

**The Teaching of English in the Government/Aided
Primary Schools in Kerala under DPEP**

Sreedevi K. Nair

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**Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development
Centre for Development Studies
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Contents

1	Introduction	5
2	District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)	9
3	The Second Language Acquisition Programme (SLAP)	15
4	Implementation of SLAP	19
5	Data collection and analysis	23
6	Findings of the study	38
7	Suggestions	42
	Appendix-I	44

The Teaching of English in the Government/Aided Primary Schools in Kerala under DPEP

Sreedevi K. Nair

1. Introduction

The background

Launched in 1993 as a national initiative to achieve Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) through district-level intervention, the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was started in a big way in Kerala in the year 1995. Unlike other States in India, Kerala did not experience serious problems either in the enrolment or in the retention of children. However, the achievement level demonstrated by the children in the Baseline Achievement Assessment tests conducted by the Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishat (KSSP) for DPEP in 1995-'96 was far from satisfactory. The Joint Supervision Mission I and II, entrusted by the Union Government, also rated the then-existing textbooks and handbooks as unsatisfactory and inadequate. Therefore, the implementation of major pedagogical modifications with support and supervision from national-level experts was advised to raise the achievement levels of the children. Consequent to this, major interventions were initiated in the teaching of English as well. The present study aims to assess the efficacy of SLAP (Second Language Acquisition Programme) of DPEP in teaching English to the children of standards IV and V.

Context

The number of Kerala students who are selected in the national-level examinations has been diminishing consistently over the years. Even those who pass the written examinations, generally fail to make it to the interview. This issue received much public attention in the past few years and several studies tried to probe into the problem. Many of the studies identified lack of proficiency in the usage of English as a major impediment. Improving the general standard of English thus became a priority area in the field of education in Kerala.

The gravity of the problem is also highlighted by the SSLC (Secondary School Leaving Certificate) examination results of the past several years. In March 2001, the lowest pass percentage as well as the lowest State average was marked for English. While 88 percent

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students passed their first language (Malayalam), only 37 percent could secure a pass in English. The lowest average mark of a meagre 13 was also recorded for English. It was this state of affairs that prompted the present study.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are listed here:

- (i) To make an in-depth study as well as analysis of the Second Language Acquisition Programme (SLAP) of DPEP.
- (ii) To evaluate the level of language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) of the children taught through SLAP.
- (iii) To find out whether the programme has been successful in making the children achieve the expected level of proficiency in English.
- (iv) To identify the reasons for the success/failure of the programme.
- (v) To suggest steps for improving the programme.

Methods of investigation

The following methods of investigation were used in the study.

(i) Focussed Group and Individual interaction with

- (a) Personnel involved in the process of development of curriculum and textbooks, i.e., DPEP staff members, State Resource Group (SRG) members, District Institute for Educational Training (DIET) faculty, and Block- and Cluster-level functionaries, and
- (b) Users of the material, i.e., Teachers and Children.

(ii) Desk analysis of relevant documents

Desk analysis of the SLAP textbooks and teachers' handbooks was carried out.

(iii) Classroom observation

Impact evaluation of SLAP was carried out through assessment of the English language efficiency of the children who have completed the first stage of SLAP study. For this, classroom observation in all the selected schools was done.

Sources of data

Out of the six DPEP districts three (Thiruvananthapuram, Palakkad, and Kasargod) were chosen for case study.

Rationale for the choice of districts

In the first phase, DPEP was introduced in

- (i) Wayanad,
- (ii) Malappuram, and
- (iii) Kasargod districts.

During the second phase, the programme was extended to

- (i) Thiruvananthapuram,
- (ii) Idukki, and
- (iii) Palakkad districts.

Among these, Kasargod was chosen from among the phase I districts and Thiruvananthapuram and Palakkad from among the phase II districts. These three roughly represent the southern, the central, and the northern parts of the State. These districts have in place all the associate structures of the programme such as the DIETs, the Block Resource Centres (BRC), Cluster Resource Centres (CRC), and the Parent Teacher Associations (PTA). Besides, organisations such as the School Resource Group, the Village Education Committees at the school level, the Cluster Resource Group, the District Resource Group and the District Monitoring Cell are all active in the districts. Thiruvananthapuram has also the additional benefit of being closely supervised by the State office.

In all the three districts, SLAP and non-SLAP schools exist in very close proximity. This made the comparative study more meaningful by making available children who shared very similar situations in life.

After consultation with the District Programme Officers (DPO), five schools each in the districts where SLAP was implemented were selected. The criterion for selection was that the schools should have all the infrastructure as well as external facilities for the smooth implementation of the programme. According to the DPOs, internal inadequacies (lack of trained teachers, lack of on-site support, etc) as well as external interference (parents trying to teach the children in the conventional way, children attending private tuition classes, etc) with the teaching/learning process were minimal in these schools.

The original plan to visit at least 10 SLAP schools in each district was, however, later dropped, as it was understood that none of the schools in any of the districts has continued SLAP into standard V. This meant that two years of SLAP study sample was available nowhere.

Instead, it was decided to assess the efficacy of English language teaching in the Government / Aided high schools in the State. Analysis of the English syllabus and the question paper for Standard X was carried out. The language proficiency of 2,100 teachers who evaluated the English answer scripts for the public examination, from eight valuation camps across the State was assessed through a questionnaire circulated officially in the camps. A short, self-contained report of that tangential study is given in Appendix II.

Children of Standard V were chosen for evaluation of language skills as SLAP had been conceived for Standards IV and V as constituting the first stage of the programme.

Outline

Section 1 of the report is the introduction to the study. Section 2 mentions a few facts about DPEP in general and also about DPEP in Kerala. Section 3 explains the theoretical assumptions of SLAP. The process of implementation of SLAP in the selected schools is described in Section 4. Section 5 presents the data collected and their analysis. The findings of the study are presented in Section 6. Section 7 contains suggestions for improvement.

2. District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)

General outline

The overall goal of DPEP introduced at the national level in 1993 was the re-construction of the primary education system to operationalise the strategy of UEE (Universalisation of Elementary Education) as envisaged in the National Policy on Education (NPE) formulated in 1986 and updated in 1992. Its Programme of Action (POA) advocated decentralised planning and management, disaggregated target-setting, community mobilisation, and population-specific planning. The fundamental principle of DPEP was to evolve efficient strategies for educational transaction at the State and the district levels. It went beyond the conventional packages such as opening of new schools and appointing of new teachers to address the issues of content, process, quality, and equity in education. The objectives of DPEP were the following:

- (i) To reduce the differences in the enrolment, dropping out, and learning achievement between the two sexes and also between the more and the less privileged social groups to less than five percent.
- (ii) To reduce overall primary-level dropout rates for all children at the primary level to less than 10 percent.
- (iii) To raise the average achievement levels of at least 25 percent children over measured baseline levels and to ensure the achievement of basic literacy and numeric competencies, and a minimum of 40 percent achievement levels in other competencies by all primary schoolchildren.
- (iv) To provide, according to national norms, access for all children to primary education (classes I-V), i.e., primary schooling wherever possible or its equivalent non-formal education where it is not possible.

The total estimated outlay during the Eighth Five-Year Plan period for DPEP was Rs 1950 cr out of which Rs 1720 cr was to be mobilised from external sources. DPEP implementation had formally started in 1994-'95 in 42 districts in the States of Assam, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu. Of these, 19 districts of Madhya Pradesh were funded by the European Community's Programme assistance to DPEP while International Development Agency (IDA) funded the remaining State projects. The project period was seven years in all the 42 districts.

The planning process and the project formulation work were initiated with the involvement of people at the grassroots-level. The State governments were expected to put the management structure in place for the smooth implementation of the programme. On the basis of experience gained in seven States, expansion of the programme to districts in new States as well as to additional districts in other States already covered by DPEP was envisaged. During the Eighth Five-Year Plan, attempts were made to cover 110 districts under DPEP.

DPEP and girls' education

One of the avowed aims of DPEP is to enhance the education level of girls. A series of

studies conducted as part of operationalising the DPEP revealed lower enrolment of girls, higher dropout rates, and existence of various other factors affecting the education status of girls. These include family attitude, involvement of girls in domestic work, early marriage, inaccessible schools and rigid school timings, lack of infrastructural facilities for girls, shortage of female teachers, irrelevance of the curriculum, and gender bias among teachers and administrators and in the textbooks and other teaching/learning materials.

Several strategies were envisaged for increasing girls' enrolment and ensuring their continuation in school and completion of five years of primary education. Enhancing their learning achievements was also on the cards. Increase in the proportion of female teachers, establishment of non-formal education centres, revision of textbooks, curriculum reform and appointment of women inspectors to monitor and assist girls' education were some of the several steps proposed to address gender bias in education. Gender sensitisation of teachers and administrators through pre-service and in-service training and of community members, government functionaries, and textbook writers through orientation workshops was also proposed.

DPEP – The Kerala experience

As mentioned earlier, the textbooks, which were in use in the State before the introduction of DPEP, were rated unsuitable and inadequate by the KSSP and also by the National Mission appointed for the purpose of looking into them. Consequently, the State Project Director's office of DPEP initiated a feedback on the Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL)-based textbooks brought out by SCERT and which were in use at that point of time in the Government / Aided schools in Kerala. The participants in the programme included teachers, parents, and those interested in the field, the media persons and many others. The feedback pointed out the following aspects:

- (i) Both the State and the national MLL-based curricula were unsuitable for the age groups for which they were meant. The expected level of learning was too high.
- (ii) The MLLs as laid down by the Ministry of Human Resources Development (HRD) were based on the assumption that the entry age for grade I is six years while in Kerala it was five years.
- (iii) The curricula did not take into account the actual instructional time available in the schools.
- (iv) Textbooks meant for children were largely devoid of content, which were of interest to them and which ensured their active participation.
- (v) Teachers' handbooks were inadequate and had several shortcomings.
- (vi) A large section of the teacher community never had the benefit of in-service training.
- (vii) On-site support and guidance to the teachers were absent.
- (viii) The approach to learning was conceived as linear while children's learning is rather spiral in nature.

On the basis of these findings, DPEP Kerala decided to go into the development of new textbooks and teachers' handbooks.

Textbooks – why and for whom?

As a starting step, the State Project Office designed a discussion paper *Textbooks – Why and for Whom?* that included extracts from the Yashpal Committee Report, to initiate a debate on the very rationale of having textbooks. Presidents of the *Zilla Parishads* organised discussions on the paper at the district and at the sub-district levels. Suggestions were also solicited from the general public. People from various walks of life such as professors, priests, politicians, psychologists, paediatricians, and laymen responded. The suggestions received were considered at the time of designing new learning materials.

The impressions of practising primary teachers on the then existing curriculum were collected through a survey. Opinions collected from 2213 primary teachers were matched with those of persons who had participated in the debate earlier. The teachers were also asked to respond to other aspects of schooling such as the burden of learning, textbook content, the ideal way to use textbooks, textbook designing, physical characteristics of the textbook such as size, number, and size of pictures. The feedback received from all these different sources was studied carefully to decide upon the changes that were required to be made to the curriculum and the textbooks. Some of the worthwhile suggestions received are listed here.

- (i) Reduce the curriculum load.
- (ii) Develop the curriculum only after taking into consideration the actual/possible number of working days available for teacher-pupil interaction.
- (iii) Develop textbooks, which are relevant and child-friendly.
- (iv) Involve practising teachers in the development of curriculum and textbooks.
- (v) Employ child-centred and activity-based pedagogy, and
- (vi) Introduce teachers and also parents to the new pedagogy and related matters.

Process of textbook development

The next step was the selection of a core team for the development of textbooks and other learning materials. Two hundred practising teachers representing the 14 districts were screened in two one-day workshops where the teachers' understanding of activity-based pedagogy and basic writing skills were tested. Kannada and Tamil teachers were deliberately included for the purpose of bringing out materials for Kannada- and Tamil-medium children. Fifty teachers were selected as potential curriculum developers/textbook writers. They were put through a 10-day rigorous orientation programme on activity-based, child-centred pedagogy and the techniques of developing curriculum and textbooks.

The selected teachers together with the State Resource Group drawn from the SCERT/DIET/BRC faculty, subject experts, academicians, illustrators, and production personnel formed the team for development and production of textbooks.

Development of curricular framework

A series of interactive workshops were conducted to form a clear vision as to what should be the new curriculum. Participants included teachers, members of the State Resource Group

(SRG), psychologists, educationists, paediatricians, and public figures. An 11-member team from Karnataka including SCERT and BRC faculties also participated in the initial workshops as observers.

The workshops began with initial discussions on Basic Beliefs and Assumptions about the child, the process of learning, the teacher, and the functions of education. The implications were examined in detail. Subsequently, the team developed approach papers specifying the methods to be adopted in the learning of the mother tongue, Mathematics, and Environmental Science. Decision was then taken to adopt an integrated approach for Grades I and II. An approach paper on the implications of the why and how of integration was also developed. This, together with the Beliefs and Assumptions listed earlier, was used to make a curricular framework that was referred to again and again throughout the subsequent stages of material development. Once the curricular framework was ready, actual development of textbooks and handbooks started. Eight textbooks and eight handbooks (one book each for Class I and II, three books each for Class III and IV) were developed in Malayalam, Kannada, and Tamil for the children of Grades I to IV.

Trying out textbooks

Manuscripts of six finalised lessons from all the textbooks were tried out with children in between the workshops. The children were selected from rural, urban, tribal, and coastal schools. Untrained teachers carried out the try-out while the others observed.

The members of the SRG and the writing team discussed the results of the tryout and the implications of these for the revision of lessons. The teachers' handbooks also were to be modified accordingly. For this and for the further refinement of writing and editing, specific guidelines were drawn up. After going through all the complex processes, the textbooks and handbooks were finally produced.

The whole of the curriculum and the teaching materials developed were field-tested in the six DPEP districts, namely Kasargod, Wayanad, Malappuram, Palakkad, Idukki, and Thiruvananthapuram in the academic year 1997-'98. The drastic changes made in the longstanding school curriculum and in the curricular approach created a lot of resistance. Consequently, a committee headed by the then Director of SCERT, Dr B. Vijaya Kumar was appointed for looking into the new textbooks and to suggest necessary changes. Some of their suggestions were implemented and the revised books were introduced in all the Government /Aided schools in all the 14 districts in the State in the academic year 1998-'99 from Grades I to IV. The spreading of the programme throughout the State gave rise to harsh criticism. A new committee was appointed under Prof. S. Guptan Nair to suggest relevant changes. The textbooks, which reached the schools in the year 1999-2000, were to incorporate the suggested changes.

Teacher training

The role of the teacher in the effective transaction of the new curriculum necessitated the rigorous and regular training of teachers. A cascade model training was envisaged and Block

Resource Centres (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) were organised. The State Resource Group conducted the training of the BRC Co-ordinators who were in turn to train other teachers. One SRG member served as an observer during every training camp to minimise transmission loss.

Ten to twelve CRC Co-ordinators were based in one BRC. Hence the range and the quantum of expertise available to each block were high. The Academic Co-ordinator was from the DIET faculty. Normally a high school headmaster worked in the capacity of Administrative Co-ordinator, for about eight to ten clusters. Each cluster catered, in turn, to about eight to ten schools. The Head Teacher of the school in which the Cluster Resource Centre was located, was the Co-ordinator of the Cluster.

Initially, the teacher training in the DPEP districts was designed to train the teacher in activity-based, child-centred teaching at the early primary level. After receiving feedback from the field, the training began to address the practising of activity-based teaching in the higher primary classes as well. By now, over 30,000 teachers have been trained in this pedagogy.

The teacher's training programmes are designed to be participatory and experiential. Normally, a teacher's training programme included a five-day orientation course on activity-based teaching/learning practice followed by a three-day textbook-related training. Training was also provided on activity-based evaluation processes. The cluster met regularly once a month to provide continued support and advice to the practising teachers. The BRC trainers also made regular school visits for giving on-the-job support.

Parents' orientation

There were plans to create awareness in parents about the new curriculum through 'Community Participation programmes'. This was aimed at reducing public resistance to the new programme. A module was prepared for communicating through the PTAs, which are fairly active in Kerala. Though well-conceived, the level of success achieved by the programme is doubtful.

Changed learning/teaching environment under DPEP

The classroom atmosphere of Kerala's primary schools underwent a drastic change due to the introduction of the DPEP programme. The changed environment was the outcome of the following features.

- (i) Introduction of child-centred, activity-based teaching/ learning.
- (ii) Learning made joyful to the child.
- (iii) Inclusion of child-friendly textual contents and illustrations.
- (iv) Training of children in 'learning to learn'.
- (v) Systematic and scientific reduction in the curriculum load.
- (vi) Making of the curriculum as flexible as possible.
- (vii) Realistic calculation of the child's learning pace and insistence on the spiralling of contents.

- (viii) Acceptance of the curriculum as a constantly evolving one.
- (ix) Involvement of practising teachers in the development of the curriculum and the textbooks.
- (x) Employment of participatory and democratic teacher-training strategies.
- (xi) Continuous monitoring of teachers even after the training.
- (xii) Providing of onsite support inside classrooms.
- (xiii) Raising of competency/confidence of the teachers.
- (xiv) Evolving of continuous and comprehensive evaluation techniques.
- (xv) Introduction of the grading system for evaluation.

These features created a welcome change in the conventional, tradition-bound, lifeless atmosphere of the primary schools where little children used to sit like *dead specimens in a museum* and on whom descended the teachers' weighty words like *hailstorms on flowers*.

The introduction of the new curriculum is a major milestone in the field of education in Kerala. It will certainly be noted down in Kerala's educational history as the most remarkable intervention made in the whole of the twentieth century notwithstanding the criticisms raised against it.

3. The Second Language Acquisition Programme (SLAP)

SLAP is the DPEP programme for the teaching of English as a second language. The programme bases itself on the convergence of Linguistics and the methodology of language teaching. It is heavily influenced by the following aspects:

- (i) Noam Chomsky's theory on Universal Grammar (UG), and
- (ii) The Whole Language Approach of Constance Weaver.

Chomsky's Universal Grammar & cognitive theory of language acquisition

The Universal Grammar (UG) and the cognitive theory of language make use of the following theoretical assumptions.

- (i) The human child is genetically endowed with a language system, namely UG, and language acquisition is the unfolding of this innate system.
- (ii) UG has a highly modular structure with a number of sub-components. Learning a language means fixing the values of each of the parameters associated with the various systems of UG.
- (iii) By fixing the value of a parameter in one way or the other, the child gets the core grammar of the language.
- (iv) Apart from the core grammar, every language will have a periphery of marked features, which include borrowings, historical residues, new expressions, and so on.
- (v) What is represented in the mind of the child, as language is the product obtained by interaction between the UG and the core grammar on the one side and the individualised elements on the other.
- (vi) After fixing the value of each parameter (i.e., after obtaining the core grammar), necessary adjustments are made in the systems of core grammar in order to accommodate the periphery of marked features.
- (vii) These processes are carried out with the help of three kinds of evidence – Positive evidence, Direct negative evidence, and Indirect negative evidence.
- (viii) Direct negative evidence given to the child in the form of corrections is not required for acquiring a language system. What is required is the availability of indirect negative evidence.
- (ix) Language acquisition is a non-conscious process, which is distinct from the conscious process of learning language facts such as vocabulary and grammar rules.
- (x) Language is acquired not through imitation but through insightful theory construction.
- (xi) Repetition might help the learning of language facts in isolation but what is relevant for acquisition is not repetition but recurrence.
- (xii) Languages are acquired not through learning language facts in isolation but by internalising clusters of language facts.
- (xiii) What is meant by language is not the totality of the four skills but the inner competence required for the performance of these skills.
- (xiv) Language acquisition is not a process of linear growth but of spiral growth.

- (xv) Acquisition progresses from whole to part. At every stage of learning, facts of language that constitute parts are conceived in relation to the language system as a whole.
- (xvi) Static texts have no role in acquisition of language. What the child requires is a large variety and quantum of dynamic texts.
- (xvii) Acquisition becomes smooth when the linguistic experience is real, holistic, relevant, need-based, and meaningful to the child.
- (xviii) Overt corrections or expansions cannot facilitate acquisition. What is required is a rich linguistic atmosphere that will provide enough indirect negative evidence.

Whole language approach and its philosophy

SLAP regards the second language acquisition process as one analogous to that of the acquisition of mother tongue. It makes use of the Whole Language Philosophy conceived by Constance Weaver (*Understanding Whole Language: From Principles to Practice*, 1990) in the context of first language learning. The following are the salient features of this approach.

- (i) Children learn and grow most when they are involved in learning processes in their own ways. Most children can read things and give responses to tests assessing relatively minute and isolated skills. But the learning of concepts, skills, and strategies are easily and effectively facilitated when they have active involvement in the process. Whatever work they do, they must be psychologically involved in it.
- (ii) To foster emergent reading and writing in particular, the strategies successfully used by parents to stimulate the natural acquisition of language are to be replicated. The approach does not expect the child to read or write correctly or without mistakes in the beginning but the child's successive approximation towards adult norms are consistently rewarded.
- (iii) The Whole Language Approach is based on the observation that much of what children learn is learned with little, if any, direct instruction.
- (iv) Children have the innate ability to acquire even very complex processes provided they are involved in them. Hence, SLAP prompts the child to involve himself in 'organic reading and writing' and in need-based learning.
- (v) Language acquisition progresses from whole to part. Words recurring in discourses such as simple and comprehensible songs and stories are identified. Every segment appearing in the word is spiralled into other words recurring in discourses on other themes that are meaningful to the child. Writing may be facilitated simultaneously, provided the child feels the need to write something.
- (vi) Enough opportunities are to be provided in the classroom for the child to use the language meaningfully from its functional point of view. Mechanical activities such as copy writing and transcriptions are to be substituted with meaningful and organic writing tasks.
- (vii) The programme envisages both teachers and children as learners, risk takers, and decision-makers who have to take sufficient responsibility for learning within the classroom.
- (viii) A predetermined curriculum is not the real curriculum. Teachers should have sufficient theoretical awareness to select and develop materials and methods based on the whole language philosophy and reject those that are not in conformity with this philosophy.

In a sense, the curriculum is “negotiated” with the children. In order to do so, the curriculum is to be flexible and ever evolving.

- (ix) Social interaction among students is to be encouraged. Discussion, sharing of ideas, working together to solve problems, and project writing can all facilitate co-operation among children. Co-operation rather than competition will help the child develop his innate potential.
- (x) Children will be actively engaged in learning activities in the classroom. The approach envisages self-maintained discipline in the class.
- (xi) There are no distinctions between the activities for learning and those for evaluation. Tests are conducted not to identify the isolated skills in which children are weak but to identify and encourage their developing skills. Aware of the limitations of the terminal examination, the Whole Language Approach does not approve of it. It advocates continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE).
- (xii) Through this approach, children are expected to reach a level of proficiency, which is much above the skills of mere reading and writing.

Visions of English class under SLAP

The child

- (i) Actively participates in the learning activities.
- (ii) Makes use of opportunities to generate English that s/he has acquired in his / her own ways.
- (iii) Uses a mixture of English and mother tongue in the initial stages but slowly switches over to English.
- (iv) Makes use of various opportunities for using expressions of phatic communication meaningfully.
- (v) Participates in various language games and is ready to take up various linguistic tasks.
- (vi) Evaluates himself/herself and tries to improve his/her skills.
- (vii) Uses a variety of reading materials.
- (viii) Involves in meaningful writing tasks.

The teacher

- (i) Knows the potential of the learner.
- (ii) Creates an English language atmosphere through interaction with the learners in English.
- (iii) Plans thoroughly to facilitate the acquiring of various skills of the language by the children.
- (iv) Uses a variety of static texts for generating dynamic texts.
- (v) Makes sure that the child has enough slots to interact with the teacher / dynamic text, while performing activities.
- (vi) Interacts with the learners in English minimising the use of the mother tongue.
- (vii) Makes use of incidental slots for generating dynamic texts.
- (viii) Makes sure that proper spiralling and recurrence is achieved.
- (ix) Makes use of classroom opportunities and activities for evaluation.
- (x) Provides ample scope for recurrence of linguistic terms in order to help the children correct their mistakes themselves.

- (xi) Encourages the child to achieve the curricular goals.
- (xii) Does necessary midcourse corrections while executing their plans.
- (xiii) Gives comprehensible input to the learners.
- (xiv) Provides the child with crucial and relevant exposure.

The material

The learning materials

- (i) Should interact with the learner.
- (ii) Are simple and familiar to the learner.
- (iii) Are thought-provoking.
- (iv) Include those that have been developed by children.
- (v) Are open-ended.
- (vi) Are suitable to the level of the learners.
- (vii) Induce creativity.
- (viii) Could be used freely.

The atmosphere

- (i) Provides a lot of opportunities for children to listen and speak English.
- (ii) There is ample scope for familiarising the children with the written form of the language.
- (iii) Arrangement of the class is conducive to implement group activities.
- (iv) The teacher is one among the learners.
- (v) Children use learning materials freely and independently.
- (vi) Provides enough opportunity to the children to correct their own mistakes.
- (vii) Is friendly and evokes confidence.
- (viii) Encourages initiation on the part of the learner.

The evaluation

- (i) All language skills are evaluated.
- (ii) There is continuous evaluation.
- (iii) The teacher evaluates himself / herself.
- (iv) Learners evaluate themselves and mutually.
- (v) Grades are assigned based on clearly defined indicators for each curricular statement.

The parent

The parent has a role complementary to that of the teacher as one who facilitates the child to acquire the language easily.

Parents should not impose mechanical work such as transcribing on the children. They should discuss their problems about the children with the teachers.

4. Implementation of SLAP

Milestones of SLAP

Selection workshop

The first step was to identify a group of teachers who could be trained as Resource Persons (RP) in English. A State-level workshop was conducted for developing tools for the selection of RPs. The following were the requirements for RPs:

- (i) RPs must be fluent in English.
- (ii) They should have an awareness of the changes that English language undergoes.
- (iii) They should have a positive attitude towards teaching English.
- (iv) They should be aware of the child-centred pedagogy.

After evolving the tools for the selection of the RPs they were tried out in Idukki, one of the project districts. Selection of the RPs in other districts was made using the refined tools.

A State-wise rank list was prepared after completing the whole process.

Conceptualisation workshop

The persons who were selected attended a State-level conceptualisation workshop. Since a common approach to all second languages was proposed, selected teachers handling Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, and Sanskrit were also allowed to participate in the workshop. A four-member team of the State Resource Group was identified as facilitators of the conceptualisation workshop. The objectives were:

- (i) To identify the innate potential of the child;
- (ii) To identify the nature of the child;
- (iii) To know how the child learns;
- (iv) To identify the characteristics of the environment that will be conducive to learning;
- (v) To identify the features of a learning activity;
- (vi) To know about the process of acquiring a language;
- (vii) To familiarise the process of formulating a curriculum;
- (viii) To develop the Cognitive Interaction Approach to second language acquisition; and
- (ix) To formulate curriculum statements in the context of second language.

The approach paper

- (i) The pedagogy unit developed a draft approach paper based on the findings of the conceptualisation workshop.
- (ii) Copies of the draft approach paper were sent to experts in various disciplines such as linguistics, methodology, psychology, and to other stakeholders inviting their comments on the approach paper.

- (iii) A second workshop was conducted for the participants of the conceptualisation workshop for refining the draft approach paper and internalising the contents.
- (iv) A seminar of the experts was conducted for incorporating their suggestions for fine-tuning the approach paper.
- (v) The fine-tuned approach paper was used for training the first batch of RPs.

Material production

A workshop for a core team of RPs was conducted for developing materials based on the new approach.

The outcome

- (i) The curricula meant to be transacted in std. IV and V were identified.
- (ii) Existing handbooks and textbooks were scanned thoroughly for identifying their structural items and their functions.
- (iii) Three-tier curricular statements were developed showing the structural, functional, and cognitive aspect of clusters of linguistic items.
- (iv) Areas where children feel heavy load on accounts of semantics, syntax, morphology, and phonology were identified.
- (v) Strategies were devised to release these loads.
- (vi) Transaction materials were developed linking the structural and functional aspects.
- (vii) Learners' materials were developed using the concept of an evolving textbook.
- (viii) A programme for developing structure consciousness and phonemic consciousness was conceived and appropriate strategies were identified for the same.
- (ix) Learning materials were prepared exclusively from the point of view of the learners.
- (x) The concept of spiralling and recurrence was effectively made use of.

Evolving textbook

The material for the learners in SLAP is *My English Book*. It was developed using the concept of an Evolving Text Book (ETB). It has 100 worksheets, which are to be 'processed' in the class. Of these, the first 23 pages are meant for building up structure consciousness through a systematic balancing of structural and functional spirals. The remaining 77 sheets aim at building structure consciousness as well as phonemic consciousness. Special attention was to be paid to facilitate the skills of reading and writing.

An evolving textbook:

- (i) It is process-oriented.
- (ii) It is evolved in the classroom.
- (iii) It gives scope for language interaction.
- (iv) It sustains the interest of the learners.
- (v) It is in conformity with the norms of Whole Language Approach.
- (vi) It elevates the child to the role of a creator from that of a recipient.

- (vii) It facilitates phonemic consciousness through graphemic reading and writing.
- (viii) It ensures spiralling.
- (ix) It blocks the intervention of outside agencies (tuition teachers and guidebook writers).
- (x) It is ever-evolving.
- (xi) It is an effective tool for Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE).
- (xii) Alongside the physical growth of ETB there is a language text growing in the mind of the child.
- (xiii) It demands professionalism on the part of the teacher.

Processing of ETB pages

The ETB pages are to be processed in the class. It is not to be used as a work sheet or a product-oriented object that requires mechanical filling in. An illustration of the conception about how the ETB pages are to be processed is given below.

Page 1 of ETB contains the structure, “This is...” It is followed by the rhyme “This is a bus, a bus, a bus.” The teacher distributes the page saying, “This is page 1.” The children are then asked to draw the picture of a bus on it. While they are drawing it, the teacher interacts with them

“What is this?”

“This is a bus, isn’t it?”

“Is this your bus?”

“That’s fine,” etc.

The children are engaged in drawing the picture. This does not mean that they are not listening to the teacher. The teacher has to continue the interaction making sure that what she is saying is comprehensible to the children. A great deal of non-conscious learning can take place in this way.

After presenting the activity the teacher has to write the sentence ‘This is a bus’ on the blackboard. She has to make sure that the children can see how the strokes are formed on the board. There is no need to refer to the letters or spelling telling directly or indirectly about these. The ETB page contains the sentence printed on it. The child ‘draws’ the word ‘bus’ in the given space without even knowing ‘b’, ‘u’ or ‘s’. This is graphemic writing. Since the students are doing it by themselves without any compulsion from the part of the teacher, it is need-based and hence organic.

English teacher’s companion

‘English Teachers’ Companion’ was the support material developed to equip the teachers for the transaction of a process-oriented package for English. It had two parts. The first part had two volumes of which the first one dealt with pages 1 to 24 and the second with pages 25 to 46. The ‘English Teachers’ Companion’ suggested many activities for transacting the curricular statements contained in the ETB.

My English World (MEW)

Alongside tasks related to ETB pages, there are tasks to be carried out at home. The notebook used for this purpose is named 'My English World' or MEW. After the first page of ETB is transacted in the class, the child may be asked to collect pictures of vehicles and mount them on his notebook pages. This is done to make the child revisit mentally the classroom experience. For example, when he gathers the picture of a van, he might say to himself "This is a van." The next day when he takes the notebook to the class, the teacher might ask him about his picture, appreciating the work.

"Is that a van?"

"That's nice."

"That's a nice Maruti van," etc.

Basic concept of MEW

It facilitates:

- (i) Extended activities of ETB and classroom interactions.
- (ii) Home activities.
- (iii) Gives scope for voluntary activities by the children.

Our Reading Corner (ORC)

A few activities are to be carried out in groups in the class. The products of the group work are to be displayed in 'Our Reading Corner.' For example, wall magazines prepared by the children could be displayed in the ORC.

Classroom interaction, ETB pages, MEW, and ORC together provide a sort of linguistic and experiential continuum for the child, which is expected to facilitate language acquisition.

Training of teachers

A core team of State Resource Group (SRG) was identified for developing the module for training Resource Persons (RP) in the project districts. The RPs were given five-day training at the State-level according to the module developed by this team. Apart from teachers of the selected schools, RPs and Trainers also participated in the workshop. Four sessions of training were given during the first phase of SLAP in 1999-2000. The intense training programme increased the language ability of the teachers considerably. The targeted level of proficiency was, however, difficult to achieve, as the majority of the teachers had never spoken the language earlier. The shift from 'reading' to 'speaking' in the class was not easy for them. Yet, SLAP gave them opportunities to attend and to benefit from a series of effective training programmes.

5. Data Collection and Analysis

As already stated, out of the six DPEP districts, three (Thiruvananthapuram, Palakkad, and Kasargod) were chosen for case study, roughly representing the south, the central, and the north of Kerala. On the advice of the District Programme Officer, four SLAP schools in each of these districts were selected. The schools selected were, reportedly those in which the programme had been implemented without much internal or external hindrance. One non-SLAP school, which is situated close by one of the SLAP schools, was also selected to act as a control group.

The language proficiency of Std. V children was evaluated as SLAP has conceived Stds. IV and V as constituting stage I of the programme. The reasons for such a planning are the following.

- (i) The child gets more time to get used to the problems posed by the second language.
- (ii) The differences in the learning pace of various children are to be reconciled with.
- (iii) Since the curricular statements meant for Std. IV are recurring at Std. V, by virtue of spiralling, children who happen to lag behind for various reasons may be brought forward.
- (iv) Only two periods in a week are available for the child to learn English at Std. IV.
- (v) It is desirable to consider the first two years of the programme as stage I since what was not transacted at Std. IV can be transacted at Std. V.

Unfortunately none of the schools in any of the districts continued the programme into Std. V. and what could be tested in Std. V children was merely that which they could retain of what they had been taught in Std. IV.

The four language skills of the children such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing were evaluated using tools specially devised for the purpose.

Testing tools for evaluating language skills

Attention was given to the development of testing tools in tune with the SLAP mode of teaching.

Listening: A simple story in five or six sentences was read out. The children's listening ability was evaluated on the basis of their comprehension of the story.

- Grading indicators:
- a. Comprehends the story well.
 - b. Comprehends only certain lines.
 - c. Comprehends only certain words.
 - d. Does not comprehend at all.

Speaking: A picture or object (toys like cars and dolls) was shown and the child was asked questions on it.

- Grading indicators:
- a. Describes in well-formed structures.
 - b. Describes in ill-formed structures.
 - c. Speaks only single words.
 - d. Does not speak; says Yes/No.

Reading: A familiar story with pictures and written in five or six sentences is given for reading.

- Grading indicators:
- a. Reads intelligibly and fluently.
 - b. Reads haltingly.
 - c. Reads only as words.
 - d. Even simple words are mispronounced.

Writing: A simple picture is hung on the blackboard and the children are asked to describe it in writing.

- Grading indicators:
- a. Writes using well-formed structures.
 - b. Writes using ill-formed structures.
 - c. Writes isolated words.
 - d. Writes incomprehensibly.

Details of data collection from the schools in Thiruvananthapuram, Palakkad, and Kasargod districts are discussed below.

Thiruvananthapuram

Five schools in Thiruvananthapuram were visited.

Government LPS, Pangode

Standard V of the school had 31 children. It was quite inspiring to listen to the children saying that they loved English. The classroom bore clear evidence to the variety of language activities undertaken. Wrapper activity, nametag activity, and concept mapping had been carried out. A number of charts, pictures, wrappers, language games, and puzzles were hung on the walls. There were quite a few books in the ORC (Our Reading Corner).

The performance of the children justified the efforts taken by their teacher. A good number of them were rated 'above average' in Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing.

The teacher had taken adequate care to do justice to the programme by following closely the instructions given in the *English Teacher's Companion*. She had organised most of the activities recommended. It was her child-friendly attitude that ensured the children's enthusiasm for the language. But her English was not good. She could repeat only the sentences given in the *Companion*. Where the book could not provide answers, she fumbled. But to a large extent, the teacher's commitment compensated for her inadequacy. Her readiness to accept her own limitations was remarkable. She confessed that she had been afraid of following

SLAP as it demanded fairly good use of English. She even admitted that she had slipped away from the first training camp for SLAP teachers. She expressed her gratitude towards the camp co-ordinators who gave her confidence and led her back to the fold. “Thanks to that, I feel much more confident about handling English now. I am learning together with my children. We enjoy this joint learning activity. I may be deficient in English. But, I know, I have improved a lot.”

The Head Master of the school seemed a very committed person who requested for an immediate feedback on how the SLAP class was being managed. He also expressed his willingness to initiate necessary changes for the effective implementation of the programme. He did not hesitate to pass on the credit to the teacher and also to the trainer who provided on-site support to her. The altogether healthy and educative atmosphere of the school may partly be due to the responsibility and interest shown by the Head Master.

Scoring of the children

Total number of children in the class – 31

Number of children present – 31

	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
Listening	5	14	6	6
Speaking	3	12	10	6
Reading	3	12	12	4
Writing	–	8	12	11

(Grade A – Good/ B – Above average/ C – Average/ D – Poor)

Government UPS, Karakulam

The class provided ample evidence to the widespread apprehension that unenthusiastic teachers might cause DPEP to fail. Only eight children of Std. V were available on the day of evaluation. The reason for this mass absenteeism was attributed to the fact that many of the teachers were away for census work. However, the dead blank walls told the sad story of ‘no DPEP’ learning. ‘SLAP’ had not been attempted at all. Only six to eight pages in the English notebook were used till the second week of March. Roughly speaking, the first three pages of all the notebooks contained common exercises, which might have been practised or dictated in the classroom. They had no connection whatsoever with the SLAP programme, but were exercises of filling up the gaps and using the right articles. After this, the children had pasted pictures – of bikes, of Chinese cuisine, and of sports stars. None of the eight children who were present could say why they had pasted those pictures. The only answer they could give was that they liked those pictures.

The grading reaffirmed the lack of guidance or teaching. Of the eight children present, only one child could read at least what he himself had written in his notebook at the beginning of the year. The rest of the children were all rated ‘poor’ (Grade D) in all the four skills. Only one child had the rating ‘average’ (Grade C) in reading and writing.

About the poor performance of the children, the teacher said, “They are all very bad in their studies. They do not study at all.” Regarding the blank walls of the class, she said that there was no money available to make things or charts. Whatever little money was available had been utilised in the beginning of the year. According to her neither the children nor the parents were interested in such activities.

Interestingly, the head master was not present in the school.

Scoring of the children

Total number of children in the class -
 Number of children present - 8

	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
Listening	–	–	–	8
Speaking	–	–	–	8
Reading	–	–	1	7
Writing	–	–	1	7

(Grade **A** – Good/ **B** – Above average/ **C** – Average/ **D** – Poor)

Government LPS, Paravoorkonam

The school had two divisions of Std. V – VA and VB. The children of both the classes, however, were sitting together in one room.

Here too, the classroom walls were blank except for a political, propagandist piece.

The teacher admitted that she had great difficulty in teaching English, particularly under ‘SLAP’. Even if she tried, she could not speak in English. SLAP activities had not been attempted because she considered them impractical.

As could be expected, the performance of the children was very poor. The majority of them could not read or write even simple, common words. They had not at all gone even a single step beyond the stage of graphic writing.

When this was pointed out to the teacher, she calmly replied that she knew it only too well. She suggested that it would be better to appoint graduates in English to teach the language.

The Head Master seemed very friendly with the children and could manage them very well. However, he seemed totally unaware of the principles or the approach adopted either by SLAP or by DPEP. He expressed his own opinion of how English could be taught effectively which was quite in conformity with the traditional approach.

Scoring of the children

Total number of children in the class (VA and VB) - 56

Number of children present - 40

	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
Listening	–	–	8	32
Speaking	–	–	–	40
Reading	–	–	12	28
Writing	–	–	8	32

(Grade A – Good/ B – Above average/ C – Average/ D – Poor)

Government LPS, Attingal

This school also had two divisions for Std. V. But the children of both the classes were sitting together.

The classroom displayed an abundance of charts, pictures, and writings. The children proudly pointed out to their creations and could tell the names of the famous Malayalam poets whose pictures they had made into a beautiful chart. Two English rhymes, which they themselves had written, were also pasted on the walls. Besides, some language games also were displayed.

The teacher seemed a very committed person who was dearly loved by her children. They named her as their favourite teacher. Her proficiency in English was not high but she seemed to have made it up with her dedication.

The majority of the children expressed a keen interest in studying English. The majority of the children displayed average ability in LSRW. However, a few children were rated poor in their language abilities.

The HM was away on some official duty.

Scoring of the children

Total number of children in the class – 75

Number of children present - 48

	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
Listening	–	8	20	20
Speaking	–	4	20	24
Reading	–	5	30	13
Writing	–	3	25	20

(Grade A – Good/ B – Above average/ C – Average/ D – Poor)

Holy Angels Convent LPS, Thiruvananthapuram

The school has very good infrastructural facilities and a team of committed teachers. There is a beautiful sprawling campus, a good classroom, and a spacious activity room besides rich facilities for extra curricular activities. The children were given coaching in many dance forms, singing, and instrumental music. The children happily communicated the news that they had bagged around eight prizes in the inter-school competitions of the year.

Most of the children in this section of the school were quite poor unlike their counterparts in the English medium section of the same school. They owed all their prizes to the sincere efforts of their teachers whose toil led to the full flowering of their talents.

However, their proficiency in English did not match their knowledge or awareness of the other curricular or extra curricular subjects. This may have been due to the fact that their teacher was ill and was away for some time. Most of them displayed only average abilities in English.

The Head Master as well as the class teacher were so friendly with the children that they mingled with them freely and happily. It was so refreshing to see the children express their deep affection for their teachers. They repeated that they would be sad to leave their teachers. The level of proficiency reached by these poor children was no doubt a great tribute to that rare species of dedicated teachers.

Scoring of the children

Total number of children in the class –52

Number of children present - 48

	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
Listening	10	8	20	10
Speaking	–	5	20	23
Reading	10	20	10	8
Writing	–	5	25	18

(Grade **A** – Good/ **B** – Above average/ **C** – Average/ **D** – Poor)

Palakkad

Government UPS, Puthur

There were four divisions of Std. V in the school. In one division, most of the children had followed SLAP in the 4th standard. Though the classroom did not present any evidence of DPEP/SLAP activities, the children fared fairly well in the evaluation process. The majority of the children could comprehend what they were told in English. But their ability to speak back in English was very limited. Many of them were rated ‘average’ in their listening and reading abilities. However, their writing was obviously ‘poor’. In another division where the

children had been taught in the fourth standard in the conventional way, the performance was slightly better in writing. In the listening and speaking skills, many were, however, rated poor. The children smiled happily when they were spoken to in English but could not comprehend most of what they listened to. They said that they were used to learning English through Malayalam.

The teachers of both the classes appeared apprehensive of SLAP. They could not accept the theory that language could be ‘acquired’. They pointed out that non-SLAP children wrote better than SLAP children. The lack of conviction of the teachers may have hampered the successful and total implementation of the programme.

The Head Master was present and was busily attending to several matters related to teaching and teachers’ training.

Scoring of the children

Total number of children in the class (SLAP) - 37
 Number of children present - 35

	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
Listening	–	10	15	10
Speaking	–	5	8	22
Reading	–	10	10	15
Writing	–	–	15	20

(Grade **A** – Good/ **B** – Above average/ **C** – Average/ **D** – Poor)

A.M.L.P.S. Punnappadam

The classroom of standard V was an airy, spacious room. No trace of DPEP/ SLAP activities could be detected on the blank, white walls.

The teacher expressed her apprehensions of DPEP being discontinued. Maybe, that was the reason why she had not adhered to SLAP instructions. Even activities such as concept-mapping and name-board writing were not attempted.

The children seemed, however, quite energetic and happy. Some of them were rated ‘average’ in writing and reading but were ‘poor’ in listening and speaking.

The Headmaster was away on other duty.

Scoring of the children

Total number of children in the class – 24
 Number of children present – 22

	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
Listening	–	2	12	8
Speaking	–	–	6	16
Reading	–	4	8	10
Writing	–	–	10	12

(Grade A – Good/ B – Above average/ C – Average/ D – Poor)

KEA LPS Elavanpadam

This was a school bubbling with activities. The children were happy to run into the classroom for evaluation even during the lunch interval.

The classroom was decorated with many colourful, interesting charts, pictures, and writings. They took part in the evaluation games with great zest and many were holding up their hands throughout the process, demanding that they be given the first chance to answer.

The teacher seemed proud of the performance of the children. He was very pleased with the support he received from the Head Mistress, the rest of the teachers, and the parents. He was of the opinion that he had personally benefited a lot from the implementation of the programme. He said that his, as well as the children's, language had improved.

The majority of the children proved themselves to be 'above average' in three skills - listening, speaking, and reading. In writing, most of them were 'average' and some were 'poor'.

The Head Mistress was a 'mother' to the staff. The love and concern always shown in their matters, the teachers said, prompted them to obey her instructions implicitly. The children too loved her dearly. They walked into her room without hesitation and asked their teachers to show the team their project works of the previous year. Their request was immediately complied with. The lavish praise of the teachers and the HM filled the children with increasing enthusiasm and zest.

We had the satisfaction of seeing an ideal school after visiting this small but very good school.

Scoring of the children

Total number of children in the class – 56

Number of children present – 50

	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
Listening	4	16	20	10
Speaking	6	10	14	20
Reading	8	12	20	10
Writing	–	4	26	20

(Grade A – Good/ B – Above average/ C – Average/ D – Poor)

AJBS, Anikode

The school had a most crowded standard V. About 60 children were sitting in one room. This was so because the HM was away on other duty and her pupils too were sitting in this class.

The classroom did not display any evidence of activities of the children. But a few activities had, in fact, been undertaken. The teacher collected the results of such activities from among a pile of sheets kept in a corner of the room when she was asked for them. She too had heard the rumour that DPEP was about to be stopped and therefore did not hang up the charts.

The teacher had a tough time managing so many little children. Giving group activities was also impossible in such a crowded class. It was during the penultimate period of the day when we visited the class and the teacher was exhausted by then. When asked whether this was a regular occurrence she said that this was so whenever the HM had to be away on other duty. She sympathised with the HM who had to manage the academic as well as the administrative affairs of the school.

The majority of the children were rated 'average' in listening and reading. Some of the children tried to speak something. But the majority of the class could not fare well in writing. Group activities were impossible in the class and some of the children were engaged in activities of their own, apart from the class work.

Scoring of the children

Total number of children in the class – 62
Number of children present – 55

	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
Listening	8	12	20	15
Speaking	3	10	15	27
Reading	10	10	20	15
Writing	8	10	15	22

(Grade **A** – Good/ **B** – Above average/ **C** – Average/ **D** – Poor)

S.V. UPS, Vadakkancherry

This was a non-SLAP school and only one of the four divisions was visited. The school did not seem to have the facilities essential for the implementation of activity-based learning.

The children were sitting crowded in the class. There was loud noise coming from all the three sides of the class. There was just a single window to the room and on the other side of the window was the class where very small children were studying. The children followed

not even a single instruction of the teacher without it being repeated thrice or even more times.

The teacher did not think SLAP very effective and she admitted that she did not know much about it.

Only a few of the children were ‘average’ in reading and writing. The others were ‘poor’ in all the four language skills.

The HM realised that the school had several shortcomings and reported that he was looking forward to support and guidance of the authorities for their rectification.

Scoring of the children

Total number of children in the class – 41

Number of children present - 37

	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
Listening	–	3	4	30
Speaking	–	–	4	33
Reading	–	4	10	23
Writing	–	2	4	31

(Grade **A** – Good/ **B** – Above average/ **C** – Average/ **D** – Poor)

C.A. UPS, Mampad

This non-SLAP school was also visited for comparing the performance of SLAP children with that of non-SLAP children.

The school had two divisions of standard V. The performance of the majority of the children was rated ‘poor’ in all the language skills. However, some of them were rated ‘average’ in reading and writing. The amusement that lighted up the innocent faces of the children when they were spoken to in English was adequate proof of the fact that they had scarcely such experience in their classroom.

The teacher knew that her children were ‘poor’ and was happy that at least some of them did write ‘something’.

The second division of the class was seated together with three other classes in a long hall. There was not even a cardboard partition to mark the boundaries of the classes. When the children of one class laughed, those in the other classes inquisitively looked on.

The HM was friendly and knew well the constraints of his school. But few measures seemed to have been taken to overcome them.

Scoring of the children

Total number of children in the class (A and B) – 60

Number of children present – 56

	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
Listening	–	–	20	36
Speaking	–	–	8	48
Reading	–	–	20	36
Writing	–	–	12	44

(Grade A – Good/ B – Above average/ C – Average/ D – Poor)

Kasargod

None of the schools in the district followed the SLAP programme in std. V. Hence it was impossible to assess the effect of SLAP on the children of std. V. Consequently what was done in the district was the assessment of what was retained by the children of their SLAP learning in std. IV.

Four SLAP and one non-SLAP school were visited. Out of the five schools visited, except in two schools, the HMs were away to attend a district-level administrative meeting.

Holy Family ASBS, Kumbala

There were three divisions of std. V in the school.

The school campus was neat and tidy. It was beautified with lots of flowering plants and greenery. The impressive building too was well maintained.

Gender discrimination seemed minimal here. Unlike most schools where cleaning the classroom becomes the duty of girls alone, this school distributed the work equally among boys and girls. In the morning, little boys and girls were found walking briskly with brooms in their hands. Before the classes started the children finished their work. The seating arrangement in the classes also made clear the absence of segregation. The children sat as they pleased in a circle around the classroom. There was no restriction imposed on them on the basis of sex.

Strict traditional discipline was, nevertheless, imposed. The children were required to leave their footwear outside the classrooms. Also they had to stand up promptly when a question was put to them even amidst group activities. The children were rarely let to speak freely. They were being constantly guided and directed. Though this was a definite drawback for a SLAP set-up, the teachers were quite concerned about the performance of their children. They were greatly committed to their work and also to their children.

All the three divisions displayed charts, pictures, and writings. Some of them were the classy creations of the teachers themselves. The children with teachers' help made some. On the board on which was pasted the works of children, many of the items bore the same names. This was so in all the schools. The seating arrangement was the best in Std. V-C.

The performance of the children in different divisions showed not much difference and hence their evaluation was done together. The children performed fairly well in the tests and the credit goes undoubtedly to the teachers who seemed to have put their heart and soul into teaching.

Scoring of the children

Total number of children in the class (A and B) – 150
 Number of children present _ 144

	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
Listening	30	34	60	20
Speaking	10	24	60	50
Reading	32	32	60	20
Writing	–	14	60	70

(Grade **A** – Good/ **B** – Above average/ **C** – Average/ **D** – Poor)

St. Bartholomea's ASBS, Bela

The school have two divisions in std. V.

Charts and maps in the class were hung up very high. This made reading them difficult even for those who were familiar with their contents. Many of the charts in the class were the creations of children who had studied in the previous year. The present lot of children who were using the room knew very little about any of them. However, the children spoke about a number of charts in Hindi. They said that though their teacher had made the charts, she had explained everything clearly to them.

The room of std. V B was quite dimly lit and the one and only window of the room was kept shut permanently as there was another class adjacent to it.

One of the std. V class divisions was allotted to the Head Mistress. As she was away on other official duty, the children had to be engaged otherwise. The teacher of the other division tried to manage this class also which was on the other side of a small partition. He was very apologetic about discontinuing SLAP and said that this was simply because no clear instruction had been received till very late in the year regarding the continuation of the programme in std. V. Moreover, the training given at the DIET was on quite different lines.

The performance of the children was not up to the expected level.

Scoring of the children

Total number of children in the class (A and B) – 49+49

Number of children present - 46 + 45 = 91

	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
Listening	–	2	29	60
Speaking	–	–	20	71
Reading	–	6	20	65
Writing	–	–	29	62

(Grade A – Good/ B – Above average/ C – Average/ D – Poor)

Jnanodaya ASBS, Manys

The school had three divisions of Std. V. The number of children in each class was just around 20. Though this should have helped in giving individual attention to the children, it had not happened. Only one class division was evaluated; the language efficiency of the children was found poor. There was no trace of SLAP activities in the class and the teacher said that she had switched over to conventional teaching. The blackboard bore questions and answers from the textbook.

‘What kind of a house has Jack’s father?’

Jack’s father has a beautiful house.

Does he have a car?, ‘Yes, he has a car.’ Etc.

The children did not acquire any of the language skills and listened to English as if they had never heard that language before.

Scoring of the children

Total number of children in the class (A and B) –19

Number of children present 17

	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
Listening	–	–	2	15
Speaking	–	–	–	17
Reading	–	–	6	11
Writing	–	–	5	12

(Grade A – Good/ B – Above average/ C – Average/ D – Poor)

G.UPS, Pudukkai

No SLAP activity had taken place in this school in the present academic year. The evaluation process, however, made it clear that SLAP activities had been undertaken in the previous

year. When asked to speak, the children sat down and thought deeply for some time. A little later they came up with the stock questions – ‘What is your name? Where are you from? How do you do?’ Obviously they were unable to go beyond this point. They remembered their earlier English teacher with fondness and said that they had used to speak a few sentences in English in the previous year. The class had bright children but their proficiency in English remained mostly ‘average’ or ‘poor’. It seemed a pity that SLAP could not be continued into the fifth standard for these children.

Scoring of the children

Total number of children in the class (A and B) –25
 Number of children present – 25

	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
Listening	–	–	8	17
Speaking	–	–	4	21
Reading	–	–	6	19
Writing	–	–	5	20

(Grade A – Good/ B – Above average/ C – Average/ D – Poor)

St. Ann’s AUPS, Pallikkara

This convent deserves praise for the atmosphere of gender equality it nurtured. The boys and girls who played together without any inhibition in the school ground. The seating arrangement in the class and the way in which the children were given opportunities for speaking up in the class – all these made obvious the total absence of discrimination. The children were neatly dressed and well cared for. The teachers as well as the children gladly consented to the idea of evaluation. The children could repeat all the stock questions of phatic communication though not taught under SLAP.

The majority of the children were rated ‘average’ in all the four skills. Some of them were ‘above average’ too.

The Head Mistress was very amicable and was happy that her school was visited and that her children were being noticed. The school once more made it clear that it is the teachers who matter more than any particular approach or syllabus.

Scoring of the children

Total number of children in the class (VA) –35
 Number of children present – 35

	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
Listening	–	10	18	7
Speaking	–	5	14	16
Reading	–	15	12	7
Writing	–	3	12	20

(Grade **A** – Good/ **B** – Above average/ **C** – Average/ **D** – Poor)

6. Findings of the Study

Out of the 12 SLAP schools visited, none had carried out the programme in its totality. Two had followed the programme more or less closely. Two other schools conducted the programme rather well, but external interference (from tuition teachers, parents or other relatives) was very high. In five schools, a combination of SLAP and non-SLAP was practised. In the rest of the three schools almost nothing was taught either in the SLAP way or in the non-SLAP way. It is quite unfortunate that the system could not make good use of such a well-developed programme.

In the schools in which at least 50 percent of the programme was carried out, the children showed remarkable language ability.

Teacher-inadequacy was the major impediment to the success of the programme. During the implementation of the programme, extensive training was given to teachers. This has greatly benefited nearly 30 percent of the teachers who own this up with immense gratitude. But the large majority had neither the inclination nor any commitment to implement SLAP. The questionnaire circulated among the teachers proved that despite implementation of several programmes to boost the morale and the proficiency level in English of the teachers, more than half of them resented the programme.

The resentment of the teachers is mainly due to the fact they find it impossible to raise themselves to the expected level of proficiency in English. It is the feeling of total inadequacy that paves the way for teachers' lack of commitment to SLAP.

SLAP has certain definite advantages, which are listed below:

- (i) The children in the conventional classes had very little opportunity to listen to English in the classroom as the teachers merely 'read' out from the textbooks. SLAP children could listen to English as their teachers spoke the language in the class. This is particularly noteworthy as language is primarily speech. The study has noticed that the listening comprehension of SLAP children was much better than that of non-SLAP children. This could be a direct result of the teachers' speaking in English.
- (ii) The programme increased considerably the English language proficiency of SLAP teachers. The rigorous and continuous training given to the teachers of SLAP helped them gain confidence in the use of English. Besides this, 'The English Teacher's Companion' developed by Dr K. N. Anandan, a fine linguist, is one of the best handbooks ever produced in Kerala for the guidance of English teachers. The book mentions what the teacher should say in class, sentence by sentence. This ensures the teacher's speaking in English without much difficulty. A large majority of SLAP trainers and teachers admitted that they benefited enormously from their involvement in the programme.

- (iii) The children loved the English classes, which provided them opportunities to engage themselves in interesting activities. They also felt immensely proud in being able to utter English sentences. A teacher in Palakkad narrated how a number of her children started coming late after she taught them to ask, “May I come in, Teacher?” The children were so enamoured of speaking this sentence that they purposefully delayed going to the class. This is strong evidence to believe that the children would gladly speak in English if they were taught to do so.

Though SLAP has succeeded in bringing about welcome changes to the conventional English classrooms, it has both (a) theoretical and (b) implementation flaws.

(a) Theoretical flaws may broadly be grouped under two heads.

- (i) First Language Vs. Second Language
- (ii) Acquisition Vs. Learning

(i) First language vs. second language

- (i) SLAP is heavily dependent on Noam Chomsky’s theory. But Chomsky’s theory of language acquisition is based on the experience of first language or mother tongue acquisition. When the same theory is applied to the experience of second language learning, it has to be suitably modified because the atmosphere of second language learning can never be the same as that of the first language. SLAP has, however, suggested scarcely any alteration to the Chomskyan theory.
- (ii) It cannot be imagined that the atmosphere of the first language could be made available for second language learning. In the case of the mother tongue, the child would be immersed in an ocean of it. He listens to all sorts, shades, and variations of it. But as for the classroom learning of second language, the child would be listening to the selected and filtered language of the teacher.
- (iii) Likewise, a child is exposed to his mother tongue for a much longer period everyday. But in the case of a child in the SLAP class, his weekly exposure to English cannot be for more than an hour-and-a-half. This is so because only two periods a week is allotted for English.
- (iv) The child is allowed to progress at his own pace in the case of the mother tongue whereas in the class he is expected to reach at least a minimum level of competency within a stipulated time.

(ii) Acquisition Vs. Learning

- (v) Acquiring is a ‘non-conscious’ process, which can take place only in natural situations. The classroom situation itself is a contrived one where the child knows that he is expected to learn, however much he may be allowed to play.

- (vi) 'Motherese' is the baby-like language, which the teacher is expected to use in the class in order to provide the children an opportunity to 'acquire' the language. Whether this is absolutely necessary is to be thought of, as the children would be doing their sixth year in school by the time they reach standard IV.
 - (vii) Conscious learning of the alphabet and mechanical work such as transcribing are discouraged. Introducing writing through several steps of graphic and organic writing is the method advocated. This is a time-consuming process and the child may not become thorough with the alphabet even at the end of one whole academic year as the time allotted for English teaching is weekly two periods of 45 minutes duration.
 - (viii) Phonemic sense is difficult to be acquired without proper guidance in the case of English, as it is not a phonetic language. This is so because in English there are instances of the same letter representing different sounds (eg. 'cat', 'century' / 'university', 'umbrella') and also of the same sound being represented by different spellings (eg., 'fan', 'Phantom', 'tough'). There are instances of initial (eg. 'honest') as well terminal syllables (eg., 'mother', 'father') being silent. Such vagaries of the language demand systematic teaching. If the child is required to acquire a sense of all these without direct instructions and that too within the limited time of one and a half hours a week, that would be setting an impossible task. The teachers' inadequacy is also to be taken into account. If there should not be direct teaching of such language irregularities, then activities, which would help their learning, should have been incorporated. The absence of such exercises may be the reason for the low level of the writing ability of the children.
- (b) Implementation Flaws: In none of the schools was SLAP implemented, as it should have been. The implementation flaws as well as the inherent flaws of the system have led to the bad performance of a good programme.

The teacher factor

- (i) Though the teachers were expected to speak in English, a large majority of them could not. It was with great difficulty that they spoke the sentences given in the handbook. This is quite natural as the teachers had been expected only to 'read' out from their texts until the time SLAP was introduced.
- (ii) The qualifications required for a teacher of the elementary school are a pass of the Plus Two stage and TTC. In neither of these courses, training is given in the spoken aspect of English.
- (iii) The majority of the teachers did not have opportunities to attend training programmes after they joined service. To those teachers who had never spoken a single word of English in their entire career, SLAP training though very effective could not produce the desired effect. Teachers' inadequacy denied the children the opportunity to have adequate exposure to the language, a condition, which is absolutely essential for acquisition.

- (iv) The feedback received from SLAP teachers revealed their lack of commitment to the programme. Fifty-one percent of the teachers who responded to a questionnaire survey stated that they did not feel convinced about the efficacy of the programme. As such their involvement in it had been deficient. They should have been given more time to come to terms with such a different teaching method.
- (v) Many of the teachers did not grasp the spirit of the instructions. A good number of them gathered wrong notions. Though there were instructions not to correct the mistakes of the children directly, it was suggested that giving the children opportunities to correct themselves would accomplish that end. The second part missed, however, the perception of many teachers. They made no attempt to guide the children and even allowed them to hang prominently on the walls charts and lists with basic mistakes. Thus the mistakes made easy way into the children's minds.
- (vi) Lack of guidance was visible in the children's efforts to write too. It was disheartening to note that not even one percent of the children knew that they needed to put a full stop at the end of a sentence. They were slightly better in the use of capital letters.
- (vii) The making of charts and lists failed to give the intended benefit in many of the classes. There were several instances of the teacher making the chart at home and bringing it to class thus completely depriving children's involvement. Even in places where there was children's involvement, the charts were sometimes hung so high up that children could not read them even with great effort.
- (viii) Correction seemed to be the 'in thing' even in the SLAP classes. In the few classes where the children attempted to speak it was disappointing to note the teacher interfering with every sentence the child uttered. There was constant correction, which inhibited the children's speech. This may be the reason why most of the children refused to speak even a single sentence other than the stock questions of *How are you?* / *What is your name?* / *Where do you come from?*
- (ix) The time allotted for the completion of the ETB pages was too limited. In none of the schools visited the whole of the syllabus i.e., 50 ETB pages, was processed. Not even a single teacher from among the 200 teachers who responded to the questionnaire survey claimed to have processed more than 35 pages. Eighty percent of the teachers found it hard to process more than 30 pages. This evidently brings to light the gap between what was envisaged and what could be practised.
- (x) The Head teachers' classes are a constant problem in the primary schools. This needs to be settled once and forever. In about 50 percent of the schools visited, the HMs were away on administrative duties. The teachers entrusted to handle the additional charge of those children were finding it extremely difficult to keep the classes under control.

7. Suggestions

SLAP is a relatively well-developed programme for second language teaching. Yet, it would be good to make some modifications to the programme taking into consideration the particular atmosphere of our Government /Aided schools.

The programme has to be very realistic about the capacity of the teachers.

Training is to be given only to those teachers who have at least average ability in the use of English and only those who have received intensive training should be allowed to teach the language.

English is not a phonetic language. As such specific activities are to be planned for making the child aware of the vagaries of English spelling as well as pronunciation.

Special activities are to be planned for making the children acquire a sense of the punctuation marks. Though speech is very important, the relevance of writing should not be undermined.

In most of the schools the ETB pages were just 'taught' and were not 'processed'. No additional reading material was either read out or suggested. In this case, it would be a good idea to provide small pieces of writing for extra reading.

The ETB pages clearly illustrate total absence of imagination. Even the rhymes suggested are so dry that there is no element of fantasy or imaginative beauty in them.

The teachers experience a total shift from the conventional method of teaching and hence they need constant monitoring. On-site support and such other support services are to be strengthened to boost the morale of the teachers and to provide them with the essential advice.

Conclusion

SLAP is a major pedagogic intervention and it deserves to be appreciated for the systematic development of its theory as well as the methodical steps taken for its implementation. The efficacy of the SLAP materials produced cannot be questioned. It has produced for English teachers one of the best 'Teachers' Companions'. The major factor, which has led to the failure of the programme, is 'teacher inadequacy'. Though SLAP has made intensive effort to improve the language proficiency of the teachers, the desired change could not be brought about. This cannot be considered the defect of the teachers either, as they were not equipped to handle this foreign language. It is a matter of deep regret that English is expected to be taught by all teachers and that no qualification is laid down as essential for the teaching of the language. The lack of logic in this matter becomes evident from the fact that to teach the national language, which is Hindi, a teacher should have a degree or equivalent qualification in it. Why English, a foreign language, is expected to be taught well by teachers who are not qualified, is an enigma. The situation demands the urgent attention of the authorities. English

is gathering tremendous significance in the national as well as international fora and our children may be expected to fare well in them. It is the failure to prescribe qualifications for English teachers that is corrupting the teaching of English in the schools. Even the teachers who have put their hearts and souls into the programme could not grow as much as the programme required. SLAP is heavily teacher-dependent and teacher-inadequacy was the major cause for its unsatisfactory performance.

One of the findings of the study is that merely by developing a new method of teaching or by raising the standard of the syllabus, little improvement could be effected in any of the subjects in the schools. The greatest problem is that very little teaching is done at all. There is also the absolute lack of commitment on the part of a large section of teachers. The few teachers who are committed find themselves out of place in the corrupt system. SLAP has definitely turned a new leaf in the professional growth of teachers who had tried to make good the support and training given to them. But unfortunately this was a very small proportion of the English teacher community.

SLAP was a good programme that has failed. It failed not because it had many inherent defects but because the number of qualified and committed teachers who could work out in the classroom this heavily teacher-dependent programme was very limited. What is needed to change the English classroom atmosphere in our schools is not merely the introduction of a good programme or teaching approach but the appointment of qualified and committed teachers.

Appendix-I

The Project

The project, which led to this study started in December 2000 with the appraisal of the teaching of English in the government schools in Kerala under DPEP. But the findings of the first stage of this research made it clear that the unsatisfactory results yielded by the DPEP method were largely due to the serious flaws in the existing system of English language teaching, which could not be bettered by the introduction of an efficient pedagogy. Hence the scope of the study was further enlarged to look into the teaching of English in the government schools in Kerala as a whole.

An analysis of the results of the SSLC exam of March 2001 was done in the light of the following facts:

- (i) The State average for English in the SSLC examination, March 2001 is just 13 for both English I and II papers.
- (ii) The lowest pass percentage in the exam is registered for English - 36.85 percent for English paper II and 37.28 percent for English paper I (The pass percentage for First language – Paper II is the highest: 88.15 percent)
- (iii) English has been holding the titles for the lowest subject average and pass percentage for the past several years.

This deplorable plight exists in spite of the fact that

- (i) The Kerala State syllabus for English in Std. X is much too simpler than the all-India streams of CBSE and ICSE as is illustrated by the following chart.

Kerala	CBSE	ICSE
Kerala Reader(Lessons)	Main Course Book	(5 Units)The Merchant of Venice -Shakespeare (original)
Non- Detailed(4 Simple adaptations of Shakespeare)	Literature Reader (11 Units)	The Old Man and the Sea-Ernest Hemingway (original)
	Grammar Work Book (14 Units)	Images of Life(15 Poems)
		Comprehensive Gram. of Current English
		Dream and Reality (Background Reading)

The majority of the questions included even in the English-II (General Paper) of the SSLC exam of March 2001 are mere repetitions of questions in the previous years. Most of the textual questions are from the 'Activities' given at the end of the textbook. For example, 6 out of the 10 questions to be attempted for Question No. 1 (refer page no.s 42, 43, 62, 63,

69, and 64 of the non-detailed text) and all the three questions for paragraph writing (Question No. 2) are given as such in the text (page no.s 15, 65, and 28 of the same text).

The general questions intended to test the language proficiency of the students are also cleverly manipulated to be mere repetitions of the previous years' question papers which are available as solved papers and are in wide circulation among students.

General Questions in the question paper - Qn. No.s 19 to 33.

Out of these, only question number 24 is **not a repetition**. Question number 25 is not a repetition but it gives an alternative, which had been thrice repeated within the past 10 years. The question paper of the previous year i.e., 2000 March, also carried the same question.

Some of the questions are **cleverly modified** not to be exactly identical with the previous years' questions. For example, question number 20 of March 2001 is

“Write a letter to the District Transport Officer about a bag of yours, you forgot to take from the bus when you got off at your stop.’

In the 1996 March question paper, the student was asked to write a letter to the *Manager of the Bus Depot* about *an umbrella*, which he had forgotten to take from the bus. There ends the challenge of the question. Question numbers 19 and 23 are also alterations on similar lines. **The others are verbatim repetitions.**

The following chart gives a rough idea of what a stale question paper was served to test the language proficiency of the SSLC students.

Questions 1 to 18 - Textual questions
Questions 19 to 33 - General questions

Question Number	Year of occurrence
19	1994 Sept.
20	1996 March
21	2000 March
22	1994 March
23	1993 March
24	not a repetition
25	not a repetition
26	1991 March, 1993 Sept. and 2000 March
27	1994 Sept.
28	1994 Sept.
29	1994 Sept.
30	1994 Sept.

31	1994 Sept.
32	1994 Sept.
33	1994 Sept.

The analysis of English- Paper II question paper of SSLC exam, March 2001 makes it clear that scoring high marks based on **rote memory** is easily possible. **The standard of the students should be pathetically low** to score an average of just 13 marks for a paper like this.

The low proficiency of the students in English may be due to

- (i) Teacher inadequacy
- (ii) Flaws in the English Teaching System

To study the problems related to teacher inadequacy, a **questionnaire survey** was conducted among **the teachers who attended the SSLC valuation camps 2001, for English**. **A total of 2,100 teachers participated in the survey** from eight different centres. The names of the different centres and the number of teachers who responded from each of them are given below.

Names of Centre	No. of Teachers Who Responded
a. Attingal	334
b. Karunagappally	186
c. Alappuzha	246
d. Ernakulam	283
e. Palakkad	270
f. Tirur	234
g. Thrikkariapur	289
h. Nileswaram	258
Total	2100

The findings of the teacher survey

- (i) More than **50 percent of English teachers make gross mistakes** in the use of the English language. They write '*English*', '*Phonatics*', '*Wast*', and '*Strengthy syllabus*'. **Only 578 teachers out of the 2,100** surveyed wrote without any spelling or grammar mistakes.
- (ii) **61.10 percent** of English teachers prefer to teach **only in Malayalam**.
- (iii) A large majority of the teachers admit that they are **incompetent to teach English**. More than **95 percent** of the teachers prefer to **teach only their optional subject**.

- (iv) ***Eighty-four percent of the teachers insist that degree holders in English should teach English.***
- (v) However, ***only seven percent of the English teachers hold a degree in English.***
- (vi) ***English degree holders with III class*** marks believe that any degree holder can teach the subject.
- (vii) More than **45 percent** of the English teachers have ***not attended even a single in-service training course*** in their entire career.
- (viii) **Seven percent** of the teachers surveyed scored ***less than 40 percent for English*** at the SSLC level.
- (ix) **Seventy-four percent** of the teachers have ***marks above second class*** for their optional subjects at the degree level.
- (x) The teachers are quite ***open-minded and supportive of change***. They advise that drastic measures need to be taken to improve the dismal state of English language teaching in the Government schools.

Flaws in the system

- (i) ***The English teachers in the government schools are not included either in the group of ‘Language Teachers’ or in the group of ‘Core Subject Teachers’.*** As such, any degree holder can teach English whereas all the other languages such as Malayalam, Hindi, Tamil, Sanskrit, Urdu, Arabic, Kannada, and Gujarati, and the core subjects such as Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies are to be taught only by degree holders in the particular subject.
- (ii) A pass in ***Part I - English*** (two papers) is compulsory for obtaining a degree in any subject from Kerala University. But the same rule applies to ***Part II – Additional Language*** also, which is generally Malayalam or Hindi. A degree holder who has taken Malayalam as Second language at the degree level is not expected to be competent in the teaching of ***Malayalam which is the mother tongue*** of the children, but ***English, which is a foreign language*** is expected to be taught efficiently by a person who has secured a pass in Part I English.
- (iii) The teachers are ***not given the option*** to teach or not to teach English but are ***compelled*** to do so (**61 percent** of the teachers prefer to teach only in Malayalam.)
- (iv) Teachers who come from other disciplines are ***not given adequate training*** to make them competent (**45 percent** of the teachers have not received any training in the teaching of English).

- (v) **Third class degree holders are appointed as teachers** in schools. (Among the few English degree holders, 57 **percent** have only III class marks and their performance is rated poor).
- (vi) The '**All-Promotion system**', which insists that 90 **percent** of the students should be promoted to the next class, results in the **children being pushed to the higher classes without imparting to them even the minimum required knowledge**.
- (vii) It also helps the teachers in the lower classes to shirk their responsibility of making the children learn the language.

Suggestions for improvement

- (i) **English teachers should be brought under the category of Language teachers** and only those who possess a degree in English should be appointed **in future** as English Teachers.
- (ii) The performance of III class degree holders in English is evaluated to be poor and hence **a minimum of II class marks is to be insisted upon for future appointments**.
- (iii) '**The All-Promotion System**' is **to be limited** to the primary classes. **According to the present system, the testing of the children's proficiency occurs only in Std X**. This accounts for their **mass failure in SSLC**. (The pass percentage for English in SSLC, March 2001, is only 36.85 **percent** and 37.28 **percent** for English Paper I and II respectively.)
- (iv) The **teachers should be given option** to teach English.
- (v) Those who opt for teaching English **should be given intense training** to make them competent in English language teaching.
- (vi) English is **to be introduced** as a subject in **Std I** itself. The tendency to compare and contrast the new language with the mother tongue advances with age. Hence mother tongue-interference will be stronger in the higher classes. To overcome this hurdle and to help the children 'acquire' the language rather than to 'learn' it, early introduction would be helpful.
- (vii) **Innovative and effective methods** of teaching English are to be adopted in government schools to make the language skills of the children at par with those of the children in the private schools.