

**A study on student heterogeneity in  
large classes and its impact on learning  
and teaching of English language in  
mother tongue medium education**

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### **Abstract of the study**

Teaching English as a second language to all Sri Lanka children, irrespective of their social, economical background has been a major educational policy of successive governments in Sri Lanka since the early 1950's. A challenge that the Sri Lanka teachers have to face specially in the National schools is how to differentiate or adapt instructions to respond to the diverse student needs found in mixed ability classrooms. The classroom heterogeneity was recorded as a problem from the time of independence. Heterogeneous class is likely to include students who can read and comprehend as well as students who could barely decode words, comprehend meaning or apply basic information and students who fall somewhere between these extremes. Students' heterogeneity is a problem in teaching any subject. However, this problem is more complex in the ESL classroom as exposure to second language differs depending on the students' background.

Although this problem has been identified, not much research has been done in Sri Lanka to find solutions.

Therefore the issues and problems that are there in a Sri Lankan National School is discussed in the dissertation, with a view to alleviating this problem at least to some extent.

As it was observed during the research most of the teachers did not have any idea as how to handle a mixed ability class. Unfortunately, the average classroom in the school is not the ideal place, and the teachers do not find differentiation easy to implement. There is a need to train the teachers as teaching leads to effective learning; teachers need to help their students to find a sense of personal meaningfulness in the learning process.

Thus to make second language teaching, more effective in the classroom, group activities and differentiated learning should be encouraged as a way to minimize the heterogeneity problem as discussed.