

## **ENSURING EQUITY IN EDUCATION THROUGH THE 13 YEARS GUARANTEED EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

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### **Abstract**

The Ministry of Education (MoE) in Sri Lanka has introduced a key policy initiative to strengthen equity in education by guaranteeing equitable learning opportunities for all children, regardless of disparities. To achieve this goal, the MoE launched the "13 Years of Guaranteed Education" program (13YGEP) in 2017, targeting the Grade 12 and 13 curriculums for GCE O/L dropout students. The program aims to provide opportunities for students who fail the G.C.E O/L to qualify for GCE A/L and continue their school education by pursuing vocational subjects. This study is based on a sample of 40 teachers, 40 principals, 10 SLEAS officers, 2 Divisional Directors, 40 PSI coordinators, and all 40 SDEC members involved in the program. The primary objective of this study is to examine the implementation of the 13YGEP in schools within the Paddiruppu education zone. Specifically, it aims to assess the effectiveness of the 13YGEP in promoting equity and equal opportunities in education for all children. The findings of this study reveal that teachers, school principals, and educational administrators generally lack a comprehensive understanding of the 13YGEP's significance and its proper implementation within schools. In this context, this study intends to provide practical guidelines for enhancing the effectiveness of the 13YGEP in fostering equity in education across all schools. Data analysis employed graphical data analysis techniques. The findings indicate that 11.55% of the students who followed the program were enrolled, while 88.46% of the students were not enrolled in the last six years because these students dropped out from the 13YGEP program. The small sample size, limited geographical coverage, and short-term experience with the program are the key limitations of this study. Such surveys should be conducted continuously to monitor equity and equal opportunities for all in education through this program.

***Keywords:** Ensuring Equity, Education, 13 Years Guaranteed Education*

### **Background of the Study:**

In 2017, the 13 YGE policy has been introduced on a pilot basis in 42 schools as a 1st phase and MoE, Issurupaya plans to extend-it to 150 schools as a 2nd phase in 2018 and again extended to 1500 schools in 2019. Implement this initiative, a new curriculum consisting of 26 technical and vocational subjects have been developed and trained for these newly introduced subjects.

However, it is observed that 13 YGEP is has not provided an equity to all students as mentioned here. It is the researcher's hypothesis that this project which was started for a good

purpose is found to be ineffective. Therefore, this research is conducted with the aim of identifying the issues and problems, challenges of this and presenting suggestions and recommendations and mechanisms for successful implementation in schools.

### **Significance of the Study**

In academic perspective, there is a difference between policy and the practice. This study would help to reconstruct these two perspectives and help to reduce the gap between policy and actions or practice? Primarily, this study can identify the reality of planning and policy implementation in school education in Sri Lanka. Findings of this research will offers guide lines for policy makers, planners and educational top level ,mid-level and low level managers and administrators to make reforms and strategies. In economic perspective, the findings of this research would help to enhance the efficiency in policy understanding, planning at the school level and the good governance and service delivery. Furthermore, it can reduce waste, human resources, physical resources and time factor and administrative delays too.

### **Literature review**

Sri Lanka has given great emphasis in the field of education with the delivery of “13 YGEP which is the longest education development plan in the history of education in Sri Lanka. Moving forward, various projects, programme and development plans are introduced to the students. However, ensuring equity and equal opportunities for all in Education through the 13 YGEP in school can be a matter of concern. Is it worth for students and compulsory education law or not? In SriLanka since independence in 1948, the GoSL has provided a large, great and continuous focus to build and improve its national education policy and system. This is clearly demonstrated in significant financial investments in education, comprehensive education plans, and subsequent policy reforms to meet the country's aspirations to grow in tandem with global demands. In fact, the SriLankan education system can be regarded as an example model developed to support national development and economic growth. In order to achieve a successful educational quality, Ministry of Education (MoE) must pay more attention to the key factors such as in the field of human resources (Gholamhosseini et al., 2012; Okwukweka & Obiageli, 2015; UNESCO, 2006).

In fact, ensuring equity in education through 13 YGEP at school is not an accident, but can also be viewed as an effort or process, and this management require proper strategic planning into a comprehensive school daily performance (Okwukweka & Obiageli, 2015; Toorani, 2012). Although the effectiveness of 13 YGEP has been debated however, in Sri

Lanka context is still undeveloped. This study will explore strategies to implement efficiently and effectively in school. However, not all schools are successful with their strategies (Widodo, 2018), there are some issues must be solved before implementation of this programme in schools.

Is it ensuring the 13 YGEP and equity in education at school? Or it is just a programme that does not value the quality of education at school? At G.C.E. O/L examination in year 2022, 1.80% of students has failed in all subjects. In addition, 38.5% of students has not qualified for higher studies. As a result more than 39% of the student population may become drop outs annually. (Source: Department of Examinations, 2022). Enable students who fail the GCE O/L examination to receive vocational education, provide certified professionals to build the economy, eliminate unemployment.( Ministry of Education, 2017)

Further, 13 YGEP gives us 26 new vocational subjects introduced , Both theoretical and practical knowledge in subject areas are to be provided, NVQ level 4 certification would be awarded, Rs. 5 billion allocated to implement the programme covering the entire school system from 2019, The pilot project launched in 2017 (*Marie Perera Dept. of Humanities Education*)

In keeping with SDG 4.3 “By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable quality technical, vocational education”

Three fundamental approaches to international education development have been conceptualized and promoted by global governance organizations since the end of the Second World War: the peace approach, the human rights approach and the development approach. These approaches form the foundation of SDG4. (2023, Sustainable Development Disciplines for Humanity).

The Development Approach id as former colonies gained independence, educational development became the center of larger modernization efforts. Using scarce budgets, these newly independent countries sought to develop their educational systems by sending students abroad to developed countries to acquire knowledge and technological skill. Japan’s modernization effort during the Meiji Era is but one of countless examples of developing countries positioning education policy as modernization policy, aiming to expand education through continuous policy and financial efforts. (Zachary Romano and Rachael Ballard,2023) In this view,

“We need to learn lessons from the past and need to have a proper analysis of the performance with prudent decision-making. Sri Lanka does not have a future if we do not motivate entrepreneurs. (N.Abeyssekera, 2023) / So, 13 YGEP is most of the important program is to be developed motivated to the entrepreneurs in future. Through this can contribute to the economic development.

“:....the four main would contributing in school dropout of students such as related factors, family related factors , school related factors and community related factors. Every common factor affect the student’s dropout rate .Essential to have sufficient physical and human resources to improve abilities and provide opportunities for better education.’ (Farwis,M(2020) .Therefore , based on this literature review, 13 YGEP also affected by these kind of factors .So, the students would affect influencing above factors for the unsuccessful programme.

Equity is prior to the adoption of sustainability development goals(SDGs) the focus had been on correcting gender disparities in school enrollment, and achieving equality in terms of quantity had been emphasized rather than the promotion of equity (Kuroda 2014; Nishimura and Sasaoka 2016). Nishimura and Sasaoka (2016).

***Describe the equality and equity of education as follows***

Equality refers to a state in which all people are equal, while equity refers to the different educational treatment of people in different environments to achieve equality (Nishimura and Sasaoka 2016). From the viewpoint of equity, it is justifiable to offer more support to groups who are in a position of disadvantage (Miwa 2005). UNESCO (2017) thus analyzed the equity of education based on items such as gender equality, geographical conditions, income status, language, and disability. In addition, Schleicher (2014, p. 19) argued that equity in education can be interpreted from two perspectives, namely, equity and inclusiveness. The perspective of fairness refers to education not being restricted by gender, ethnic group, family environment, or other personal or socioeconomic conditions.

The targets of SDG4 also reflect the perspectives of “Education for development” and “educational development”, as well as “education and development” to a certain extent. For example, Target 4.5 aims to “eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the in vulnerable situations” (United Nations 2015b, p. 21), which is in line with the perspective of the human rights approach. At the same time, however, “education for development” is also represented with

the inclusion of the term “vocational training”, implying that education should be tied to socio economic development (Zachary Romano and Rachael Ballard, 2023 ).

Education does not necessarily increase social mobility but can reproduce inequalities by providing opportunities and resources for those already established in the society (Breault and Lack, 2009).

The term “equity in education” is deeply complex and can take on many forms, making it challenging to establish a succinct definition. But the basic meaning behind the term is the pursuit of creating an educational system that caters to students of all kinds and develops their educational experience accordingly. This means that no matter what a student’s background, language, race, economic profile, gender, learning capability, disability or family history, each student has the opportunity to get the support and resources they need to achieve their educational goals.

### ***Identified Research gaps***

Most of the researchers have been done many studies about the policies and no one did not study significantly regarding the practical issues when implementing 13 years mandatory education programme. Also, the studies need to be done at zonal level or regional level in implementing process and related procedure but there are a few studies conducted regarding the equitable access and participation commonly to be affective. As the practitioner, I feel able to do this kind of study by me and gather the findings to the school educational leaders, managers, administrators, planners and policy makers as well. The gap between policy and practice regarding 13 YGEP implementing process. During the last 6 year–period in Paddiruppu zone 8797 students sat in GCE OL exam, but only 11.55 % of the students were enrolled in 13 years mandatory education Programme.

### ***Problem Identified the 13 YGEP***

Policies and programmes are not understand well ,not to be planned and implement efficiently therefore, many impacts observed on ensuring equity in education .The issues has been raised that the 13 YGEP is not been prepared and implemented efficiently at the school levels. So, There are thousands of students leave the education system either at or before GCE OL without obtaining proper knowledge, skills necessary for further education, their lives and world –of – work. Thus, expected outcomes not reached so far in the 13 YGEP. In Each year 325,000 students join Grade One but only a few qualify to enter University. The

aim of the 13 YGE policy is to ensure that all 325,000 students reach professional level. Every year 120,000 students drop out without going in for higher studies. Hence, the present system of vocational training in the country is not attractive to students. This is a big issue today,

13YGEP providing education opportunities for all children . It is to be implemented under the theme “The professional turning point in Free Education. This scheme would enable students who sit for the G.C.E. Ordinary Level Examination to obtain Higher Educational qualifications notwithstanding whether they pass or fail. Upper secondary education curriculum have been reformed including professional or vocational subject stream enabling students to obtain skills and competences related to the future job market. Under this initiative education will be mandatory for a student until Year 13 and the GCE O/L examination will no longer be a strictly “pass or fail” exam. Students will be promoted to the next class in accordance with the new education system which the government intends to introduce. Every student will remain in school after the O/L examination. It is in keeping with the Government’s proposal to lessen the burden of examinations on the students.

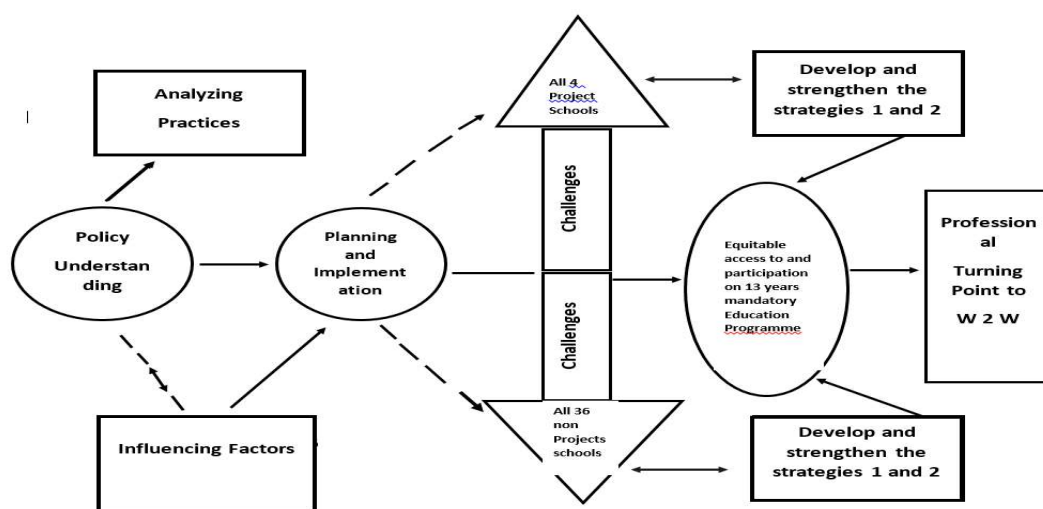
## **Methodology**

### ***Objectives/Research Questions***

Main Objective is Analyzing policies and existing practices regarding 13 YGEP is planning, Implementation, and monitoring & Evaluation in Paddiruppu zone schools. Also following sub objectives are have been developed as follows.

1. Find out the factors influencing when planning and implementing 13 years guaranteed education programme
2. Find out the challenges and strengthen the strategies used when implementing 13 years guaranteed education programme.
3. To make suggestions and recommendations to fill the gap between policy and practice also to improving equitable access to and participation for 13 years guaranteed education program

### Conceptual Frame Work



### *Research Approach:*

In this research the approaches are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods is to be used.

### *Research Design*

It is a Descriptive Survey research. The methods based on mixed method -qualitative and quantitative will be applied in this research. Especially descriptive research approach and explanatory research approach both of approaches are to be used by the researcher. And this will be focused on group discussion, this research will be done with the view generating a theory or finding the ideal type of ideas to increase productivity of schools and making suggestion to policy planners to forecasting.

### *Sampling*

Simple random sampling method –To select all 40 principals in the Paddiruppu education zone Stratified sampling method –To select 40 teachers, 40 principals, 10 SLEAS officers, 2 Divisional Directors, 40 PSI coordinators and all 40 SDEC members. Cluster sampling methods are to be applied in this research by selecting 1AB, 1C and Type II schools. That selection will take place as per the ratio accordingly to the number of schools and Divisions,

### *Data gathering Instruments*

- *Data gathering under the qualitative methodology-phenomenology and grounded theory types:* Literal reading, Interpretive and Reflexive reading also going to be used.

▪ *Data Collecting Method:*

Chiefly the questionnaire- interview, observation –Structured and Semi-Structured observation types are will be used.

*Documents:* Existing data, media articles, Research journal articles, Websites, Guidelines, Circulars and other official’s records will be used in these sources of collecting information. Focus Group Discussion (Small and homogeneous group) also to be used. Field Notes –Visit the school and collecting sample prepared SBDP and Progress report of the schooling addition to that, *Mobile Surveys:* This is called the method data collecting, thus is a popular method which is being in this increase. For these purpose forms, data collecting electronic drives, smart phones etc. are to be used.

*Telephone:* Traditional telephone interview *New Electronic Tools:* Face book chatting, WhatsApp, Internet calls are to be used. Computer Assisted telephone interviews (CATI).*Mail:* Information are to be collected via post- mail, e-mail and fax etc. *Face and Face Interview* and *In –Depth interview*

**Data Analysis and Discussion**

Pass rate in G.C.E (O/L) and trend of enrolment in 13 YGEP during period between 2016 and 2021 in Paddiruppu Education zone.

Year	No sat	No of Pass in G.C.E(O/L)	Parentage	No of students Fail in G.C.E(O/L)	Fail in Percentage	Enrolee to the 13 YMGEF	Enrolment rate	Dropout after G.C.E(O/)	Dropout rate
2016	1442	880	61.03	562	38.97	47	8.36	515	91.64
2017	1480	952	64.32	528	35.68	45	8.52	483	91.48
2018	1439	967	67.2	472	32.8	79	16.73	393	83.27
2019	1395	953	68.32	442	31.68	78	17.66	364	82.35
2020	1429	1019	71.31	410	28.69	41	10	369	90
2021	1612	1173	72.77	439	27.77	35	7.97	404	92.03
Total	8797	5944	67.56	2853	32.43	325	11.39	2528	88.60



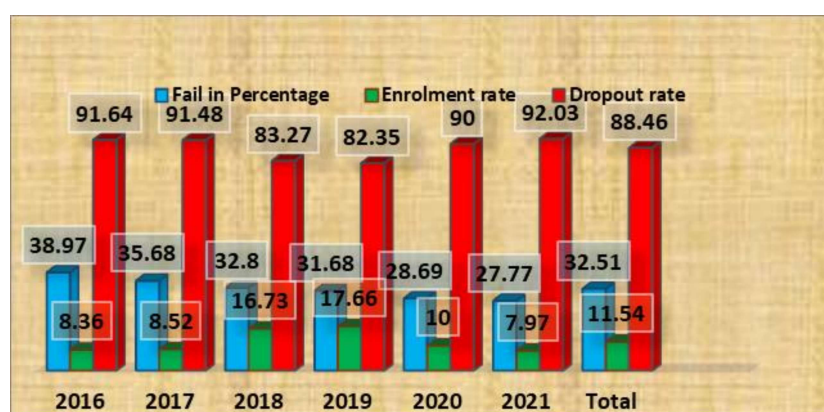
As role of education researcher on influence of planning on improvement of school is to be describe here it is not possible to take decision without keeping touch with the mixed method. That is since Qualitative and Quantitative based data are received descriptive and inferential statistics analysis is also to be used. Statistical analysis can be performed using SPSS software in this data Analysis. Exploratory data analysis is to be used in this research by using following Techniques. , Frequency and percentage tables, one way tabulating, Cross tabulation (two way higher way tabulation.) Analyzing the multiple responsible data also, Analysis the response based on indicaors.

### Annually Enrolled and not enrolled to the 13 YGEP

Year	No sat	Fail in Percentage	Enrollee to the 13 YGEP	Enrolment rate	Dropout after G.C.E(O/)	Not enrolled or Dropout rate
2016	1442	38.97	47	8.36	515	91.64
2017	1480	35.68	45	8.52	483	91.48
2018	1439	32.8	79	16.73	393	83.27
2019	1395	31.68	78	17.66	364	82.35
2020	1429	28.69	41	10	369	90
2021	1612	27.77	35	7.97	404	92.03
Total	8797	32.43	325	11.39	2528	88.60

In this table, there are 88.46 % of the total students dropped out among not qualified students for GCE A/L in these years. Also, we could find out the exact degree of students to enroll in the 13 YGEP during these period of six years.

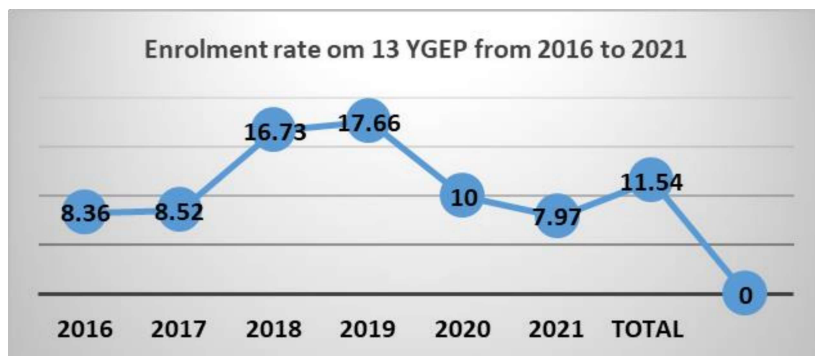
### Enrollment Trend of 1 Years Guaranteed Education Programme



When we get the results through this analysis we came to the conclusion there is no any improvement in enrolment

rate .there is 11.54% only were enrolled and others were gone out of the system.

According the **first objective**, found there are few factors influencing in to the planning and



implementing process in 13 YGEP. Mostly urban and rural area schools was selected which are already introduced and exist programme in paddiruppu education zone. Especially

**Geographical factor, Economic factor, Educational status, gender wise factor** were analyzed all these factors are influencing in the enrollment and dropout. **These** factors were more significant in this study.

Further, the capacity of the teachers, Principals, ISA, ADE, DEO and the DDEe were analyzed. Actually the capacity of important of 13 YGEP or the policies in relation to the vocational stream was very lack. Especially the principals are not educated in this regard. Also, they have very good responsibility to establish network by link near the schools to provide his vocational education to the all students those who failed in G.C.E. (O/L) exam in past six years.

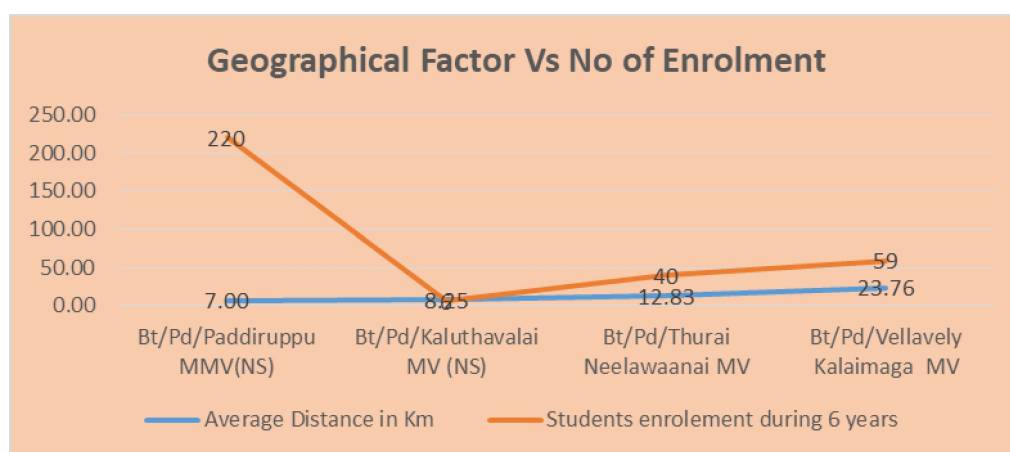
No any programme were conducted successfully to the parents, school development executive members and the PSI coordinators at root level. Therefore, aforesaid members has few negative opinion against this 13 YGEP in past.

#### Students Enrolled in geographical area wisely to the 13 YGEP

DS Division	Project schools	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Manmunai South Eruvil Pattu	Bt/Pd/Paddiruppu MMV(NS)	47	32	50	59	16	16	<b>220</b>
	Bt/Pd/Kaluthavalai MV (NS)	-	-	-	02	04	-	<b>06</b>
	Bt/Pd/Thurai Neelawaanai MV	-	13	07		03	17	<b>40</b>
Vellavelly	Bt/Pd/Vellavelly Kalaimaga MV	-	-	22	17	18	02	<b>59</b>
	Total No Enrolled	<b>47</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>325</b>

#### Students Enrolled in based on the distance wisely to the 13 YGEP

Name of the School in 13YGEP	No Allocated feeder School	Total Distance in Km	Average Distance in Km	Students enrolment during 6 years
Bt/Pd/Paddiruppu MMV(NS)	9	63	7.00	220
Bt/Pd/Kaluthavalai MV (NS)	4	33	8.25	6
Bt/Pd/Thurai Neelawaanai MV	6	77	12.83	40
Bt/Pd/Vellavelly Kalaimaga MV	21	499	23.76	59
Total and Average	40	672	16.80	81



Based on the **second objective**, here are General Components, Applied Subjects (Vocational Area) and Industrial Training strategies were used in the vocational stream in all six terms in grade 12 and 13 classes.

One of the challenges faced by the 13 Years Guaranteed Education Programme (13 YGEP) is the geographical dispersion of the schools in the zone, particularly there are only four 13 YGEP schools in scattered widely in the Zone. Especially in Vellavelly, where 21 other schools surrounded a particular 13 YGEP school. The average distance from Vellavelly to the other 21 schools is approximately 16.8 km. Further, another significant challenge is the shortage of teachers. While a minimum of 16 teachers is required for vocational streams in each 13 YGEP school, only two teachers are currently appointed. Moreover, Upon completing their academic components, students are expected to be attached to field-related workshops or institutions near their residences. However, this proves impossible due to insufficient teachers and a lack of fundamental knowledge provided by the schools.

The prevalence of seasonal jobs, such as paddy field harvesting, weeding, corn and peanut harvesting, prawn fishing, honey hunting, brick making, and selling seasonal fruits like watermelon, blueberry, cashew nut, and others, significantly impacts student attendance

rates. Economic hardships force families to rely on these seasonal jobs, contributing to irregular attendance. Mean time another challenge arises from the egoistic mentality of parents who perceive attending the 13 YGEP as a mark of academic underachievement in the GCE (O/L). Approximately 80% of parents hold this mentality, fearing that allowing their children to attend the program will affect their social status and self-dignity. In addition to that limited facilities and teachers hamper the ability of principals and teachers to compel students to attend the 13 YGEP. When we go through the analyzing components, insufficient monitoring and evaluation (M &E) exist at the Zonal, Provincial, and National levels. Finally, there is a lack of specific and proper guidelines, even at the national level. The absence of a developed curriculum on the national level compounds the challenges faced by the program.

Following six major areas also have introduced the students to select first three and one for specialized areas. Such as Health Social Service, Social Cultural Studies, Designing, Agro and Food technology, Technical Studies, and Tourism & hospitality. In these components there are twenty six disciplines have been introduced. The work to world expect these kind of competencies among the youths.

Meantime, we got the result through this analysis, in grade 12 academic period most of the students was irregular attendance to the school. Further, industrial training programme was not successful due to the unavailability of the industries near the school area. So, students are reluctant to attend the industrial training.

## **Findings**

In all schools we all insist equity in Education as an important. So, there are numerous reasons found that why equity in education is important. Such as creating opportunity for underprivileged and underserved students so they are able to overcome disadvantages and find success, Giving everyone the chance to learn in the way that best supports their learning style, Helping students become more engaged in what they're learning by ensuring they see people who are their same race, gender, ethnicity, etc. in their learning, Granting students more access to the resources that can bolster their education, Strengthening the connection between a student's family and their teacher, fostering a more enriching educational environment at home, Guiding students to success in their educational career, and beyond, Closing the opportunity and achievement gap by making students equal, Impacting the community in positive ways, such as reducing crime rates and increasing property value and

Creating an overall economic benefit by preparing students to become contributors to society, and saving money on public assistance.

***Following matters were found as positives findings***

1. Financial provisions guaranteed in getting physical and human resources.
2. New teaching appointments have been given for some subjects.
3. A second chance for students who had dropped out of education.
4. Students are not motivated.

***Following matters were found as challenges or as negative findings.***

5. In last 6 years of period 11.55 % of the students are only were enrolled.
6. Altogether 88.46% of the students are dropped out in last 6 years year without following 13 years guaranteed education Programme.
7. Mismatch between student demand and teacher supply.
8. Lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills needed to continue with the programme.
9. Lack of awareness of the objectives of the programme by the stakeholders resulting in negative attitudes.
10. Deployment problems in the schools.
11. Need to commence in all IC schools in rural and urban areas.
12. Lack of coordination among skill providing industrial institutions.
13. Students are not motivated by the school teachers, principals and the parents as well.

**Recommendations**

1. Establish the school with vocational stream at least requirement is 4:1 (one school for each four schools) at the all zone in Batticaloa district considering the distance between the schools by using mapping techniques.
2. Need to appoint the teachers for all subjects according the policy on 13 YGEP.
3. Select the teacher trainees among youths those who have completed at 13YGEP with credit pass in science, technical and technological subjects in G.C.E.(O/L) examination and trained them to recruit education zone wisely.
4. Establish Vocational Education Hubs (VEHs) at the area wisely to trained the students to develop their practical skills before send them to the industrial attachments.

5. Establish the “Board of Vocational Study” (BOVS) including University and UNIVOTEC professionals, registered industrial members ,SDEC members , teachers ,principals and the zonal education officials to act autonomy.
6. Awarding foreign scholarship for the student’s those who have completed vocational stream through the 13 YGEP.
7. Providing equal learning opportunities in all children included rural area children by maintaining equity in education through 13 YGEP.
8. Giving job opportunities in local and foreign countries to resolve the economic crisis in the region and country.
9. Facilitating all schools in 13YGEP with the laboratory, libraries and workshop facilities as well as the high technologized end digitalized equipment.
10. Develop mechanism for effective monitoring and evaluation at the Zonal, Provincial and National level.

### **Conclusion**

A very good effective concept and programme, if efficiently implemented. Meanwhile, equity in education aims to provide equal opportunity to all students to develop valuable skills and knowledge that help them live a full life and contribute to society. To succeed this policy and programme, educators to be tasked with reworking systems of learning that exist on both the school, Zonal levels and ensure this approach is adopted from the top down. The new system is then built on fairness and inclusion, with safeguards such as interventions and resources built in to make sure every student has every opportunity to achieve their academic and vocational goals. Further, to ensure equity in education needs refining, re-structuring and monitoring this 13 YGEP in all schools.

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## **Politics and Human Rights**