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PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVE ON SCHOOL-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION

W.M.Shaminda Wanasinghe *¹

¹ The Faculty of Education, The Open University of Sri Lanka. Email: wmwan@ou.ac.lk

*Corresponding author

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Abstract

Teaching is one of the most important professions in the society. The teacher is the main facilitator of the education provided to the students. The teacher should update the knowledge by completing his / her training requirements from time to time after the basic teacher education he / she receives. A school-based teacher education program has been introduced for school teachers for this purpose. The main objective of the study was to identify the professional development needs of school teachers through this school-based teacher education programs. The main objective is to study the existing school-based teacher education. Accordingly, the study was conducted based on three specific objectives. Identify principals' perspective on school-based teacher education, identify problems and issues faced in the implementation of school-based teacher education and Make recommendations for the development of school-based teacher education. Data obtained from a questionnaire and an interview revealed that principals have gained awareness and training in school-based teacher education programs. It was also observed that a school-based teacher education program has been included in the annual plan of the school and the training needs of the teachers have been identified and there is an active contribution of the teachers. It was revealed that they must seek the help of experts and face financial problems. Accordingly, it was concluded that the Denuwara Zone principals have a good understanding of school-based teacher development. Recommendations were also made to further raise awareness on a school-based teacher development program, to establish an expert pool, to formulate a regulatory program and to increase financial allocations.

Keywords: Professional Development, Professional Development Requirements School-Based Teacher Education, Teachers, Teacher Education

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Introduction

Teaching is the highest profession of all professions. This is because the basis of all other professions is formed through the teaching profession. In. “If you educate a boy, you educate one individual. if you educate a girl, you educate the whole family and if you educate a teacher, you educate the whole community” (Aggrawal 1995)¹, is emphasized the importance of teacher education. At present, various strategies are being adopted to provide teacher education. In Sri Lanka, various Programmes are offered by teacher training colleges, National colleges of Education as well as Universities. In addition, residential training is also organized by the Zonal Education Offices. At present, the Ministry of Education has taken steps to implement programs for the professional development of teachers on a school basis. School-based teacher development programs are currently being implemented as part of school-based management. Circular 10/20132 of the Ministry of Education has stated that the primary objective of the school itself is to identify the training needs of teachers and to organize training programs accordingly in school-based teacher development. Circular 10/20132 further stated that the various teacher development programs currently in operation are not compatible with the needs of the school and can be implemented more closely to enable the school to reap the benefits more effectively depending on the geographical location of the schools.

School-based teacher education has now become an integral part of school annual plans. Sri Lanka will have 240494 teachers by 2020 out of which 1472 are untrained teachers. But updating the professional development of trained teachers can be seen as a matter of urgency. School-based teacher education can update the vocational education needs of this group of teachers. Desimone (2009)³ has also shown that implementing school-based teacher development programs is more effective than holding isolated workshops and seminars. Erawan (2015)⁴ states that the implementation of school-based teacher programs has many benefits as well as strengths for the teacher as well as the school. Setunga (2006)⁵'s statements also highlight the importance of implementing school-based teacher education more than other training programs for teacher training.

The primary objective of this course is to explore issues based on Sri Lanka's experience in implementing school-based teacher development. It can be pointed out that conducting such a study is important to enhance school-based teacher education in Sri Lanka. Considering the importance of education, it can be said that school-based teacher development enhances the professional development of teachers as well as the educational performance of students. It also builds positive interpersonal relationships as well as the opportunity to share experiences while working within the faculty. It can also be pointed out that the professional development of the teachers is directly related to the needs of them and is cost effective. This will enable the school principal and the teaching staff to identify the training needs and organize future training programs. It is also important for policy makers to be able to apply this learning experience in monitoring school-based teacher education programs.

Various research have also been done on school-based teacher development programs. Opfer & Pedder (2011)⁶ found that school-based teacher development programs are more effective in in-service training and that the role of the school is important. Knight elal (2016)⁷ points out that school-based teacher education programs update the experience gained from pre-service teacher education. They further state that school-based teacher development is important not only for teachers but also for teacher educators, graduates, supervisors, as well as institutions that

provide teacher education such as universities and teacher training colleges. Thus, it can be said that school-based teacher education is important for every aspect of the field of education. Day & Gu (2007)⁸ noted that through school-based teacher education programs, teachers can share their experiences through collaboration and interaction. This is since good manners can be exchanged in these training programs.

Teaching cannot be done in the same training or in the same way. The teacher must adapt to the constant social and technological changes. Alkhaldeh and Qualter (2004)⁹ stated that school-based teacher development needs to be introduced to every school as a key strategy for teacher updating and training. This will make it easier for the teacher to adapt to the changing world. Pointing out the importance of school-based teacher development, Bandara (2018)¹⁰ states that this is a great concept that has emerged in recent times in relation to teacher education as it provides an opportunity to develop and activate their profession. Little (2012)¹¹ noted that these school-based teacher development programs enable teachers to experience and share interactions with their fellow teachers. Dobie & Aderson (2015)¹² points out that another strategy that can lead to school-based teacher development is to maintain developmental dialogue among teachers. Such conversations can erase misunderstandings between teachers and bring about a consensus between the teaching and learning process and cognition. Salite (2015)¹³ points to school-based teacher education as a re-orientation of teacher education. He further stated that school-based teacher education is very important in the process of sustainable development.

McDiarmid & Bright (2008)¹⁴ noted the need for and importance of a teacher receiving a lifelong education in pursuing his or her career. They further state that school-based teacher education can be considered as an interdisciplinary lifelong learning process that contributes to the professional development of teachers. Alexandron and Swaffield (2014)¹⁵ points out that school leadership play a major role in the professional development of teachers. Liu et al (2016)¹⁶ states that school principals also play an important role in school-based teacher development programs. They found that there is a positive link between learning-centered leadership and the professional development of schoolteachers. Teachers' confidence in the leadership of the school principal has also been cited as the main reason. Commenting on school-based teacher development, Kugamoorthy (2017)¹⁷ states that teachers have stated that school-based teacher education programs meet their needs to a minimum. It has also been revealed that no expert assistance is sought for these programs. Further research by Setunga (2007)¹⁸ has shown that there is no formal system in place to identify teacher training needs in schools. Erawan (2015)⁴ found that inadequate pre-service teacher training is a major problem in school-based teacher development. In this context, it can be said that the concept of school-based teacher education can play an important role in providing continuous teacher education. But the understanding of school-based teacher education among principals and teachers in Sri Lanka can be seen at different levels. It is not uncommon for schools to run workshops or seminars to spend the money they receive. It is a matter of urgency to inquire into the understanding of teachers and principals about school-based teacher education.

Methodology

The main objective is to identify the existing school-based teacher education programmes. Accordingly, the study was conducted based on three specific objectives.

1-Identify principals' perspective on school-based teacher education.

- 2-Identify problems and issues faced in the implementation of school-based teacher education.
- 3-Make recommendations for the development of school-based teacher education.

The survey design belonging to the quantitative research approach was used for this study. The population of this study is all principals working in schools in Sri Lanka. The target population is principals belonging to the Denuwara Education Zone and 42 principals were selected as a sample by random sampling. Questionnaire and interview schedule were selected for data collection. Ten principals were randomly used again from the principal sample selected for the interview. The data obtained from the questionnaire were triangulated during the interviews. Under quantitative data analysis, a percentage, was used for data analysis. Pilot survey was conducted with 10 principals and the final questionnaire was prepared based on the results.

Data analysis and Discussion

10 Likert-scale statements were given to ask principals' perspectives on school-based teacher education programs. The responses given by the principals are presented in the table.

Table 1. *Principals' Perspective on School-Based Teacher Education*

	Statements	1		2		3		4		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Adequate awareness of school-based teacher education.	18	43	14	33	08	19	02	05	42	100
2	Trained in school-based teacher education.	06	14	24	57	09	21	03	07	42	100
3	My school has started school-based teacher education programs.	15	36	20	47	04	10	03	07	42	100
4	My schoolteachers are aware of school-based teacher education.	10	24	24	57	03	07	05	12	42	100
5	The School Development Committee plans school-based teacher education.	06	14	20	48	10	24	06	14	42	100
6	The school has identified the vocational training needs of teachers.	18	43	24	57	0	0	0	0	42	100
7	School-based teacher education programs are included in the school's annual plan.	14	33	18	43	08	19	02	05	42	100
8	Teachers actively contribute to school-based teacher education programs.	03	07	23	55	06	14	10	24	42	100
9	External school resource support has been obtained to implement school-based teacher education.	03	07	20	48	10	24	09	21	42	100
10	School-based education meets the professional development needs of the teaching staff.	05	11	25	60	08	19	04	10	42	100

1-Totally agree

2-Agree

3-Disagree

4-Totally disagree

Analyzing the data obtained from the principals, 43% of them said that they strongly agree that they have adequate knowledge about school-based teacher education and 33% agree that they do. Most of the principals are aware of school-based teacher education. However, it was revealed that 24% do not have adequate awareness. That should be considered an important point. At present, these teacher education programs are being implemented in all schools and it is problematic to have a group of principals who do not have a good understanding.

Principals were asked whether they had received any training on school-based teacher education. According to the response, 71% said they had received the necessary training. However, it was found that 29% of the principals had not received the relevant training. It was revealed in the interviews that some of the principals were not given the opportunity to undergo such training as they were recent appointees. It was also observed that no such training workshops have been conducted in recent times.

Also, 83% of respondents said that school-based teacher education programs have been started and 17% have not started yet. This is since the principals are having difficulty in organizing school-based teacher education programs in the face of the current epidemic. It was clear from the comments of the teachers that the use of technology and the problems of contacting the teachers had contributed to this. It was also revealed in the principals' interview that many schools have already implemented programs using technology.

The questionnaires given to the principals also inquired about the awareness of the teachers in those schools. According to the principals, 81% of the teachers in their school said they were aware of school-based teacher education and 19% said they were not. Accordingly, many teachers are also aware of school-based teacher education.

The Ministry of Education has directed the principals in the relevant circular and instruction code that school-based teacher education programs should be discussed and organized by the School Development Committee. The questionnaire asked whether they would act accordingly. 62% responded that the School Development Committee organizes teacher education programs and 48% respond that it does not. Accordingly, it was revealed that a significant number of schools do not comply with the circular. In the interview they were asked about the reason for not acting in accordance with the circular. It was further revealed that the principals and the teaching staffs of these schools are discussing and organizing programmes due to the declining parental participation, the number of students and the number of teachers.

It is noteworthy that 100% of the responses have been received that the training needs of teachers have been identified in the implementation of school-based teacher education programs. It was also revealed that methods such as obtaining preference lists from teachers and disclosing them in teacher discussions are being followed.

The questionnaire examined whether planned school-based teacher development programs were included in the school's annual plan. According to the circular, it is mandatory to include a program in the annual plan. However, 24% of respondents said that such teacher education programs were not included in the annual plan. The principals pointed out that teacher development programs are also activated during the daily activities of the school. It was also revealed that some schools have not prepared annual plans in a systematic manner.

Sixty-two percent responded that teachers actively contribute to school-based teacher education programs and 38% respond that they do not. Teachers were asked about the reasons for the decline in active participation, and the principals believed the reduction was since these programs were held on weekends and evenings.

The questionnaire also asked whether external resource support was sought for school-based teacher education. Fifty five percent (55%) of respondents said they would seek external resource assistance. Lack of such support from 45% was also seen as a problem. The given reasons were inadequate funding, difficulty in finding such specialists around the school as well as inadequate pay for them.

Finally, principals were asked whether school-based teacher education meets the professional development needs of the school's teaching staff. Seventy one percent (71%) of principals responded that teachers' needs were being met. Also, 29% said that school-based teacher education programs do not meet the training needs of teachers.

Analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire revealed that most principals responded positively to school-based teacher education. Accordingly, it can be pointed out that school-based teacher education programs are being implemented successfully.

Also, several open-ended questions were asked to ascertain the nature of the implementation of school-based teacher education programs. Table 2 shows their response prioritization to the question of how school-based teacher education programs are implemented.

Table 2. *How to implement school-based teacher education programs*

Activity	Rank
Teacher discussion	1
Parent meeting	2
Quality Circles	3
Demonstration of lessons	4
Lesson observation	5
Action research	6

According to Table 2, most respondents said that according to traditional methods, the schools conduct teacher meetings, such as calling outsiders and giving lectures. Organizing programs with those teacher meetings was identified as a simple and easy methodology. It is also unique, and it has the lowest ratings of the competition for conducting practical research. Also, when inquired about the duration of school-based teacher education programs, it was found that such programs are often held after school. It is noteworthy that the response to such programs on weekends and holidays was minimal. It was stated that the reason for this was the reluctance of many teachers to return to school for such programs during the holidays.

The issues and ideologies faced by the principals in the implementation of school-based teacher education programs were also examined. The responses received from them are given in Table 3.

Table 3. *Problems faced in the implementation of school-based teacher education*

Problems	Rank
Reluctance to stay after school	1
Having to conduct programs during school hours	2
Attitude problems of teachers	3
Giving priority to learning and teaching activities in the school	4
Lack of active participation of teachers	5
Limited time to spend	6
Human resource procurement issues	7
Problems with financing	8
Lack of technical equipment	9
Diversity of teachers	10

It is clear from Table 3 that principals face a variety of problems. It was further revealed that the reluctance of teachers to change the impact of various circulars, environmental issues, disparity in resource allocation, and the lack of suitable subject matter experts are some of the issues that principals face in implementing school-based teacher education. This shows that although principals have a positive attitude towards the implementation of school-based teacher education programs, and they also face various problems in implementing them in practice.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Data obtained from this study on principals' perspectives on school-based teacher education programs were analyzed. Based on that data analysis, it was possible to draw the following conclusions.

Adequate knowledge of school principals on school-based teacher education. This confirms the views expressed by Liu et al (2016) and Alexandron & Swaffield (2014) that school leadership is also important for the success of teacher education programs.

The school has identified the training needs of the teachers. More important than the success of school-based teacher education is identifying teacher training needs and organizing programs accordingly. The above conclusion is confirmed by receiving 100% response to this. However, Setunga_etal (2007) states that schools do not have a system in place to identify teacher training needs. This study seems to refute the above conclusion.

Data analysis also concludes that the active participation of teachers in school-based teacher education programs is not satisfactory. The reason for this is that only 62% have stated that they are actively contributing. It is important to have at least 80% contribution to reap the benefits. Little (2012) and Dobie & Anderson (2015) point out that good practice and interaction are important for the professional development of teachers. It is important for teachers to have a high contribution to receive such benefits.

It can be concluded that school-based teacher education meets the professional development needs of teachers. This is evident from the 71% response that such requirements are

met. But Kugamoorthy (2017) states that teacher training needs are met to a minimum. It can be pointed out that a more contradictory conclusion can be drawn from this study than that conclusion. It can be concluded that various practical problems must be faced in the implementation of school-based teacher education. Examples include the need to conduct teacher education programs during school hours, the shortage of specialists, and problems with funding. Kugamoorthy (2017) pointed out that there is a problem with access to external expertise, and Setungaetal (2007) points out that there are problems with resource management.

Based on the above conclusions and the findings of the data analysis, The following recommendations can be made for the development of school-based teacher education programs. Organizing awareness programs for principals and teachers on the importance of school-based teacher education at zonal level.

Providing incentives to participate in school-based teacher education programs. Measures such as exemption from training requirements for promotions can be taken. Establishment of a pool of external expert resource persons at the zonal level who can be involved in school-based teacher education programs.

Increasing the financial allocation for school-based teacher education and giving the money to the principals at the beginning of the year.

Organizing teacher education programs jointly by several small schools instead of the programs conducted by each school. Then, solutions to financial problems can also be found. Establishment of a network of contacts at the zonal level relevant to school-based teacher education programs. It can create WhatsApp groups for Teachers and principals. Teachers can benefit from sharing their experiences between schools.

Develop a program at the zonal level to regulate school-based teacher education programs. By implementing such recommendations, school-based teacher education can be used to meet the professional development needs of school teachers. It can be pointed out that the school leadership and the teachers have a responsibility, and the success of these programs depends on the active participation of these parties.

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