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# A Study on Bilingual Policy in relation to the issue of changing the medium of Instruction at the Junior Secondary Level

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## **Abstract**

Change over of the medium of instruction to Sinhala and Tamil in 1950s made provision to teach English as a compulsory second language. Even though English has been taught for around half a decade it has failed to improve the students language proficiency in speaking and written English. With the introduction of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction, the students from different ethnic communities were segregated to Sinhala and Tamil streams in schools. The children of these communities were isolated. Hence there was no common medium to communicate with each other. Therefore the necessity arose to use a common language in all activities. As a result the Amity Schools Project was started in 2001 to build national unity.

To build national unity through learning a second language was identified by the Amity Schools Project which was later developed as a strategy in terms of bilingual policy. The National Education Commission (2003) has introduced a bilingual policy in 2002 in Junior Secondary level. The main objective of the bilingual policy was claimed to acquire a level of English proficiency for higher education and career advancement. (N.E.C. Report, 2003).

This study is to investigate, whether there is a bilingual policy in Junior Secondary level and to identify the features of bilingual programme that has been introduced in Sri Lanka.

For the purpose of the study a survey was carried out in four leading schools. The survey consists of one hundred and fifty two students who are in Grade 8 English medium classes. Among the four schools, an indepth study was based in two schools. Nine teachers who teach in Grade 8 English medium classes of these respective leading schools were also the participants of this study.