The Issues in Introducing Communication and Media Studies Subject in Tamil-Medium Schools in Badulla, Sri Lanka

A. Gabilan* and D. Navanathanpillai

Department of Media Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka

ABSTRACT

Communication and Media Studies is an important addition to Sri Lanka's school curriculum. However, many Tamil-medium schools in the Passara zone of the Badulla district have yet to implement this subject. Although a few Sinhala-medium schools have introduced this subject, it still needs to be included in the curriculum of Tamil-medium schools in the area. A study was conducted to identify the issues associated with introducing Communication and Media Studies to Tamil-medium schools in the Passara zone of the Badulla district. This study examines the challenges that hinder its introduction and explores students' perceptions of the subject. A mixed-methods approach was used for the study that included surveys, focus groups, and interviews with 988 students, school principals, and the zonal director. The research found that a shortage of qualified teachers, limited student awareness of media literacy, and a lack of administrative initiative have hindered the implementation. Data were analyzed using descriptive and thematic methods. Furthermore, the study revealed that the principals of these schools still need to take action to introduce this subject to their students. These findings underscore the need for a concerted effort to address these challenges and highlight the need for teacher training and stronger policy support to ensure equitable access to Communication and Media Studies across all schools in the region. In conclusion, the inclusion of Communication and Media Studies in the school curriculum of Sri Lanka is a noteworthy development, and all schools in the Passara zone must adopt this subject.

1. Introduction

The media is a powerful weapon in the globe and plays a major role in society as a source of many functions. The media have a crucial link between the governing bodies and the general public, facilitating communication and information sharing between entities. The media is a critical communication component and is inseparable from it. Channels serve a fundamental purpose as bridges in the communication process. Choosing an appropriate medium is essential to enable realistic decisions regarding the type of media to be employed and how to use them in communicating with a specific target audience. While this decision is straightforward in a direct face-to-face conversation, it becomes more complex when communicating with a larger group. At times, the choice of media relies on available resources and the competency of the intended audience. The correct selection and use of media play an instrumental role in guiding successful communication. Various types of media platforms exist, including primitive media, traditional media, personal media, mass media, and new media. Mass media, or mainstream media, is regarded as indispensable due to its broad reach, increased influence, and extensive communication coverage. Mass media is any communication that reaches many people, including radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, billboards, films, recordings, and books (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

As such, communication and media studies have become a new subject in school curricula. Introducing this subject was challenging, including teacher training, observing learning methods, preparing teachers' guides based on their experiences in learning and teaching in the classroom, and more. Media studies have since been included in the G.C.E. Ordinary Level, and UNESCO has launched a program to popularize media education worldwide. Since 2006, communication and media studies have been taught in Sri Lankan schools, albeit not as a compulsory subject. The curriculum is designed to provide students with a broad media perspective and prepare them for the future. Due to the impact of media studies, media literacy is viewed as an inseparable element of education in the 21st century. Media literacy refers to the ability to assess and regulate information in different forms and understand the role of media in society. Introducing Communication and Media Studies aligns directly with Sri Lanka's National Development Goals and Vision 2030 strategies. It emphasizes inclusive education, digital literacy, and human capital development that supports 'Goal 4' of Sri Lanka's Sustainable Development Framework, incorporates inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Sugathapala, Yalegama, Ranaweera, & Senanayake, 2020). School management committees and zonal education offices often prioritize traditional subjects that directly influence examination performance, sidelining newer disciplines.

It is important that there is a teacher in every classroom. Most of the provinces do not have a database all in one place to help make data-based decisions. Schools have the data, but it is seldom sent to the zones or to the province. The NIE supports education in the Sinhala, Tamil, and English (Bilingual) Medium schools. Three thousand hundred and ninety (3,190) Schools in Sri Lanka offer instruction in Tamil. Two-thirds of them are in the North, East, and Malaiyakam. The MOE and the NIE need to make changes to their structure and staffing. If it fails, the only remedy is for a Tamil citizen to appeal to the Official Language Commission to inquire and recommend a remedy (Ethirveerasingam, 2018).

While media studies have seen unprecedented global growth in the 21st century, their progress in Sri Lanka, particularly in Tamil-medium schools, has yet

to catch up. There is a need to improve media studies in Tamil-medium schools and encourage more students to take the subject. This will not only cater to the needs of society but also equip the students for their future endeavors.

Research Problem

In 2004, Communication and Media Studies was introduced as an optional subject for secondary-level schools. Initially, it was available only to students in grades 10 and 11 pursuing the Ordinary Level. In 2008, the subject was expanded to include students in grades 12 and 13, which serves as the entry point to university education.

Although Communication and Media Studies has been introduced as a subject in Sri Lanka's national school curriculum, many Tamil-Medium schools in the Passara Zone of the Badulla District have yet to implement it. This gap has created inequitable learning opportunities, leaving Tamil-Medium Students with limited exposure to media literacy, digital communication skills, and contemporary knowledge that are essential for higher education and employability. The present study examines the factors that hinder the introduction of this subject in Tamil-Medium schools and explores the perceptions of students and educators to identify strategies for equitable curriculum implementation.

Main Objective

To explore the factors influencing the introduction of Communication and Media Studies in Tamil-medium schools in the Passara Zone of the Badulla District and to propose strategies for its effective implementation.

Sub Objectives

To identify the institutional, pedagogical, and resource-related factors that affect the introduction of Communication and Media Studies in Tamil-medium schools in the Passara Zone.

To assess the level of awareness among Tamil-medium students regarding the objectives, relevance, and career opportunities associated with Communication and Media Studies.

To examine the perceptions of students and educators concerning the importance and feasibility of implementing Communication and Media Studies in Tamil-medium schools.

To recommend practical strategies and policy measures that can support the effective inclusion and sustainable delivery of Communication and Media Studies in Tamil-medium schools.

Research questions

1. What institutional, pedagogical, and resource-related factors affect the introduction of Communication and Media Studies in Tamil-medium schools in the Passara Zone?
2. How aware are Tamil-medium students of the objectives, relevance, and career opportunities associated with Communication and Media Studies?
3. What are students' and educators' perceptions of the importance and feasibility of implementing this subject?
4. What strategies and policy measures can support the effective inclusion of Communication and Media Studies in Tamil-medium schools?

Literature Review

A study on Media Education in Secondary Level schools and its Popularity among Students in Sri Lanka was done by Wijayananda Rupasinghe and S. Raguram in 2021. Based on that study, the Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka introduced "Communication and Media Studies" as an

optional subject for secondary-level schools in 2004. Initially, it was only available to grade 10 and 11 students pursuing the Ordinary Level. In 2008, the subject was introduced for grades 12 and 13 students following the Arts Stream, the entry point to university education. Though only a few students opted for Communication and Media Studies initially, within a few years, the subject became increasingly popular. The present researcher conducted a study to find out why more students chose this subject at the Ordinary and Advanced Levels. The latter is the highest examination in secondary schools and also serves as the university entrance examination in Sri Lanka. The study collected and analyzed data from the Department of Examinations, Sri Lanka, and the National Institute of Education to explore the increasing trend of students opting for Communication and Media Studies (Rupasinghe and Raguram, 2021).

The study found that students enroll in this subject for various reasons. Some students want to work as journalists and produce media content. Others are interested in becoming popular or acquiring new experiences. Some admire handling electronic devices, while the country's media culture influences others. The widespread use of social media and opportunities for self-employment are also motivators. Finally, students find that studying Communication and Media Studies increases their chances of getting a high Z-score in Sri Lanka's university entrance system.

Galagedarage Thushari Madhubhashini Hewage researched media and communication studies at state universities in Sri Lanka, explicitly addressing challenges in English medium education. Media education was introduced to Sri Lankan university education in 1973, yet it is primarily offered in Sinhala. Consequently, due to the language barrier, students need help finding job opportunities, foreign scholarships, research, and publications. This study aimed to explore the challenges involved in offering media education in English medium in state universities using the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory. Data was collected through focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews. The findings reveal several challenges in offering media education in English media, such as the difficulty of finding visiting academics or resource persons who are capable of teaching media and communication in English, the limited availability of permanent members in universities, and the lack of exposure to the English language by both the permanent academic members and the students in the field of Media and Communication Studies. The study recommended that, academics must take necessary measures to offer media education in English to enable students and teachers to familiarize themselves with English medium education and to empower themselves to find job opportunities, foreign scholarships, postgraduate opportunities, and research publications (Hewage, 2023).

According to *Beyond Boundaries: One Hundred Years of Humanities and Social Sciences in Sri Lankan Universities* (de Silva et al., 2021), the growth of media and communication education in Sri Lanka mirrors the broader evolution of the social sciences in the country. The study points out that communication and creative industries are now seen as key parts of Sri Lanka's developing knowledge economy. Over time, universities have made efforts to include subjects that match global trends in information and media studies. However, the book also notes that regional and language-based inequalities, especially within Tamil-medium education, still limit equal access to these opportunities, creating challenges for students and teachers in less-resourced areas. These insights are crucial for understanding the current study on introducing Communication and Media Studies in Tamil-medium schools in Badulla, where similar institutional, linguistic, and

resource barriers persist. However, the study suggests, such inclusion is not merely an academic concern but one tied to employability and cultural participation. The actual market opportunities for communication, media, and creative industry professionals within the Tamil-speaking community and nationally, reveal that developing CMS in Tamil-medium contexts can empower students to engage with local and national media landscapes, contribute to bilingual content production, and fill a growing demand for media professionals who can operate across linguistic and cultural boundaries. The introduction of Communication and Media Studies in Tamil-medium schools with these documented higher-education trends and labour-market needs supports both educational equity and socioeconomic development in Sri Lanka.

In 2014, I.M. Kamala Liyanage conducted a comprehensive study on Sri Lanka's education system. The study primarily focused on the history of the free education policy introduced in 1947 and the use of Sinhala and Tamil languages as the medium of education. Sri Lanka achieved universal primary education, a literacy rate of 92%, and gender parity, and successfully eliminated disparities in enrollment in education, meeting the third Millennium Development Goal by 1964. However, the present education system faces significant challenges, including poor quality, curriculum mismatch with existing labour market demands, lack of training for school teachers and inefficient administration. According to educationists, researchers, and policymakers in Sri Lanka, factors such as limited government expenditure on education, lack of clear national/state educational policy, un-planned policy changes made by political leaders from regime to regime, politicization of recruiting procedures for school teachers and administrative staff, lack of proper teacher training, and some recent educational reforms based mainly on foreign donor agencies, but not on the real needs of the country are the primary factors contributing to the deterioration of the education system. In 2006, media education was introduced to the secondary education system in Sri Lanka. A study of Communication and Media Studies in Sri Lankan secondary education was conducted by Galagedarage Thushari Madhubhashini Hewage in 2022 using the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge Framework (TPACK) model to examine the challenges and opportunities in media education. The study specifically looked at the curriculum, teaching, assessments, technology, and resources, which are the crucial elements of the TPACK model.

The study found that theoretical knowledge, lack of practical and skill-based content, teaching only in the Sinhala language, inadequate training for teachers, limited resources and infrastructure facilities in schools, limited representation of teachers in curriculum development, and the need for private tuition are some of the challenges in media education. These challenges are reflected in the limited availability of "A" grades. However, there are opportunities for media education, such as the availability of qualified teachers in practical activities like media workshops, exhibitions, wallpapers, media days, media weeks, and radio services. Having skilled and experienced academics in curriculum development and evaluation is also an opportunity. In conclusion, the study highlights that responsible authorities should develop a curriculum that incorporates teaching, assessments, technologies, and resources. This will help improve the quality of media education in Sri Lanka's secondary education system.

A study conducted by Jolly Rubagiza, Edmond Were, and Rosamund Sutherland examines the introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in schools in Rwanda. The study focuses on the Rwandan government's perspective on ICT as a critical tool for transforming the economy,

with the education sector playing a crucial role in developing the necessary human resources. Since 2000, there has been a significant effort to integrate computers and ICT into the education curriculum through various initiatives (Rubagiza et al., 2011). The paper draws on the research of EdQual, a DFID-funded project, to examine issues related to the use of ICT in schools in Rwanda. The authors argue that merely introducing computers and ICT infrastructure in schools will not fully realize the potential of ICT. They demonstrate that current policy initiatives appear to be disadvantaging particular groups, such as girls and those living in rural communities. Using Sen's capability approach as a framework for theorizing issues of education policy and social justice, the authors discuss how engagement with ICT can be re-conceptualized as access to the capability of what Jenkins calls a participatory culture. They also argue that without a shift in teaching and learning practices with ICT in schools, young people are not likely to learn how to exploit the capabilities offered by access to ICT.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three interrelated theoretical perspectives that help explain the factors influencing the introduction of *Communication and Media Studies* in Tamil-medium schools, such as t**he Diffusion of Innovations Theory, the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) Model,** and **the Media Literacy Education Framework.** Each of these frameworks provides a distinct lens for understanding institutional readiness, pedagogical capacity, and student awareness regarding the adoption of a new subject in the school curriculum.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Everett Rogers, 1962; 2003)

Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovations Theory* explains how new ideas, practices, or technologies spread within a social system. According to Rogers, adoption occurs through five stages: *knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation,* and *confirmation*, and is influenced by innovation characteristics such as **relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability,** and **observability.**

In the context of this study, the **introduction of Communication and Media Studies** represents an educational innovation. The theory helps to explain **why some schools adopt** the subject earlier (e.g., Sinhala-medium schools) while others (Tamil-medium schools) do not. It analyses **institutional, administrative, and cultural barriers** affecting the adoption process and understands the **role of educational leaders and teachers** as "change agents" in promoting curriculum innovation. Thus, the diffusion and Innovation theory provides a framework for exploring how *awareness, resources, and perceptions* among teachers, students, and administrators influence the pace and success of introducing the subject.

Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) Model (Mishra & Koehler, 2006)

The **TPACK framework** emphasizes the integration of **technology, pedagogy,** and **content knowledge** for effective teaching in modern education. Communication and Media Studies, by nature, is a multidisciplinary subject that depends heavily on the use of digital and mass media tools.

Applying the TPACK framework enables this study to examine teachers' **preparedness** to teach media and communication effectively using available technology, the **availability and integration of technological resources** in Tamil-medium schools. The **pedagogical challenges** that the teachers face are due to insufficient training or a lack of exposure to media-based instruction. This framework supports the analysis of both **resource-**

related and **instructional factors** that influence the introduction of subjects.

The Media and Information Literacy Education Framework (UNESCO, 2011)

The **Media and Information Literacy (MIL) education framework**, proposed by UNESCO, emphasizes the ability to **access, analyze, evaluate, create, and communicate information** across different media platforms in a responsible and critical manner. This framework positions media literacy as an essential 21st-century skill that promotes civic participation, digital competence, and cultural understanding.

For this study, the framework helps to assess the **awareness and understanding** of media literacy concepts among Tamil-medium students. Explore how **the inclusion** of Communication and Media Studies in the curriculum could enhance students' analytical and creative engagement with media. Evaluate the **educational value and social impact** of promoting media literacy in rural and marginalized communities.

By applying the UNESCO MIL framework, the research situates the introduction of Communication and Media Studies as not only an academic subject but also a tool for **empowerment, critical thinking, and social inclusion.**

The integration of these theories supports a holistic analysis of the **institutional, pedagogical, and learner-centered factors** affecting the introduction of Communication and Media Studies in Tamil-medium schools in the Passara Zone.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

The study adopted quantitative and qualitative methodologies, with observations, focus group discussions, and interviews as data collection tools. Recipient Analysis was used for this study. Tamil-medium schools in the Passara zone of the Badulla district are included in the study area's scope.

Quantitative methods were used to measure students' awareness, interests, and perceptions, while qualitative methods provided in-depth insights into institutional and pedagogical challenges through interviews and discussions.

Study Area

The research was conducted in the **Passara Educational Zone** of the **Badulla District** in Sri Lanka. The study focused on **Tamil-medium schools** where *Communication and Media Studies* has not yet been introduced. Both **1AB** and **1C** schools offering the Arts stream were included to capture variation across school types and resources.

Sample

The target population consisted of **G.C.E. Ordinary Level (Grade 11)** and **Advanced Level (Grades 12 and 13)** students from Tamil-medium schools in the Passara Zone, along with **school principals** and the **Zonal Director of Education.** In total, **988 students** participated in the study (706 from Grade 11, 123 from Grade 12, and 159 from Grade 13).

Data Collection Methods: Both **primary** and **secondary** data sources were used.

Primary data: Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with groups of Grade 11, 12, and 13 students to explore their awareness, interest, and perceptions of *Communication and Media Studies* and related career opportunities. **Semi-structured interviews** were held with the **principals** of the twelve selected schools and the **Passara Zonal Director of Education** to understand institutional challenges, policy gaps, and possible strategies for introducing the subject. Classroom and school environment observations were conducted to assess the availability of facilities such as computer labs, multimedia equipment, and learning spaces relevant to teaching the subject.

Table. 01. A **sample of twelve schools** was purposively selected, comprising two 1AB schools and ten 1C schools

No	School Name	Type	Total Students
01	B/Passara Tamil National School	1AB	191
02	B/Ramakrishna Hindu National College	1AB	121
03	B/Kalai Mahal Tamil Maha Vidyalaya	1C	127
04	B/Al Ameen Muslim Vidyalaya	1C	29
05	B/Passara Muslim Vidyalaya	1C	25
06	B/Madulseemai Tamil Maha Vidyalaya	1C	160
07	B/Battawata Tamil Maha Vidyalaya	1C	94
08	B/Ganavaralla No. 3 Tamil Maha Vidyalaya	1C	30
09	B/Vigneswara Tamil Vidyalaya	1C	33
10	B/Akarathna Tamil Vidyalaya	1C	15
11	B/Shri Ganesha Vidyalaya	1C	26
12	B/Gonakaella Tamil Maha Vidyalaya	1C	137

Secondary data: Relevant literature, including previous research studies, dissertations, policy documents, and official reports from the Ministry of Education, the Department of Examinations, and the National Institute of Education, was reviewed to provide context, and support data triangulation.

Data Analysis:

Data analysis followed both **quantitative** and **qualitative** approaches. **Quantitative data** from surveys and FGDs were analyzed descriptively using frequency counts and percentages to illustrate patterns of awareness and interest among students. **Qualitative data** from interviews and observations were analyzed thematically.

Emerging themes related to institutional barriers, pedagogical challenges, and student perceptions were identified and compared across schools. Findings were then synthesized using **Recipient Analysis**, which evaluates how educational programs are received and interpreted by learners and educators within a specific context.

2. Results and Discussion

The data were classified, and the theories and collected data were analyzed using tables, maps, previous research, interviews, and focus group discussions for the research titled "The issues in Introducing Communication and Media Studies Subject in Tamil-medium schools in Sri Lanka."

The study found that only a few students knew this subject. That means only 183 out of 988 students were aware of Communication and Media Studies. The Passara Zone students are unfamiliar with Communication and Media Studies subjects and the opportunities and challenges. They did not even have any idea about the job opportunities. Schools are crucial in promoting media literacy through dedicated curriculum components, workshops, and

extracurricular activities focused on media analysis and production through communication and media study subjects.

However, many schools in the Passara zone need to promote it.

Table 02. The students' knowledge of Communication and Media Studies,
The students' knowledge of Communication and Media Studies

Number	Schools	Grade 11	Grade 12	Grade 13	Total no. of students/ samples
01	Vigneshwara Tamil Vidyalaya	01	-	-	01
02	Hakarathan Tamil Vidyalaya	02	-	-	02
03	Sri Ganesha Tamil Vidyalaya	01	-	-	01
04	Kanaweralla no 03 Tamil Maha Vidyalaya	-	-	-	-
05	Al-Ameen Muslim Vidyalaya	01	-	-	01
06	Passara National School	30	04	04	38
07	Kalai Mahal Tamil Maha Vidyalaya	30	01	05	36
08	Ramakrishna Hindu National College	02	02	02	06
09	Madulseema Tamil Maha Vidyalaya	40	-	-	40
10	Batawathe Tamil School	14	10	10	34
11	Gonakaella Tamil Maha Vidyalaya	20	02	01	23
12	Passara Muslim Vidyalaya	01	-	-	01
	Total	**141**	**20**	**22**	**183**

Interest of students in learning communication and media studies and working in the media

According to the focus group discussions conducted among the students for the research, it was indicated that, out of 988 students, only 343 students were interested in learning about and pursuing careers in the media industry. Many students were unfamiliar with communication and media studies, but they knew about media platforms and activities. Media platforms offer various entertainment options, including videos, games, and music. These platforms can be a great source of relaxation and enjoyment for students. Furthermore, media platforms allow students to showcase their creativity and express themselves through various

forms of content creation, such as videos, artwork, writing, and more.

Students preferred to pursue careers in the media

Based on numerical data obtained through the focus group discussion among students, out of 343 students who are interested in media, 15% of students are interested in journalism, 26% are interested in working in radio, 43% are interested in working in television, 10% are interested in social media, and 6% are interested in other media-related careers.

According to students' perceptions, most students are interested in working in television, which mainly attracts them.

Comparatively, students in the Passara zone are more interested in Television and other mass media platforms than social media platforms. Students mentioned that they like to be news readers and radio and video jockeys. Radio entertains students through music, comedy, drama, and other forms of programming. It can provide valuable information and education on various topics, including science, history, literature, and current events. Educational radio shows can complement classroom learning and encourage students to explore new subjects.

Listening to radio broadcasts can improve students' language skills, including vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension. Many students from the Passara zone mostly listen to the radio and are interested in working in broadcasting media. Some students are interested in platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram which have created avenues for individuals to build a career in content creation and influence.
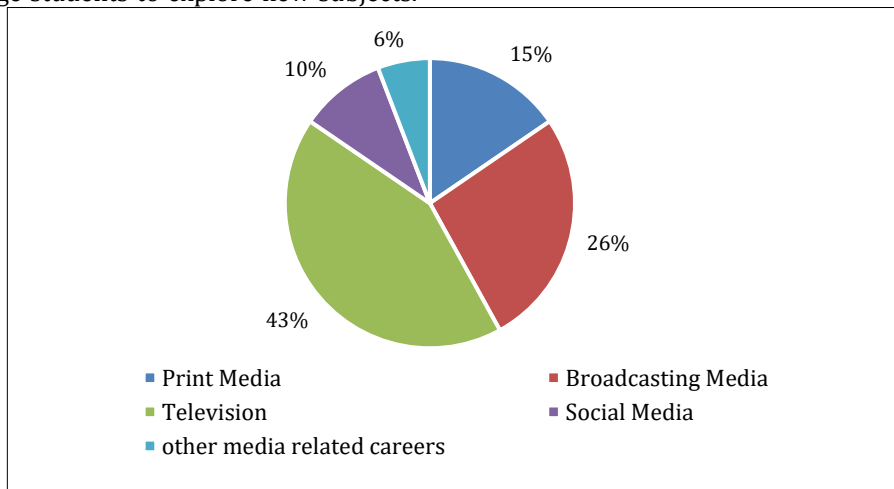
Figure 1. Students who follow media-related courses

Table 03. Students who follow media-related courses

Number	Schools	Grade 11	Grade 12	Grade 13	No. of students who follow media related courses
01	Vigneshwara Tamil Vidyalaya	00	-	-	00
02	Hakarathan Tamil Vidyalaya	00	-	-	00
03	Sri Ganesha Tamil Vidyalaya	01	-	-	01
04	Kanaweralla no 03 Tamil Maha Vidyalaya	00	-	-	00
05	Al-Ameen Muslim Vidyalaya	00	00	01	01
06	Passara National School	00	02	00	02
07	Kalai Mahal Tamil Maha Vidyalaya	00	00	00	00

08	Ramakrishna Hindu National College	00	00	02	02
09	Madulseema Tamil Maha Vidyalaya	00	00	03	03
10	Batawathe Tamil School	00	00	01	01
11	Gonakaella Tamil Maha Vidyalaya	00	00	01	01
12	Passara Muslim Vidyalaya	00	00	00	00
Total		**01**	**02**	**08**	**11**

According to the data gathered from the focus group discussion with students, 11 out of 988 are pursuing courses related to media studies. Few students only got the opportunity to study media and communication in the Passara zone. Unfortunately, many schools do not offer this subject.

Students who are interested in learning communication and media studies

According to the findings of a focus group discussion conducted among students, out of 706 students, 126 students studying for the GCE Ordinary level have shown interest in studying media and communication. Additionally, out of 123 students in Grade 12, 50 are interested in pursuing this field of study. Similarly, out of 159 students from Grade 13 of the GCE Advanced level following the Arts stream, 64 students have expressed their eagerness to study communication and media studies, if it is introduced in schools.

Reasons for not introducing communication and media studies in schools so far

According to the interviews with teachers who teach communication and media studies, it was found that this subject faces particular challenges. These include having fewer students in the classes, difficulty allocating enough lesson time to teachers, many subjects to cover, and a need for more clarity among students. These factors have contributed to the subject's lagging behind.

Further, teachers mentioned that classes with fewer students can affect the dynamics of the learning environment. Smaller class sizes result in less diverse perspectives, limited group discussions, and fewer opportunities for collaborative learning. While training courses and educators strive to cover various skills for print journalism, broadcast, telecast, and online media, several issues still require attention. These include ensuring quality control, practical relevance, and communication and media studies education affordability.

Communication and media studies cover various topics, from mass media theories to digital communication trends.

Allocating sufficient time to adequately explore each topic within the constraints of a semester or academic year can be challenging. This time constraint may lead to a superficial understanding of concepts or the omission of important areas of study. The interdisciplinary nature of communication and media studies includes numerous subfields, theories, and methodologies. Trying to encompass all relevant subjects within a limited curriculum can lead to overwhelming content for educators and students. As a result, specific topics may receive less attention than others, potentially affecting the depth of understanding. Communication and media studies encompass a wide range of concepts that students may not easily understand, especially if they are unfamiliar with the field. This lack of clarity can lead to confusion,

disengagement, and a perception of the subject as abstract or irrelevant. Teachers need more facilities to explore innovative teaching methods.

The importance of communication and media studies and the subjects that have been introduced lately in schools

Based on the interviews with the principals of twelve schools and the Director of Education for the Passara zone, it was found that the subjects being introduced were already being taught in a few Tamil-medium schools. As a result, students had some knowledge of these subjects and could select them based on their preferences. However, communication and media studies was unfamiliar, and whether they would be interested in learning it was unclear. While we can assume the outcomes of familiar subjects, it is difficult to predict the outcome of an unfamiliar subject. Many principals were not ready to introduce communication and media studies in schools for various reasons.

The efforts and actions taken to introduce communication and media studies in schools

Based on the interviews conducted with the principals of twelve schools, in addition to the Director of Education of the Passara zone, it was concluded that despite the efforts of some principals to introduce a certain subject in Tamil-medium schools in the Passara zone, the majority of schools had not made any efforts to do so.

The principals have mentioned several reasons for failing to introduce communication and media studies in schools. One of the main reasons is the need for more resources, such as funding for materials and teacher training. Principals prioritize subjects traditionally seen as more essential for academic and career success, such as mathematics, science, and language arts. They did not consider communication and

media studies as important or relevant as these subjects. Additionally, principals comprehend communication and media studies' value and potential impact on students' academic and personal development. With a clear understanding of the subject's benefits, they may be more likely to advocate its introduction in schools.

The opportunities for incorporating communication and media studies in schools

According to the interviews conducted with the principals of the twelve schools that were taken as samples for the study and the Director of Education of the Passara zone, it was concluded that "the resources for all subjects are available." Each subject has computer laboratories, technical equipment, and separate classrooms. As a result, if communication and media studies are introduced, subject-related activities could be carried out more effectively. Students' curiosity about learning communication and media studies is widespread. Accordingly, introducing this subject will allow students to choose their field of interest.

It also has been noted that a student's cultural background, personal interests, and individual learning style can affect their perception of media and communication. Parents may discourage their children from studying this subject because they believe that their children may not obtain good grades for this subject and that working in the media is dangerous. There is also a common misconception that media is not a suitable career for girls. Still, the majority of them have not made any effort so far.

The significance of introducing communication and media studies in Tamil-medium schools in the Passara zone of Badulla district

According to the interviews conducted with the principals of the twelve schools that were

taken as samples for the study and the Director of Education of the Passara zone, it was concluded that "the introduction of communication and media studies at schools is crucial to expose and solve the upcountry political issues, problems related to livelihood and earnings, and social problems that are still not addressed".

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper examined the challenges of introducing communication and media studies subject in Tamil medium schools in the Passara zone of Badulla District. The students in this area have demonstrated a strong interest in media platforms and media studies. Therefore, introducing communication and media studies could foster greater media literacy among the students. Despite this, implementing this subject in schools has been limited for several reasons. This study aimed to analyze the significance of communication and media studies, the recent efforts taken to introduce this subject in schools, the opportunities for introducing communication and media studies, and the importance of it in Tamil-medium schools within the Passara zone of Badulla district. The research was conducted in twelve 1AB and 1C schools. It is observed that the students in this area have shown a strong inclination towards media platforms and media studies. Therefore, the introduction of communication and media studies has the potential to foster greater media literacy among the students. However, its implementation in schools has been limited due to various reasons. Specifically, the study identified the institutional, pedagogical, and resource-related factors affecting the introduction of Communication and Media Studies. The findings revealed that, although schools possess basic infrastructure such as computer laboratories and classrooms, the lack of trained teachers, limited administrative initiative, and low prioritization of the subject have constrained its implementation. Another objective was to assess Tamil-medium students' awareness of the objectives, importance, and career opportunities related to Communication and Media Studies. The results showed that students had limited knowledge of the subject but expressed strong interest in pursuing media-related careers, highlighting the subject's potential relevance and appeal. In addition, the study examined students' and educators' perceptions of the importance and feasibility of implementing Communication and Media Studies. Educators and principals acknowledged its value in fostering media literacy and communication skills. However, its introduction was viewed as challenging under current institutional constraints. Finally, the study recommends practical strategies and policy measures to support the effective inclusion and sustainable delivery of Communication and Media Studies. To promote fair access and align education with social and economic needs, policy measures should prioritize teacher training, curriculum development, and awareness programs. Overall, the study concludes that introducing Communication and Media Studies in Tamil-medium schools would enhance educational opportunities, foster creative engagement, and empower students to participate meaningfully in Sri Lanka's evolving media landscape.

Recommendations

Teachers and students should be encouraged to enroll in the Communication and Media Studies subject at the G.C.E. A/L and O/L levels.

Curricula and syllabi must be reviewed periodically to align with the job market's requirements, incorporating topics such as animation, cybersecurity, and AI.

Media education must be expanded across various levels to meet the needs, expectations, and aims of the audience.

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