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### **The Status of Secondary Level English Curriculum in Assam in pursuance of The National Curriculum Framework 2005**

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#### **Abstract:**

*When it comes to learning English in India, the situation is not ideal or comfortable, since it is a foreign language that is not spoken natively. In India, it is taught as a second language in schools. As a result, until recently, English instruction in our schools was in a state of disarray. The lack of a defined and attainable teaching goal was the most unpleasant element. As a result, it has been understood that raising the quality of English learning in India will be impossible until these faults are eradicated. In this context, the NCERT Executive Committee decided to rewrite the National Curriculum Framework at its meeting on July 14 and 19, 2004, and NCERT has since evaluated the National Curriculum Framework for School Education, 2000 (NCESE - 2000) in light of the report "Learning Without Burden" (1993). In this regard, the National Curriculum Framework 2005 addresses the issue of quality in an educational system that aims to reach every kid. Thus, The justification for conducting this research in light of the National Curriculum Framework 2005 is to see if our country's education system, specifically the state of Assam is progressing toward realising the highest standard, depth, and openness that the National Curriculum Framework 2005 vision envisions. As a result, in order to properly learn and internalise the National Curriculum Framework 2005, it is required to examine current curricular practises in Assam, including English syllabi and textbooks, as well as the evaluation process and classroom transaction. To collect data, the researcher employed a survey method. The investigator met with English teachers from various government and provincialized high and Higher Secondary schools in five different education blocks of Cachar District, as well as other experts such as, retired English teachers and Headmaters/Principals who taught or still teach English in Cachar District schools. The researcher discovers that current English textbooks for grades IX and X are very child-centered and capable of improving students' creativity and imagination. The prose and poems included in the English textbooks are quite capable of bringing forth the joyful element in learning, and the overall English curriculum aims at developing communitative*

*The Status of Secondary Level English Curriculum in Sumita Rakshit & Dr. Swapan Kumar Dutta competence through the development of language skills. Thus, the current SEBA English curriculum is able to accomplish the English language objectives established by the Board of Secondary Education, Assam (SEBA) in light of the National Curriculum Framework 2005 to a great extent.*

**Key words:** Curriculum, Secondary, Status, Document, Pursuance, Guideline.

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**Introduction:** Language is an important aspect of a person's development. An individual cannot achieve intellectual, social, or emotional success without acquiring a language. As a result, linguistic competence plays a critical role in determining educational attainment. It is essential that language should be learnt effectively and comprehensively. However, learning English in India is not a pleasurable process. Because English is a foreign language with little exposure in the Indian social context, the learner faces a number of competency issues, particularly in terms of achieving basic proficiency while learning it. However, the fundamental cause of this dismal state of English learning in India is a lack of direction and failure to meet previously established goals and objectives. To be specific, Sub-standard text books in terms of content and learners' degree of understanding are one of the main causes of this chaotic state of the English teaching learning process in India. Besides that, incompetency on teachers' part in terms of subject knowledge and continual updation resulting from inadequate training and orientation programme is also responsible. Furthermore, a deficient evaluation system is also affecting the quality of language learning.

As a result, it has been realised that improving the quality of English language learning will not be possible unless and until these evils are removed and the objectives of learning English as a second language at various stages are clearly defined. With this goal in mind, the NCERT Executive Committee decided to revise the National Curriculum Framework at its meeting on 14 and 19 July, 2004. The NCERT has also examined the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE 2000) with a focus on the report "Learning Without Burden" (1993). The National Curriculum Framework 2005, has tried to reduce the subject boundaries by incorporating the concept of integrated knowledge and joyful learning within the curriculum. Along with English competency, The National Curriculum Framework 2005 has tried to develop multilingual proficiency among the learners. So, in the current Indian setting, English teaching and learning is characterised by a diversity of schools and linguistic contexts that assist English acquisition, as well as organised classroom procedures. We can now see that the emphasis has switched to learning and teaching English in a relevant context, with the goal of creating multilinguals.

However, the National Curriculum Framework 2005 has defined two goals in accordance with these characteristics of language learning. "Attainment of a basic proficiency, such as 'is acquired in natural' language learning and development of language into an instrument for abstract thought and knowledge acquisition." In this regard, the Board of Secondary Education Assam (SEBA) has taken the initiative of changing the Secondary Stage curriculum in order to achieve the goals and objective of National Curriculum Framework 2005. The state of Assam has developed syllabi based on the guidelines of the National Curriculum Framework 2005.

The state of Assam requires that teachers who teach English must have a basic proficiency of the language. Teachers should have access to a variety of instructional materials so that they can deliver meaningful learning to their students through an input-rich curriculum. Furthermore, teachers should be able to teach English at a level and in an environment that is appropriate for them. When it comes to language evaluation, it's important to remember that it doesn't have to be about "performance" in terms of specific syllabi; instead, it should be about measuring language competency.

However, many of the goals and objectives of National Curriculum Framework 2005 will be impossible to attain. A considerable number of schools are afflicted by severe political, administrative and financial problems. For many teachers, these recommendations are essentially nothing more than empty promises to improve the quality of English language learning in India. So, keeping in mind these harsh facts the investigator has tried to determine the status of English Curriculum at the secondary level in the schools of Cachar District of Assam.

The study also aims to see if the schools in Cachar District, Assam, are properly complying with the secondary school curriculum, particularly in terms of the English teaching-learning process, which was developed in light of the National Curriculum Framework 2005. The investigator's goal is to determine whether schools in the Cachar District of Assam are genuinely focusing on the National Curriculum Framework 2005 guidelines when implementing the English curriculum at the secondary level, or if they are only partially successful in doing so and keeping these guidelines just in pen and paper.

The investigator's goal in conducting this study in light of the National Curriculum Framework 2005 is to see if our country's educational system is achieving the highest level of quality, depth, and openness as envisioned in the guiding principles and curriculum reforms of the National Curriculum Framework 2005 or as stated in the policy papers of the National Curriculum Framework 2005.

The investigator has discovered that the primary and secondary curriculum often lack thematic linkage, resulting in gaps and inadequacies in children's learning as they progress from class VIII to class IX. As a result, it is necessary to initiate the curricular developments in secondary education to address the lack of thematic linkage.

Thus, changes in administration, curriculum revisions, changes in the evaluation system, and the construction of various types of schools are just a few of the key initiatives taken in secondary education. Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking contribute to a child's advancement in all curricular areas, and so form the foundation of learning.

Lastly, the purpose of this study is to determine whether evaluation in education system is always linked to objectives and implementations because, after reviewing related studies, the investigator has discovered that the current evaluation process is limited in that it measures and assesses a very limited range of mental faculties, it is insufficient, and it lacks in providing a true picture. As a result, the current research attempts to achieve excellence in all aspects of learning.

**Objectives of the Study:**

1. To study the status of secondary English Curriculum in Assam with special reference to National Curriculum Framework 2005.
2. To examine the changes in the process of curriculum development in Assam with special reference to English language syllabus, textbook, teachers' handbook and students' reference material.
3. To examine how far the English language curriculum is implemented in the Schools with regard to physical facilities, teaching-learning materials, availability of teachers, timetable and workload.
4. To study how far the English textbook for standard IX and X are suitable to achieve the objectives of English curriculum laid down by SEBA in the light of National Curriculum Framework 2005.

**Delimitation of the Study:** The present study is delimited to IXth and Xth standard of Government and provincialized High and Higher Secondary Schools of Cachar District of Assam only.

**Review of Related Literature:** Bharali, 1997 conducted a study on the "History of Secondary Education in Modern Assam (1968-1990)– A Perspective", The study traces the historical development of Higher Secondary Education in Modern Assam covering 1968-1990. It focused on identifying vital problems in Higher Secondary education such as its structure, administration and organization, examination and evaluation, medium of instruction, professional requirements, diversification, etc. The curriculum for Higher Secondary Education was rigid and not suitable for the different situations, which prevailed in different environments. The existing system of examination was not sound and needed to be changed. Many items of educational policy both at national as well as State Level were not implemented with all seriousness.

**Koul. B.N. 1981,** Conducted a study on "A critical study of the Fundamental curricular issues Relevant to the teaching of English in India Leading to an Alternative integrated ELT curriculum." The study reveals that, in actual fact there was nothing like a curriculum for ELT in India, for the curriculum components at a particular level of instruction and also across the various levels stood in disjoint relationship with one another. The investigator suggested a new paradigm which might be called a 'utilitarian curricular paradigm'

**Sunwani, V.K. (2006)** conducted a study on "Revisiting schools education in India - National Curriculum Framework 2005, Focus on language". The investigator's goal in conducting this study in light of the National Curriculum Framework 2005 is to see if our country's educational system is achieving the highest level of quality, depth, and openness as envisioned in the guiding principles and curriculum reforms of the National Curriculum Framework 2005 or as stated in the policy papers of the National Curriculum Framework 2005 has attempted the three language formula to address the challenges and opportunities of the linguistic situation in India. The study reveals that language can relate all the subject, as it is the heart of education. It states that a language across the curriculum approach is required.

**Meganathan., Rama.** (30th Oct, 2009) conducted a study on "English language education in Rural Schools of India : The situation, the policy and the curriculum." English language education in majority of Indian schools present a very abysmal picture. Analysis of curricular statements and syllabi of the states of Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland reveals how planning for language English is not looked at holistically.

**Bhattacharjee, R., 1984,** Conducted a study on "An investigation into the teaching of English in the High Schools of East Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya." Teachers of English of East Khasi Hills' High Schools will be interviewed. The aim is to identify the present status of teaching English, through observation of teachers' performance in the classroom situation and to study strengths and weaknesses in the teaching of English.

**Methodology of the Study:** For the purpose of obtaining a clear picture of India's present curricular structure the investigator has made a thorough analysis of the entire document of the "National Curriculum Framework 2005" developed and published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training. Moreover, the investigator has critically analysed the position papers of NCERT entitled "National Focus Group on Teaching of English" and "National Focus Group on Curriculum, Syllabus and Textbooks." The current study is based on a thorough examination of these three papers. Moreover, for the aim of data gathering, the investigator has used the survey method. The investigator has made a personal visit to the English teachers working in various Govt. and provincialized high and higher secondary schools in five different educational blocks of Cachar District. In order to collect data and obtain relevant information, the investigator has also interviewed other Experts, such as, retired English teachers and Headmaster/Principals who taught or still teaching English in the schools of Cachar District. In this regard, a self-developed Open-Ended Questionnaire for English Teachers with a total of 43 items and a self-developed Interview Schedule for Experts with a total of 15 items has been prepared by the Investigator.

**Population of the study:** The population of the present study is a finite one. The population comprises of all the English Teachers teaching at the government and provincialized high and higher secondary schools of Cachar District.

**Sample of the study:** The current research has been carried out in the Cachar District of Assam on students of the IXth and Xth standard. According to the records kept by the Inspector of Schools, there are a total of 103 Government and Provincialized High and Higher Secondary Schools in the Cachar District, covering all eight educational blocks, including Silchar, Sonai, Narsingpur, Salchapra, Katigorah, Lakhipur, Rajabazar and Udharbond.

The investigator has chosen five educational blocks at random from a total of eight for the purpose of gathering data for the current investigation. Silchar block, Sonai block, Salchapra block, Udharbond block, and Lakhipur block are the five blocks. There are 76 schools in total in these five blocks. The investigator has chosen 50% of the schools,

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totaling 38 schools for the purpose of data collection. The English teachers of each of these 38 schools has been provided with a self-developed Questionnaire with 43 items. There are 50 teachers who will receive the self-developed questionnaire. Furthermore, the investigator has gathered information from 20 experts using a 15-item Self-Developed Interview Schedule.

**Tools used for the study:** In the present study, the investigation has used two tools for the purpos of data collection -

- (i) One self-developed Questionnaire for the English Teachers.
- (ii) One self-developed Interview Schedule for the Experts.

**Statistical Technique used for the study:**

The investigator has used percentage as a technique for the analysis and interpretation of the data.

**Data Collection Procedure:** To conduct this research, the investigator went to the Board of Secondary Education, Assam (SEBA) and collected all essential documents in order to learn more about the current situation of secondary English curriculum in Assam. The investigator has also visited several high & higher secondary schools in the Cachar District, which are divided into five educational blocks: Silchar, Sonai, Salchapra, Udharbond, and Lakhipur. The investigator visited 38 schools, which accounted for 50% of the total schools, out of a total of 76 schools from these five educational blocks. In order to collect data and obtain appropriate information from existing English teachers, the investigator personally visited these English teachers of 38 schools and interacted with them as well as visited other experts, such as retired English teachers and Headmasters/Principals who taught or still teaching English in the high & higher secondary schools of Cachar district. The investigator has used two separate tools to gather data and conduct the study: one self-developed open-ended Questionnaire for English Teachers with 43 items and one self-developed Interview Schedule for Experts with 15 items.

**Major Findings:** The majority of secondary English teachers (97%) believe that the recommendations of National Curriculum Framework 2005 are capable of bringing about a change in the educational system of Board of Secondary Education, Assam. The previous SEBA system of evaluating a learner's performance at the end of the academic session has been replaced by a continuous and comprehensive evaluation. According to the English teachers, the English textbooks for Class IX and X are designed to assist students in reading for comprehension and the development of basic English language skills. The syllabus is now developed in such a way that it may assist learners improve their grammatical knowledge, the knowledge of literature, and most importantly, the development of four language skilled of English, Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Oral and project work are provided expressly to build writing and speaking abilities among the learners, as well as substantial and intensive reading to promote global and local comprehension of the texts taking into account the learners' age group. The poetry chosen for the textbooks provide learners with a source of delight and admiration for the English language.

Furthermore, the textbooks for classes IX and X contain a large number of rich reading materials that can help students modify their moral and spiritual attitudes and build a sense of solidarity and brotherhood in them. The contents encompasses subject matters such as biography, fiction, adventure stories, and poems, which aid in the development of learners' aesthetic sense.

The English teachers also mentioned that the current English curriculum of SEBA encourages students to participate in classroom discussions, which allows them to communicate with their peers, teachers, family members, and others while expressing their own opinions and thoughts. As a result, the majority of English teachers agree that when designing the current SEBA English curriculum, special attention has been paid to the learners. According to the experts (90 percent) in the current survey, a diverse range of reading materials has been offered in SEBA textbooks to build learners' basic English language competency. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 guidelines were successful in modifying SEBA's English curriculum by replacing its old and antiquated technique and introducing uniformity to the learning process. SEBA is able to create a variety of information in Class IX and Class X textbooks that is both thought stimulating and interesting. As a result, the teaching-learning process has become more lively for the students. The teachers (66%) who are teaching English at the secondary level opine that preference is given mostly on the development of the four skills of English language for better comprehension and communication and to meet the needs of the globe.

As per the present study, experts (55%) believe that the textbook class IX is prepared keeping in mind the age group of the students of class IX. They opine that the textbook for class IX will be able to accomplish the goals and objectives of the National Curriculum Framework 2005. As a result, the current textbook may be left unchanged. In contrast, English teachers at the secondary level (65%) believe that the English textbook for class IX should be changed since some of the courses are dull for students. Other English teachers (35%) believe that it is not required to change the current SEBA English textbook and that simply the number of topics should be reduced. As far as an adequate number of English teachers is concerned, the majority of English teachers (90 percent) believe that there is no provision in Secondary Schools for a teacher to teach exclusively English. Some of the teachers have specialised training/diplomas in English teaching, such as a P.G. diploma in English teaching or a Diploma in E.L.T. (English Language Training). Thus, in the perspective of English teachers, if these are the only requirements for teachers to teach English, it cannot be stated that the number of English teachers in schools is sufficient.) The majority of specialists (85%) believe that the current English curriculum is slightly overburdening for students. It is tough for the students to accomplish it in the allotted time of one academic session.

Experts (90%) believe that the current English textbooks for standards IX and X achieve the SEBA-mandated English language objectives because they are able to instil the power of imagination in the brains of students. In terms of connecting students' knowledge to life outside of school, both experts (83%) and English teachers (75%) believe that various

activities and literary exercises included in the English curriculum, such as simulating real-life situations, dramatising and miming etc., assist students in connecting their acquired knowledge to life outside of school. In terms of joyful learning, the investigator discovered that the English textbook for class IX, "Beehive," has been written keeping in mind the learners' curiosity and interest. "My Childhood," "The Bond of Love," and "The Sound of Music" are some of the more thought-provoking and enlightening sections. On the other hand, the investigator discovered that some of the contents of the class X text book are rather enjoyable, such as "Father's Help" and "A Child Speaks")

In terms of the challenge faced by English teachers in the classroom, the majority of English teachers (96%) believe that the majority of secondary school students are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. As a result, the students do not have any exposure to a better educational environment outside of school. They don't have any opportunities to engage in English in their daily lives. The majority of learners promoted to secondary school have lower than average standards, making it difficult for teachers to teach English to them in a limited amount of time in the classroom. Teachers are having a difficult time dealing with such slow learners and underachievers in the classroom when it comes to teaching English.

**Conclusion:** To arrive at a conclusion, the investigator has compiled the opinions into the following: school curriculum should be designed and implemented in such a way that it recognises education as a process of democratisation, a process aimed at bringing equality and bridging the gap among different classes and communities. Thus, the National Curriculum Framework 2005, which lays out the needs and demands of the school system has been and produced with the goal of making the school a powerful instrument of social change.

Significant modifications have been done in all curricular areas by National Curriculum Framework 2005 in order to make education more relevant to the current and future needs and in order to lessen the stress that students face today. However, it is worth pointing out that education that is more relevant to today's and tomorrow's needs necessitates a worldwide exposure to improve comprehension and communicative skills, and we all know that language is the best resource to exploit in this regard. In today's India, English is a symbol of people's desire for better education and greater participation in national and international affairs. The goal of English instruction is to produce multilinguals who can enrich all of our languages.

Because of the dual element of teachers' proficiency in English and pupils' exposure to English outside of schools, the NCF 2005 has established a diverse range of English teaching-learning settings. The NCF 2005 has two goals in this regard: achieving basic proficiency, such as that achieved through natural language learning, and developing language into an instrument for abstract cognition and knowledge acquisition, such as literacy. This supports a curriculum-wide approach that bridges the gap between English and other courses, as well as English and other Indian languages. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 proposes to design a secondary school curriculum in which the courses

generally aim to raise awareness of many fields. The programme aims to improve children's ability to reason with abstractions, allowing them to participate deeply in both learning and developing information beyond the present moment. It also aims to foster a critical understanding of the self in connection to the larger world. In this context, current English textbooks for grades IX and X are very child-centered and capable of enhancing students' creativity and imagination. In this regard, the investigator has discovered that the English textbook for class IX, "Beehive," has been structured keeping in mind the learners' curiosity and interest.

On the other side, the investigator has discovered that some of the contents of class X textbook are rather enjoyable, such as "Father's Help," "The Cabuliwallah, a Child Speaks." Thus, English textbooks are written keeping in mind all sorts of learners and both class IX and class X textbooks have all of the attributes of a good textbook. Furthermore, teachers are receiving training on how to assist learning for their students in order to transmit enough knowledge to them regarding the new English curriculum. As a result, all teachers who are untrained but nonetheless teach English are getting trained phasewise to improve their basic language skills. They must learn how to teach English in ways that are appropriate for their environment and level, based on their understanding of how languages are acquired. Thus, the current SEBA English curriculum is capable of achieving the English language objectives in pursuance of the National Curriculum Framework 2005 to a great extent.

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