

A Critical Study of SPM Tamil Literature Exam Paper

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Abstract

This study investigates the quality of SPM Tamil literature question paper. For this purpose last four years examination paper of SPM Tamil literature from Selangor were selected for critical analysis. The demographic information and National Philosophy of Education were given focus. The results of SPM Tamil literature were compared with the students' achievement. The quality of SPM Tamil literature question paper was critically analysed. Mixed method approach was used. The findings showed that the SPM Tamil literature question papers had fulfilled the National Philosophy of Education. The results obtained by the students showed that 95 % of them had passed in the examination. On the basis of these findings, it is concluded that the SPM Tamil literature question paper fulfils the National Philosophy of Education and also The SPM Tamil literature question papers does provide sufficient time for students to answer the questions and the instructions that given in question paper are easy which is proved that the questions are prepared according to the students' level. As compared to old format, new format is easier and the quality also has improved where the questions measure the higher order thinking skill of students. The quality of the exam papers should be improved in order to promote student's higher order thinking skills. The findings revealed SPM Tamil literature question papers fulfils the National Philosophy of Education but there are still some drawbacks in which the National Philosophy of Education items were not included in question paper namely spiritual and health. So, in order to fulfill the nation's philosophy of education, we must include and give importance to all criteria in preparing and writing the textbooks and question papers. In future, the quality of question papers have to be improved by including higher order thinking questions to expand students' critical and creative thinking skills.

Keywords *Critical Study, Tamil Literature Question Paper, SPM*

INTRODUCTION

Tamil Literature which is known as *illakkiyam* is one of the tool that people use to express their feelings, philosophy and purpose. Literature also works as a mirror that reflects a community. Literature is also searched as way to look how the community has progressed with achievements throughout the years.

In ancient times when something that written without any grammatical mistakes is considered as Tamil literature. Tamil literature has 2000 years nostalgic history as compared to other language literatures. Tamil literature mostly reflects human life. Most of the countries use Tamil language as communication language. This then creates Tamil literature according to their situation and lifestyle. This situation also applies to Malaysian Tamil community. Tamil literature plays a crucial role in Malaysia especially to the schools.

In Malaysia, Tamil literature is not taught as a different subject in the primary schools. But to promote the interest of students in Tamil literature, the Tamil literature is taught in collaboration with Tamil language. But, when we look at the secondary schools, Tamil literature is taught as one of the different subjects. Tamil literature is teaches for form 4 student and form 5 students where this subject is an elective subject and also an exam subject. In Tamil literature subject poems, novel, drama were teaches to students.

Malaysia government has allowed Tamil students to take Tamil literature subject and also exam papers are made through ministry of examination to evaluate students. In conclusion Tamil literature is still used widely in Malaysia because it is being taught as one of the subjects and evaluates the student.

Statement of the problem

It has been highlighted by number of scholars that evaluation plays vital role in teaching and learning process, moreover in evaluation of Tamil literature learning, the scholars expressed their concern over the Tamil literature exam papers as being a standardize exam or not. Moreover, the scholars expressed their uncertainty over the Tamil literature exam papers which might not cover the items found in the National Philosophy of Education.

Research Questions

Following research questions were raised to solved the problem:

1. To which extend SPM Tamil literature exam papers fulfil the nation education philosophy?
2. What are the ways to improve the quality of SPM Tamil literature question paper?

METHODOLOGY

Mixed approach was used during the research both qualitative as well as quantitative methods were used to analyse the study. The research was based on descriptive study because it describes the analysis of Tamil literature textbooks and SPM Tamil literature exam paper.

The population of the study consisted a group of teachers teaching Tamil literature and students at higher secondary level. Four last year exam papers were used by examination syndicate were critically analysed by the researcher.

Procedure

The study was conducted using last four years papers used by examination syndicate of Tamil literature. The researcher analysed the literature textbooks and SPM Tamil literature exam papers based on the National Philosophy of Education. Moreover, a tailor made questionnaire consisting closed-ended and an open-ended question were used to collect data from the teachers and students. The instrument was distributed to 20 teachers and 50 students. The details are as follow:

Demographic information about the analysis of the researcher

Table 1 The analysis of textbooks based on National Philosophy of Education

Criteria of Nation Education Philosophy	Old Textbook	Current Textbook
Spiritual	-	-
Mind	2	-
Health	-	-
Intelligence	3	2
Moral	-	4
Responsibility	3	3
Blissful Life	8	7
Total	16	16

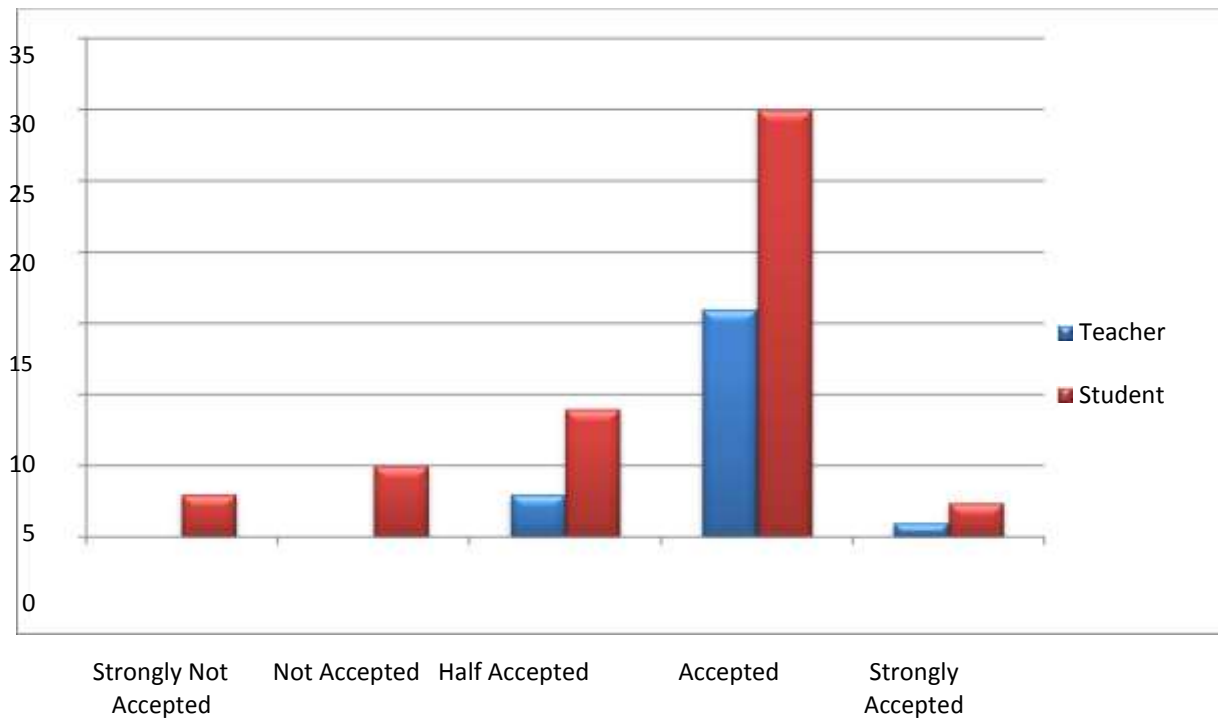
Table 2 The analysis of SPM Tamil literature question papers based on National Philosophy of Education

Criteria of Nation Education	Old Format		Current Format	
	2011	2012	2013	2014
Philosophy				
Spiritual	-	-	-	-
Mind	7	6	2	1
Health	-	-	-	-
Intelligence	9	9	14	11
Moral	3	4	6	4
Responsibility	9	3	4	6
Blissful life	10	16	8	12
Total	38		34	

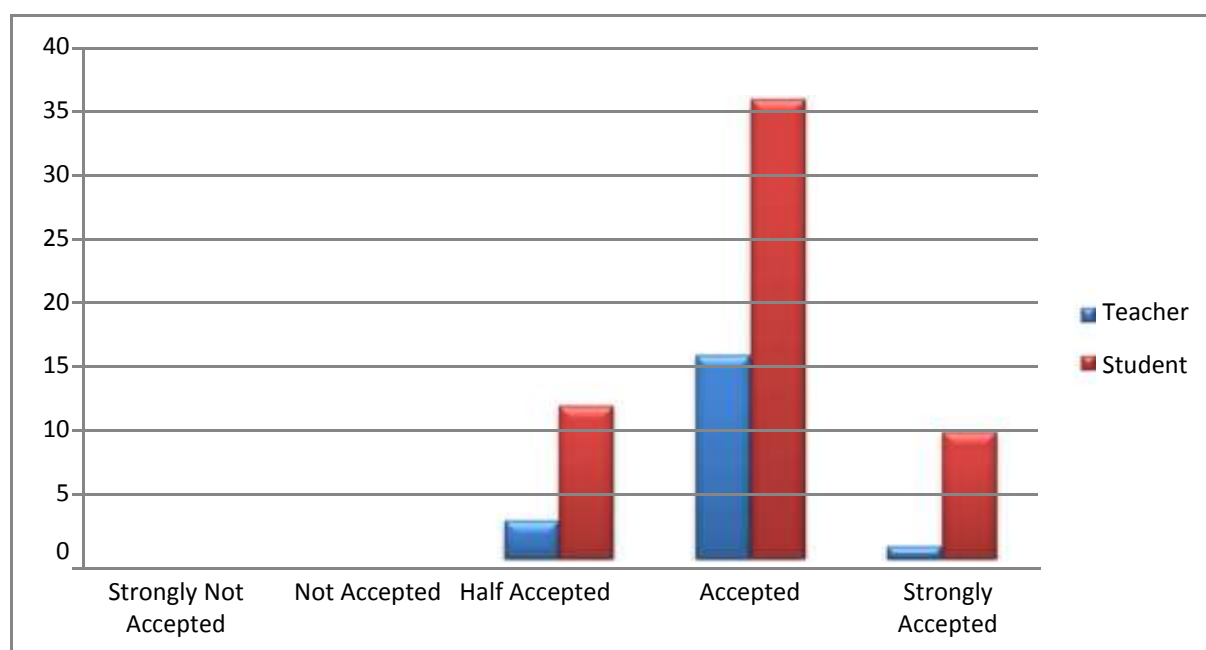
Demographic information of the respondents

For the present research, a tailor-made questionnaire was distributed to the respondents; the details of the responses are as follow:

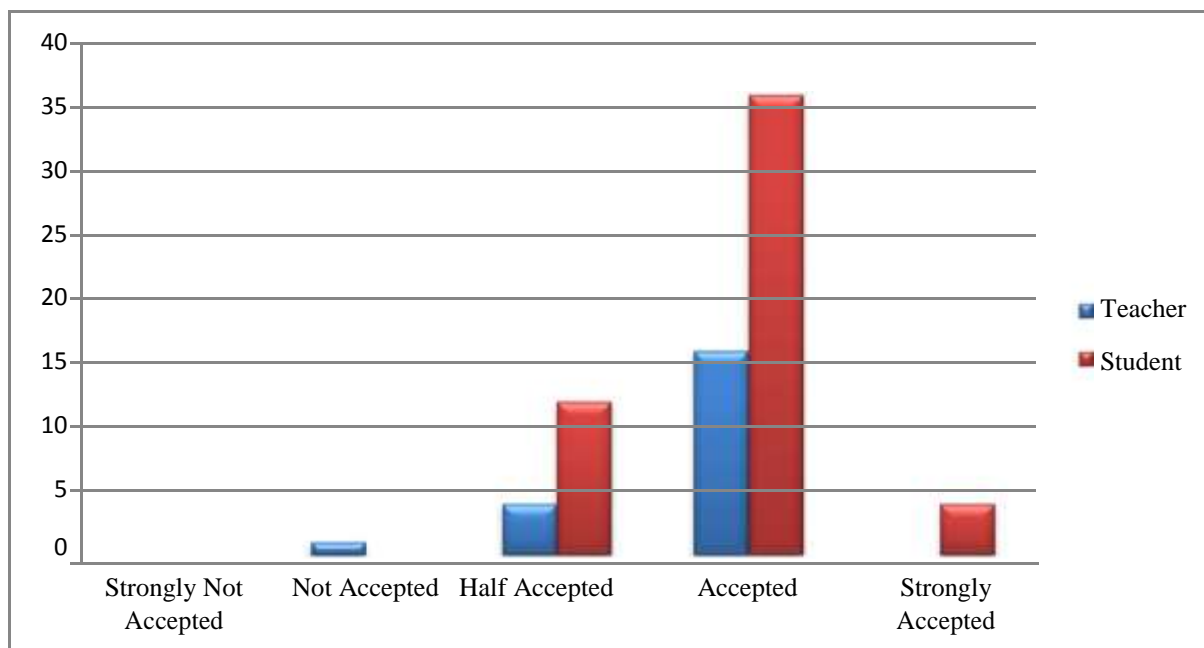
No	Item	Responses	No of Responses	
			Teacher	Student
1	Students were given enough time to answer the question.	Strongly Not Accepted	0	3 (6%)
		Not Accepted	0	5 (10%)
		Half Accepted	3 (15%)	9 (18%)
		Accepted	16 (80%)	30 (60%)
		Strongly Accepted	1 (5%)	3 (6%)



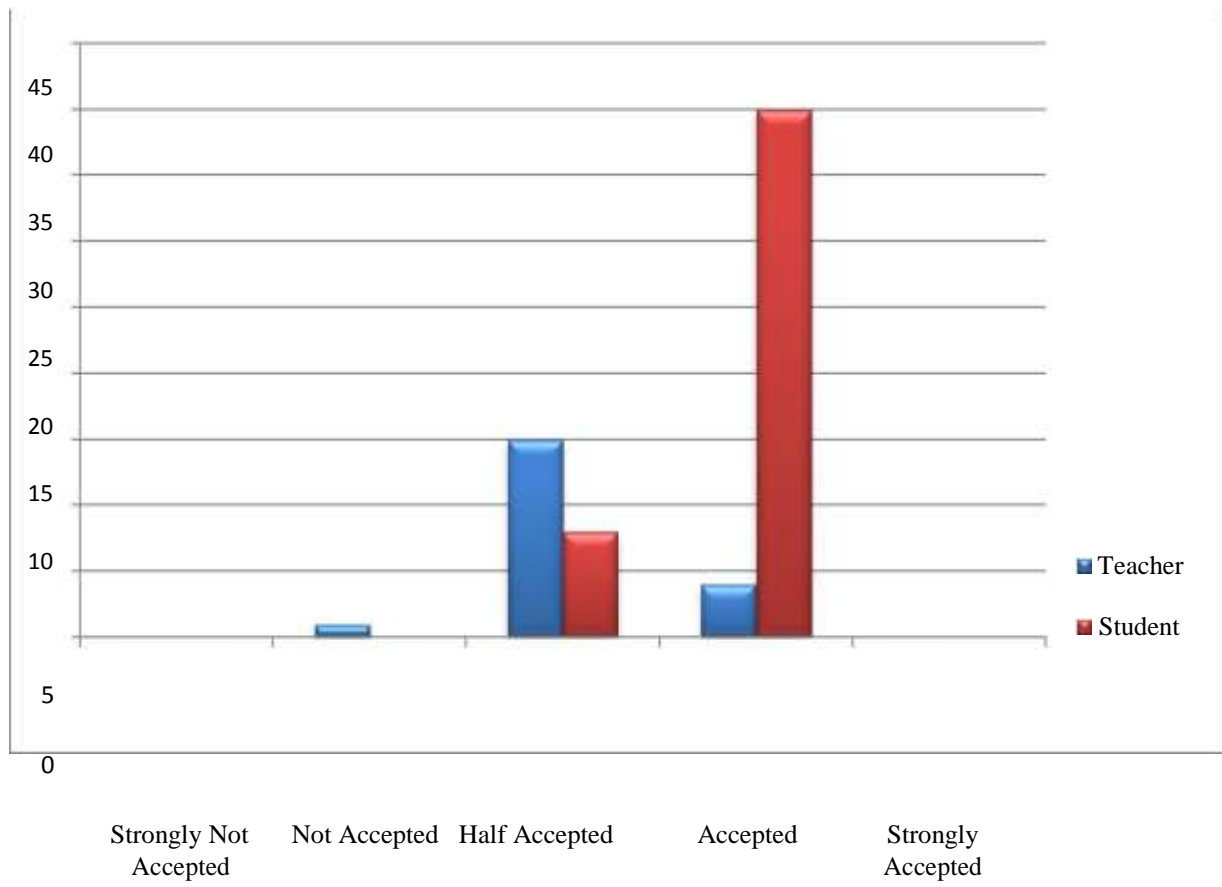
No	Item	Responses	No of Responses	
			Teacher	Student
2	The instruction of questions constructed is easier to understand.	Strongly Not Accepted	0	0
		Not Accepted	0	0
		Half Accepted	3 (15%)	3 (6%)
		Accepted	16 (80%)	37 (74%)
		Strongly Accepted	1 (5%)	10 (20%)



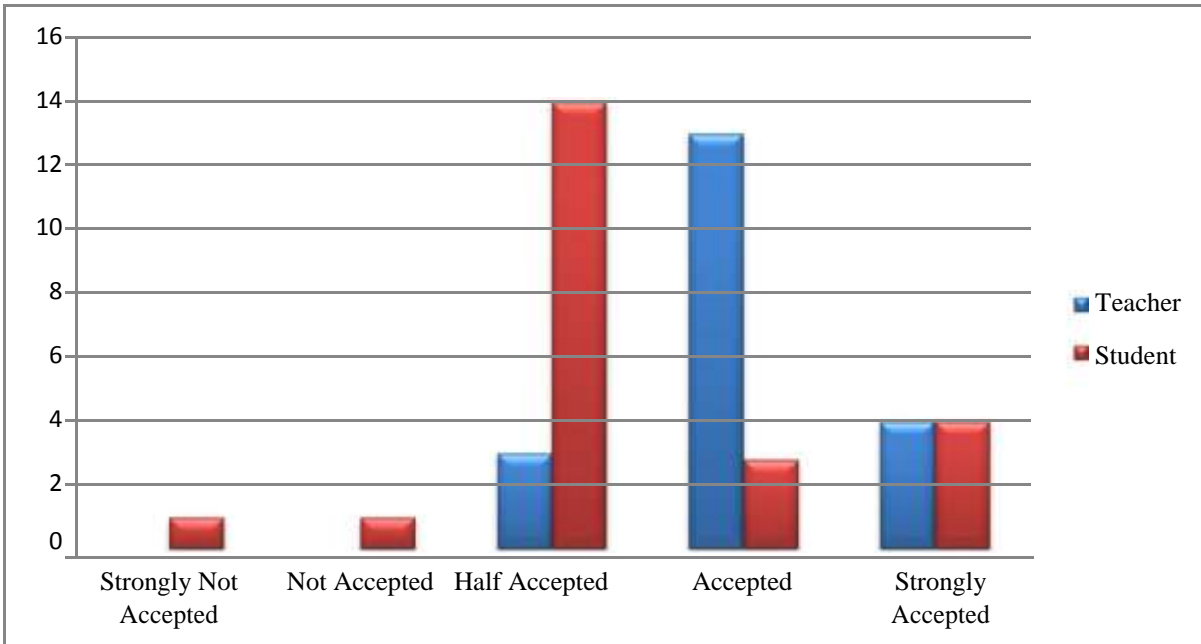
No	Item	Responses	No of Responses	
			Teacher	Student
3	The questions are made based on textbooks.	Strongly Not Accepted	0	0
		Not Accepted	0	0
		Half Accepted	4 (20%)	12 (24%)
		Accepted	16 (80%)	36 (72%)
		Strongly Accepted	0	2 (4%)



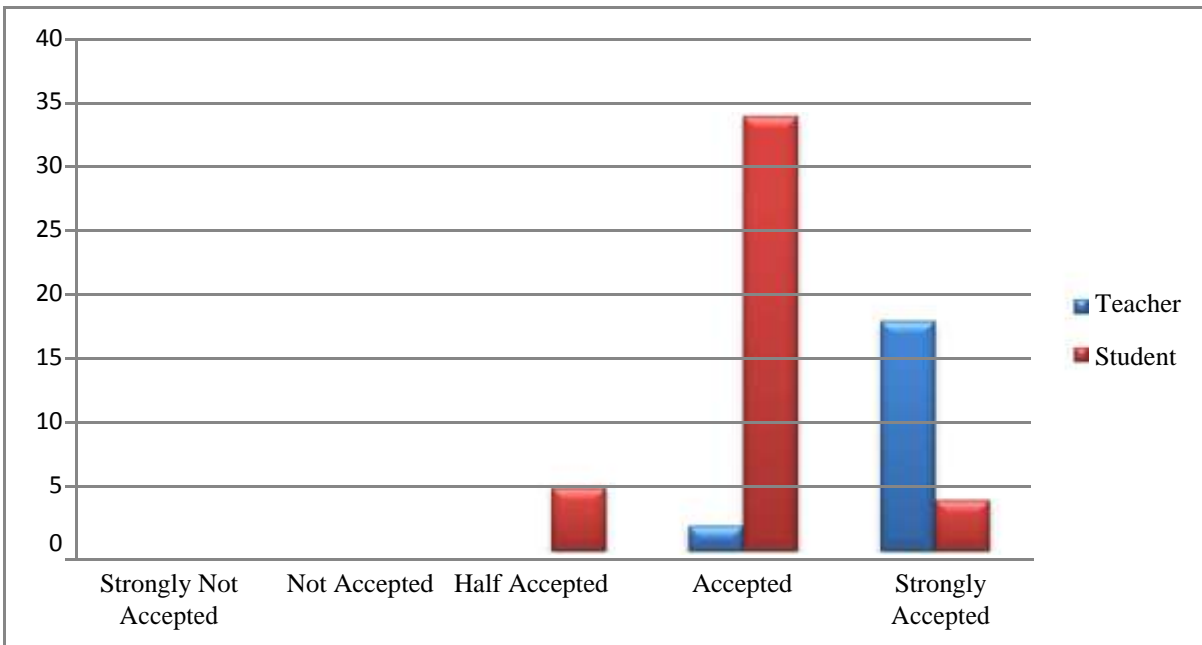
No	Item	Responses	No of Responses	
			Teacher	Student
4	Question papers that evaluate literature skills.	Strongly Not Accepted	0	0
		Not Accepted	1 (5%)	0
		Half Accepted	15 (75%)	8 (16%)
		Accepted	4 (20%)	40 (80%)
		Strongly Accepted	0	2 (4%)



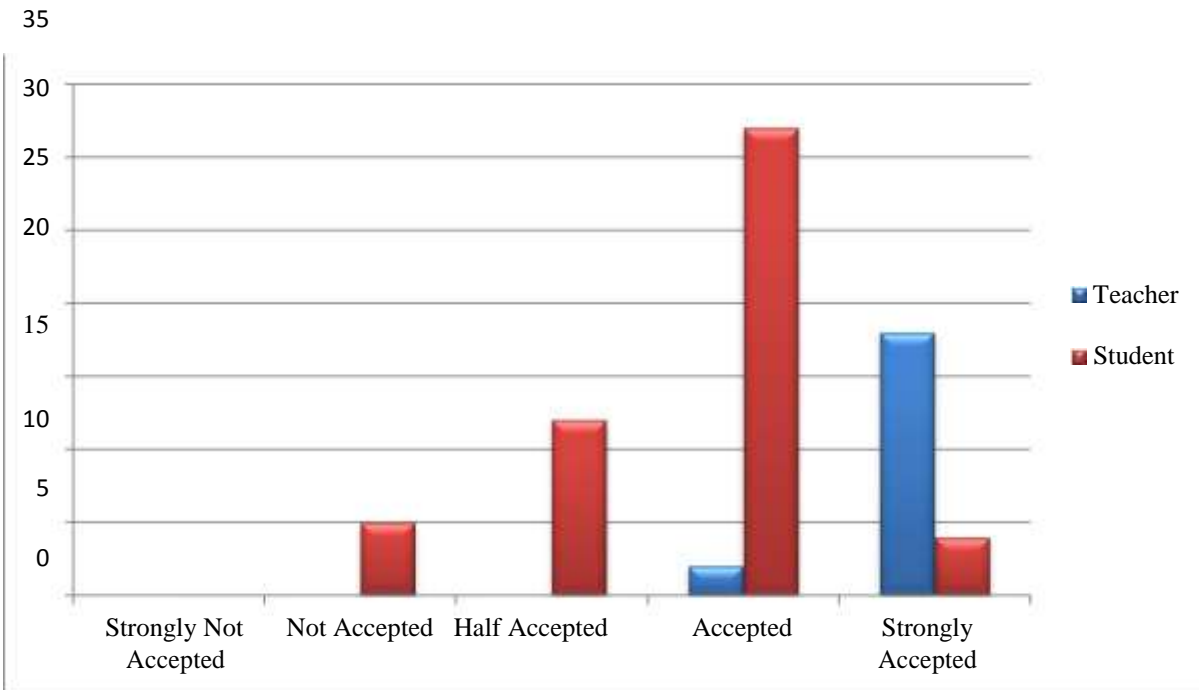
No	Item	Responses	No of Responses	
			Teacher	Student
5	Compare to old format the new format is more easier.	Strongly Not Accepted	0	1 (2%)
		Not Accepted	0	1 (2%)
		Half Accepted	3 (15%)	14 (28%)
		Accepted	13 (65%)	30 (60%)
		Strongly Accepted	4 (20%)	4 (8%)



No	Item	Responses	No of Responses	
			Teacher	Student
6	In new format the quality of questions have improved.	Strongly Not Accepted	0	0
		Not Accepted	0	0
		Half Accepted	0	5 (10%)
		Accepted	9 (45%)	34 (68%)
		Strongly Accepted	11 (65%)	11 (22%)



No	Item	Responses	No of Responses	
			Teacher	Student
7	The quality of exam papers improved	Strongly Not Accepted	0	0
		Not Accepted	0	5 (10%)
		Half Accepted	0	12 (24%)
		Accepted	2 (10%)	32 (64%)
		Strongly Accepted	18 (90%)	1 (2%)



Discussion and conclusions

Based on the analysis, the findings revealed that the textbooks and the question papers fulfil seven criteria stated in the National Philosophy of Education which are spiritual, mind, health, intelligence, moral, responsibility, and blissful life.

In the present research, 20 teachers and students participated, taught and learnt Tamil literature at secondary school. In response to the question one, 100% of the teachers agreed that students were given enough time to answer the questions, meanwhile 84% of students also agreed that sufficient time was given. As for the question number two, both teachers and students agreed 100% that the instruction of question was clear and easier to understand. Furthermore, 1-100% teachers and students had accepted that the questions were constructed based on textbooks.

Based on question four, 95% of teachers and 100% student had agreed that the question papers evaluated the literature skills. When we look into question five which as compared to old format, the new format is easier. The respondent was also asked whether for the new format, the quality of questions had improved or not. Both the teachers and students were in favor that the quality of question had improved in the new format.

In response to the question related to the quality of exam papers, 90% students expressed that the quality needs improvement, whereas all the teachers came to an agreement that quality plays a crucial part in determining the quality of the exam paper.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded from the results that the SPM Tamil literature question papers does provide sufficient time for students to answer the questions and the instructions that given in question paper are easy. This is evident as the questions were tailored according to the students' level. As compared to old format, new format is found to be easier and the quality has improved whereby the questions measure the higher order thinking skill of students. The quality of exam papers should be improved in order to promote students' higher order thinking skills.

Although, SPM Tamil literature question papers fulfill the aspects found in the National Philosophy of Education, there are still some criteria of the National Philosophy of Education which are not included in the question paper namely spiritual and health. So, in order to fulfill the National Philosophy of Education, emphasis must be given to all criteria when designing the textbooks and question papers. It is hoped that in future, the quality of exam papers can be improved by including higher order thinking questions to promote students' critical and creative thinking skills.