



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

A Review Paper on School-Based Management (SBM) in Sri Lanka

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Abstract:

The basic concept of School-Based Management (SBM) is decentralization power and authority from the central government or district office to individual schools. These schools can use their new power and authority to bring on change in teaching and learning practices in schools where SBM worked is a very high priority. This power and authority through SBM is a good tool for school development and teacher Professional development in school level. This SBM was introduced to the general education system in Sri Lanka in 1990s, by 2018 the ministry of education expects to develop and enhance SBM activities all parts of the country.

Keywords: School-based management, decentralization, teacher professional development, quality teaching

1. Introduction

This review paper begins by explaining the international literature of decentralisation concept and importance of School-Based Management (SBM), and then the paper describes some definitions of School-Based Management (SBM). According to the Provincial Council Act, 1987 there are nine Provincial councils in Sri Lanka. Under the Sri Lankan constitution, the power and authority has devolved to the local Provincial Councils. Under this devolution, power and authority in the education sector has also devolved to the local Provincial Councils (MOE, 2005). While the SBM concept was also introduced to Sri Lanka in the 1990s, this SBM concept has sufficient power and authority to develop individual schools and teacher professionalism. Considering the nine Provinces of Sri Lanka, a Province includes around 10 to 20 Zones and a Zone is the closed powerful administrative unit to a school. This paper particularly considers the situation of Teacher Professional development in Sri Lanka under SBM.

2. Methodology

Qualitative data (information) for this review paper were collected by reviewing relevant websites, thesis, books, journals, paper articles and various types of hand-books. The collected information were analysed and finally this reviewed paper is prepared. Especially the paper was focused to review national and international literature which are relevant to aspects of School-Based Management (SBM) programs in government schools in Sri Lanka.

2.1. School-Based Management (SBM)

This section focuses on review the international and national literature of SBM and advantages of SBM for school development. The importance of School-Based Management (SBM) is emphasised as "School-based management demands greater participation by staff and parents in the policy and decision making process of the school" (Campbell-Evans, 1993, p. 92). In addition, the process of SBM is defined as "...decentralises control from the district office to individual schools as a way to give school constituents, to principals, teachers, parents, community members, and in some schools, students" Wohlstetter & Mohrman (1996, p. 1). Furthermore, OERI (1993) describes that as a strategy, SBM helps to improve education by transferring significant decision-making authority from the state and district levels to individual schools. SBM also provides responsibility for school principals, teachers, students and parents to have control over the education process and take decisions about the school budget, personnel, and the curriculum. As a result, SBM creates a more effective learning environment for students. There are seven advantages of SBM which are identified. The first is to allow competent individuals in the school to make decisions that will improve learning; the second is to give the entire school community a voice in key decisions; the third is focused on accountability for decisions; the fourth is leading to greater creativity in the design of programs; the fifth is redirecting resources to support the goals developed in each school; the sixth is leading to realistic budgeting as parents and teachers become more aware of the school's financial status, spending limitations, and the cost of its programs; and the final is to improve moral of teachers and nurture new leadership at all levels (OERI, 1993, p. 1). The United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Canada are the pioneer countries that introduced SBM. Subsequently, SBM started to develop in a number of countries, such as Hong Kong, China, Indonesia, El Salvador, Mexico, Kenya, Kyrgyz, the Republic of Nepal and Paraguay. Moreover, the World Bank report (2007) listed the

goals of SBM programs and their variations. They include: promoting participation of parent and communities in schools, empowering the principal and teachers, developing local level capacity and improving quality and efficacy of schooling to raise student achievement levels.

Disputing the many advantages of SBM, some problems or obstacles are discussed in the literature on SBM. Cotton (1988) highlights some of the problems. According to his idea, time is a one of problems, because implementation of SBM in school staff requires additional hours. Secondly, Cotton (1988) mentions the unrealistic expectations. Research on SBM investigated that full institutionalisation of a school-based management process takes as long as five years or more as the performance cannot be observed in schools in a short period. He further describes the insufficient support for site councils. They are the bodies connected with planning and decision making in most SBM structures. These councils have problems regarding lack of qualification to carry out their responsibilities. Typical problems they encounter are the lack of knowledge of school operations. Members of councils, teachers, non-certified staff, parents and students possess little knowledge of school budgets, facilities, personnel, policy issues and other matters, such as lack of group process skills - some council members are often deficient in the skills of group decision making, conflict resolution, problem solving and other group activities - and finally it highlights the lack of clarity about their role. The next main problem is incongruence between decision desired and decision allowed. The last problem is other constraints on decision making. However, many countries accepted that SBM is an effective concept for decentralisation of power and authority to individual schools. One of the prominent advantages of the SBM is decentralised of power and authority to individual schools could be used effectively to organize School-Based Teacher Professional Development programs in individual schools

While this paper describes SBM and relevant activities of teacher professional development and teacher evaluation in developed countries, (with reference to Australia, Mexico, the United States and New Zealand). Their staff development programs for teachers are focused on annual teacher performance evaluation. Generally, this evaluation is based on a District Staff Development Plan, and these staff performance evaluation methods are commonly competency-based. Considering the teachers' performance, evaluation or assessing methods should be clear and uncomplicated. ACER (2002, p. 1) reports that, "...teacher performance can be assessed using standards in ways that are reliable, valid and productive in terms of recognition and professional development". The quality of teachers and their training and practising are considered by the Australian government. Teachers are given considerable attention for both pre-service and in-service (Marsh, 1988). Further, the Australian Government has started National Programs to develop teachers' professionalism and status. These programs help to upgrade teachers' quality with research including positive benefits for staff morale, teacher retention and career satisfaction (Owen, 2005b). Owen further explains that, in 2004, the Federal Government established the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership (NIQTSL). This institute has the responsibility to raise the status, quality and professionalism of teachers and school leaders.

In addition, Chadbourn et al (1998) have written a report on self-managing schools, professional community and Professional Recognition Programs in Victorian schools of the future. This report refers to literature on the relationship between school organisation and professional development. The report further explains about staff development programs in Australian schools. According to Chadbourn et al (1998, p. 63), the Professional Recognition Program (PRP) is "a new career structure for teachers and the PRP guidelines gives principals the responsibilities for a formidable range of staff management and evaluation functions related to implementing that career structure". Similarly, PRP guidelines (Education Victoria, 1996, p. 1) defines, "Professional Recognition Programs (PRP) is part of an integrated approach to the staff management process and enhanced opportunities for planned teacher professional development".

Further, Chadbourn et al (1998) emphasise the importance of PRP. Professional Recognition Programs are expected to provide long-term benefits on the quality of teaching in schools. Furthermore, "the PRP provides guidelines and enhances the capacity of principals to carry out a number of staff management responsibilities in self-management schools" (Chadbourne & Ingvarson, 1998, p. 63). In addition, teacher professional development and annual review are closely connected to PRP. (Education Victoria, 1996, p. 12) explains the annual review for Level 1 teachers as "...supports the professional growth and career development of each teacher through review of performance, provision of feedback, recognition of achievement and encouragement of continued development". Moreover, in the annual review cycle for teachers, the principals' decision is very important as mentioned in PRP (Education Victoria, 1996, p. 13). "For those teachers progressing through the incremental scale, following a successful review, the principal will authorise the payment of an increment. Following an unsuccessful review, the principal will authorise the deferral of the increment". In addition, the State School Administrative Unit of Australia's (SAU) Master Plan for Staff Development (2006) shows that 70% of the authority and decision making power decentralised to individual schools for decision making and funding to professional development. Under this situation, the Australian teachers' responsibilities depend on adequate staff development activities which are based at school, district, regional or state wide level (Education Victoria, 1996). Different types of staff development programs could be found in Australia. Some programs are annually advertised in the public media and some are organised by the universities. In these staff development programs, different teaching methods are being used, for example, RICE (The Research in Computers in Education Group) teachers' professional development programs were conducted by the Deakin University in Victoria. This section attempted to describe of decentralisation of education and the concept of SBM. In this discussion many literature of Australian context was reviewed. The next section is school-based management in Sri Lanka and it focuses on the context of SBM in Sri Lanka.

2.2. School-Based Management (SBM) in Sri Lanka

SBM concept was introduced to the Sri Lankan education context in the 1980s; however, it was not developed in the education system by 2008. While the SBM concept was also introduced to Sri Lanka in the 1990s, this SBM concept has sufficient power and authority to develop individual schools.

The decentralisation process of education administration is a significant step in the Sri Lankan history of education. Perera (1998b, p. 1) explains that "Sri Lanka during the last four decades has taken noteworthy steps towards decentralisation of educational administration with a view of upgrading operational efficiency. The process of decentralisation had been gradual, but had been mainly concerned with establishing layers between the central ministry and the school with the view to bringing management closer to the school. Though the geographical units of administration have shifted from the central to the middle levels, the pattern in which schools function have almost remained unchanged". After the introduction of SBM in Sri Lanka, School Improvement Councils were set up and were represented by the principals, teachers, parents and alumni. They had the authority to make certain decisions on the given school. This empowerment leads to enhancement of responsibilities of the councils and the schools' staff invariably becomes accountable to the community. In addition, the school council has the power to make funding and financing more transparent and competitive. This decentralised power has been delegated from the central government to the provincial level and this power and authority in turn could be used to organise and implement different types of school enhance programs in secondary schools in Sri Lanka.

The history of the decentralisation effort in the Sri Lankan education context is briefly summarised in this section and the current situation is discussed next. Since the last few decades several steps have been taken to introduce basic concepts of decentralisation in education through the education reforms and some innovation of the education. The free education scheme from kindergarten to university was introduced in the 1940s with the adaptation of the local language as the medium of instruction. In the same decade, the concept of 'central school' was established to provide opportunities for good education to rural students, although the central schools started in distance cities of the country. The next step was extending Science education for secondary classes in rural area schools in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1979, the education authorities realised that schools can do better when they do not feel locked up by national directives (Perera, 1998a). In 1981, a 'school cluster' system was introduced under education proposals of reform and this reform was called the 'white paper'. Under this cluster system, schools were grouped together for better organisation in the same geographical areas for development and management. The core school and the principal of the cluster had the power and authority over many areas of the school management. This cluster principal was the head of the cluster schools and the core school was the management centre. The cluster principal had the responsible as the District Director of Education for administration and supervision of the cluster schools. Some significant aspects of the cluster system are summarised as: the cluster principal identified the strength and functions of the schools of cluster, then planned and developed whole schools; the teachers deployed by the cluster principal, among the schools of cluster; the cluster principal organised the curricula programs, the sharing of facilities and equipment within the cluster; the cluster principal had authority to recommend increments and recommend minor punishments; and the cluster principal had the authority to use the facility fees (Perera, 1998a). This was a significant and important effort for the decentralised power and authority to the grass root levels. However, this 'white paper' educational reform was cancelled. In 1984, the management reforms recommended that the delegation of power should be given directly to the school level. That recommendation had included the authority to punish any teacher, to suspend any student for misconduct or misbehaviours, and financial authority to repair any equipment or furniture in the school. In addition, that recommendation included authority for principals to develop funds.

The next event was the Provincial Council Act, 1987. According to that Act, many political and administrative functions were decentralised to eight Provinces in Sri Lanka in 1984. Consequently, Provincial Education Ministries were established. The responsibility of the Province is the provision of facilities to schools, the appointments of principals to Type 2 and 3 schools, the implementation of non-formal education programs, the construction and maintenance of physical facilities of schools, procurement and distribution of educational aids, and furniture. In 1993 the decentralisation effort became more consultative and participatory. However, in 1993, the School Development Boards were introduced for the schools. The duties of the School Development Board was to assist the principal to assess the current needs and performance of the school, develop cultural activities and sports, develop and maintain infrastructure facilities of the school, and utilise government allocations and community contributions (MOE, 2004; Perera, 1998b). The abovementioned initiatives are the main efforts introduced to the education system of Sri Lanka, to promote effective decentralisation of educational administration. In addition, Perera (1998b, p. 41) says that "The process of decentralisation was mainly concerned with establishing layers between the central ministry and the school in order to bring management closer to school. Though the geographical units of administration have shifted from the central to the middle levels, the pattern in which schools function almost remained unchanged". Further, by the early 1990s there were four layers of the education administrative system between the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the individual school, which were the Provincial Ministry of Education (PMOE), Provincial Department of Education (PDOE), the Zonal Education Office (ZEO) and the Divisional Education Office and this administration structure is the currently functioning administration structure of the Sri Lankan education system.

Under such a situation, many issues were identified during the decentralisation process and some of the main issues were, firstly, the schools were subjected to multiple controls by different layers and different offices had issued different instructions on the same subject. Secondly, the officers who represented the different layers were responsible for helping schools to better function, but they did not contribute properly to the development of schools. Thirdly, the co-ordination between the different levels was insufficient. Next, was the aim to establishing different layers to put an end to lengthy procedures, but there were administration procedures which had become longer. Finally, the multiplication of work within the different layers had increased the workload of the school principals. Therefore, Perera (1998b, p. 43) suggests that, "This reveals that a more comprehensive and carefully prepared package needs to be introduced if schools are to work with more autonomy. Most functions carried out by the above layers could be delegated to the school level". In

1996, the reforms in general education were introduced and under these reforms, the concept of SBM was included. SBM is an effective tool in the management of the schools, and it should specifically state the power and authority of the school principal and the Senior Management Group of the school (MOE, 2004; MOE, 2005). As mentioned before, in the late 1990s, a major national educational reform was implemented in Sri Lanka. Through this national educational reform, delegation and devolution of functional power has spread between the Central Government and the ninth Provincial Councils. After the introduction of the major education reform in 1998, SBM was introduced in 1998 as a pilot project at 1,552 schools (MOE, 2005), and the Central Government holds a responsibility for national education policy at all levels. However, Provincial Councils play an important role in the administration of the school system. As a result, devolution of educational management power flowed down to schools to empower front line service to principals of schools, sectional heads, teachers and local communities (MOE, 2005). "Under School-Based Management, each school will have a budget for staff development and congruence between staff training and school needs will be more conceivable" (Perera, 1998b, p. 46).

After the introduction of SBM in the 1990s, it has not been spread in Sri Lanka in a decade because some obstacles have influenced the development and establishment of SBM in Sri Lanka's education context. "For the successful implementation and sentence of SBM, significant changes in both role and orientation at every level of the existing education system need to be introduced. The preparation of the key players, e.g. principal and middle managers in schools is vital to ensure the successful introduction of SBM" (Perera, 1998b, p. 62). Under the concepts of SBM, the school principal has significant responsibility to adopt these concepts in the school. Wohlstetter & Mohrman (1996) states that all schools that implemented SBM and principals of those schools played a key role in dispersing power, in promoting a school-wide commitment to learning and growth in skills and knowledge, in expecting all teachers to participate in the work of the school, in collecting information about student learning, and in distributing rewards. In addition, the principals were often referred to as 'facilitators' and 'leaders', as strong supporters of their teachers, as the people who brought innovations to the school, and as principals who moved reform agendas forward.

3. Conclusion

This paper reviewed the literature of School-Based Management (SBM) in Sri Lankan context and the importance of SBM in the education system. In addition the paper articulated SBM practices in some Western countries, this findings (information) would be benefited for further study in similar field in education.

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