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## Teacher Professional Development and Student's Outcomes

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### සංක්ෂිප්තය

ගුණාත්මක අධ්‍යාපනය සඳහා සිසුන්ගේ වර්තමාන පුළුල් ඉල්ලුම සපුරාලීම සඳහා ගුරුවරුන්ගේ දැනුම, කුසලතා, ආකල්ප සහ භාවිතයන් යාවත්කාලීන කළ යුතු ය. එබැවින් ගුරු වෘත්තීය සංවර්ධන වැඩසටහන් (ගුරු අධ්‍යාපන වැඩසටහන්) ශක්තිමත් කළ යුතු අතර, ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ සන්දර්භය තුළ ගුරු අධ්‍යාපන/වෘත්තීය සංවර්ධන වැඩසටහන් වර්ග දෙකක් දක්නට ලැබේ. එනම් පාසල් පාදක ගුරු සංවර්ධන (SBTD) වැඩසටහන් සහ පාසල් නොවන ගුරු සංවර්ධන (NSBTD) වැඩසටහන් වේ. පාසල් පාදක ගුරු සංවර්ධනය (SBTD) ඉතා වැදගත් සංකල්පයකි. මන්ද එය ගුරුවරුන්ට ඔවුන්ගේ විශේෂිත අවශ්‍යතා මෙන් ම සිසුන්ගේ සහ පාසලේ අවශ්‍යතා සලකා බලා ඔවුන්ගේම වෘත්තීය සංවර්ධන වැඩසටහන් සැලසුම් කිරීමට, සංවිධානය කිරීමට සහ ක්‍රියාත්මක කිරීමට ඉඩ සලසයි. කෙසේ වෙතත්, මෙම සංකල්පය ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ අධ්‍යාපන සන්දර්භය තුළ පුළුල් ලෙස වර්ධනය වී නොමැත. මෙම ලිපිය ශ්‍රී ලංකාව තුළ SBTD වැඩසටහන් ක්‍රියාත්මක කිරීමේ හැකියාව, සඵලතාවය, උපාය මාර්ග, ගැටළු සහ අභියෝග විස්තර කරයි. ඊට සමගාමීව, පාසල් නොවන ගුරු සංවර්ධන

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(NSBTD) වැඩසටහන්වල තත්ත්වය ද පැහැදිලි කර ඇත. මෙම වැඩසටහන් ද්විත්වයම ප්‍රමුඛත්වයෙනිලා සැලකිය හැකි බැවින් සමබර ගුරු වෘත්තීය සංවර්ධනයක් ලබාදීම සඳහා මෙම වැඩසටහන් දෙකම ඒකාබද්ධ කළ යුතු බව මෙම පත්‍රිකාව උපකල්පනය කර ඇත. මෙය සමාලෝචන පත්‍රිකාවක් වන අතර මෙම ලිපිය සම්පාදනය කර ඇත්තේ ජාතික හා ජාත්‍යන්තර සම්පත් සමාලෝචනය කරමිනි.

ප්‍රමුඛපද : ගුරු වෘත්තීය සංවර්ධනය, පාසල් පාදක ගුරු වෘත්තීය සංවර්ධනය, පාසල් පාදක නොවන ගුරු සංවර්ධනය.

## **Introduction**

The World has entered into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with new expectations in all areas of the modern society. Particularly in the new millennium, the demands of education have become broader and more complex. Under such a situation, educational institutions and people who are involved in the education system have to prepare to equip themselves for the ‘millennium kids’ (21<sup>st</sup> century learners). The Education Minister of Bhutan says that education is the single most powerful instrument for the empowerment and development of people (Thakar, 2007). In addition, the Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations emphasises the high standard of education is the foundation for all our futures (DETYA, 2006).

Under these circumstances, teachers who are able to provide facilities and encouragement for children’s future education have a challenge in ‘learning and doing’ more in order to upgrade their professionalism. This review paper focuses to discuss teacher education (teacher professional development), the importance of teacher professional development and the effect of teacher professional development and students’ outcomes in Sri Lankan context.

## **Methodology**

This is a review paper and several National and International books, journal articles, research reports and other relevant sources were referred to prepare this paper.

## **Teacher professional development in Sri Lanka**

The Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka has recognised that good teachers are ‘keys’ to enhance the quality of education (MOE, 2004b). Furthermore, MOE (2005a) states

that Sri Lanka has already considered professional development for teachers as an essential part of the education system because professional development enhances the quality of good teaching (DETYA, 2005; Sethunga, 2007). In addition, the University of Western Sydney emphasises the importance of the relationship between quality teaching and student outcomes (Zammit et al., 2007).

The National Science Education Standards (2008) believes that, "...effective professional development programs becomes central in teachers' lives" (NSES, 2008, p.1), and Hayman (2009) pointed out that well organised professional development programs can enhance teachers' skills, knowledge and attitudes. In addition, Linda (2005, p. 238) states "...research has shown that many of schools have improved teaching practices and student achievement, while building professional knowledge". This statement is based on research which was conducted in the United States.

Teacher Education programs (Professional development programs) for teachers in Sri Lanka are divided into two groups (Bandara, 2010).

1. School-Based Teacher Development (SBTD) program (School-Based Teacher Education programs).
2. Non School-Based Teacher Development (NSBTD) program (Non School-Based Teacher Education programs) which are conducted by external organisations or institutions of the schools.

These professional development programs help to develop teachers' knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes. They also have particular advantages and disadvantages. This paper focuses on discussing School-Based Teacher Development (SBTD) programs in the secondary education system of Sri Lanka, because they are currently rarely used in Sri Lanka. These programs are considered an effective strategy for teacher professional development because they are designed, organised, implemented, owned and controlled by principals and teachers of the schools (Monyatsi, 2006; Margarita, 1997; Clair & Adger, 1999; Good et al., 2003; Wickramasinghe, 2002; Blackmore, 2000).

School-Based Teacher Development (SBTD) programs consider the teachers' needs and current available resources. Therefore, School-Based Teacher Development

(SBTD) programs are important and beneficial to teachers in various ways in both developed and developing countries. For example, Monyatsi (2006) describes the results of research which investigated the effectiveness of such programs in secondary schools in Botswana. The findings of the study revealed that 95.8% of teachers believed that School-Based Teacher Development programs should be made compulsory for all teachers in schools. That study also examined the advantages of school-based workshops and identified the following findings:

- School-based workshops are based on the needs identified by the teachers in their own schools;
- School-based workshops are cost effective, because there are no additional travel and accommodation expenses;
- School-based workshops are time saving, because teachers' time is used profitably without disturbing school time;
- There is no disturbance to the normal teaching process, because the time for workshops can be arranged after the normal teaching time so that students do not miss their lessons due to teachers' professional development workshops;
- Relationships of inter-department and inter-schools are being enhanced by the school-based teacher development programs;
- School-based workshops enhance the transparency of the school (because all community members of the school are aware of these programs).

In addition, Sri Lankan education researchers have realised the importance of the school-based professional development. Sethunga (2007, p.3) states "Many international and local researchers have emphasised the need for school-based teacher professional development programs". Under such a situation, in order to organise and implement SBTD programs in secondary schools in the Sri Lankan context, the principals and staff of schools have two major options:

1. The Program on School Development. In 2007, the Sri Lankan government inaugurated this program particularly aimed at school improvement and includes new directions for SBTD programs (Sethunga, 2007).

2. The School Based Management (SBM). In the late 1990s the concept of SBM was established in the Sri Lankan education system (MOE, 2005a). This concept gives opportunities to provide SBTD programs for teachers.

This section discusses the importance of teacher professional development and particularly school-based teacher professional development. In Sri Lanka, almost all prominent professional development programs for teachers are NSBTD programs (Government or non-Government). These programs are organised and implemented by external organisations or institutes, such as Zonal Education Offices, Provincial Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Education, the National Institute of Education as well as various Non-Government Organisations. These Non-School-Based Teacher Development programs are held for primary and secondary school teachers who come from various schools which are situated in different geographical areas. As a result, these teacher development programs (NSBTD programs) may create ineffectiveness in teacher professional development since they are planned without considering the needs of individual schools and the willingness of individual teachers. One of the significant issues for teachers is that they have to travel long distances from their workplaces to participate in these professional development programs.

As has been mentioned above, SBTD programs are not very common in the Sri Lankan education system. However, some secondary schools have organised and implemented effective and innovative School-Based Teacher Development programs using various strategies and methods. Furthermore, there is potential for these programs to be developed to improve the professional standards and required interpersonal and other skills of secondary school teachers; but the development of these programs is one of the many complicated issues within the education system in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this paper was inspired to discuss the current situation on School-Based Teacher Development programs in Sri Lanka.

After gaining Independence in 1948, the Sri Lankan education system was steadily developed in many areas. As the student population increased, the infrastructure facilities were also developed. Subsequently, the rate of literacy has increased from 60% to 90% (Mathews, 2002). In this situation, a report from MOE (2004) claims that it is questionable whether this literacy is a sufficient indicator to measure the level of development of human capital. MOE (2004) confirms that Sri Lanka has a major problem with the outcomes of the quality of education.

The results of the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) examination are a remarkable evidence for the insufficient outcomes of education over the years. This examination is held every year for grade 11 students, at the end of the junior secondary education stage and this is a major examination in Sri Lanka. There are more than 500,000 candidates who sit for this examination (MOE, 2005). But based on the results of the examination, the percentage of qualified students for higher education is just around 45% (Department of Census & Statistics, 2008). This situation is not satisfactory because 55% of students do not qualify for higher education. The pass rate among students who sit for General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) examination should be improved and appropriate measures should be taken to achieve this target. Consequently, the Sri Lankan Secondary Education Modernisation Project (SEMP, 2007) has outlined sets of goals to be implemented in the secondary education system. Among them, two goals are geared towards enhancing the result of this examination. These two goals are: firstly, to increase the examination results for one (1) million students; and secondly, to ensure that more than 50,000 students pass their General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level examination (G.C.E. (O/L) examinations (cc international, 2008). However, when looking at the percentage passes of G.C.E. (O/L) candidates, it has gradually increased, but is still below 50 percent by 2017. In addition, Mathematics, a subject in G.C.E. (O/L) examinations which is essential for enrolment in further education however 55% failed this subject. Further, the report states that considering this 'pathetic' situation, special discussions have been held by the MOE with members of the World Bank, and the need to improve classroom learning in the school system has been emphasised.

Further, the National Educational Reform in 1997 stated that "The pedagogy has been renewed by the instruction of child centred individualised focus on students" (MOE, 2005a, p.6). It is believed that in order to upgrade the pass percentage of GCE-O/L examination, secondary school teachers should be provided with well organised SBTD programs. SBTD programs may lead to enhance results of the GCE-O/L examination and may change the pedagogy from a 'teacher centred' to 'child centred' approach. Very recently the Sri Lankan Education Minister also emphasised the importance of the 'child centred' approach and it needs to be developed (Gunawardana, 2010). There are many factors responsible for the low results of the GCE-O/L examination. One of them is the teaching-learning process in secondary schools.

On the other hand, the Sri Lankan government has taken many steps to enhance the quality of outcomes of education and extended educational opportunities (MOE, 2002; MOE, 2005a), although ‘drop-out’ rates of senior secondary level students are significantly high in Sri Lanka. Further, Silva (2009) claims that, only 86.9 % of enrolled students in grade one attend grade nine. There are many reasons that influence the increase of students’ ‘drop-out’ rate and among them the socio-economic reasons are the most significant (MOE, 2002). Another significant reason that affects the increase of ‘drop-out’ rate in schools is the teaching-learning process in the classroom. Monyasti (2006) believes that well organised SBTD programs have the potential to upgrade the teaching-learning process in the classroom.

This paper is important for a number of reasons, one of which is that the school-based teacher development activities need to be developed in Sri Lanka as they are in developed countries where both SBTD and NSBTD programs are being used to develop teacher professionalism. For example, Hezel Associates (2006) has designed and carried out a survey in the United States of America. The focused areas of the study are teacher professional development and instructional coaching in order to better understand the context of teacher professional development, and the findings of this study show that participants respond positively to SBTD programs and NSBTD or district level programs (Hezel Associates, 2006).

The result of the study carried out by Hezel Associates (2006) has revealed that the majority of school principals believe that the primary responsibility of organising and implementing teacher professional development has to be done by the school principals or assistant principals (SBTD); whereas, educational superintendents respond that the primary responsibility for the same has to be with them (NSBTD). On the other hand, teachers view that both the SBTD and NSBTD programs are vital for their professional development, although NSBTD programs may not be very effective. Jennings (1989) observes that externally organised professional development programs may be employed in a ‘top to bottom’ approach, depicting the traditional and hierarchical order, and they therefore do not have a significant impact on teachers. This can happen because the external professional development providers are not closely in touch with the needs of the individual teachers and the particular schools. It is necessary then that the national policy makers in Sri Lankan education make relevant policies to develop a wider range of SBTD programs.

## **Conclusion**

Two types of teacher education programs are used in Sri Lanka to develop teachers' professionalism, these programs are; SBTD and NSBTD programs. Both teacher development programs help to develop teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes, however, SBTD programs are not popular in the country. Many NSBTD programs are provided to school teachers in the system by government and non-government organizations, but effectiveness of the programs are very limited. In addition this paper pointed out that teacher professional development directly affected to students learning outcomes.

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