Teachers' Perspective on the English Syllabus of Tamil Nadu Equitable Education System

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ABSTRACT The aim of this study was to investigate the English syllabus of Tamil Nadu Equitable Education system or Uniform System of School Education or *Samacheer Kalvi Thittam* with respect to the teachers' perspective. The method of this study was Descriptive Method. Stratified proportionate sampling method was followed by administering a close-ended questionnaire. Proportionately nine different schools, three government schools, three government aided schools and three self-financing schools in and around Trichy district, Tamil Nadu were selected for the study. Three English teachers from each school, tota lof twenty-seven teachers were sampled. The responses from the teachers were measured as Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. More favourable responses were received from the teachers' towards the syllabus. The conclusion of the study establishes that the English syllabus of the system is good when compared to the previous one. The study recommends that the syllabus may be framed in depth so that it enables the students to appear for competitive examinations.

INTRODUCTION

Education is essential and it is the greatest means which exterminates illiteracy and ignorance among the public. The quality and uniform education determines the growth of a country. It is the responsibility of each and every state in a country to provide a standard education to all students' right from their school. The school education is to equip the students with a strong base of knowledge in all its dimensions. Tamil Nadu State Government has made an endeavor to bring equal and standard school education throughout the state in the year 2010. Earlier standardized education was not followed by the state. The following streams of school education were followed: The State board, Anglo-Indian, Oriental, Matriculation and Nursery School. Apart from these schools, CBSE and ICSE are available. These schools follow different syllabi and different schemes of examination. As a result, discrimination entrenched among the student community. To remove the different opinion about the syllabus content, teaching methodology, discrimination of caste and social background, Equitable Education *(Samacheer Kalvi)* was introduced. The main objective of this system is to provide uniform and quality education. It also aimed at eradicating the commercialization of education due to which the quality of education is at stake. Education is made compulsory so as to increase the literacy rate. Equitable Education along with the continuous and comprehensive system of evaluation enables Activity Based Learning (ABL) and free of examination stress. The Equitable Education aims at a holistic education by bringing together the CBSE content and the NCERT curriculum to provide the children with technical, interpersonal and life skills. It also includes fine arts, sports and physical education which are made compulsory for all children. The textbooks, Trimester pattern and Examination pattern are the most significant changes that administrate the Equitable Education.

Literature Review

The objective of the education system can be achieved when the syllabus is framed well.

The syllabus is considered to be a "…specification of the content of a course of instruction and lists what will be taught and tested" (Richards 2001). Prabhu's (1987) definition appears more specific when he refers it as the "specification of what is to be learnt." For Allen (1984), the syllabus is "….that subpart of curriculum which is concerned with a specifications of what units will be taught" whereas for Yalden (1987), it is primarily a teacher's statement about objectives and content, with formal and functional components in a dual progression of linear and spiral learning. Brumfit (1984) refers to the content and also the sequences of learning, while Nunan (1988) takes a wider, non-specific view of syllabus "…a framework within which activities can be carried out: a teaching device to facilitate learning." Breen (1987: 83) articulates a very common definition of a syllabus which, according to him, is "the meeting point of a perspective upon language itself, upon using language, and upon teaching and learning which is a contemporary and commonly accepted interpretation of the harmonious links between theory, research, and classroom practice." Thus definition for syllabus may differ from one perspective to the other. But the ultimate goal is to specify what is to be taught. According to Aggarwal (1984: 112-113), the Commission observes that "any method, good or bad links up the teacher and his pupils into an organic relationship with constant mutual interaction …..Every teacher and educationist knows that even the best curriculum and the most prefect syllabus remain dead unless quickened into life by the right methods of teaching by the right kind of teachers." In line with this, teachers play a vital role in executing the syllabus which is framed to satisfy the objective of the system.

Objective

The objective of the study was to analyze the views of the teachers' from various schools and various backgrounds on the English Syllabus of the Equitable Education System in Tamil Nadu. It also aims to provide suitable recommendations to upgrade the syllabus with recent trends.

METHODOLOGY

This study involves a descriptive method. Based on stratified proportionate method samples were selected. Twenty-seven high school teachers from nine different schools, three from each school were sampled. The study was conducted in and around Trichy District, Tamil Nadu. They were administered a close-ended questionnaire which has a set of ten question (Appendix 1) based on the English syllabus of the equitable education system in Tamil Nadu. All the questions were rated as strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Apart from this, face-to-face interview was also conducted among teachers in order to make the study more reliable and sensible.

RESULTS

The English Syllabus in Equitable Education

Table 1 establishes the fact that the majority of the respondents (70.4%) agreed to the given statement that the English syllabus provides a clear objective of each lesson. Only one respondent has strongly disagreed with the statement. It is found that 18.5 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Strongly agree was the response of two teachers out of twenty-seven. Through the descriptive method, it is well proved that the syllabus gives a clear objective of what is to be taught.

Table 1: Gives a clear objective of each lesson

Particulars	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.7
Disagree	5	18.5
Agree	19	70.4
Strongly agree	2	7.4
Total	27	100

Table 2 indicates that four teachers have strongly agreed that the syllabus presents the ideas and concepts clearly. Out of twenty-seven respondents, seventeen respondents agreed

Table 2: Presents the ideas and concepts clearly

Particulars	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.7
Disagree	5	18.5
Agree	17	63.0
Strongly agree	4	14.8
Total	27	100

to the statement. Remaining teachers have shared their opinion as disagree and strongly disagree. The responses indicate that the new syllabus pattern gives the ideas and concepts clearly. The students can understand the lesson well as it gives a clear picture about the concepts and ideas without any ambiguity.

Majority of the teachers (70.4%) agreed the statement that the syllabus enables the students to learn grammar easily. Three disagreed; one strongly disagreed out of the whole number, whereas the remaining four teachers agreed strongly. Table 3 stands as an evident as the syllabus focuses on grammar and makes the students to learn the back exercises easily. Activity based learning enables the students to learn grammar easily through exercises like dialogue writing, framing questions etc.

Table 3: Makes the students to learn grammar easily

Particulars	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.7
Disagree	3	11.1
Agree	19	70.4
Strongly agree	4	14.8
Total	27	100

The information in the Table 4 states that sixty-three percent of the respondents agreed that the syllabus prescribes the materials in a well-structured and in an organized manner. It was strongly disagreed by 3.7 percent of the respondents while 18.5 percent of the teachers strongly agreed to the statement.

Table 4: Prescribes the materials in a well-structured manner

Particulars	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.7
Disagree	4	14.8
Agree	17	63.0
Strongly agree	5	18.5
Total	27	100

Table 5 signifies that maximum of twelve and ten respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the syllabus caters to the needs of the students at all levels. Only one out of twenty-seven teachers said that it doesn't meet the requirements of

all levels of students. 14.8 percent of the respondents disagreed with the given statement. The qualitative approach finds that the table explicitly denotes that the syllabus satisfies the students' needs at all levels. Thus the syllabus proves its uniformity in framing syllabus.

Table 5: Caters to all levels of students

Particulars	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.7
Disagree	4	14.8
Agree	12	44.4
Strongly agree	10	37.0
Total	27	100

Table 6 points out that the statement was agreed by fifteen respondents whereas it was strongly agreed by seven out of twenty-seven teachers. The positive responses from the majority of the teachers show that the framework of the syllabus makes the teachers to complete the syllabus within the stipulated time.

Table 6: Allows the teachers to complete within the time limit

Particulars	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.7
Disagree	4	14.8
Agree	15	55.6
Strongly agree	7	25.9
Total	27	100

The data reflected in Table 7, hints that proportionately six respondents gave the opinion as strongly agreed and another six disagreed with the statement that the syllabus develops the students' ability to speak English fluently. It is found that the rural background students feel

Table 7: Develops the students' ability to speak English fluently

Particulars	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	6	22.2
Disagree	4	14.8
Agree	11	40.7
Strongly agree	6	22.2
Total	27	100

very difficult to speak in English as they are exposed to L2 acquisition only in the school. The change of the syllabus which mainly focuses on activity based learning kindles the interest of the students to acquire the language.

Table 8 explains that the majority of the respondents (59.3%) agreed that the syllabus focuses on the four skills of the language. Six respondents gave the positive note that they strongly agreed to the statement. 14.8 percent and 3.7 percent of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that the syllabus does not pave way to develop the LSRW skills of the language.

Table 8: Develops all the four skills of the language

Particulars	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.7
Disagree	4	14.8
Agree	16	59.3
Strongly agree	6	22.2
Total	27	100

The information given in Table 9 interprets that fourteen respondents agreed to the statement. 11.1 percent of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed equally. 25.9 percent of the teachers agreed strongly. The descriptive method of analysis shows that the syllabus provides the basic requirements to face the board exams confidently.

Table 9: Meets the students' requirements to face their public exams

Particulars	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	3	11.1
Disagree	3	11.1
Agree	14	51.9
Strongly agree	7	25.9
Total	27	100

The findings in Table 10 imply that the statement was agreed by five respondents whereas sixteen respondents disagreed with the statement that the syllabus allows the students to go for rote learning. It is observed that the continuous and comprehensive evaluation never allows them to learn by heart their lessons.

Table 10: Tends to go for rote learning

Particulars	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	4	14.8
Disagree	16	59.3
Agree	5	18.5
Strongly agree	2	7.4
Total	27	100

DISCUSSION

From Table 1, it is understood that each and every unit has a prose, poetry and a supplementary lesson. Teachers have been given a note of objective for each unit. According toBrumfit(1984), the syllabus has to specify the objective of what is taught and it cannot organize what is learnt. The syllabus should be focused in its objectives. Breen (1989: 47) defines syllabus as "…a plan of what is to be achieved through ourteaching and our students' learning." The new policy of the syllabus gives a plan to the teachers and students about the accomplishment of the content in the textbooks.

The information in the Table 2, demonstrates that the ideas and concepts are presented very clearly. Richards (2001) also referred that "…specification of the content of a course of instruction and lists what will be taught and tested." The content and the concept should be clearly presented for the better execution of the syllabus. The responses from the teachers state that there is no ambiguity in the ideas and concepts in the syllabus. It is understood orally that most of the teachers follow only the prescribed textbooks as the source of teaching. Imparting of education can be done efficiently only when there is no ambiguity in the source of material.

In Table 3, a positive note was given by most of the teachers that grammar can be learnt easily with the help of the new framework of the syllabus. The responses can be well supported by Praise and Meenakshi(2015) who clarify that the description of the language is seen as grammar and structure, on the other hand, grammar is the base to communicate efficiently and also helps to understand the meaning of the communication correctly. Thayniath (2017) advocates that grammar exercises have been a part of the syllabus in order to enrich the students' level of communication. A case study by Thangayavelu and Pugalenthi (2014) on the students' attitude to-

wards equitable education system supports the statement in a proper manner.

The responses from the teachers' part for the given statement in Table 4, infer that the syllabus prescribes the materials in a well-structured manner. Orally it was registered that the syllabus is not in-depth. Superficial outlook of the each topic predicts that the syllabus can be in detail so that student beneficiaries can face the exams confidently. Syiemiong (2010) also came out with the findings that the topics in the syllabus should be well discussed in the broader aspects. Nunan (1988) elaborates that the designing of the syllabus and the preparation of the materials should be well-organized. According to Brumfit (1984), functional notional methodology attends to mean more than structure and form, contextualization is a basic premise, language learning is learning to communicate, reading and writing can start from the first day and communicative competition is the desired goal.

The responses in Table 5 support the statement strongly. Only with subtle difference between agree and strongly agree, the respondents support the statement that the syllabus fulfills the needs of all levels of students. On the other hand, 14.8 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement as the students from English medium and other background feel that the syllabus is not profound in certain aspects. Mediocre and below average students may find it easy to learn. Richards (2001) advocates about curriculum and syllabus that it should be meticulously prepared for all categories of students. Susheela and Annakodi (2015) bring out the students' attitude towards the syllabus and emphasis that all levels of students are the beneficiaries of the new policy.

Managing time is a brilliant art. Teachers have the utmost responsibility in managing time in the classroom. Teachers were asked whether the syllabus allows them to complete within the given time limit. Table 6 gives a clear picture that the majority of the respondents gave the positive response towards the question. Only five respondents felt that the time is not sufficient to complete the portions. It is strongly proven that the syllabus has been framed in such a way that the time allocation to cover the syllabus is satisfactory. Reeves (2005) highly recommends that the teachers' attitude towards the classroom management lies in managing time in complet-

ing the syllabus. The respondents approve the syllabus that provides them adequate time to cover the portions. Rahimpour (2010) expresses that the time allocation in framing syllabus is the major factor which determines the achievement of the goal of the syllabus.

Teacher respondents (22.2%) equally came out with the opinion as strongly agreed and strongly disagreed in Table 7. The proportionate response from the teachers' side is due to the students from rural background. Continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) enables the students to have Activity Based Learning (ABL). This evaluation method will really motivate the students to speak the language. The findings can be authenticated with the literature of Lepcha (2010) which highlights that the syllabus improves the students' ability to communicate in English. Anandalakshmy (2007) reports that the Activity Based Learning is one among the innovative methods in Tamil Nadu School Education which nurtures the students by all means. The talents of the students would be brought out through various activities. Students are also motivated to speak English without any hindrance.

In Table 8, maximum number of the respondents made a positive response that the syllabus focuses on the activities based on the four skills of the language. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) are the four skills of the language which make the students' to acquire the language at better altitudes. The responses towards learning language skills are better substantiated with Syiemiong (2010: 100) that the syllabus motivates the students to learn all the four skills of the language as English is learnt as a skill subject. Vijayakumar and Stephen (2016), conclude in their study that language based activities should be included in school curriculum in order to retain the positive attitude among the teachers and the students to learn LSRW skills.

Table 9 witnesses that minimal ratio of the teachers disagreed and strongly disagreed. The Muthukumaran Committee highly focuses on the syllabus design. The inputs through the syllabus should be noteworthy so that the students face any situations boldly even their examinations. Syllabus is one of the most important things which determine the uniform system of school education throughout the state. The responses from Table 5 also hold the keynote idea that the syllabus caters to all levels of students.

It infers that all levels of students can meet their essentials through the syllabus to face the public exam assertively. Hursen and Islek (2016) stress that the training needs of the teachers' and the students' are ample so as to perform well in the exams.

It was strongly opposed by four respondents whereas two of them agreed strongly in Table 10. Lepcha (2010) supported that the syllabus should not encourage rote learning instead it should make the students to understand the concepts and write on their own. Vijayakumar and Stephen (2016) advocate in their findings that the students' attitude towards Active Learning Method (ALM) in equitable education is good. It implies that the Activity Based Learning will reduce the attitude of rote learning. Memorizing something was the conventional way of learning. Barnes (2007) says that the syllabus should be designed as a remedy to the rote learning styles of the past and it should focus on the development of the students' communication skill. It must procure a skill-based method by depending on an extensive selection of exercises. The views of the teachers portray that the syllabus and the examination pattern never allows the students to do the traditional learning.

CONCLUSION

In line with this, the teachers of various schools came up with their opinion. It is inferred that the school teachers of English are very much contented with the syllabus. Based on the responses, betterment could be seen by the teachers in framing the syllabus under this system. The syllabus is well received by the teachers. They agreed that the syllabus remains as the testimony of the system. The English Syllabus of the equitable education is well demonstrated by the responses of the teachers. Trimester pattern, textbooks, exam pattern and grade system are the most important things that enhance the competency level of the students on par with the students of other board of studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Equitable education is implemented throughout the state to impart uniform and quality education. This system is a unique and a beneficial one. But the teachers of English feel that the syllabus can be in-depth so that it may help the students to get through any competitive exams. More speaking activities should be given to improve the communication skills of the students. Grammar exercises based on the day to day activities are highly recommended so that the students can learn grammar with its practice.Further studies can be carried out by comparing the Equitable English syllabus with the English syllabus of other boards.Other parameters on examination pattern, grade system and trimester pattern can also be analyzed in the future study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX-I

The English Syllabus in Equitable Education

a. Gives a clear objective of each lesson
   Strongly disagree ( )   Disagree ( )   Agree ( )   Strongly Agree ( )
b. Presents the ideas and concepts clearly
   Strongly disagree ( )   Disagree ( )   Agree ( )   Strongly Agree ( )
c. Makes the students to learn grammar easily
   Strongly disagree ( )   Disagree ( )   Agree ( )   Strongly Agree ( )
d. Prescribes the materials in a well-structured manner
   Strongly disagree ( )   Disagree ( )   Agree ( )   Strongly Agree ( )
e. Caters to all levels of students
   Strongly disagree ( )   Disagree ( )   Agree ( )   Strongly Agree ( )
f. Allows the teachers to complete within the time limit
   Strongly disagree ( )   Disagree ( )   Agree ( )   Strongly Agree ( )
g. Develops the students ability to speak English fluently
   Strongly disagree ( )   Disagree ( )   Agree ( )   Strongly Agree ( )
h. Develops all the four skills of the language
   Strongly disagree ( )   Disagree ( )   Agree ( )   Strongly Agree ( )
i. Meets the students requirements to face their public exams
   Strongly disagree ( )   Disagree ( )   Agree ( )   Strongly Agree ( )
j. Tends to go for rote learning
   Strongly disagree ( )   Disagree ( )   Agree ( )   Strongly Agree ( )