



Principals' perceptions on professional development opportunities in Sri Lanka

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පාසල හා පාසල් පරිසරය ශිෂ්‍ය අධ්‍යාපන ප්‍රගතිය කෙරෙහි බලපාන ප්‍රධාන සාධකයයි. පාසල හා පාසල් පරිසරය කළමනාකරණයේදී පාසල් නායකයාගේ (විදුහල්පතිගේ) වෘත්තීය දක්ෂතාවය ඉතාම වැදගත්ය. ඒ අනුව විදුහල්පතිගේ වෘත්තීය දැනුම කුෂලතා හා ආකල්ප සංවර්ධනය අඛණ්ඩව සිදු විය යුතු ක්‍රියාවකි. ඒ සඳහා ලෝකයේ සෑම රටකම විදුහල්පතිවරුන් වෘත්තීය සංවර්ධනය සඳහා විවිධ අවස්ථාවන් සපයා දෙනු ලැබේ. මෙම පර්යේෂණයේ දී අරමුණු වූයේ ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ විදුහල්පතිවරුන්ගේ වෘත්තීය සංවර්ධන අවස්ථා පිළිබඳ විමර්ශනය කිරීමටයි. ඒ සඳහා ප්‍රමාණාත්මක ප්‍රවේශය තෝරාගත් අතර ක්‍රමවේදය ලෙස සමීක්ෂණ ක්‍රමය භාවිතා කරන ලදී. දත්ත රැස් කිරීමට ප්‍රශ්ණාවලිය භාවිතා කළ අතර පර්යේෂණය සඳහා විදුහල්පතිවරුන් 212ක සාම්පලයක් යොදා ගන්නා ලදී. දත්ත විශ්ලේෂණයේ දී පෙතීරියේ විදුහල්පතිවරුන් බහුතරය ප්‍රකාශ කළේ ඔවුන්ගේ සංවර්ධනය සිදුකළ යුත්තේ ජාතික අධ්‍යාපන ආයතනය මගින් බවයි. සම්පත් දායකයන් විශ්වවිද්‍යාල වලින් හා ජාතික අධ්‍යාපන ආයතනයෙන් තෝරා ගත යුතු බව ද සඳහන් කරන ලදී.

ප්‍රමුඛ පද: විදුහල්පති භූමිකාව, විදුහල්පතිවරුන්ගේ වෘත්තීය සංවර්ධනය, ශිෂ්‍ය සාධනය, කළමනාකරණ කුසලතා, නේවාසික පුහුණු වැඩසටහන්

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Introduction

In this new school environment, there is increasing recognition of the importance of school leadership in supporting change and providing for educational quality. In fact, school leadership has been identified by a number of researchers as a key element in the effectiveness of school organizations. Therefore many countries have focused on providing appropriate training and professional development opportunities to aspiring and practicing school leaders. However Sri Lankan school principals do not have enough opportunities to develop their management competencies, and current professional development programs of school leaders are need to be developed considering their perceptions. Therefore the government has to provide well organized training programs to principals. The research design was based on the quantitative research approach and survey research method has been employed, a questionnaire is administrated in this survey.

In this new school environment, there is increasing recognition of the importance of school leadership in supporting change and providing for educational quality. In fact, school leadership has been identified by a number of researchers as a key element in the effectiveness of school organizations (Gronn and Ribbins, 2003). Therefore as school leaders, school principals should have better knowledge, skills and attitudes for school development. Everyone knows that a good school has a good principal. It is not surprising that leadership preparation and development has also become a major area of concern. Many countries have focused on providing appropriate training and professional development opportunities to aspiring and practicing school leaders. Increasingly, international studies reveal a number of patterns or tendencies in providing school leadership development around the world.

On the whole, it seems that those in charge of preparing professional development programs are aware that schools are not static organizations that need to be administered but learning organizations that require continuous development. Pheko (2008), referring to Botswana, remarks that there is no formal leadership training policy, while Bush and Oduro (2006) comment that leadership preparation and

training is low on the agenda of most African countries and South Asian countries. In addition, it is important to point out that principals in many countries are appointed on the basis of irrelevant or insufficient criteria; for example, on the basis of their teaching record rather than their leadership skills, on the basis of long service and experience without any higher academic qualifications (Oduro and Macbeath, 2003)

School effectiveness as well as school improvement research has demonstrated the importance of the role of the leader in school life. Apart from individual states, international organizations are beginning to realize the key role of school leaders in providing access to quality education for all students. This ascertainment has led to a growing recognition that the professional development of school leaders could contribute significantly to the improvement of their practices.

However Sri Lankan school principals do not have enough opportunities to develop their management competencies, and current professional development programs of school leaders are need to be developed considering their perceptions. Therefore the government has to provide well organized training programs to principals. The professional development programs for school principals in Sri Lanka remains several issues regarding the quality and the administration of courses. Many have questioned about the quality, efficiency and the effectiveness of the above programs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the professional development needs of school principals to lead school improvement. In particular, the results of this study provide valuable information to the Center for Education Leadership Development (CELD) of National Institute of Education (NIE) and Education Faculties or Education Departments of some Universities, for develop and organize effective professional development programs to school leaders in Sri Lanka.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the proposed study is to investigate the principals' perceptions on professional Development opportunities in Sri Lanka. In particular, study focuses on the following sub objectives;

- To review the nature of existing school principals' professional development programs in Sri Lanka
- To understand principals prefer forms and subject areas of professional development programs
- To identify the more effective training programs for principals
- To make recommendations for the improvement of effectiveness of the principals' professional development programs

Research Methods and materials:

The research design was based on the quantitative research approach and descriptive survey research method has been employed. Descriptive survey method allows collect important and massive quantitative data from wider range of the Country, in addition this method allows collect qualitative data also. In order to determine that, what professional development opportunities are needed for principals, further a questionnaire is administrated in this survey.

The questionnaire entitled the Principal Professional Development Needs was designed to obtain information concerning a principal's self-perception of his or her need for professional development in the leadership skills and competencies to facilitate a comprehensive school improvement process as well as a preferred delivery model for the professional development. Selected principals' population was 150 among 112 questionnaires (N= 112) were collected from the participants. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: demographic professional profile, leadership performance domains and the preferred

delivery model for professional development. Further the questionnaire was comprised preferred types of training programs, duration and mode of the programs/workshops, in addition principals were asked information about expected resource persons for the their training programs.

The sample

Five districts were selected to the sample, the sample was purposive, according to researcher's convenience. 15 schools were randomly chosen in a district, 2 questionnaires were sent a school by the post (one for principal and one for a deputy/vice/assistant principal). Responded principals were included Sri Lanka Education Administrative Service (SLEAS), Sri Lanka Education Administrative Service (SLEAS), Sri Lanka Principal Service (SLPS), or Sri Lanka Teacher Service (SLTS-performing Principals).

Table: 1- District wise responses and number of total response

| District | Number of school | | Number of principals (responded) | |
|--------------|------------------|------------|----------------------------------|-----------|
| | National | Provincial | Male | Female |
| Kandy | 05 | 10 | 12 | 10 |
| Nuwara Eliya | 02 | 13 | 12 | 06 |
| Matale | 04 | 11 | 11 | 12 |
| Colombo | 06 | 09 | 16 | 10 |
| Kegale | 03 | 12 | 08 | 14 |
| Total | 20 | 55 | 59 | 52 |

Result/ Discussion:

Different types of principals' professional development training programs could be found in Sri Lanka, these training programs are induction programs, workshops, seminars, certificate programs, diploma programs, degree programs, post-graduate programs. While some principals' professional development training programs durations are vary and different; according to the objectives of the programs. This research considered limited kinds/types of training programs such as induction programs, workshops, seminars ect, further, the research was not focused search/investigate certificate, diploma, degree and postgraduate programs, this was one of the limitations of the research. Because of above programs are personally support to their promotion and these are offered by Universities or NIE, further these programs are longer and consumable (not offered free of charge).

Questionnaire was the data collection tool for this study and the questionnaire included 10 main questions, each question had two parts and first part had some closed-ended questions and second part of each questions had some open-ended questions these were helped to collect some extend qualitative data. Among 1 to 3 questions of the questionnaire were focused on gather data about current principals' training programs which are conducted by Ministry of Education, NIE, Provincial Department of Education, Zonal Education Office or other Government or Non-government Institute/organization.

According to the findings, recommendations were proposed. Majority of principals (82 percent) believe their current training opportunities are insufficient. In addition they expected regular and continues training programs. Further principals noticed that current their professional training programs were not integrated and these programs were organized and implemented separately by different organizations. As a result, subject contend of the programs were overtime overlapped therefore they mentioned that a national policy for principals professional development will need to be formulated.

4 and 5 main questions of the questionnaire were focused to collect information about mode of current workshops or seminars for

principals and offering institutes or organization of the above principals' professional training programs. Whereas 50 percent of sample agreed in general that the effective professional development programs are conducted by National Institute of Education (NIE), even 45 percent of principals mentioned that they like participate to residential programs, however among female principals 82 percent female principals do not like residential training programs.

Further, 6 and 7 questions of the questionnaire were made for investigate principals' perceptions about duration of their training programs, because the duration of professional development programs for principals are vary program by program. While 55 per cent of the sample agreed that the training programs which is being implemented is an effective five days for their professional development. 30 percent of the sample agreed to two-day training programs.

Question number 8 of the questionnaire wanted to collect data about resource persons of the training programs. Further majority of principals (67 percent) expected that resource persons for their training courses are more suitable from Universities or National Institute of Education (NIE). However 22 percent principals believed that resource persons for their training should be experienced principals or SLEAS officers.

Final questions of the questionnaire (9 and 10) asked about contend subject areas (discipline) which should be included in principals' training programs. These principals expected subject areas were summarized and percentage of their perceptions also mentioned below Table: 2.

Table: 2. Principals' wanted subject areas in training programs

| | Subject discipline | Responds percentage |
|----|---|---------------------|
| 01 | Management theories, strategies, new trend in education management | 87% |
| 02 | Guidelines for school management | 96% |
| 03 | Leadership theories and leadership development | 78% |
| 04 | Circulars and financial management | 91% |
| 05 | Program of School Improvement (PSI), School-Based Management (SBM) and School-Based Teacher Development (SBTD) programs | 63% |
| 06 | Internal and external school supervision | 58% |
| 07 | Examinations and school community | 66% |

According above Table: 2 majority of principals (96 percent) needed guidance of school management to develop their respective schools, whereas they like learn about Circulars and financial management. According to the question number 9 and 10 selected principals' lowest demand was about internal and external school supervision (58 percentage).

Conclusion:

The overall conclusion to this study, is that endemic systemic problems in and across the Sri Lankan Education system have left schools without national or local policy and professional development frameworks in regard to the provision of principals' professional development opportunities in Sri Lanka.

Ministry of Education is the key facilitating and limiting factor in the development of above programs. It is recommended that top-level

Education Officers should develop and implement a support program for principals in regard to developing and offering principals' professional development opportunities in Sri Lanka.

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