වන සිසුන් ලෙසය. ද්වි මාධ්‍ය අධ්‍යාපනය ලැබීම සඳහා සිසුන් තෝරා ගනු ලබන්නේ ප්‍රාථමික අංශයේ සිට කණිෂ්ඨ ද්විතියක අංශයට සමත් වූ සිසුන්ගෙන් 59%ක් ලෙස සහ වෙනත් පාසල් වලින් පැමිණෙන ශිෂ්‍යත්ව ධාරීන්ගෙන් 41%ක් ලෙස විද්‍යාලය මගින් පවත්වනු ලබන ඉංග්‍රීසි භාෂා පරීක්ෂණය සමත් වූ සිසුන්ගෙන්ය.

07. ඒ අනුව, 2022 වර්ෂයේ ද්වි මාස පන්ති සඳහා සිසුන් ඇතුළත් කර ගැනීමේදී, සාසලේ ප්‍රාථමික අංශයේ සිට ද්විතියික අංශයට ඇතුළත් වූ සිසුන්ගෙන් තෝරා ගනු ලබන පරීක්ෂණයේ ලකුණු 69ක් ද ශිෂ්‍යාන්ව ධාරීන්ගෙන් කඩඉම් ලකුණු 66ක් ලෙස ලබා ගත් සිසුන්ගෙන් සිසුන් 200ක් පමණි.

08. උක්ත විදුහල්පතිගේ වාර්තාවට අනුව, ඉංග්‍රීසි ද්වි මාස අධ්‍යාපනය ලැබීම සඳහා සිසු දරුවන්ගේ ඉංග්‍රීසි භාෂා කුසලතාවය නිසි පරිදි සංවර්ධනය වී තිබිය යුතුය. පවතින භෞතික හා මානව සම්පත් අනුව ද්වි මාස අධ්‍යාපනය හැදෑරීම සඳහා අයදුම් කරන සියළු සිසුන් හට අවස්ථාව ලබා දිය නොහැක. ඒ බැවින් උක්ත ඉල්ලුම්කරුවන්ගේ දරුවන් මෙම විද්‍යාලයේ ඉංග්‍රීසි/ ද්වි මාස භාෂාවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන හැදෑරීමට සුදුසුකම් ලබා නොමැති බව නිරීක්ෂණය කරමි.


අධ්‍යාපන අධ්‍යක්ෂ (ජාතික සාසල්)
අධ්‍යාපන ලේකම් වෙනුවට