

1.17 2008, University of Kelaniya: English for All?

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ABSTRACT

A pass in at least one course unit in English as a Second Language is has been made mandatory for all undergraduates of the University of Kelaniya from 2008. At present, only the faculties of Medicine and Commerce & Financial Management have made English mandatory. This paper is a discussion of the implications of the new regulation on students of lower proficiency in English, especially students of the faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences. The paper analyses the political rationale behind this move to make English mandatory, and looks at the English language learning history of the present first year students with the hypothesis that the level of proficiency and history of exposure to English of the next batch of students will be similar, and therefore we can make a fairly reasonable prediction of the potential problems of the next year's batch. The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to the need for implementation of a programme that will not place the weaker students at a disadvantage and is consistent with what we know of the varied levels of proficiency that students bring with them when they join the university in their first year.