

## **The managerial role and organizational responsibilities of chief executive officers of public schools in Sri Lanka**

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### **Abstract**

The majority of schools in Sri Lanka is administered by Central Ministry and Provincial Ministries. It seems that the principal is playing a key role in administering school. Especially, this study aimed to investigate the managerial role and organizational responsibilities of the chief executive officers or principals in the Sri Lankan government schools. This study employed Mixed Methods, and both a case study research approach and a survey research approach were used to study this research problem. Data gathered from the principals, deputy principals and teachers in the schools located in the Colombo district. Participants were selected by using a purposive sampling technique and a systematic random sampling technique. Data was gathered by administering semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and document surveys. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis and descriptive statistics. The main research questions in this study were: what is the nature of principal's managerial role in the government schools, how principals face management and administration related challenges in schools, and what is the nature of responsibilities and the power which the chief executive officers of schools entertain in making decisions. The findings indicated that there are considerable managerial role activities have to be performed and many organizational responsibilities grasped by the principals. The responsibility of principals in relation to human resource management, school planning, financial management, and physical resource management has been increased. However, it seems that sufficient power for making decisions on the above matters has not been delegated to the chief executive officers in schools. The principal has a collective and shared responsibility for finding resources for school development. It appears that the decision-making process of the schools is dominated by the principal. Moreover, selection of members for the school development committees is directly and also indirectly influenced by the principals. It is recommended that to establish an independent, qualified and experienced supervisory body for monitoring schools, and the principals and the SDC members need to be given better training on school management.

**Keywords:** school based management, principal's responsibility, school management, decision making, school boards

### **Introduction**

Leaders of traditional educational organizations in Sri Lanka had the power and authority to make decisions regarding educational activities implemented in their institutions. In addition, they had civil power in their society since the majority of them were priests of Buddhist temples. That era, there had been a good relationship between traditional educational institutions and community members in the society of Sri Lanka (Ruberu, 1962). However, in order to accomplish the requirements of colonial rulers, a special school education system was introduced, and it was continued by every colonial agent. Thus, the introduction of the education system which was made by the Colonial agents in their ruling period can be considered as a huge change, in the Sri Lankan society.

### **School education in Sri Lanka during the British ruling period**

The British ruling period is considered as a very significant period of school education in Sri Lanka. Many vital changes were taken place in the education system in Sri Lanka during the period which was ruled by British. For instance, a commission was established as "School Commission" in 1834 for administering school education in Sri Lanka. Afterward, for administering school education system 'The Central Education Commission' was established in 1948.

Gradually, the school education system which was introduced during the period of Colonial-era has been popularizing in Sri Lanka (Silva, 1981; Ruberu, 2003) <sup>[3]</sup>. However, only a few people had more opportunities to enjoy educational opportunities which were introduced by the British. Therefore, there were many criticisms about the school education system during that period. Many Sri Lankans made requests and representations to the British government to provide more educational opportunities for the general public. Some significant changes were made in favor of the requests of Sri Lankan citizens by the leaders of the British Colony. As a result, it was opened the doors of many schools for the general public.

### **School education in Sri Lanka subsequently to the independence**

After independence and during the first period of 'C.W.W. Kannangara era', many constructive changes had been made in school education in Sri Lanka (Ruberu, 1974) <sup>[16]</sup>. It had made very significant changes after the independence in Sri Lanka, especially during the second period of 'C.W.W. Kannangara educational reforms. Particularly, the introduction of free education from kindergarten to the university level is considered as a key revolution in Sri Lankan education (Silva, 1981; Premasiri, 1999; Sedere, 2005) <sup>[3, 15, 17]</sup>. Afterward, all the governments ruled Sri

Lanka has been maintaining the free education system till now. Subsequently, central school system was also introduced during the Kannangara period. The majority of private schools which were very active were taken over by the government in 1961. With a view to enhancing the quality of education, the 'Cluster School System' was instituted in 1978 by the Ministry of Education Sri Lanka (MoESL).

### **School education in Sri Lanka - School Based Management after 2006**

After 2006 schools have been given autonomy and authority to make decisions to address their local needs and to generate resources from their school community, from parents, past pupils' associations, and local philanthropists, to supplement the funds received from the government to develop schools. Schools are expected to use those funds particularly to improve student learning, school plant, physical resources, and staff development, etc. The Sri Lankan version of School Based Management (SBM) has been implementing in the Sri Lankan government schools since 2006 as titles as the Programme for School Improvement (PSI) (MoESL, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2018) <sup>[13, 14]</sup>. With the implementation of the PSI several governing boards were introduced. For instance, School Development Committee (SDC), School Management Committee (SMC), etc. and the principal is the chief executive officer, chairperson of those committees.

### **School development committee & principal role in school**

The main duty of SDC is to take steps for preparation of school development plans and educational development programmes, SMC assists SDC to make school development decisions, and also SMC is the implementation body of school development plans prepared by SDC. Therefore, it is expected to have a close relationship and cooperation between SDC and SMC (MoESL, 2014, p. 05) <sup>[14]</sup>. Primarily, the SDC has a responsibility in preparing: strategic plan for the school, preparation of school development plans and project plans. Each school is given more autonomy in making decisions on school affairs. School managers are encouraged to implement participatory management style in managing their schools. In the process of implementation of the PSI, the functions of school planning have been given considerable official recognition. As a planning technique, the 'strategic planning' is encouraged by the MoESL. However, according to the anecdotal evidence and as well as the experiences of the researcher, the majority of government schools have failed to prepare strategic plans (Kasturiarachchi, 2012, 2019) <sup>[6, 7]</sup>. However, preparation of strategic plans for school is one of the main responsibilities of the SDC members of school. Therefore, as the chief executive officer of school, the principal has a big responsibility in performing the above tasks, however with the support of its members (MoESL, 2013, p. 04) <sup>[13]</sup>. According to the MoESL instruction manual issued in 2013: the SDC must be comprised of the principal as ex officio member, representatives of teachers, representatives of parents of the students, representatives of past pupils and one of the officers from education authority. The principal will be the chairperson of the SDC (MoESL, 2013, p. 04) <sup>[13]</sup>.

The main duties and responsibilities of the SDC members have been identified and indicated in the instruction

manuals issued by the MoESL in 2013, 2014 and 2018. Accordingly, the key duties and responsibilities of the SDC members are categorized into various sub sections. School planning is considered as a very significant key function of the SDC. Middle term and annual action plans should be prepared by SDC in order to achieve the expected targets of school with the principal's leadership. The SMC will also be invited for preparing school plans. Every school is supposed to take necessary steps in order to obtain grants for implementing the approved plans, and the SDC is expected to make a priority list for implementing school activities. All the plans should be prepared according to the priority list prepared by the SDC, and they should be prepared on 'outcome-based approach'.

The SDC has a responsibility in preparing the 'annual school performance report' for school, and the progress of annual programmes of school will be included in this report. This annual school performance report must be available for stakeholders of the school. In the process of planning, the SDC is supposed to identify available resources and development needs of students in schools, and the potentials for gathering resources. If there is a shortage of resources to achieve the expected targets, school must take necessary actions to obtain those resources from outsiders (MoESL, 2013, pp. 06, 07) <sup>[13]</sup>.

Each SDC is supposed to prepare effective mechanisms to: utilize donations, quality inputs and other resources for school development; encourage students in participating extra and co-curricular activities; provide support to develop library facilities and other educational facilities; take steps to obtain support and contribution of resource persons for curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular development of school. Moreover, the SDC members are anticipated to prepare programmes for staff appraisal for continuous improvement of the quality of staff; take steps to provide career guidance to school leavers, those who are entering to the work of world; contribute maximum for creating a joyful and peaceful learning environment in improving inborn talents and competencies of students (MoESL, 2013, p. 07) <sup>[13]</sup>. Therefore, as the chief executive officers and the chairperson of the SDC, principal has a huge responsibility and also a big role in performing the above and following tasks.

Preparation of School Based Teacher Development (SBTD) programmes is one of the main responsibilities of the SDC. Thus, SDC is supposed to: identify developmental skills and training needs of teachers through teacher performance evaluation processes; organize SBTD programmes for the professional development of teachers; make arrangements for teacher training and education; implement construction and renovation programmes for strengthening the physical environment; take steps to develop school plant through community support. Moreover, the SDC is expected to be dedicated to managing capital assets of the school effectively (MoESL, 2013, p. 08) <sup>[13]</sup>. SDC is supposed to: the preparation of a much practical school-community development plan, and to create a sense of ownership of the school within the community; implement community development programmes in school community; implement programmes to create child friendly environment at homes of students; direct teaching staff to carry out action researches to address the development needs of school; form subcommittees for fulfilling the development of school.

The main responsibility of SMC is to implement the plans,

programmes, and projects prepared by SDC. The SMC is comprised of internal community members of the school. The principal is also the chief of the SMC. The duties of SMC are indicated in the instruction manuals issued by the MoESL, in 2013, 2014 and 2018. Implementation of the decisions made by SDC is one of the main responsibilities of SMC. Evaluation of the progress of sub committees of SDC is one of the tasks of the SMC. The SMC is responsible to take remedial measures to improve the progress of the projects which are being implemented slowly (MoESL, 2013, p. 10) <sup>[13]</sup>.

### **Responsibilities of principals**

Principals are required to have specific management skills and leadership qualities to implement school plans and also the above-mentioned activities and responsibilities as the chairperson of the SDC and the SMC. The expected skills and qualities from the principals are indicated in the instruction manuals of the MoESL (MoESL, 2014, p. 08) <sup>[14]</sup>. As mentioned by Stoner et al., (1985) a manager has to perform planning, organizing, leading and controlling functions at an organization. And also, as indicated by Mintzberg (1975, 1989) ten managerial roles need to be performed by a manager. Since the principal as the Chief Executive Officer of the school and also the top manager, he or she also has to perform all of the above roles in school. According to the MoESL (2013) <sup>[13]</sup> principals need to have a clear understanding on school vision and learning outcomes of the students; he/she needs to have a capability in implementing total curriculum for getting better results at the national examinations; in addition, the principal has to develop competencies of teachers through performance evaluation and motivation. They will play an effective role in utilizing human and other resources in developing outcomes of students. The principals are supposed to have skills to develop and enhance the relationship between school and community. They are expected to have the capability to make arrangements to open doors of schools for stakeholders to enhance their participation in school management.

Prior to the implementation of the PSI in the government schools in Sri Lanka, principals had the power to make key decisions on school activities. Subsequent to the implementation of PSI in schools, principals are expected to modification of their attitudes, working style and behavior according to the new situation. At present, after implementation of the PSI, size of the school, location of the school, human and other resources of school are considered as decisive factors of principal's role in the government schools. Therefore, according to the PSI initiatives principal has to: transformation his/ her attitudes, improve management and leadership skills, adapt to new school environment, and also, they are expected to take steps to introduce a participatory management culture and a shared leadership style within the school. The principal has a key role as a change agent in the school as its chief executive officer (MoESL, 2014, pp. 08, 09) <sup>[14]</sup>.

According to the anecdotal evidence the principals and decision makers face challenges and problems in managing schools. Generally, lack of awareness of stakeholders on school management is a big issue in the majority of schools (Kasturiarachchi, 2019) <sup>[7]</sup>. According to the guidelines issued by the MoESL (2014) <sup>[14]</sup>, most of the stakeholders are expected to perform new roles and management tasks in

schools, especially, SDC members and principals have a big responsibility in this regard. In order to perform those tasks, and to fulfill the targets which are relevant to school management, SDC members and other relevant stakeholders are supposed to be empowered through training and development programmes. The importance of training and development of stakeholders with regard to school management is also stressed by the MoESL. Financial management systems were significantly changed in government schools since the implementation of PSI. Hence, principals and managers of schools need to have sufficient knowledge of financial management and accounting (Kasturiarachchi, 2014, 2019; MoESL, 2014) <sup>[6, 7, 14]</sup>.

Many researchers show that, recently, the school reforms in the countries focused on to decentralization, devolution, and distribution the decision-making power to school level or local level of education, and make school a more autonomous place. The principal is expected to perform new roles and fulfill many responsibilities in managing schools.

The schools are expected to perform five aims through the implementation of the SBM in Sri Lanka. They are: to provide quality education to students, to be sensitive to the aspirations of the school community, to increase the transparency of school activities through creation of opportunities, to be improved flexibility of internal activities of the school, to optimum use of available resources. Therefore, at present the principals are playing a vital role in schools as the chief executive officers of schools. The SDC has become the main platform to the representatives of stakeholders for sharing their ideas on school management.

The principal has been performing his/her chief executive role in the school, He/she is the chairperson of the decision-making structure (SDC, SMC) of the school, and he/ she is expected to be fulfilled many responsibilities of the chief executive role of the decision-making process of school. In order to get determined benefits, principal is anticipated to perform the leading role of school efficiently and effectively. The principal and the SDC members are identified as key decision makers of schools. Wohlstetter (1995) <sup>[12]</sup> acknowledged that the schools, the principals who played a key role in dispersing power, in promoting a school wide commitment to learning, in expecting all teachers to participate in the work of the school, in collecting information about student learning, and in distributing rewards. According to the above statement provided by the Wohlstetter, it is understood that the principal performs key multi roles in the school. Spilman (1996) adds: "the key role change in the SBM is the principal's shift from top- down manager to a supporter and facilitator who maintains his or her leadership responsibilities" (p.36). The SBM system has been implementing in the Sri Lankan schools for more than thirteen years. By 2006, the SBM was a new management concept for most of the government schools in Sri Lanka, and therefore the staff members and stakeholders did not have much experience in participatory management, shared decision making and school governing boards of schools, etc., however, they had much experience on principal dominated management structures in schools. There is a dearth of either published research studies or in-depth investigations managerial role and organizational responsibilities of Chief Executive Officers of public schools in Sri Lanka. Thus, this study carried out to get a better understanding of the managerial role and

organizational responsibilities of Chief Executive Officers in the Colombo district schools.

### Materials and methods

The main aim of this study to identify the real experiences of participants on managerial role and organizational responsibilities of Chief Executive Officers of public schools in Sri Lanka. The main research questions in this study were: what are the nature of principal's managerial role and organizational responsibilities of government schools. The specific research questions were: what is the nature of authority of principals on HRM in schools; how principals face managerial and administrative challenges in schools; and what is the nature of responsibilities, and the power which the chief executive officers of schools entertain in decision making in schools. And, specific objectives were to: recognize the nature of principal's managerial role and organizational responsibilities; identify the nature of authority of principals on HRM in schools, identify how principals face managerial and administrative challenges in schools; and recognize the nature of organizational responsibilities and the power which the chief executive officers of schools entertain in decision making.

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in order to achieve the aims and objectives of this study. Qualitative and quantitative data was gathered through various research methods from participants in this study. Both qualitative and quantitative data analyzing techniques were employed to analyze data in this study. Mainly a multiple case study approach was employed to gather rich data to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. In addition, a survey research approach was used to gather information from individual participants.

Quantitative research methods are research methods dealing with numbers and anything that is measurable in a systematic way of investigation of phenomena and their relationships. It is used to answer questions on relationships within measurable variables with an intention to explain, predict and control a phenomenon (Leedy, 1993). Therefore, survey research approach was more appropriate in this study. Kerlinger (1973) defined survey research as a study on large and small populations by selecting samples chosen from the desired population and to discover relative incidence, distribution, and interrelations. The ultimate goal of survey research is to learn about a large population by surveying a sample of the population; thus, it may call that a descriptive survey or normative survey. The researcher personally met the research participants and distributed the questionnaire among them, and completed questionnaires were collected by the researcher with the help of research assistants.

Qualitative research is concerned with individuals' own accounts of their attitudes, motivations, and behavior. Qualitative research uses a variety of interpretive research methodologies that seek to investigate the quality of relationships and experiences (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). In general, qualitative research focuses on the inner experience of people, as they interact with others (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 138) Therefore, the qualitative research approach is most appropriate in this study, because during this research study it was expected to investigate and explore the managerial role and organizational responsibilities of Chief Executive Officers of public schools in Sri Lanka. In order for that, it

was gathering information through principals, deputy principals and teachers from selected schools located in the Colombo district in Sri Lanka. Mainly a multiple case study approach was administered to gather information to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

The case study research approach has been used by qualitative and interpretive researchers for a long time in disciplines (Burns, 2000) because it has a number of advantages. This approach can be used to investigate actual contemporary life settings and life cycles of people, and it allows researchers to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events of people (Yin, 2009) and it provides the researcher with a holistic understanding of a problem, issue, or phenomenon with its social context (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Since this study intended to explore deeply the experiences of participants on the managerial role and organizational responsibilities of Chief Executive Officers of public schools in Sri Lanka the multiple case study approach was more fitted.

Qualitative researchers use various methods for data collection: "observation (participant and non-participant), interviewing, and document analysis" (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002, p. 430). Questionnaires, document surveys, and interviews were administered to gather information in this study. Questionnaires and interviews were the main data collection methods from the participants of this study. As this study expected to explore the experiences of participants of schools the interview was able to capture their ideas, experiences, and perceptions about the managerial role and organizational responsibilities of Chief Executive Officers of the government schools. Interviewing seemed to be an appropriate method of data collection in this study because it was seeking particular experiences about the managerial role and organizational responsibilities of Chief Executive Officers which are familiar to the participants in this study.

According to Hodder (2000, p. 704) documents are important in qualitative research because "access can be easy and low cost... the information provided may differ from and may not available in the spoken form, and... texts endure and thus give historical insight". The documents in this study were minutes of the meetings, school plans, budget reports, ministry and government regulations, policy statements, project reports, training & development activity reports, and training & capacity development guidelines, etc.

In order to gather rich data, a questionnaire survey was administered in this study. An advantage of a questionnaire is to gather data in a relatively short period of time. Questionnaire is an effective tool which can be used to gather straightforward and factual information from the participants (Anderson, 1998). The questionnaire was a semi-structured, and before the questionnaire is distributed, it was pilot tested with several principals, who are not involved in this study as research participants. Finally, data were collected from principals.

The participants in this study are principals, deputy principals and teachers who have experienced the managerial role and organizational responsibilities of Chief Executive Officers of public schools in the Colombo district. If the researcher intended to generalize the findings of the research probability sampling would be most suitable, and in qualitative research, purposive sampling is used (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Participants in this study

were selected by using a purposive sampling method and a systematic random sampling technique. Best & Kahn (2006) suggest purposive sampling will permit the researcher to choose the participants who provide the richest information. A group of principals, deputy principals, and teachers were purposively selected from the schools located in the Colombo district in order to gather in-depth information. For the purpose of collecting information through a questionnaire survey, 30 principals, 15 deputy principals, and 30 teachers were selected, and the sample includes 75 participants who are working in the Colombo district category 1 AB and 1C schools. In order to gather information via the case study approach, 05 principals 05 deputy principals and 10 teachers were selected.

The principals, deputy principals and teachers of selected schools were involved in the questionnaire survey and an interview process, and they are from 1AB and 1C schools located in the Colombo district. The questionnaire and the interview protocol were prepared to gather information regarding the managerial role and organizational responsibilities of the Chief Executive Officers of their schools. All the questions included in the interview protocol were semi-structured. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analyzing a strategy that starts with the data and pursues identifiable themes and patterns (Aronson, 1994). It is implicit that the thematic analysis was a most appropriate method for analyzing data in this study in order to identify the meanings and the patterns of the data since it is an analytical approach dealing with data that involves human experiences. In addition, it was used descriptive statistical techniques to analyze the data gathered through a questionnaire. Quantitative data can be analyzed in a variety of different ways. (Kothari, 2004; Newman & Benz, 1998). The data gathered through the questionnaire survey was analyzed by using percentages etc.

Several codes were used to identify schools, cases, and participants, in order to maintain the confidentiality and the anonymity of the information and also the sources of information in this study. The participants and the schools were named by using pseudonyms when they interview. The researcher/ research assistants directly requested the participants to participate in this study and distribute them "participants information sheets". The interviews were conducted in the Sinhalese language, and all the interviews were transcribed into Sinhalese language and then translated into English. A sample of the translation of each interview was checked by a lecturer who has a good knowledge of English and Sinhalese languages to ensure the accuracy of the translation. The interview transcripts were undergone a member checking process. The interviews were digitally recorded with the consent of the participants.

## Results and discussion

The participants in this study, principals, deputy principals and teachers of schools described their experiences on the managerial role and also the organizational responsibilities of the chief executive officers, principals of the schools in the Colombo district, as their real-life stories. In this study, it was gathering information from the participants as qualitative and quantitative data through interviews, questioners and documents.

According to the information provided by the participants, the majority of respondents are degree holders, and 35% of responders have postgraduate degree qualifications.

According to the information gathered, the majority of respondents represent the 35-55 age group, and the majority of deputy principals are also in that age group. While 80% of principals represent 45-55 age group, 45% of teachers represent the 25-35 age group. According to their background information, the majority of principals in the sample are matured in age-wise. However, the majority of teachers' and deputy principals are below 45 years.

## Human resource development

Most of the participants (80%) believe that human resources are the most important resource in a school. Further, they indicated that; the development of them as an imperative task of a school. It appeared that HRM is the main responsibility and also a key role activity of a principal as the chief executive officer of the majority of schools (90%) in this study. The majority of the principals' (80%) understanding is that the funds provided by the MoESL and PMoE are not sufficient for the staff development and training of staff of schools. One of the deputy principals' (DP2) perceptions on teacher development are: "*The teachers are not willing to participate in teacher training and development programmes on weekends. I think it will be harmful to the students if teacher development programmes are conducted on weekdays. However, the principal is trying to organize such activities without harming other events of school*". According to the MoESL policy, teacher development programmes are supposed to be organized by school leaders at school level. During this research it was observed that the majority of principals of schools have not made satisfactory measures for collecting, and also allocating adequate resources for teacher development activities.

As the findings of Katuuk (2014) <sup>[8]</sup>, the leaders of schools in Indonesia tend to effectively improve the teacher professionalism. According to Beerel (2009) and Gronn (2002), school leadership encourages staff development and students' learning.

It appeared that the schools always tend to pass the responsibility to their higher-level authority, and criticize their leaders due to inadequate funds provided by their higher-level authority for staff and also teacher development activities, and trying to escape from their role activity on staff training and development. It was revealed that almost all the principals have not made any action for training and developing their non-academic staff members.

As indicated in the policies of the MoESL, the government schools are supposed to be delegated maximum decision-making power and responsibility. However, it looked that an appropriate degree of power on Human Resource Management (HRM) has not been delegated to the principal or the school so far.

Comparable findings have been indicated by Malaklulunthu and Shamsudin (2011, p. 1491) <sup>[10]</sup>, in which, school managers in Malaysia do not have any power to choose or hire teachers who would be best suited for the school, and also freely increase the number of teachers as may be required by the school.

But school principal and its management boards are obliged to direct their human resources to achieve the aims of the schools in Sri Lanka. Although all the schools are anticipated to adapt to a shared and participatory management culture, it appeared that most of the principals (65%) perform a dominating role in HRM. For instance, as

most of the HRM activities are handled by the principal, the School Development Committee (SDC) has not been given whole particular responsibility on that. As the majority of teachers (60%) indicated, the principals of their schools are not willing to delegate the decision-making power on HRM to the SDC. And one of the interesting things was revealed is that; some of the members of the SDC are selected by the principal by his or her own wish. One principal (P3) remarked that: *“I do not have sufficient authority to make many decisions on HRM related matters, but usually, I have directed teachers and staff towards the development of school, unfortunately, some staff members do not like to change their bad attitudes and their inappropriate work behavior”*. Even though the principals have not been assigned satisfactory amount of authority on HRM in the schools, it appeared that they usually direct, guide, influence staff to reach their school targets.

As found by Hirata (2006, p. 70) <sup>[5]</sup>. The maximum authority has not been devolved to individual schools on HRM and as well as financial management in Japan. However, most of the teachers (70%) indicated not to be delegated more power on HRM to the principals.

### Decision making

Since the MoESL is anticipating to develop a participatory decision-making culture in schools, and also the policy framework developed by the MoESL the core school decisions are desired to be taken by the SDC. However, it seemed that selecting members for the governing boards are not autonomous in the majority of schools (60%) as expected by the MoESL. According to the majority of teachers (80%); the principals are influencing in selecting members for their SDCs. Accordingly, it seemed that there were no autonomous and unaffected, and real participatory decision-making processes in most of the schools (60%) in this study.

The findings of this study are totally different from the findings of Hirata (2006, p. 71) <sup>[5]</sup>, in which, it is not anticipated that, council members of schools be elected by the principal or the chief executive officer of school in Japan. However, it seems that, the system in Sri Lanka is different from Japan school system.

Moreover, it was observed that the decision-making process in the SDC meetings is also not much participative. Bandur (2012, p. 326) <sup>[2]</sup> found that, it is mandatory to lead school councils in participatory decision-making and having a partnership at schools, with the implementation of SBM in Indonesia.

One teacher (T5) indicated as: *“I have noticed that since I am participating SDC meetings, the community involvement in the SDC meetings is just for following formalities. Usually, almost all the proposals are prepared by the principal in advanced and what happened in the meeting is to get SDC members’ agreement and signatures for the principal’s proposals”*. According to the information gathered during this study and also as indicated by this teacher the decision-making process of many schools do not seem to be materialized in democratic manner as expected by the MoESL. One principal (P4) contended that: *“the SDC is the common platform for every stakeholder to present their ideas on school affairs”*. However, as the chairperson of the SDC and the chief executive officers of the school, principal is expected to perform a democratic and effective role for school development with the support

of the SDC.

According to the findings of Vally and Daud (2015), principals in the secondary schools in Kuala Lumpur carry out their roles well. The principals play a key role in the school, principals are the chief executive officers and change agents of schools. Similar findings have been indicated by Thida and Joy (2012) <sup>[19]</sup>, in general, the principals hold significant domination over the decision making in the areas of monitoring and evaluation, that can be found in many countries which implement SBM programmes. As Thida and Joy (2012) <sup>[19]</sup> found, the principals in Cambodian schools play the leading role, and they have key responsibilities of all aspects of school decision making, and teachers have more authority and responsibility on teaching and learning.

It seems that the SDCs of majority of the schools (60%) are not being functioned legitimately as the majority of principals are not much keen to make such mechanisms democratic. According to the information provided by the participants, it is evident that the principals and internal members of SDC do not encourage external members to incorporate their ideas, and also to motivate active participation in school decisions.

### Financial management

Although the schools are expected to provide sufficient funds for school activities by the government, it has not happened for several years. Therefore, there is a responsibility and a role of its managers and chief executive officers to find resources by their own to achieve the objectives of their annual plans.

Leithwood and Menzies (1998, pp.265-275) found that, lack of resources is a big challenge for schools to make changes as recommended by education authorities in South American countries.

Although the schools expect support of their stakeholders in generating funds, it was observed that some of them do not provide their support to schools voluntarily and autonomously. However, it seemed that the principal and the SDC members of many schools (70%) make many efforts to generate funds since the government does not provide adequate financial and physical resources for school development. Therefore, the principal has to play a significant role in financial management of school in finding resources.

Bandur (2012, p. 325) <sup>[2]</sup> revealed a similar situation in Indonesian schools. They face problems due to inadequate financial facilities and lack of school facilities in managing schools. Therefore, Bandur (2012, p. 45) <sup>[2]</sup> recommends to devolve power on financial management; physical resource management including renovation of building; construction of new buildings, etc.

One of the deputy principals (DP1) stated as: *“we used to make decisions at the SDC meetings in order to get financial support from the stakeholders, and most of the time principal has a financial plan, and at the meeting he is convincing others to get their consent to his plan”*. It is evident that the principals have to perform a significant role in generating funds for school. It was observed that according to the commitment, dedication, attitudes, and skills of the person who held the principal position directly affects the success of fund-raising activities. Some principals are successful and some are not in this regard, and it depends on their skills, capacity, and commitment.

Malaklolu and Shamsudin (2011, pp. 1491, 1492) <sup>[10]</sup> found that, the financial management is a new task for many stakeholders who represent governing boards of school; therefore, financial management skills are required for the members of governing boards for efficient mobilization and use of resources. Gamage and Sooksomchitra (2006, pp. 299,300) <sup>[4]</sup> have recommended to provide pre-service training and in-service training for Thai school leaders and governing board members in the areas of educational leadership, organizational leadership, school planning and strategic development, entrepreneurial and marketing initiative to cope with the challenges faced in managing their schools.

### Challenges

As per the information provided by the majority of principals (60%), deputy principals (100%) and teachers (60%), schools face challenges in finding resources for school development since sufficient amount of resources are not provided by the government. Therefore, principals face many difficulties in finding financial and physical resources for school development. It was revealed that the principals have not yet been provided or delegated sufficient HRM authority.

The findings of this study are a bit similar to the findings of Hirata (2006) <sup>[5]</sup>, in that, the decision-making authority is not sufficiently devolved to each school, and many groups of stakeholders are not significantly involved in decision-making processes, and SBM form of school governance has not yet been realized in Japan.

The majority of participants (80%) indicated that most of the SDC members are not willingly participate in the decision-making process of schools in providing rich ideas and proposals, and also do not take the responsibility of decisions made at the SDC. Therefore, the principal holds the ultimate responsibility of each and every activity in the school. Therefore, most of the principals of schools are working under pressure in this regard.

Thida & Joy (2012) <sup>[9]</sup> found, that the lack of knowledge and understanding of stakeholders on school management is a big problem in Cambodia, sometimes, they have to follow trial and error strategy in performing duties as management board members. Thida & Joy (2012) <sup>[9]</sup> revealed that lack of contribution of the members in decision making due to their poor management skills and knowledge.

### Conclusion and recommendations

Since the principals have not been provided more decision-making power, they face difficulties in handling HRM matters in their schools. However, SDCs and the principals make many efforts to finding financial resources for school development. Yet, community participation is not very much supportive in finding resources in some of the Colombo district schools. Awareness of stakeholders on school management is not adequate. Therefore, the community members are needed to make aware of school management, and the disadvantaged and marginalized schools must be given additional support by the government in finding resources. In addition, the stakeholders of the schools and the principals are needed to be empowered and trained to implement school plans and policies effectively. Since the schools are facing many challenges, immediate attention must be drawn by the responsible authorities to establish a supervisory body or monitoring process to

supervise and guide the public schools in Sri Lanka.

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