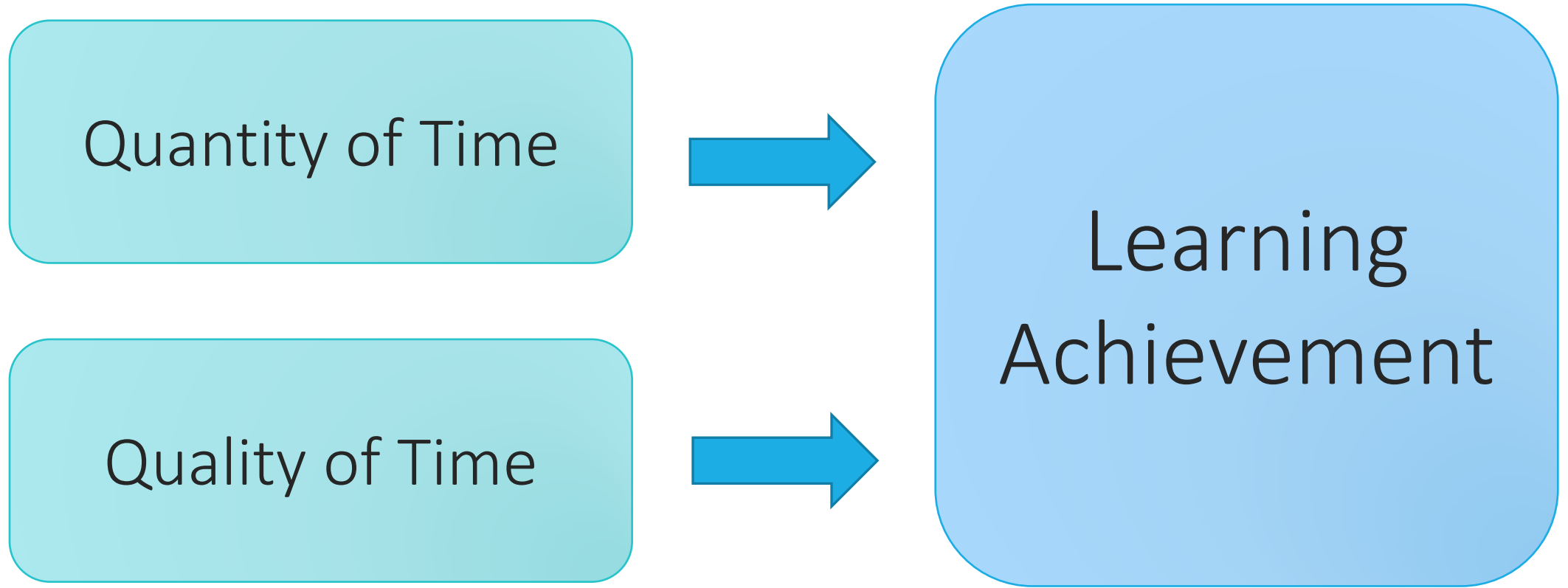


Learning English in Sri Lankan primary schools: opportunities, pedagogy and development goals

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Focus of previous studies on maths and first language

The education policy of the Learning of English in the Sri Lankan context integral to Sustainable Development, defined here as:

- Economic growth
- Formation of national identity in an ethnically and linguistically divided society
- Formation of international identity in a globalising world
- Promotion of equity in education and labour market opportunities

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Our paper addresses four questions

- a) On how many days per year are schools expected to be open and how many days are available for teaching?
- b) Who are the teachers of English?
- c) How much time is allocated for the teaching of English and how much time is lost?
- d) How do English teachers spend their time in classrooms?

❑ Field research conducted by Sri Lanka Business Development Centre (SLBDC) and financed by the World Bank and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Government of Australia (DFAT)

❑ Draft paper available at www.angelawlittle.net

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This presentation focuses on

1. **OPPORTUNITY** and **LOST OPPORTUNITY** (quantity of time)

for learning English in Grades 3, 4 and 5 in 60 schools in the Central Province (interviews, documentary analysis)

2. **TEACHERS' USE of TIME** (quality of time use)

306 'unannounced' observations of Grade 3, 4, and 5 English lessons ('snapshot' observation protocol)

Losses of opportunity for learning English occur when

- The school timetable allocates less time for English than the official guideline prescribes (on average 190 minutes per week)
- Teachers are absent from the timetabled English class
- Lessons start late or finish prematurely
- Teachers and students are 'off task' during the lesson



THE CORROSION of OPPORTUNITY

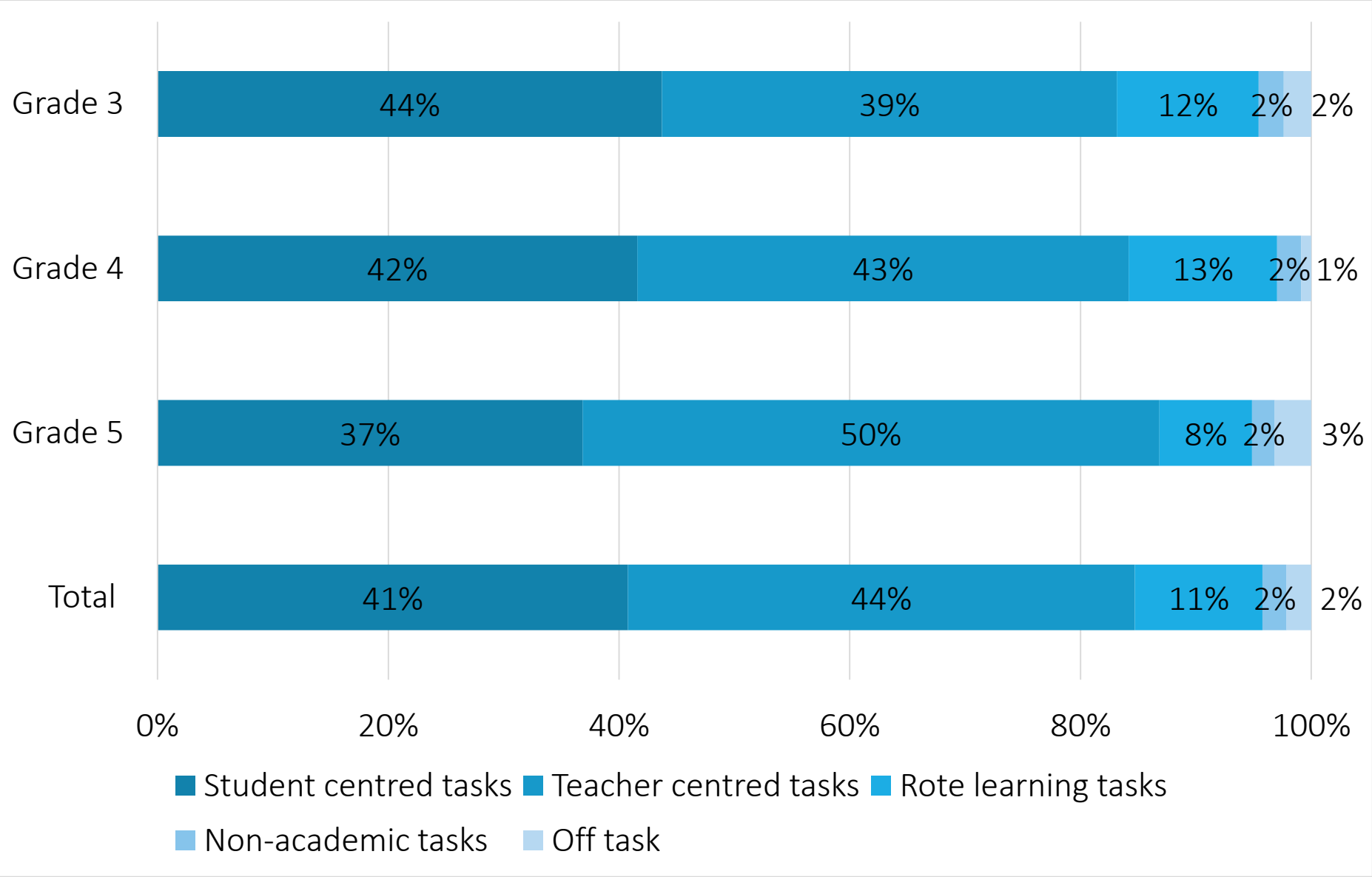
- Discrepancy official and actual timetable = 3.4%
- Teacher absence from timetabled class = 15.0%
- Lessons start late/finish early = 4.4%
- Time off task = 2.1% (lower average, includes classroom management and discipline)
= 4.2% (higher average, excludes class management and discipline)
- **Total % Loss of Opportunity** (compounded loss) = **23.2%** (lower)
= **24.8%** (higher)

Table: Various Activities Observed in the Classroom Observations

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Activity
On task	Academic Tasks	Student centred tasks	Kinesthetic
			Discussion/questioning
			Focused listening
			Remedial work/corrective feed back
		Teacher centred tasks	Reading aloud
			Demonstration/Modeling
			Assignment/Desk work
			Verbal Instructions
		Rote learning tasks	Practice/Drill
			Copying
Off Task	Non-academic tasks	Tasks that are not purely academic	Classroom management
			Discipline
		Student off task	Student's personal social interactions
			Student's uninvolved
		Teacher off task	Teacher social interactions
			Teacher management
			Teacher uninvolved
			Teacher out of the classroom
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Figure: Distribution of Classroom Time across Various Types of Activities, by Grade

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Discussion points to raise with Sri Lankan teacher educators and curriculum developers

- Time expectations:
 - Do curriculum expectations take time loss into account
- Time use:
 - Has the prescribed shift towards student-centred learning activity occurred?
 - What is understood (by curriculum developers and teacher educators) as student-centred activity?
 - How much time should be spent on 'student-centred' activity?