The Capacity Development Opportunities of Sri Lankan Government School Principals

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ABSTRACT

Human resource is more important than any other resource in every institution or organization. In a school, the principal is the chief manager who supervise the human resources. Therefore, there should be proper professional development programmes in the system of Education to enhance the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the principal. Through that more systematic, effective and productive Education service can be delivered to the community. It has become a necessity to pay attention to the capacity development of principals. Therefore, it was necessary to do a research on identifying the capacity development areas of Sri Lankan government school principals. The main aim of this study was to find out the capacity development opportunities for Sri Lankan government school principals. With special focus to 60 principals in Hambantota district, 6 directors of Education and 5 trainers of principals data had been collected through questionnaires, interviews and documents. The methodology used was mixed method approach and the data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Through this study, the necessary capacity development areas for Sri Lankan government school principals were identified where suitable suggestions were made for modifications. It could be concluded that the principals were in need of appropriate pre-service or in service professional development. The awareness of the principals regarding the nature and the duration of the existing capacity development programmes was not satisfactory. Over half of the selected principals in the sample have pointed out that the capacity development programmes for the school principals are not conducted based on their capacity development needs.

Key words: capacity development, professional development, school principals, capacity development needs

INTRODUCTION

Building capacities is essential in any sector because human resources directly deal with the victory or defeat of any organization. It is therefore crucial for school administrators. As a summary, school administrators must navigate the complicated environment in which they perform their management and leadership responsibilities. On the other hand, a school's performance suffers when new leaders are not mentored. A school principal is thought of as a leader whose abilities influence the classroom setting.The new emphasis for professional development is on how school principals carry out their responsibilities. Principals in schools need to take on more leadership roles. The current study demonstrates that the capacity development opportunities of Sri Lankan government school principals are effective.

School management is the process of carefully managing an organization's limited resources while upholding standards in order to reap the greatest rewards and meet the institution's anticipated goals. At a school, human resources are a highly potent force. The same is true for physical resources. Careful consideration must be given to these human and physical resources, as well as money and time resources, during the school management process. The effectiveness of the school administration process determines

whether the entire educational system succeeds or fails.

According to both Fayol and managerial practice, the process of management is extremely wide. Planning is a compulsory phenomenon in a school. Planning students to achieve higher targets in examinations, planning to prepare time tables at the beginning of the year considering the available number of teachers in the school and their subject knowledge etc. and every other task is needed to be implemented due to an appropriate plan. The principal has to organize meetings for students, teachers and parents, various functions, teacher and student welfare activities etc. At the same time the principal should develop this ability to achieve the aims of the institution through correct leadership. Coordinating skills are another that a principal should obtain. The principal bears the responsibility of building up unity among each and every section of the school. Similarly, control is another necessity for a school. Principal need to supervise whether the things take place according to the prepared plans and appropriate changes should be made whenever irregularities are visible.

Thus, a principal must engage in the above mentioned management actions. In order to lead all the resources of the school on time, to achieve the aims of the school, the principal must have in-depth knowledge and practical training about management and managerial process. Therefore, all the elements of the managerial process that are elaborated by Fayol and included in his management theory are directly connected to the school management procedure of the principal. Hence, the theoretical information on management training needs of the principals are directly related to the first objective of the present study through which an identification of the existing capacity development procedure for Sri Lankan government school principals was expected.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Senevirathna (2006) implies that as principals' professional development opportunities are planned without a proper analysis of training needs, fulfilling the training needs of the trainees is at a very low level. Moreover, Herath (2010) and Hettige (1992) indicate the necessity of providing training in educational technology regarding the professional development of principals. Also many of the principals in the sample of Herath's research claim that when concerning the future changes of professional development programmes, the curriculum should be changed timely and more attention should be paid for the development of skills.

Herath (2010) presents the following statements regarding the views of the principals about the existing training procedure in Sri Lanka by analyzing the responses of the principals in the research sample. Accordingly, most of the principals believed that professional development of government school principals is not based on proper planning; many of the sample declared that there is no strategic evaluation procedure in the professional development of principals; no feedback is provided at the completion of tasks of the principal and the research sample assumes that the principals those who are provided with the professional development opportunities do not satisfactorily using their knowledge in a practical way for the betterment of their institutions. However, National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (2002) reveals a contrasting finding to this.

According to Mathews and Crow (2003), the principal's socialization process entails role-taking and role-making. Similarly, Hart (1991) identified four themes in the socialization process of principals.

"First – Socialization tactics involve the collective or individual socialization context in which the principal finds himself or herself. (p.454)

Second – delineated 3 socialization stages.

1. The encounter, application and confrontation stage
2. The socialization adjustment, accommodation and clarity stage
3. The stabilization, role management and location stage (p.29)

Third – The social structures facilitate beginning principal tendencies to increase their interactions with those similar to themselves and to decrease interactions with those whom they perceive to dissimilar to them. (p.35)

Fourth – the outcomes or effects are the cumulative effect of socialization experiences."

Different researchers claim differently on university preparation of principals. For instance, Levine (2005); Hess and Kelly (2005); Haller et al (1997) claim that "the preparation of principals, particularly in universities is inadequate for the new policy and social contexts" while Young and Peterson (2002); Young et al. (2005) argue that "although university preparation should be more rigorous, it is still the best model for principal preparation". These arguments are relevant to the present study as Sri Lankan government school principals' perspectives on university level capacity development programmes were also examined by the researcher.

Additionally, the socialization of beginning principals is usually characterized by two broad types that includes (a) professional and (b) organizational according to Greenfield (1985a);

Where these two forms of socialization frequently conflict as professional socialization is focused at inculcating the conception of the role for newcomers and organizational socialization is focused at making these newcomers effective organizational members.

In the case of US principals, "professional socialization typically includes courses on topics primarily derived from management science and industrial psychology" (Callahan, 1962; Crow & Grogan, 2005). For instance, these topics varied from finance, law, leadership, organizational theory etc. In addition, "University preparation programmes include a field component, typically in the form of an internship" (Milstein et al, 1991; Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004).

Crow and Matthews (1998); Jackson and Kelly(2002) state that "in order to prepare aspiring principals for a complex society, internships should provide these future principals with the opportunity to work with a variety of students, a variety of effective, culturally relevant teaching and a variety of school and work settings."

Broadening the notion of organizational socialization to include not only a particular school, but also social, mental and health agencies; community religious and government entities; and other schools with similar and different demographics can strengthen the learning of beginning principals.

Moreover, reinvigorating the assistant principalship position in the USA, as a leadership development position (in a similar way to the deputy head teacher position in England) can strengthen the organizational socialization for beginning principals as well as contributing to the school's learning capacity (Greenfield(1985c); Matthews and Crow(2003).For beginning principals, personal socialization can include identifying with the larger view of schools that goes beyond one classroom and with a different image of the role than a traditional image (Ortiz, 1982).

The above researches reveal the importance of the managerial process of the principal. In order to fulfill such an important process, the principals must have a proper training regarding this. Thus, it is a timely necessity to study about such training opportunities with regard to Sri Lankan government school principals. As this research focusses at the existing training opportunities for Sri Lankan government school

principals, the factors considered in other countries when training principals and the necessary areas that should be strengthened in Sri Lankan government school principal, this study would be useful for the education policy makers, educational administrators as well as principals who expect success in the school management process. The success of the principals result in the whole society. Thus, this research is important for the whole Sri Lankan future society as well.

RESEARCH METHOD

Methodology and the main aim of the research

In the research study of identifying the areas of capacity building procedure of Sri Lankan government school principals, the most suitable method was considered as the mixed method approach. The main aim of this study was to find out the capacity development opportunities for Sri Lankan government school principals. It was needed to analyze data both quantitatively and qualitatively. Thus, the mixed method was identified the most suitable.

Sample of the study

There were 60 principals selected as a sample from the schools in Hambanthota District in Sri Lanka. Table 01 shows the selected government school principals in the research sample.

Table 01: The selected government school principals in the research sample

Education zone	1AB school principals	1C school principals	Type 2 school principals	Type 3 school principals	Total
Hambanthota	5	5	5	5	20
Tangalle	5	5	5	5	20
Walasmulla	5	5	5	5	20
Total	15	15	15	15	60

In addition there were five trainers and course coordinators who were engaged in training principals and the six directors of education in the sample.

Data gathering instruments

In order to gather data three data gathering instruments were prepared.

Questionnaires

A questionnaire was given for the selected principals.

Interviews

Randomly selected 15 principals (25%) out of 60, three zonal directors of the three education zones, the Director of Human Resource Development branch of Ministry of Education, the Director of Centre for Education Leadership Development, the Southern Provincial Director of Education and five trainers and course coordinators were interviewed.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered through data gathering instruments such as questionnaires, interviews and documents. The collected data were presented in percentages, tables, graphs and notes. Quantitative data were analyzed through tables, graphs and charts using MS EXCEL. Percentages

of data were calculated and analyzed using SPSS. Moreover, qualitative data were thematically analyzed.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Background information of the sample

The years of service as a principal of the selected sample were examined. The collected data are presented in the following Table 2.

Table 2: Years of service as a principal

Years	Number of principals	Percentage (%)
<5	24	40
6-10	27	45
11-20	8	13.3
>20	1	1.7
Total	60	100

According to Table No.2, the majority (45%) of the principals in the sample had 6-10 years of experience. Table No. 3 shows the highest educational qualifications of the principal's sample.

Table 3: Highest Educational Qualifications of the principals in the sample

Qualification	Number of principals	Percentage (%)
G.C.E. (O.L)	0	0
G.C.E. (A.L)	17	28.3
Degree	38	63.3
Master Degree	4	6.7
Mphil	1	1.7
PhD	0	0
Total	60	100

The above table shows that a majority of the selected sample obtains a degree as the highest educational qualification. There are 38 principals under this category and it is 63.3% of the sample. Only one principal obtains an MPhil which is 1.7% of the sample. There are no individuals who obtain both G.C.E. (O.L) and PhD as the highest educational qualification.

In addition to that, the highest professional qualifications of the principals in the sample were examined. The collected data are presented below in Table No.4.

Table 4: Highest professional qualifications of the principals in the sample

Qualification	Number of principals	Percentage (%)
BEd	3	5.0
PGD	8	13.3
PGDE	22	36.7
PGDEM	4	6.7

PGD	8	13.3
PGDE	22	36.7
PGDEM	4	6.7
Teacher training	17	28.3
NCOE	4	6.7
Other	2	3.3
Total	60	100

The above table presents that the majority of the principals (36.7%) has obtained PGDE as the highest professional qualification. That is 22 individuals in number. A considerable number of 17 principals (28.3%) obtain Teacher training as the highest professional qualification.

Existing capacity development opportunities for Sri Lankan government school principals

- **Foreign training opportunities**

Providing foreign training opportunities for the school principals are presented in the following Table 5.

Table 5: The need of providing foreign training opportunities for the school principals

Criteria	Number of principals	Percentage (%)
Yes (agree)	57	95
No (disagree)	3	5
Total	60	100

This table shows that there is a drastic difference between the number of principals who agree and disagree in the need of providing foreign training opportunities for the school principals. 57 individuals of the sample or 95% agree that the principals should be provided with foreign training opportunities while only 3 individuals or 5% of the sample disagree with that.

- **Pre-service principals' training opportunities**

Table 6 shows pre-service principals' training opportunities received by the selected principals.

Table 6: Pre-service principals' training opportunities received by the selected principals in the sample

Criteria	Number of principals	Percentage (%)
Yes (received)	23	38.3
No (not received)	37	61.7
Total	60	100

Accordingly, only 38.3% of the sample (23 individuals) has participated in pre-service principals' training programmes while the majority of 61.7% (37 individuals) has not received any of such programmes.

- **The duration of the pre-service principals' training programmes**

The duration of the pre-service principals training programmes completed by the principals in the sample was examined and the results are presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7:The duration of the pre-service principals' training programmes

Duration	Number of principals	Percentage (%)
< 1 month	11	18.3
1-3 months	10	16.7
3-6 months	0	0
6-12 months	1	1.7
Above 12 months	1	1.7
Not relevant (No training)	37	61.7
Total	60	100

The above table reveals that the percentage of the principals in the sample who have not received any pre-service principals' training programme is very high. That is 61.7% of the sample. Thus, it is obvious that there are a considerable number of principals working in schools at present, who have not received any pre-service principals' training programme. Only 1.7% or only one principal each has got pre-service training programmes both with 6-12 months duration and above 12 months duration. 11 principals (18.3%) in the sample have got pre-service training programmes of less than 1 month duration.

- **Type of pre-service principals' training programme**

The Table 8 shows that the type of pre-service principals' training programmes.

Table 8: Types of pre-service principals' training programmes

Criteria	Number of principals	Percentage (%)
Full time	14	23.3
Part time	7	11.7
Not relevant	2	3.3
Not received pre-service training programmes	37	61.7
Total	60	100

According to Table 9, 14 principals out of the sample (23.3%) have studied full time pre-service principals' training programmes while 7 principals (11.7%) have studied part time programmes. Therefore, it is revealed that the total percentage of those who have studied either full time or part time programmes are at a very low level.

- **The institutions from where the selected principals have studied the training programmes**

Furthermore, the institutions from where the selected principals have studied these training programmes shows in the following Table 10, the collected data are presented.

Table 10: Institutions that conducted the pre-service training programmes studied by the principals in the sample

Institution	Number of principals	Percentage (%)
University	0	0
National Institute of Education (NIE)	16	26.7
Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA)	1	1.7

Private institutions	1	1.7
Provincial centres	2	3.3
Other institutions	3	5.0
No pre-service training	37	61.7
Total	60	100

Above table shows that 26.7% of the principals in the sample have studied their pre-service principals' training programmes at the National Institute of Education (NIE). Other than that Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA), private institutions and provincial centres also have provided them pre-service principals' training programmes.

- **The completion of the pre-service principals' training programmes**

The following Table 11 presents data regarding the completion of the pre-service principals' training programmes.

Table 11: Completion of the pre-service principals' training programmes by the principals in the sample

Criteria	Number of principals	Percentage (%)
Yes	23	38.3
No	0	0
No pre-service training	37	61.7
Total	60	100

According to Table 11, it is clear that all the principals who have got pre-service principals' training have successfully completed the respective programmes. As a percentage it is 38.3% of the sample. However, 37 individuals (61.7%) of the sample have not got any pre-service training opportunity.

- **In-service principals' training after being appointed as principals**

The data of possibility of selected principals in getting in-service principals' training after being appointed as principals are presented in Table 12 as follows.

Table 12: In-service principals' training opportunities received by the selected principals in the sample

Criteria	Number of principals	Percentage (%)
Yes (received)	28	46.7
No (not received)	32	53.3
Total	60	100

The above table shows that the only 28 principals (46.6%) in the sample have got in-service principals' training after being appointed as principals. On the other hand 32 principals (53.3%) have not received any in-service principals' training after being appointed as principal. Approximately, half of the selected principals in the sample were not provided with any in-service principals' training which can be considered a major weakness of the responsible authorities.

The duration of the provided in-service training programmes were presented below in Table 13.

Table 13: The duration of the in-service principals' training programmes

Duration	Number of principals	Percentage (%)
<1 month	23	38.3
1-3 months	1	1.7
3-6 months	0	0
6-12 months	2	3.3
Above 12 months	2	3.3
Not relevant (No training)	32	53.3
Total	60	100

The above table shows that the percentage of selected principals who have got in-service training programmes of less than 1 month is 38.3% and it is 23 by number. The percentage who have not received any in-service training programmes is 53.3% and 32 in number which is more than half of the sample. Thus, it reveals that most of the individuals in the sample have not received any in-service training programmes. There are no principals who have got in-service training programmes of 3-6 months duration.

- **The type of in-service training programmes provided for the principals**

The type of in-service training programmes provided for the principals in the sample are presented in the following Table 14.

Table 14: Types of in-service principals' training programmes

Criteria	Number of principals	Percentage (%)
Full time	12	20.0
Part time	10	16.7
Not relevant	6	10.0
Not received in-service training programmes	32	53.3
Total	60	100

According to Table 15, 12 principals out of the sample (20.0%) have studied full time in-service principals' training programmes while 10 principals (16.7%) have studied part time programmes. Those who have selected 'Not relevant' option is 10%. Therefore, it is revealed that the total percentage of those who have studied either full time or part time programmes are at a very low level.

- **The institutions from where the selected principals**

Furthermore, the institutions from where the selected principals have studied these training programmes were shows in the following Table 16.

Table 16: Institutions that conducted the in-service training programmes studied by the principals in the sample

Institution	Number of principals	Percentage (%)
University	0	0
National Institute of Education (NIE)	21	35.0
Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA)	0	0

Ministry of Education and NIE	2	3.3
Zonal Education Office	2	3.3
Provincial Centres	2	3.3
Provincial Department of Education	1	1.7
No in-service training	32	53.3
Total	60	100

Table 16 presents that those who have not studied any in-service principals' training programmes is 53.3% of the sample and no one has studied in-service principals' training programmes neither from universities nor Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA). 35% of the sample have studied in-service principals' training prgrammes from the National Institute of Education. Equal percentages of 3.3% each have studied in-service principals' training prgrammes from the Ministry of Education and National Institute of Education both, Zonal Education Office and Provincial Centres. Only 1.7% of the sample have studied in-service principals' training prgrammes from the Provincial Department of Education and that is only one individual.

- **The completion of the in-service principals' training programmes**

The data of the completion of the in-service principals' training programmes are presented below in Table 17.

Table 17: Completion of the in-service principals' training programmes by the principals in the sample

Criteria	Number of principals	Percentage (%)
Yes	28	46.7
No	0	0
No in-service training	32	53.3
Total	60	100

According to Table 17, it is clear that all the principals who have got in-service principals' training have successfully completed the respective programmes. As a percentage it is 46.7 % of the sample. However, 32 individuals (53.3%) of the sample have not got any in-service principals' training opportunity.

- **Expectations of the selected principals in following a professional development programme in the near future**

The data of the expectations of selected principals in following a professional development programme in the near future are presented in Table 18 as follows.

Table 18: Expectations of the selected principals in following a professional development programme in the near future

Criteria	Number of principals	Percentage (%)
Yes	43	71.7
No	17	28.3
Total	60	100

According to the above table, 71.7% of the selected sample (43 individuals) hope to follow a professional development programme in the near future. Thus it is obvious that the majority of the selected sample hope to follow a professional development programme in the near future which is a positive trend. But at the same time, 28.3% of the sample (17 individuals) do not wish to follow any professional

development programme in the near future.

- **Capacity development programmes they wish to follow in future**

capacity development programmes they wish to follow in future were show the following Table 19.

Table 19: The capacity development programmes the principals in the sample wish to follow

Programme	Number of principals	Percentage (%)
Post Graduate Diploma in Educational Management	5	8.3
Financial management, planning	1	1.7
Principals' training	1	1.7
Capacity development	1	1.7
Administrative development of principals	1	1.7
Post Graduate Diploma	1	1.7
Post Graduate Diploma, management	1	1.7
Master of Education	1	1.7
Management	4	6.7
Management, administration	1	1.7
Administration	1	1.7
Educational management	1	1.7
Educational administration	1	1.7
School management	12	20.0
School management, financial management	1	1.7
School Management Diploma	2	3.3
Not interested in following programmes	25	41.7
Total	60	100

The above table shows that nearly half of the selected sample did not have any interest in following a capacity development programme in future. As a percentage that amount is 41.7% of the sample. The most number of principals in the sample want to follow a capacity development programme regarding school management. That is 20% of the sample (12 individuals). 5 individuals (8.3%) need to follow Post Graduate Diploma in Educational Management while 4 individuals (6.7%) are interested in management. Only 2 individuals (3.3%) need to follow a diploma in school management.

- **The institutions at which they wish to follow the capacity development programmes**

Furthermore, data regarding the institutions at which they wish to follow the capacity development programmes were presented as follows in Table 20.

Table 20: The institutions at which the selected principals wish to follow capacity development programmes

Institution	Number of principals	Percentage (%)
National Institute of Education	21	35
National Institute of Education, Open University	1	1.7
National Institute of Education, Ministry of Education	1	1.7
National Institute of Education, University	1	1.7
Centre for Education Leadership Development	5	8.3

Ministry of Education	1	1.7
Provincial Council	1	1.7
University of Colombo	2	3.3
Not responded	27	45
Total	60	100

When studying the above table, it is clear that the number of principals who have not mentioned any institution regarding following a capacity development programme is 27 and as a percentage it is 45% of the sample. This is nearly half of the selected sample. The highest percentage that has marked an institution to follow a capacity development programme is 35%. In other words, 21 individuals have selected National Institute of Education to follow a capacity development programme. 5 individuals (8.3%) have preference in selecting Centre for Education Leadership Development to follow a capacity development programme while only 2 individuals (3.3%) have selected University of Colombo.

- **Institutions the principals participated in any of the workshops or seminars on education management and education administration**

In addition to that, which institutions the selected principals participated in any of the workshops or seminars on education management and education administration was presented in the following Table 21.

Table 21: The institutions at which the selected principals participated in workshops or seminars on education management and education administration

Institution	Number of principals	Percentage (%)
Ministry of Education (MOE)	2	3.3
MOE, Provincial Department of Education	1	1.7
MOE, Provincial Department of Education, Zonal Education Office (ZEO), National Institute of Education (NIE)	6	10.0
MOE, Provincial Department of Education, University	1	1.7
MOE, ZEO	1	1.7
MOE. ZEO, NIE	3	5.0
Provincial Department of Education	2	3.3
Provincial Department of Education, ZEO	8	13.3
Provincial Department of Education, ZEO, NIE	3	5.0
Provincial Department of Education, NIE	1	1.7
Zonal Education Office (ZEO)	5	8.3
ZEO, NIE	2	3.3
ZEO, Other	1	1.7
National Institute of Education (NIE)	3	5.0
Not participated any	21	35.0
Total	60	100

According to the above Table, 21 individuals of the sample (35%) have not participated in any workshop or seminar on education management and education administration organized by any institution.

13.3% of the sample have participated in such workshops or seminars organized by Provincial Department of Education and Zonal Education Office. Next, 10% of the sample have participated in such workshops or seminars organized by Provincial Department of Education, Zonal Education Office and national Institute of Education.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Most of the principals in the sample have stated that the responsible authorities pay less attention in fulfilling the capacity development needs of the principals. Also they have pointed out the existing reasons for this less attention. According to them, they were "not given the opportunities to reveal their capacity development needs" and "the responsible authorities mostly conduct capacity development programmes without considering the development needs of the principals. Thus, the respective authorities should pay necessary attention in developing the capacity development needs of the school principals. Similarly, Senevirathna (2006) insists that in order to fulfill the duties of the principals they should be provided with training opportunities about managerial tasks. Also Senevirathna emphasizes that principals must have quality management training to succeed the challenges. Liyanage (1994) highlights since the principals have to act as skillful leaders as well as creative managers, the management training they need must be provided immediately.

The majority of the principals in the sample have mentioned that the procedure of their capacity development is not done according to an appropriate plan. This was further confirmed by the zonal directors of education. Therefore, it can be concluded that the capacity development process of the principals should be done based on an appropriate planning. Here, Premasiri (2004) suggests that out of the principals with educational and professional qualifications, people with innate creative leadership qualities should be selected and provided them with further training on principal's leadership. Moreover, Wills (1980) reveals that a principal needs to engage in a variety of managerial tasks within his or her role. In order to fulfill this need, well planned training programmes should be implemented.

Over half of the selected principals sample have pointed out that the capacity development programmes for the school principals are not conducted based on their capacity development needs. Also they have provided reasons for this situation. Moreover, 71.7% of the selected principals have stated that there is no appropriate evaluation method in this regard. Thus, it can be concluded that, it is important to conduct capacity development programmes considering the capacity development needs while implementing a proper evaluation method. Wills (1980) mentions that as the principal is the chief executive of the school, he needs to become excellent at managerial and professional skills both internally and externally. Thus, well planned training programmes should be provided in order to fulfill those development needs.

Out of the selected principals in the sample, 56.7% have mentioned that no feedback is provided regarding the performance appraisal of the principals. They have come out with the reasons for providing or not providing feedback. Hence, it is clear that providing feedback on the performance appraisal of the school principals needs to be paid more attention by the responsible authorities. Similarly, Ranasuriya (2002) suggests the trainers of principals and policy makers to maintain strategic evaluation and provide appropriate guidance after training.

The majority of the principals have pointed out that the training needs of the principals are not identified by the responsible authorities and the zonal directors of education have agreed with this statement. Hence, it can be concluded that, it is necessary to identify the training needs of the principals. Flanigon et al (1990) conducted a research in USA about the changing role of the principal. The overall finding of this

research is that suitable training opportunities should be there in order to expect a change in the role of the principal. To provide suitable training opportunities, the training needs of the principals need to be identified.

In addition to that, 66.7% more principals in the sample stated that the institutions which plan professional development programmes do not get the contribution of the principals in the planning process. Also, they have pointed out the reasons for not getting their contribution in this regard. Moreover, the principals have said that those institutions at least do not get the suggestions of the principals and do not maintain a healthy relationship with the principals. Therefore, it can be concluded that, when preparing plans for the professional development programmes, it is necessary to get the involvement of the principals in them as well. The study of Sackney & Walker (2006) on Canadian perspectives on beginning principals; their role in building capacity for learning communities reveals that, the beginning principals need to first develop personal, then collective efficacy as well as mindfulness of their own learning and the learning culture. Moreover, Wijethunga (2006) states that the school system needs principals with deep understanding and knowledge about planning, organizing and managing the time as well as human resources and physical resources of the school. Such principals do not appear automatically. Hence, satisfactory management training is essential for the principals to fill the gap of their unawareness. Therefore, it is important to get the contribution of the principals in the planning process of professional development programmes.

The majority of principals have stated that professional development of principals should be done continuously. Therefore, it can be assumed that continuous professional development opportunities should be provided for the principals. Hettige (1992) states that the principal should be able to identify the most appropriate management styles, communication strategies, supervision and feedback, administrative strategies etc. for his school. This implies that the principals should select and follow training programmes with a syllabus consisted of such training areas which the principals need to have a mastery of. Opatha (2005) brings out the necessity of training school managers. In order to fulfill this necessity, satisfactory opportunities need to be put into practice.

High proportion principals of the sample have agreed that professional development training programmes should be conducted at the university level. They have mentioned the reasons for this idea as well. Thus, it can be assumed that the professional development training programmes could be started at university level due to the possibility of conducting more systematic and methodical training programmes at university level. Supporting this, by the government gazette published on 222nd October 1999, the officers of Sri Lanka Education Administrative Service and the principals of Sri Lanka Principals' Service are granted study leave with salary to follow certain study programmes in the universities or other tertiary education institutions in Sri Lanka. Moreover, in the case of US principals 'University preparation programmes include a field component, typically in the form of an internship." (Milstein et al, 1991; Browne Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). Furthermore, different researchers claim differently on university preparation of principals. For instance, Levine (2005); Hess & Kelly (2005); Haller & et al (1997) claim that "the presparation of principals, particularly in universities is inadequate for the new policy and social contexts" while Young & Peterson (2002); Young & et al (2005) argue that "although university preparation should be more rigorous, it is still the best model for principal preparation".

As far as the teaching methods used at professional development programmes are considered only 1.7% of the sample of principals preferred lecture method. 28.3% of them preferred discussions while an equal percentage of 16.7 preferred case studies and group discussions. Thus, it is clear that the least popular teaching method is the lecture method.

Some principals in the sample have identified the unavailability of opportunities to get trained according to their own training needs, as a notable challenge in the procedure of professional development

of principals. Therefore, necessary adjustments in the professional development procedures should be made providing the opportunity for the principals to obtain the training based on their training needs. The changes that should be implemented to overcome these challenges were also pointed out by the selected principals.

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