

Official Language Efficiency Bar Examination: A Critical Analysis

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The efficiency bar exam for public sector officers in Official Languages was introduced in July, 2007. Since then, all new recruits to state sector employment, according to their profession, are required to prove their proficiency in the National language other than his/her mother tongue within a period of seven years from recruitment. The Official Language Department is entrusted with the final responsibility of certifying the officers' knowledge in National Languages by conducting exams in terms of a pre-defined outline. This examination, which anticipates achieving universal bilingual competency of public service, presents a unique case in language policy owing to its ambitious outlook and declared interests to reinforce national integration. The present study is a critical assessment of the success and relevance of this exam, bringing into question the number of public employees who have taken this exam, their pass rate, post-qualification applicability of the obtained language competence and public reception of the exam and criticisms against it. The study revisits the decision making process that led to the establishment of this examination and highlights the need to avoid assumption based decisions.

Key Terms: Language Policy, National Language Competence Examination for Public Servants,