The Influences of Administration System and Policies to Development of School-Based Teacher Development Programs in Sri Lanka

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Abstract: *There is a strong relationship between teachers' teaching quality and students' learning outcomes. In this context, School-Based Teacher Professional Development is a very important concept, because it allows teachers to plan, organise and implement their own professional development programs. However, this concept has not been extensively developed in the Sri Lankan education context. In Sri Lankan secondary school context, several factors are affected to development of School-Based Teacher Professional Development programs. This study examines the influences of Administration system to development of School-Based Teacher Development programs in Sri Lanka. Simultaneously, the situation of the Non-School-Based Teacher Development programs are also examined because these are currently prominent and this study assumed that both programs need to be integrated in order to provide balanced teacher professional development. The qualitative research approach and the case-study method have been employed. The data were collected by conducting interviews, non-participative observation and sample-based documentary searching. According to the findings, strong recommendations were proposed and relevant guidelines were suggested for future researches.*

Keywords: Teacher Professional Development, school context

1. Introduction

The Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka has recognised that good teachers are 'keys' to enhance the quality of education (MOE, 2004). Furthermore, MOE (2005) states that Sri Lanka has already considered professional development for teachers as an essential part of the education system because professional development enhances the quality of good teaching (DETYA, 2005; Sethunga, 2007). In addition, the University of Western Sydneyemphasises the importance of the relationship between quality teaching and student outcomes (Zammit et al., 2007). The National Science Education Standards (2008) believes that, "…effective professional development programs becomes central in teachers' lives" (NSES, 2008, p.1)**,** and Hayman (2009)pointed out that well organised professional development programs can enhance teachers' skills, knowledge and attitudes**.** In addition, Linda (2005, p. 238) states "…research has shown that many of schools have improved teaching practices and student achievement, while building professional knowledge" this statement is based on research which was conducted in the United States.

Professional development programs for teachers in Sri Lanka are divided into two groups. The first is the School-Based Teacher Development (SBTD)programs, these programs are considered an effective strategy for teacher professional development because they are designed, organised, implemented, owned and controlled by principals and teachers of the schools (Bandara, 2010; Monyatsi, 2006; Margarita, 1997; Clair & Adger, 1999; Good et al., 2003; Wickramasinghe, 2002; Blackmore, 2000).The second is the Non School-Based Teacher Development (NSBTD) program, NSBTD programs (Government or non-Government). These programs are organised and implemented by external organisations or institutes of the schools, such as Zonal Education Offices, Provincial Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Education, the National Institute of Education as well as various Non-Government Organisations. These Non-School-Based Teacher Development (NSBTD) programs are held for school teachers who come from various schools which are situated in different geographical areas. As a result, these teacher development programs may create ineffectiveness in teacher professional development since they are planned without considering the needs of individual schools and the willingness of individual teachers. One of the significant issues for teachers is that they have to travel long distances from their workplaces to participate in these professional development programs.

These two types of professional development programs help to develop teachers' knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes. They also have particular advantages and disadvantages. This study focuses on investigating School-Based Teacher Development (SBTD) programs in the secondary education system of Sri Lanka, because they are currently rarely used in Sri Lanka. In addition, these programs consider the teachers' needs and current available resources. Therefore, School-Based Teacher Development (SBTD) programs are popular and beneficial to teachers in various ways in both developed and developing countries.

Although, SBTD programs are not very common in the Sri Lankan education system. However, researchers discovered that some secondary schools have organised and implemented effective and innovative (SBTD) programs using various strategies and methods. Furthermore, there is potential for these programs to be developed to improve the professional standards and required interpersonal and other skills of secondary school teachers; but the development of these programs is one of

the many complicated issues within the education system in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this research inspired to investigate the influences of administration system and policies to development of SBTD programs in Sri Lanka.

2. Literature Survey

School-Based Teacher Development (SBTD) programs in Sri Lanka do not have a long history and SBTD was accepted as a concept in the education system in the early 1980s as part of national education reforms (Wickramasinghe, 2002). In the 1990s the Sri Lankan government took action to develop School-Based Teacher Professional development even though, over these 30 years the development of this field is questionable in Sri Lanka.

Furthermore, considering the Sri Lankan history of SBTD programs, an aspect related to SBTD was a framework for Annual Implementation at School Level (1983-part II school development) and that document outlines several programs and projects. Some of them are 'In-service Training of Teachers' (Internal) and 'Professional Growth of Teachers' and the aim was to develop SBTD. Thus, in the 1990s, there was a significant initiative by the Sri Lankan government to develop School-Based Teacher Professionalism, in conjunction to the massive National reforms in 1996 (MOE, 2004). As a new concept of SBTD programs for Sri Lanka, Sethunga (2007, p .3) explains that "even though the paradigm shift from centralised in-service programs moved towards SBTD initiatives, in the Sri Lankan context it would have to ascertain whether such modalities would be applicable or how it could be approached within the present teacher education system. In order to develop effective SBTD initiatives, rigorous research studies would have to be conducted".

After the beginning of the 21st century, improvements or major changes in the field of SBTD programs in Sri Lanka have not been prominent. However, in 2007, a new program was proposed, called 'Program on School Improvement' (PSI). In line with the objectives of the program on PSI and with the new directions in teacher professional development, the Ministry of Education (MOE)has a number of innovative activities including a pilot program on SBTD where 40 schools have been selected from eight (8) Zones representing each Province" (Sethunga & Devananda, 2007, p. 2). Furthermore, considering the literature of teacher professional development, the Sri Lankan government has already recognised that professional development of the teachers and principals is essential, and that this program should be promoted and continuously offered (MOE, 2005).

In addition, the Sri Lankan government recognised five aims that can be achieved through School-Based Professional development. The first is facilitating teacher development programs. The second is promoting on-site teacher development programs (each school will conduct site-based programs). The next is facilitating teachers' participation in continuing teacher education programs, and finally, providing training for principals and Senior Management Teams (SMTs) on educational planning, IT usage, financial management, quality improvement and organising effective on-site teacher development programs. The last is conducting a network of monitoring mechanisms (Mathews, 2002).

In addition, a project was conducted in Sri Lanka that aimed to assess the quality of Sri Lankan secondary education for years 6-11. This project provided equitable access to quality secondary education participation in rural areas. The project had four main objectives: revision in curriculum; improvement in teacher education and training; reform in education and examination systems; and improvement in school administration and academic learning through the provision of physical infrastructure and equipment to teach Science and Computer studies in selected schools (Mathews, 2002). The project implemented teacher training programs in order to improve teacher education and professional development under improvement in teacher education and training objectives. The project objective had three aims: firstly, preparing self-study training materials for teacher trainers with special emphasis on the use of multimedia and distance teaching methodology; secondly, supporting pre-service education for student teachers, in-service training of untrained teachers and short-term refresher courses in newly specialised subject and teaching methodology; and thirdly, upgrading facilities at Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) and Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs). However, this project did not consider developing or encouraging SBTD programs as an effective part of teacher professional development.

3. Problem Definition

SBTD programs are not popular in secondary education system in Sri Lanka; however the government emphasises to develop such programs in the Country. Some factors are affected to development of SBTD programs in Sri Lanka, the research focuses to investigate influences of administrative system and policies to development of SBTD programs in secondary education system in the Country.

The overarching research question of the investigation is how do influence administrative system and policies to development of School-Based Teacher Development programs in Sri Lanka?

Four sub-research questions are made to seek answers to the overarching research question:

1. What factors affect the development of SBTD programs in Sri Lanka?
2. How is the effectiveness of the SBTD programs demonstrated in each school?
3. Which professional development activities are reflected in the SBTD programs in secondary schools in Sri Lanka?

4. Methodology

Research methodology is a broad concept comprising aspects such as design, data collection, data analysis and

theorizing, as well as social, ethical and political concerns. Qualitative research approach and Case study method used for the study. Ten secondary schools were selected (ten cases) to collect qualitative data.

The participants

The participants for the study were ten secondary school principals who have considerable experience and qualifications, from three administrative districts selected in this study. Five were male and five were female participants. The samples of school included were girls, boys and mixed schools.

Interview

This case study involves the collection of data through semi-structured interviews with the principal of the selected school. According to Anderson (1998), the interview source has two advantages; interviews can be used for gathering depth of understanding of issues that are related to the case, and to identify key information that are part of the case. In addition, "Interviews may be either open-ended or guided" (Field et al., 1985, p. 65). According to Field's categorisation, open-ended interviews are suitable for this investigation. This is because the researcher needed to develop a better relationship in response to the data identified. "Data is typically collected through in-depth, open-ended interviews and that allow each person to fully describe their experience" (Reid &Petocz, 2006, p. 6).

Non-participant observation

Data that were considered relevant to the study were collected by conducting non-participative observation which related to the SBTD program at the respective schools. During this observation, important instances, situations, activities, happenings were noted in the field book and photographed.

Document searching

Punch (2009, p. 158) mentions "Documents, both historical and contemporary, are rich sources of data for education and social research". Therefore these sources are used for this study. Punch further describes the importance of documentary data as some education research depends entirely on this type data. In some case studies, documentary data may be gathered in conjunction with interviews and observations. For this purpose, with other data documents, it would be used in triangulation.

5. Results and Discussions

The collected data which is relevant to administrative system and policies of teacher professional development in Sri Lanka are discussed in two sub-topics; these are: the organisational structure, and resources which affect the SBTD programs in Sri Lanka.

The organisational structures

This section discusses and analyses several organisational structures which are relevant to the operation of SBTD programs in the education system of Sri Lanka. The comments made by the principals regarding the weaknesses of the organisational structure of the education system are discussed below under two topics.

Lack of encouragement of SBTD programs

According to the responsibilities of the Zonal Education Office (Zonal Education Office is nearest administration body of the government schools and it has more powerful authority to administrate schools, principals and teachers. Generally around 100 schools are included for a Zone). They have power to encourage principals to organise and implement SBTD programs. The majority of participants' general idea is that ZEOs do not support to develop SBTD programs or they do not do their job appropriately, but they like organising NSBTD programs for teachers of the Zone, because they can claim payments for various aspects such as travelling, lecturing, supervision, and supplying stationery. However, one of a principal's idea of the sample was completely different and she had a well organised annual plan because she had been encouraged and helped by the ZEO. In addition, she said that she was very often given the opportunities to deliver lectures and share her experiences on SBTD programs with other principals at the Zonal principals' meetings. As evidence of her statement, when the interview was being conducted there was an unexpected telephone incoming call from the ZEO inquiring about a workshop which she had been asked to organise by the ZEO.

Supervisions of SBTD programs

Some school principals did not have any awareness about SBTD programs (2 principals of the sample). The main reason for this situation is that they were not provided with proper supervision and feedback procedures by the ZEO. Three principals suggested the importance of supervision and feedback for SBTD programs. ZEO has many resources to develop SBTD programs, the organisational structure of ZEO shows that it has several education directors who are responsible for develop teachers' in-service education. In addition, the majority of principals believed that ZEO is the most powerful authority and the closest government body for the development of SBTD programs. Therefore, principals need the assistance of ZEO to develop SBTD programs. Additionally, the principals were quite sceptical with the credentials or expertise of the education officers in the ZEO. They claimed that most of the education officers in ZEO are unqualified (4 principals mentioned). Among the principals, 2 principals firmly criticised the qualification of the education officers and their recruitment procedures.

Resources

This section discusses the resources which are relevant to SBTD programs. According to Ranasinghe (2004) the resources can be divided into three groups and these are:

physical resources, time resources, and human resources. In this section, the data is categorised and discussed based on four sub-themes which are: funds, time, physical and human resources. When organising and implementing SBTD programs the resources are affected by the development of these opportunities in schools.

Funds

Questions regarding funds were not included in the semi-structured interview schedule. However, during the interview sessions, principals were given several opportunities to discuss the financial situation on SBTD programs. For example, when responding to the interview question on, "What are the issues on SBTD programs?" the principals explained the problems which they faced on SBTD programs. The majority of principals used this opportunity to describe the financial problems they face in relation to SBTD programs. According to the data, 60% of the principals responded that funds were a problem for SBTD programs, and rest of the principals (40%) had not financial problems on SBTD programs. These findings are presented in the following figure:
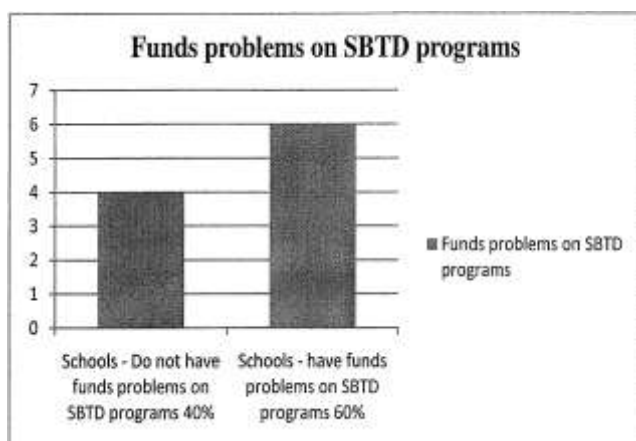

Figure 1: Funds problems on SBTD programs

Four principals indicated that they do not have funds problems to organise SBTD programs; however only three had organised and implemented a wider range of SBTD opportunities to their teachers. Further, the principals' opinions regarding the sources of funds were categorised and presented in the figure below.
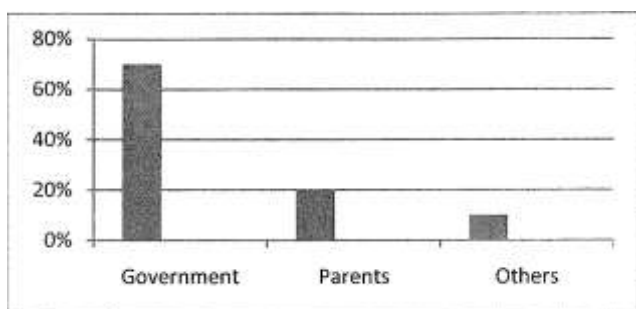

Figure 2: Principals' expectations of the funding sources for SBTD programs

The above figure shows 70% of the principals believed that the funds for SBTD programs should be provided by the government, whereas 20% thought the funds for SBTD programs should be sponsored by parents of the respective schools and 10 % said the funds for SBTD programs should be collected from various providers. One principal mentioned that funding was the main problem for SBTD programs and further he believed that funds for SBTD programs should be provided by the government; however, One principal organised a SBTD program co-sponsored by a bank at an outside location. There was a conflict regarding this arrangement. As mentioned by a principal, "Once we organised a workshop for teachers sponsored by the a Bank. That was called the 'positive thinking program'. This was a one day workshop which was held at a hotel in Kithulgala (a city). After this workshop researcher noticed a change of behaviours of teachers such as: dressing, the way of addressing students and each other, etc. Even their thinking had been changed".

Findings show that funds can be collected for SBTD programs from various organisations and personnel, a school organised several SBTD programs and all the details were documented. This wanted to provide balanced professional development programs for his teachers. To achieve this task they planned various SBTD programs to fulfil the different needs. For example, this school had organised a SBTD program to develop teachers' attitudes and concentrate their minds, and the program was held at an outside location in Anuradhapura (an ancient city) last year (2017). The main point is the funds for this program which was provided by the well-wishers of the school.

The government has provided a certain allocation of funds to every government school since the last decade, that is, after the establishment of SBM in Sri Lankan schools. A certain percentage of the government funds (this money is called 'quality input') can be allocated to SBTD programs. Based on the data analysis, it was found that a school had appropriately utilised this money for SBTD programs. "According to our needs, occasionally we hire (used) outside resource personnel and we pay them using quality input money". Regarding the allocation under School Based Management, a principal complained that, "This quality input money is not enough and it is very difficult to spend. This is the big problem; because, there are rigid and stereotype financial rules and therefore some principals do not spend this money". There is a contradiction regarding funds for SBTD programs. Furthermore, strict and non-flexible financial rules and regulations affect the SBTD programs. Subsequently, principals' are inhibited to spend money for school essential needs also. A principal stated this as, "Considering money, there are many regulations to spend money and as a result we have restrictions to spend money for teacher development".

Time

This section discusses the findings which are relevant to time problems on organising and implementation of SBTD programs. The majority of participants' highlighted that time is a main problem for SBTD programs, and there seemed to be a connection between time and their workload. In other words, the workload is heavy while time is very limited.
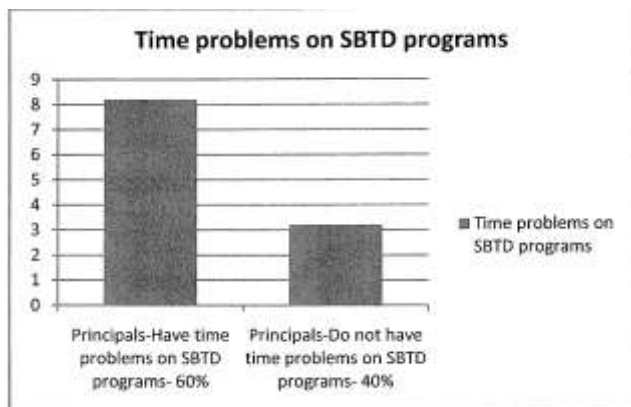
Figure 3: Principals' time problems on SBTD programs

A principal argued that, year by year, teachers' and principals' work increases; therefore, it is very difficult to find time for other activities. Disputing the abovementioned idea, some principals believed that if they had good management, time would not be a problem. One of them said that "Our SBTD programs are organised and implemented after school hours, during weekends, holidays or term-end vacations. As a result, we do not have problems of time".Similarly, a participant believed that, "Our timetable, and time periods all are decided by the top level policy makers at national levels of the education system, and as a result schools do not have flexible timetables in the school. Therefore, time is a problem for SBTD programs".

In addition, a principal explained that they have their own teacher selecting procedure (however teachers are deployed by the government) and she described the school's teacher recruitment procedure as, "We have a different teacher recruitment procedure. Before offering a teaching appointment to new teachers, their willingness to work after school and extra hours is ascertained and if they are willing to do these, we take them". As a result, teachers in this school are willing to work after school based on the needs of the school.

Infrastructure facilities

The following figure shows that 80% of the principals complained about the lack of physical resources to organise SBTD programs.
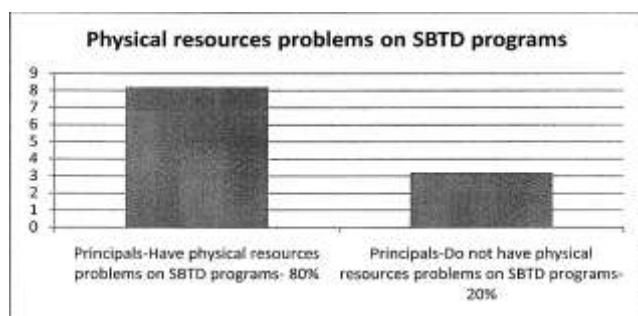

Figure 4: Physical resources problems on SBTD programs

One principal of the sample wanted to develop teachers' ICT skills, computer literacy, and the ability to used multimedia to conduct lessons for students, among other things, but the school does not have these resources in the

school. Regarding this contradiction to school infrastructure facilities, a lady principal argued about the lack of ICT facilities, and suggested that the government should provide these facilities to secondary schools. The ICT facilities include computers, internet facility, software and operation competencies of teachers, but there is a contradiction because the majority of secondary schools of Sri Lanka do not have electricity; and this is a big issue as a developing country to supply electricity to all secondary schools. The principals, however, believe that the government is responsible to provide these facilities to the government schools. Further, a participant explained the importance of ICT which can be used to develop teacher professionalism in SBTD programs. Thus, it is important to note that using ICT, teachers can develop their professional needs accessing the ICT in their free time and they do not have to go out to participate in NSBTD programs, and as a result money can also be saved.

A principal states that, "We do not have enough building facilities therefore we could not organise SBTD programs and in such a situation staff meetings are also held after school". Based on researcher's non-participative observation notes on this site, the school has a serious problem in relation to building facilities. The school has big halls, but small, non-separated classrooms with packed students, (overcrowded classes). Further, teachers do not have a comfortable staffroom and they usually gather in a small room near the principal's office. However, this school did not have procedures to be able to hold SBTD programs during or after school, holidays, weekends and term-end vacations.

In summary, the majority of the principals claimed that, they face facilities problems in organising SBTD programs. However, three schools demonstrated that the lack of physical resources is not a major problem that affects the development of SBTD programs in secondary schools in Sri Lanka. This is because, based on the observation carried out at the site of the school, the facilities problems existed especially during school sessions when lessons are in progress. This implies that SBTD programs can be conducted during non-peak sessions, which are after school hours, during the weekends, holidays or semester holidays two principals effectively used after school hours and holidays for SBTD programs.

Human resources

This section is based on human resources that affect the organisation and implementation of SBTD programs in secondary schools. Five principals have complained that they do not have suitable human resources to carry out effective SBTD programs in their schools. Further, they said that external human resources are very expensive; therefore, they do not have money to pay them.

In addition, a principal said, "We organise SBTD programs once a week, according to our annual advanced plan and sometimes we use inside human resources as senior teachers or very expert outside people are invited". Regarding this, one principal also offered a possible

solution for the human resources problem and he said that human resources is not a big problem for them and they can arrange human resources from the school; however, they have qualified teachers in different areas. Further a principal added that "We do not need to spend money because many resource personnel are willing to assist us voluntarily".

6. Conclusion

This research focused on the provision of SBTD programs in Sri Lankan secondary schools, focusing on factors that impede or facilitate the provision of such programs in Sri Lanka. The overall conclusion to this study, based on the data from the participating research sites, 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 SBTD in Sri Lankan secondary schools. Due to the small sample size of schools included in this study (10 from approximately 10, 000) - it is evident that this finding needs confirmation from a larger scale study in and across the nine provinces responsible for the provision of secondary education.

The study also identified that, in the absence of national or local policy frameworks, secondary school principals are the key facilitating and/or limiting factor in the development and offering of SBTD programs. In this study, only a minority of principals (30%) facilitated the development of high quality SBTD programs. This finding also needs to be validated by a wider scale study. It is recommended that top-level Education Officers should develop and implement a support program for principals in regard to developing and offering SBTD programs.

7. Future Scope

The study also identified the small number of research studies conducted in the Sri Lankan context and recommends the commissioning of further case studies and policy analysis and development.

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