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School-Based Education Improvement Initiatives

The Experience and Options for Sri Lanka

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SCHOOL-BASED EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES

INTRODUCTION

Most developing countries following independence opted for strong central control and direction of the education system, partly because of limited resources and the need to plan carefully, and partly because of a felt need to create a sense of national unity among diverse ethnic and linguistic groups. This meant that key areas of control and decision making, such as management of resources and personnel, curriculum, evaluation of performance, and accountability, were under central rather than local control.

By the 1980s, the promotion of democracy in education management, through the empowerment of schools, had become one of the most popular strategies in the school reform movement in industrialized countries (Guthrie, 1986). Following initiatives in Australia, Canada, and the United States, a wide range of countries have experimented with, or introduced, policy initiatives to grant greater managerial authority and responsibility to schools over the last three decades. In Asia, four states in which the management of education had been highly centralized embarked on greater empowerment of schools in the 1980s (Singapore) and 1990s (Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan). While the structures that were established to implement the policy reforms (e.g., school management committees) were very similar in all cases, the motivation for reform differed. In South Korea and Taiwan, a major objective was to promote democratization (Lo, 2010). In Hong Kong SAR, and Singapore, the focus was on promoting efficiency and innovation, supported by retention by the state of strong control through quality assurance procedures and mechanisms.

The periods before and after the World Conference on Education for All, held in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand, in particular, were associated with considerable advocacy of school-empowerment as a mechanism to improve the provision of education in less-developed countries (Bray, 2001). As in the case of the East Asian states mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the rationale for the empowerment of schools varied. It could, for example, be seen as reflecting a more general trend towards regionalization and localism in government as a reaction against the excessive centralism of the modern state and the facelessness of its administration, or it could be seen as an effort to achieve improved educational productivity and economic growth through the restructuring of schools to maximize "output", as represented by improved student learning (Abu-Duhou, 1999).

The empowerment of schools has two major components: school-based management and the involvement of parents and communities in the work of schools. The emphasis given to one or other of these components depends on general national policy, local traditions, and context, with the result that almost every system is unique when one considers who makes

decisions, the actual decisions that are made, the nature of those decisions, the level at which they are made, and relationships between levels. Thus, there are "strong" and "weak" versions of school empowerment. In some, only a single area of autonomy is granted to schools, while in others the community management of schools, even the establishment of schools, is encouraged (World Bank, 2007). In many industrialized countries, the core idea behind school empowerment was that those who work in schools should have greater control of the management of what goes on in the school. In developing countries, the core idea tended to be less ambitious, focusing mainly on involving parents and community in the school-decision process (often in an advisory capacity) rather than putting them entirely in control (World Bank, 2007).

In this paper, we will briefly outline the history of school empowerment in Sri Lanka with particular reference to the Programme for School Improvement (PSI), which commenced in 2006. The final section of the paper contains suggestions designed to strengthen process of empowering Sri Lankan schools and improving education outcomes.

SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

Why School-Based Management?

A variety of reasons have been proposed in support of school-based management (Barrera-Osorio *et al.*, 2009; Bruns *et al.*, 2011; Caldwell, 2005).

1) School-based management is *democratic* as it involves a distribution of powers among the education partners in regulating institutional and individual behaviour and in allocating funds. When parents and community members are involved, it contributes to their empowerment and ownership.
2) School-based management facilitates the *recognition of, and responsiveness to, local needs*. Large bureaucracies can overlook peripheral needs and ignore ethnic, linguistic, and regional cultural variation, while school-based management allows local decision makers adapt education policies to local realities and needs and determine the appropriate mix of inputs.
3) School-based management should lead to a *more effective educational delivery* and use of resources at school, local, and regional levels. This view, in part, reflects the business concept of total quality management, according to which decisions made close to the actual product will produce a better result. Studies of business suggest that local management is most appropriate in organizations where the work is complex, involves uncertainty in its day-to-day tasks, and is carried out in a continually changing environment, all of which characterize the teaching-learning

situation (Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1993). It should, for example, be possible for local actors to work more effectively than a central authority in mobilizing local resources, including private ones, in improving inter-agency co-operation and in integrating services.

4) School-based management should lead to *improved communication* between stakeholders, facilitating principals' awareness of teacher and parent concerns.

5) School-based management should lead to *greater accountability* of schools and teachers to students, parents, and local communities.

6) School-based management is more *transparent*, reducing opportunities for corruption.

7) School-based management provides for *decisions made by groups,* which are generally better than ones made by individuals.

8) School-based management contributes to the development of *high levels of professionalism* in schools.

9) School-based management should ultimately lead to *improved student retention and learning*. This was not an issue in early reforms involving school-based management which were seen primarily as political activities that transferred power and authority over budget, personnel, and curriculum to individual schools. From the late 1990s, however, the improvement of outcomes became a major objective of school-based management initiatives.

10) Training (when provided) for parents and other stakeholders in shared decision making, interpersonal skills, and management skills can *benefit the community* as a whole.

11) The development of school-based management is relatively *inexpensive* as it involves a change in locus of decision making rather than a large increase in resources.

School-based management, and indeed other forms of school empowerment, it should be noted, have also been associated with a number of possible disadvantages. First, it can have adverse effects on equity. It may, for example, result in disparities in resource availability (including capacity to manage) between schools in economically advantaged and disadvantaged areas. According to Bray (2001), "a major question for policy makers concerns ways to harness the resources and energies of prosperous communities while protecting and encouraging their less prosperous counterparts" (p.3). Thus, the need is indicated to monitor the impact of school-based management on income and social groups, and to identify measures to mitigate possible adverse effects. This, in turn, points to the need for a central authority to retain powers that can be employed to implement policies to discriminate in favor of areas most in need. Secondly, there is a danger that in a localized system, unnecessary duplication will occur in certain services (e.g., in policies to address the special needs of students with disabilities). To address this issue, it will be necessary to specify carefully the categories of decision that are most appropriately dealt with at the national level. Thirdly, it may take longer in a localized system to implement some kinds of

reform and innovation. Fourthly, forms of managerial devolution that involve intermediate tiers can create problems for schools as the sources of conflict are multiplied and bureaucracy is increased (Perera, 2000). Finally, there is a danger that elite groups will take control or dominate committees or councils on which parents or other stakeholders are represented. Also communities are not homogeneous in nature. There can be power imbalances and conflicts among them.

Characteristics of School-Based Management

School-based management systems vary on a variety of characteristics (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Caldwell, 2002 , 2005; Cheng, 1996; Hill *et al.*, 1990; World Bank, 2006, 2007, 2008). Only the first two apply to all systems.

1) The school has the authority and responsibility to make decisions about one or more of the following:
    - use, maintenance, and improvement of school plant;
    - intended curriculum (range of subjects taught, syllabus content);
    - implemented curriculum (methods of instruction; choice of textbooks);
    - budget/expenditure;
    - procurement of educational materials;
    - management (deployment of teachers, assigning students to classes, school calendar, classroom hours);
    - human resources (employment, remuneration, and conditions of employment of teachers and other staff); professional development;
    - admission, suspension, and expulsion of students;
    - monitoring and evaluation of student performance (judgment of student achievement/failure; certification of student achievement);
    - quality assurance (supervision and evaluation of teacher performance);
    - publication of information about a school's performance.
2) School decision making is carried out within a centrally determined framework of goals and policies. School-level actors have to conform to, or operate within, a set of centrally determined policies and procedures.
3) An internal school management group comprising the principal, teachers, and in some cases students, is constituted either (a) to advise the principal or (b) to actually take decisions.
4) Parents' and other community members are provided with the opportunity of participating in school management, planning, and development, usually through the creation of a school-based management council. Again, the council may (a) advise the principal or (b) actually take decisions.
5) School principals and teachers are considered accountable (a) to education authorities for adhering to policy and rules; (b) to their peers for adhering to standards of instruction; and (c) to students, parents, and the general public for

student achievement. There is great variation in accountability systems. In some, information on student achievement is published in league tables, and sanctions, including monetary rewards, are attached to performance for schools and teachers. The use of monetary rewards, however, has proved controversial, and usually has not lasted very long. Furthermore, rewarding successful schools at the expense of increasing resources to schools that are failing would not contribute to overall school improvement. Non-monetary rewards (working in an environment conducive to learning, seeing positive results in student learning, or responding to parent pressure) can be motivating.

6) School-based management may be implemented in conjunction with other reforms. It is not unusual to regard school-based management as only one of several strategies designed to improve student learning.

The accountability framework in a general model of school-based management is presented in Figure 1. The beneficiaries of education, such as students and parents, are the clients who demand education services. The frontline suppliers of education services are schools. Behind the schools are the central and local education organizations such as the Ministry of Education and the local education administrative offices. In ordinary education management systems the clients who demand services and the schools and education organizations which supply services are separate. However, in school-based management, the clients are also represented in the delivery of services through their participation in school boards. The accountability system flows in both directions between the clients and providers.

Figure 1: The Accountability Framework of School-Based Management
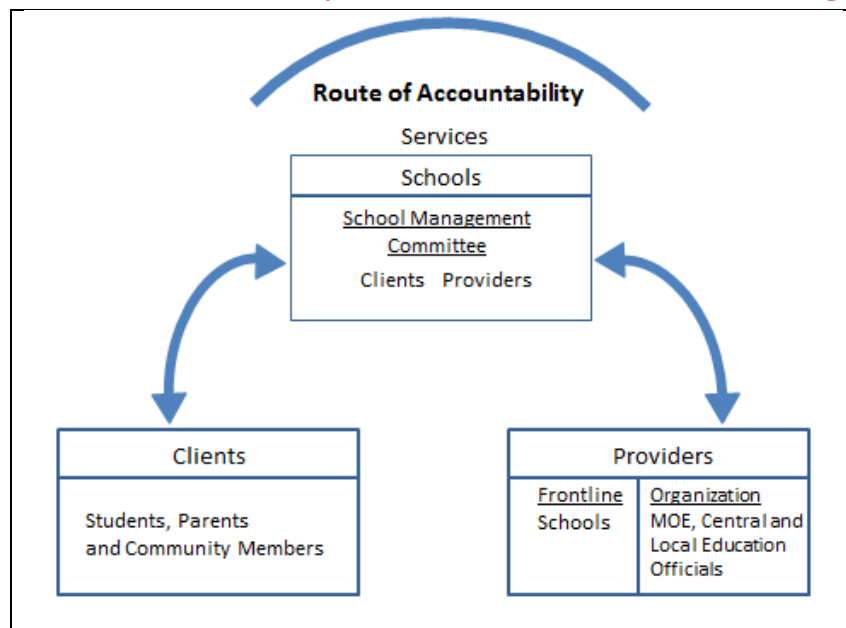
Source: Authors, adapted from World Bank (2012).

The combinations of various characteristics of school-based management above can result in four broad models of school-based management: (a) the administrative control model; (b) the professional control model; (c) the community control model; and (d) the balanced-control model (see Figure 2). The characteristics of each model are summarized below (see Leithwood and Menzies, 1998; and Bruns *et al*., 2011). While the four models are theoretically neat, in practice school-based management systems in countries can and often do combine the characteristics of one or more models. However, the weight of characteristics may still favor one model or the other. For instance, within South Asia the model implemented in Sri Lanka is a balanced control model, with power shared relatively evenly between education principals, teachers and education officials on the one hand, and parents, past pupils and local well-wishers on the other hand. The model in Nepal, in contrast, is chiefly a community control model, with local communities exercising more authority over schools.

- Administrative control. School-based management devolves authority to the school principal. This model aims to make each school more accountable to the central district or board office. The benefits of this kind of school-based management include increasing the efficiency of expenditures on personnel and curriculum, and making one person at each school more accountable to the central authority.

- Professional control. School-based management devolves the main decision-making authority to teachers. This model aims to make better use of teachers' knowledge of what the school needs at the classroom level. Participating fully in the decision-making process can also motivate teachers to perform better and can lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness in teaching.

- Community control. School-based management devolves the main decision-making authority to parents or the local community. Under this model, teachers and principals are assumed to become more responsive to parents' needs. Another benefit is that the curriculum can reflect local needs and preferences.

- Balanced control. School-based management balance decision-making authority between parents and teachers, who are the two main stakeholders in any school. It aims to take advantage of teachers' detailed knowledge of the school to improve school management and to make schools more accountable to parents.

Figure 2: Models of School-Based Management
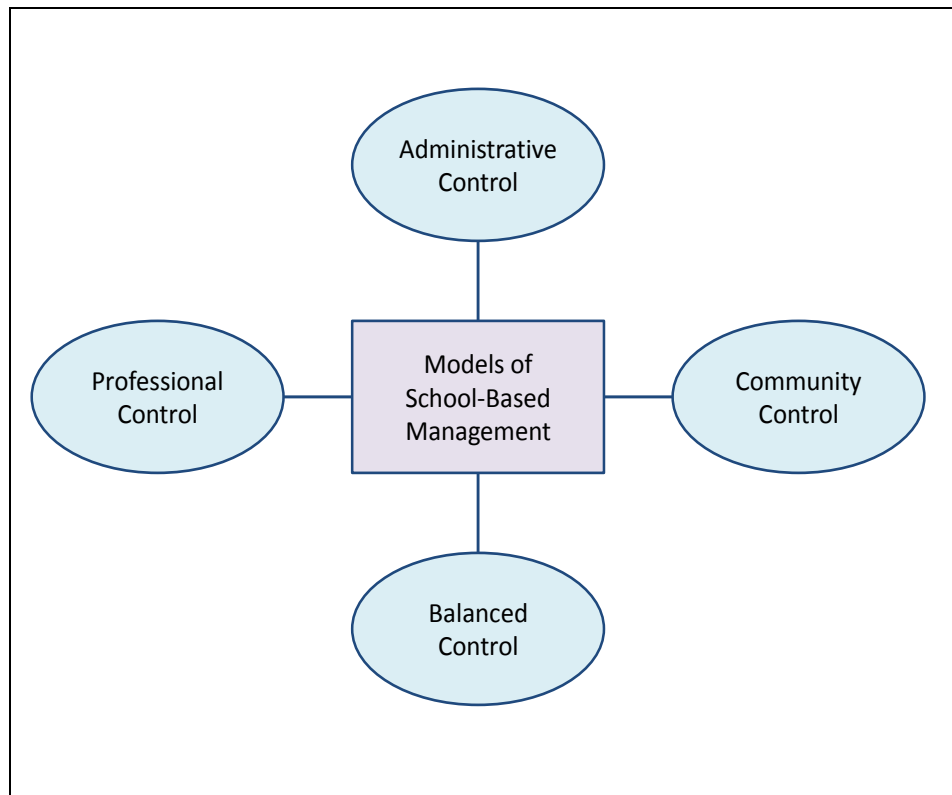
Source: World Bank (2012).

The different models of school-based management seek to combine autonomy and empowerment of schools with participation by stakeholders such as parents and well-wishers from the community. There is considerable variation across countries in the extent of autonomy given to schools and the extent of participation under the various models of school-based management (see Figure 3). In countries such as the Netherlands and Madagascar, autonomy is high while participation is low. The programs in countries such as Mexico and Mozambique, in contrast, are high in participation but relatively low in autonomy. The programs in the United States and New Zealand are high in both autonomy and participation. The degree of autonomy and participation depends on a variety of factors, including the extent of empowerment that already existed when the school-based management program was introduced, and the aims and objectives of school-based management in each country. For instance, the Unites States scores high on both autonomy and participation because its education system was already considerably decentralized when school-based management commenced, and obtaining greater participation in schools by education stakeholders was an explicit objective of the program.

Figure 3: The Autonomy-Participation Nexus, Selected School-Based Management Programs
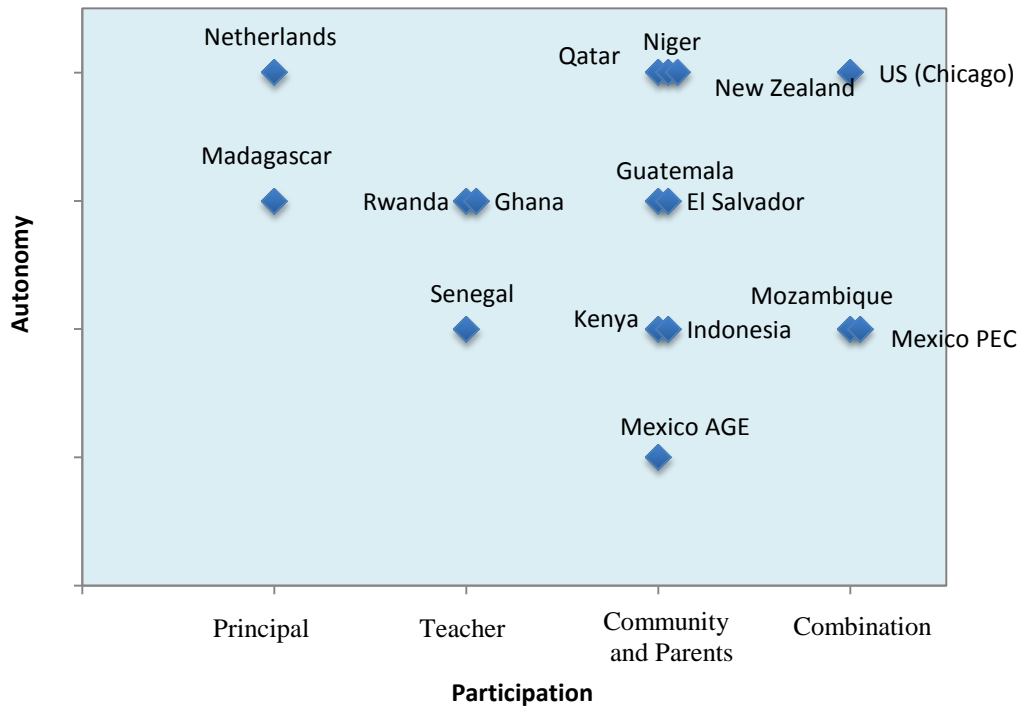
Source: Bruns *et al*. (2011) adopted from Barrera-Ossorio *et al*. (2009).
Note: AGE stands for *a la Gestión Escolar* (Support to School Management Program). PEC stands for *Programa Escuelas de Calidad* (Quality schools Program).

The Effects of School-Based Management

Assessing the effects of school-based management is difficult for a variety of reasons. First, as already noted, school-based management varies greatly from one education system to another in its goals and implementation strategies and in relationships between tiers. Thus, a finding that school-based management in one education system has, or has not, certain effects may not be relevant in another system.

Secondly, the context in which school-based management is implemented also has implications for generalization. For example, control of education in the United States was already exercised at district level. Thus, a movement to grant schools greater autonomy would involve a much shorter distance to travel than in a system in which control was centralized at the national level.

Thirdly, it is difficult to design and implement a rigorous evaluation of such a large-scale change as school empowerment. Problems in interpretation of findings can arise from

selection bias and control of treatment, and in isolating the impact of the treatment from other interventions.

Fourthly, in interventions up to the late 1990s, impact on outcomes was not an objective of school-based management. A corollary of this situation was that the database to make inferences about effects on student learning was weak.

Finally, it takes time for a shift in the balance of centralization/ empowerment to have an impact. Research from the United States suggests five to eight years. It has been observed that a large-scale intervention such as the implementation of school-based management is not just installed; rather it unfolds over time through a gradual learning process.

With these reservations in mind we may consider the research evidence on the effects of devolving management to the school level. The findings of recent research, when a major concern in school-based management was to improve learning outcomes and a strong data base on which to base inferences was established (Caldwell, 2002), are generally positive. The evidence from this research is that school-based management policies: (a) changed the dynamics of the school; parents became more involved and teacher behavior changed; (b) had a positive impact on repetition rates, failure rates, and to a lesser extent dropout rates; and (c) impacted positively on standardized test scores (Barrera-Osorio *et al*., 2009; Bruns *et al*., 2011; World Bank, 2008). For example, in Mexico, a compensatory education program that provided extra resources to disadvantaged rural schools and empowered parent associations had a substantial impact on improving educational outcomes (Gertler *et al*., 2006). In Nicaragua, the establishment of school-site councils (composed of teachers, parents, and students) that determined how all school resources were allocated and had the authority to hire and fire principals was associated with higher student test scores (Ozler, 2001). In Indonesia, in the "Creating Learning Communities for Children" project, in which schools were given a small budget, teachers were provided with professional development programs relating to new approaches to curriculum and teaching, parents were encouraged to support their schools, and the school experience of students was "invigorated", dramatic improvements in attendance rates and test results were recorded (Caldwell, 2005).

Two general conclusions have been drawn from studies of school-based management. First, a major focus of decision making in the school should be on teaching and learning and how to support them, building staff capacity to deliver a curriculum and pedagogy that identifies the needs of students, meets those needs, and monitors outcomes. Secondly, it is essential that the capacity of parents and community (religious institutions, business, industry, leisure groups) be developed to support the efforts of schools (Caldwell, 2005).

HOME- AND COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVES

A key goal of educational policy in many countries as far back as the 1960s has been to enlist the support of communities for the running of schools and to help parents become more involved in their children's scholastic lives. In the United States, parent involvement was identified as one of six areas requiring reform in the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001. Sometimes, increased parent involvement is posited in conjunction with increased school-based management; sometimes not. The goal reflects the view expressed in the 1994 Delhi Declaration that:

> "education is, and must be, a societal responsibility, encompassing governments, families, communities, and non-governmental organizations alike; it requires the commitment and participation of all, in a grand alliance that transcends diverse opinions and political positions". (UNESCO, 1994)

The goal also fits with the idea that governments should become less the direct producers and providers of goods and services, and more the facilitators and regulators of economic activity.

Why Home- and Community-Based Initiatives?

Since children spend most of their waking time outside school, it would be surprising if the continuous influence of the family and the community in which they live, both before they enter school and when they are attending school, did not play a major role in their learning. Research going back to the beginning of the 20th century has consistently established relationships between family factors and children's scholastic performance: Children from high socioeconomic status homes tend to perform better than children from lower socioeconomic status homes (White, 1982). Such findings have been replicated in Sri Lanka for students in grades 8 and 10 (Perera *et al*., 2007).

While much early research focused on status variables (parental education, income, or occupation), more recent research has shown that variables that describe the ethos, atmosphere, or teaching style of families are better predictors of students' scholastic achievements (Kellaghan *et al*., 1993; White, 1982). Appreciation of this fact has led to efforts, based on a variety of models and approaches, to develop home-school relationships and, in particular, to improve the developmental capacity and educational options available to families. While a school cannot change the income or occupation of adults in the home, it can impact on its "atmosphere" or ethos. In this context, families in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas have received special attention, as they were likely to differ from schools in their aspirations, activities, values, and the competencies they foster, putting children at risk of educational failure, school dropout, and intergenerational poverty.

Enlistment of the support of parents in the education tasks of the school is one aspect of a two-way process in the development of school-parent/community relationships. The other aspect is that schools will provide a mechanism for parents to assert their preferences over a school's operational decisions and policies, becoming more responsive to the needs of the parents and communities they serve, working not just to meet students' needs but also helping to build communities by serving their social and cultural needs and interests.

A variety of more specific reasons have been proposed in support of engaging in partnership. Partnership

- broadens the range of experiences and expertise available to the school
- provides mutual support to persist in efforts to achieve goals
- allows partners to concentrate on tasks that they do best
- increases resources (human and material)
- increases sense of involvement and ownership
- increases effectiveness arising from the variety of perspectives, interests, and expectations which can be bought to bear on problems
- broadens the range of advocacy (e.g., to focus attention and increase societal commitment to educational issues). (Bray, 2001; Kularatne, 2008)

Characteristics/Domains of School-Parent-Community Involvement

The characteristics or domains of school-parent-community involvement show considerable variation. One way to categorize them is by the extent to which the focus of the involvement is on learning and teaching. Activities that focus directly on teaching and learning may be described as *proximal*. Ones that do not relate directly to teaching and learning, but are supportive of these activities, may be described as *intermediate*. More remote educational activities may be regarded as *distal* (Bray, 2001; Kellaghan *et al.*, 1993; Shaeffer, 1994; Swift-Morgan, 2006).

Distal Activities:
1. Parents provide for health, nutrition, safety, and general well-being of children.
2. Parents and community members attend meetings/events organized by schools.
3. Parents and community members are involved in school governance and advocacy (e.g., in a parent-teacher association or school management board) in an advisory or decision-making capacity.
4. Parents and community members engage in voluntary work or make financial contributions to maintain/improve physical conditions, resources, and services in schools.

5. Schools are held accountable by parents and community members for providing effective education.
6. Schools provide or support cultural events in the community (e.g., dance, music, sport).

Intermediate Activities:
1. Schools and parents communicate regarding school programs and children's school progress, as needs arise.
2. Parents and community members assist with non-instructional activities (e.g., field trips, playground supervision).
3. Parents and community members attend workshops, lectures, and discussions provided by the school on school policies, literacy/numeracy development, or conditions that promote learning.
4. Schools provide structures and procedures to support and coordinate activities that promote and sustain the parental role in education.

Proximate Activities:
1. Parents provide pedagogical support in the classroom (e.g., as classroom assistants).
2. Parents and community members serve as information sources for students, and provide them with opportunities to obtain practical educational experience.
3. Parents provide a home environment that is supportive of intellectual development and school learning. In practice, this means that time and space are well structured and used; activities are provided to promote the development of language, reading, problem solving, critical thinking, and exploring ideas; facilities are provided for homework, which is supervised; and parents hold, and communicate, high expectations and aspirations for their children.

The Effects of School-Parent-Community Involvement

Apart from the vast literature that established relationships between home/community characteristics and students' learning, a number of studies have focussed on one or more dimensions of parent and community engagement, variously operationalized as helping children with homework (Patall *et al*., 2008; van der Werf *et al*., 2001), participation in a training program (Gertler *et al*., 2006; Graue *et al*., 1983), discussing school activities in the home (Ho & Willms, 1996), organizing and monitoring children's time, helping with homework, discussing school matters with the child, reading to the child, and being read to by the child (Finn, 1998).

Although it is not always possible to isolate the effects of community/parent engagement in these studies, findings indicate that such engagement, sometimes in conjunction with other factors, is associated with a significant effect on a variety of achievement variables.

In the 26-country IEA reading literacy study, degree of parental cooperation was found to be the strongest of 56 predictors of school effectiveness (Postlethwaite & Ross, 1992). In the United States, parental involvement was found to be significant for a variety of achievement variables at both elementary and secondary school levels (Jeynes, 2005, 2007; Patall *et al.*, 2008). In research in developing countries, parental engagement was associated with (a) improvement in the recruitment, retention, and attendance of pupils; (b) reduced grade failure and repetition (Mexico); (c) improvement in teacher efforts (El Salvador, Nicaragua); and (d) higher pupil achievement on national primary school examinations (Kenya), on tests of language and mathematics (Colombia), and on measures of life skills and writing (Bangladesh) (Bray, 2001; Gertler *et al.*, 2006).

SCHOOL EMPOWERMENT IN SRI LANKA

As early as the 1950s, pressure to decentralize administrative processes, not just in education but more generally, was in evidence in Sri Lanka in the belief that this would improve the rate of economic and social development. Particular emphasis was placed on the need to promote the participation of local communities in decision making. In the field of education, for example, proposals were made to give school principals authority over school finances, to require them to develop annual school plans, to supervise and evaluate teachers, and to serve as liaison between schools and parents. Education divisions and districts, and later zones, were created in what, however, was primarily a delegation of tasks, rather than a devolution of power (Perera, 2006).

The passing of the Thirteenth Amendment to the constitution in 1987 provided for the establishment of provincial councils, with local government as a third tier, with the aim of improving service delivery. The establishment of School Development Boards in 1992 had a specific focus on enlisting parental and community support to improve the operational efficiency of schools. In practice, most school boards focused their efforts on generating resources (fund raising). The boards were criticized on a number of grounds: for using undemocratic methods to select members, for being dominated by elites (who did not represent the community) and for failing to provide information to stakeholders. They were abolished in 1995, only three years after their creation (Perera, 2006).

An intervention in the 1980s focused on mostly small schools serving disadvantaged populations in the plantation sector and rural villages, where literacy, education, and health levels were the lowest in the country. Selected schools were invited to participate in a program of school development which had as its objective convincing school personnel that "if schools are to function at their best, the principal and staff have to take the ownership, interpret national aims, make decisions and implement them" (Perera, 1997, p.63). Outcomes, on the whole, were positive. Attempts were made to tackle

problems at school level rather than passing them to a higher level; links with the immediate community were strengthened; and teachers accepted greater responsibility for student achievement.

Perera's (2006) review of school empowerment efforts up to 2000 identified a number of problems: ambiguities and changes in objectives, focus on creating layers between the ministry and schools, inadequate preparation of stakeholders to take on new responsibilities, a reluctance to exploit opportunities by some stakeholders, and lack of resources (see also de Silva, n.d.). As a result, effects appear to have been marginal. Participation in decision making by principals, teachers, parents, or members of the community did not increase, and practices in schools remained virtually unchanged. Herath's (2009) study also showed that the actual degree of school empowerment had been quite low, and pointed to certain issues that needed to be addressed: to empower lower layers of government with more clearly defined functions that did not overlap with those of central government; to develop a proper mechanism enabling lower tiers of government to reap the benefits of school empowerment; and to provide appropriate professional development to familiarize public officials with the decentralized role of the state and principles of public expenditure.

Despite these problems, official commitment to the principle of school-based management remained strong. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (1966) stated that the "process of decentralization must go right down to the level of the school" (p.14). The National Education Commission (1997), which noted that "school-based management has been accepted as an effective tool in the management of schools" (p.25), reiterated the need to introduce school-based management to the school system as early as possible in its 2003 publication *Envisioning Education for Human Development.*

In 2005, the Ministry of Education embarked on the Programme for School Improvement (PSI) (MoE, 2005). Theme 4 of the Education Sector Development Project (2005-2011) captured the main features of the programme in its Project Appraisal Document, November 15, 2005, when under the heading "Strengthen Education Governance and Service Delivery", it set the objectives of schools becoming increasingly self-managing, with strong community involvement, and strengthening the capacity of central and provincial education institutions to deliver services within a decentralized framework.

PSI was designed to bring about change in the culture of schools through the establishment of management structures and the provision of training and support services in which (a) decisions for a range of activities are devolved to the school level; (b) the participation of parents and community in the work of the school is increased; and

(c) the quality of student learning becomes a major focus. More specifically, PSI was planned to achieve:

- active involvement of the school community (parents, teachers, and past pupils) in the running of the school;
- planned development of the school;
- effective utilization of resources;
- improved performance in curricular and co-curricular activities through co-operation between school and community;
- establishment of congruence between staff training and school needs;
- strengthening school-community relationships; and
- entrusting responsibility for the school to the School Development Committee, thus ensuring accountability (MoE, 2005).

In this programme, the principal, teachers parents and past pupils and well-wishers from the local community are brought together to help the development of the school. Each school is required to set up two bodies: a School Development Committee (SDC) and a School Management Committee (SMC). The SDC consists of the Principal (as Chair), a Deputy Principal, and representatives of teachers, parents, past pupils, and the Education Authority. Teachers, parents, and past pupil representatives are elected. The SDC should meet at least once a month during its three-year term of office. The committee is expected to prepare a five-year school development plan based on the *Manual of Instruction for School Level Planning* (MoE, 2004a) and an annual implementation plan. The school development and implementation plan should (a) address student access and participation; (b) focus on improving student achievement; and (c) attend to school plant and physical resources (Ministry of Education, 2004b). Grants are provided for the activities of the plan.

The SDC has the power to undertake projects and make purchases (up to a maximum value). It is required to prepare an annual budget and monthly and annual statement of financial accounts; operate a bank account; be responsible for the maintenance and development of the school plan; and be accountable to the relevant authorities and to the school community.

The SMC, which is established within the school, consists of all the school staff members of the SDC, the other Deputy Principals, Assistant Principals and Sectional Heads. The SMC should work closely with the SDC and, following consultation, may appoint subcommittees (project teams).

PSI was launched in one zone in eight provinces in 2006. In each succeeding year, additional zones were added. By 2009, a total of 5,222 schools were participating in the

scheme. There has been over the years evidence of variation from school to school in the interpretation and implementation of PSI. A high degree of implementation was associated with

- strong commitment of the principal and other teachers to the values of PSI;
- a school plan prepared and its implementation monitored;
- a wide range of extra-curricular activities provided for pupils (e.g., dance, music, sport, gardening);
- increased community involvement in the school;
- regular (monthly) meetings between teachers and parents to monitor and discuss the progress of individual pupils;
- regular visits to the schools by zonal and divisional officers to participate in committees, to advise on teaching methods, and to assist in development and implementation of the school plan; and
- a shift in teachers' minds from inputs (e.g., resources) to the quality of student learning.

In schools in which implementation of PSI was less successful, structures might have been established but they did not operate effectively to promote the objectives of PSI. In these cases, observations in, and reports from, schools, together with limited evaluation findings (Dias, 2008; Gunasekara et al., 2010; Kularatne, 2008) point to

- lack of commitment to, or interest in, meeting the challenges that PSI had been designed to address;
- efforts to implement management changes not sufficiently grounded in institutional political analysis;
- ambiguities in the responsibilities specified for different levels;
- inadequate funds;
- lack of support which schools require to help them understand the messages of PSI and how they might be translated into practice in their schools. There is some evidence that this situation may arise from the inability of zonal officers, often because of lack of time, to engage in meaningful collaboration with schools;
- failure to connect PSI with curriculum and instructional reforms and, in particular, with student learning outcomes;
- reluctance of some administrators and teachers to allow others take over decision-making authority;
- additional management roles and responsibilities not always welcome in schools;
- lack of stakeholders' knowledge of what school-based management is, and how it works;
- a tradition of weak management, decision making, and communication skills in a school;

- problems in getting full participation in meetings;
- lack of support from parents and community; and
- lack of a culture of accountability within a community (no one would question the actions of school teachers) (see World Bank, 2007).

A variety of procedures are in place to address problems associated with low or marginal levels of implementation:

- PSI committees have been established in all zones;
- technical Assistants have been appointed in all provinces to support schools;
- meetings have been held between Ministry officials, Zonal officers, and Technical Assistants to review progress;
- training has been carried out of SDC personnel at provincial level;
- schools serving pupils from disadvantaged areas that need additional support or assistance in implementing PSI have been identified; and
- "seed grants" have been given to "difficult" and "very difficult" schools (Ministry of Education, 2008).

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EMPOWERMENT OF SRI LANKAN SCHOOLS

Considerable effort and resources have been invested in recent years in promotion of the PSI. There are a variety of reasons as to why the PSI has been supported by policy makers and stakeholders (World Bank, 2011; World Bank–FTI Secretariat, 2011).

- The PSI is democratic as it empowers the various education partners and stakeholders. When parents and community members are involved, it contributes to their commitment and empowerment.
- The PSI facilitates the recognition of, and responsiveness to, local needs. Large bureaucracies could tend to overlook peripheral needs and ignore ethnic, linguistic and regional cultural variation, while the PSI allows local decision makers to adapt education policies to local realities and to determine the appropriate mix of inputs and prudent use of school, local, and regional level resources. School-based management has the potential to lead to a more effective educational delivery.
- The PSI can lead to improved communication between stakeholders, and facilitate principals' awareness of teacher and parent concerns.
- The PSI can result in greater accountability of schools and teachers to their pupils, parents and local communities.
- The PSI provides for group decision making, which tends to be more considered than decisions made by individuals.
- The PSI can contribute to the development of high levels of professionalism in schools.
- The PSI can ultimately lead to improved student retention and learning.

- Training (when provided) for parents and other stakeholders in shared decision making, interpersonal skills, and management proficiency can benefit the community as a whole.
- The development of the PSI is relatively inexpensive as it involves a change in locus of decision-making rather than a large increase in resources.

Impact of School-Based Management in Sri Lanka

The PSI in Sri Lanka, through which the government sought to introduce school-based management, indicates that the PSI has had a positive and significant impact on cognitive achievement levels of primary school students. Table 1 presents estimates of the impact of the PSI on student and household outcomes of interest for Grade 4 students. Columns 1-2 examine the impact of those programs on Math and English test scores. The findings reveal that students from schools that implemented the PSI alone score significantly higher in both subjects. These scores increase by 0.20 and 0.18 standard deviations, respectively, among students from the PSI schools. Table 2 examines certain variables concerning the management of school needs. The PSI increased the probability that the principal had implemented some kind of project through resources raised from local communities. It also increased the probability that a school development committee had been formed.

Table 1: Impact of the PSI on Grade 4 Test Scores
(School–level fixed effects estimation with clustered standard errors)

Variables	(1) Math	(2) English	(3) Math	(4) English
Year = 2008	-0.0684	-0.0584	-0.0385	-0.0469
	(0.0482)	(0.0458)	(0.0525)	(0.0495)
2008×PSI	0.199***	0.177***	0.220***	0.226***
	(0.0720)	(0.0662)	(0.0767)	(0.0712)
Male			-0.238***	-0.344***
			(0.0289)	(0.0266)
Sinhala			0.349***	0.0286
			(0.103)	(0.0841)
Tamil			0.0400	-0.0644
			(0.0975)	(0.0828)
Income			0.0313***	0.0421***
			(0.0119)	(0.0116)
Mother's Education			0.0281***	0.0269***
			(0.00635)	(0.00545)
Father's Education			0.0101	0.00962*
			(0.00625)	(0.00540)
Constant	-0.114***	-0.0756***	-0.668***	-0.337***
	(0.0173)	(0.0163)	(0.104)	(0.0880)
Observations	5709	5688	4746	4727
R-squared	0.003	0.004	0.038	0.058
Number of scid	196	196	196	196

Source: World Bank (2011)

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 2: Impact on Principals' Management of School Needs Variables
(Probit estimation with clustered standard errors)

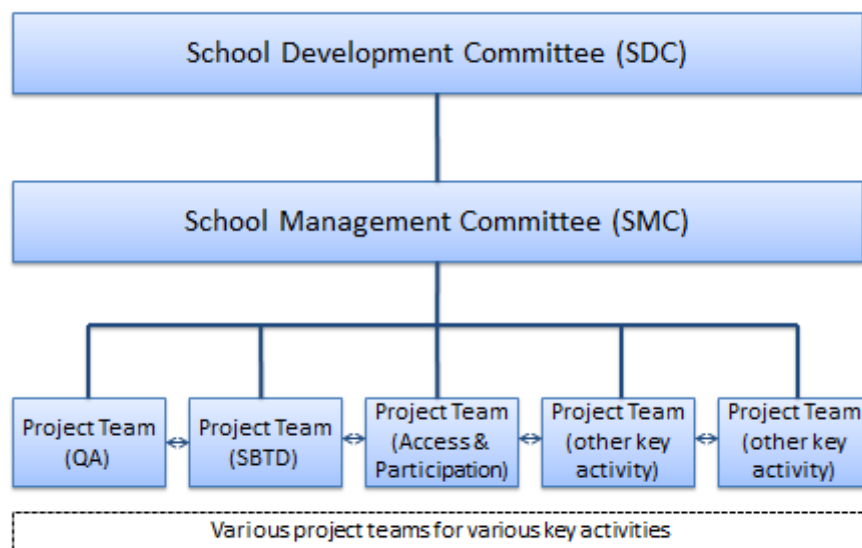| Variables	(1) Project	(2) Needs Analysis	(3) Priorities	(4) Long-Term Plan	(5) Formed School Dev. Com.
Year = 2008	-0.122	0.0621	0.0621	0.738**	-0.519*
	(0.217)	(0.311)	(0.310)	(0.345)	(0.307)
2008×PSI	0.628**	0.534	0.219	0.327	1.685***
	(0.292)	(0.517)	(0.447)	(0.541)	(0.513)
Constant	-0.239**	1.364***	1.364***	0.894***	0.773***
	(0.0934)	(0.127)	(0.127)	(0.105)	(0.102)
Observations	331	346	345	307	296

Source: World Bank (2011)
Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Future Developments in School-Based Management in Sri Lanka

The Ministry of Education and the Provincial Education Authorities wish to deepen and strengthen the empowerment of schools and to increase parental and community involvement in the education system in Sri Lanka, under the government's Education Sector Development Framework and Programme. The following steps now seem appropriate to extend and consolidate the reforms.

a) Develop the capacity among School Development Committees (SDCs) and School Management Committees (SMCs) to improve participation and retention, and learning and soft skills, of students.

b) Promote PSI but as a means through which school-level decision makers can implement practices that improve teaching and learning. Appoint the necessary sub-committees or project teams for this purpose: e.g. to promote retention and participation, school-based teacher development, quality assurance, etc. (see Figure 4).

c) Consolidate PSI in schools where structures have been established, but activity is low. This may require greater clarity in specification of roles, capacity building, and continuing personal and monetary support for schools.

d) Empower lower levels of governance with clearly defined functions that do not overlap with higher levels of governance. This will involve strengthening zonal and divisional capacity through training for in-service advisers and networking of principals.

Figure 4: School Development Committees, School Management Teams and Project Teams


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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│          School Development Committee (SDC)              │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                            │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│          School Management Committee (SMC)               │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
       │        │          │          │          │
  ┌────────┐┌────────┐┌──────────┐┌──────────┐┌──────────┐
  │Project ││Project ││Project   ││Project   ││Project   │
  │Team    ││Team    ││Team      ││Team      ││Team      │
  │(QA)    ││(SBTD)  ││(Access & ││(other key││(other key│
  │        ││        ││Participa-││activity) ││activity) │
  │        ││        ││tion)     ││          ││          │
  └────────┘└────────┘└──────────┘└──────────┘└──────────┘
  └─────── Various project teams for various key activities ─────┘
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e) Particular attention needs be paid to schools serving children in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas as effective governance is particularly important for the marginalized and disadvantaged. Additional funding may be required which takes account of school size, level of schooling, special education needs, location and type of schools.

f) Support schools in developing a parent involvement program which to date has been largely restricted to distal activities (attending meetings, involvement in school committees, engagement in voluntary work or making financial contributions to maintain or improve physical conditions, resources, and services) to one in which attention is paid to proximal activities. The program could focus on (i) developing parents' understanding that the home environment has a profound impact on the school learning of children and that they have the power to change it; (ii) developing parents' self-confidence and sense of efficacy in establishing a home environment that will provide rich learning experiences for children; and (iii) demonstrating specific behaviors that parents can use (e.g., how to interact with pupils re homework, having pupils read to them).

g) Extend the involvement of communities to contribute to the development of "competencies for life", so-called "soft skills" or generic skills which are necessary for effective functioning in personal life, interpersonal relationships,

and employment/economic activities (critical and divergent thinking, problem solving, creativity, initiative, leadership, responsibility, team work). Experience in community activities is often more relevant and appropriate in developing these skills than school based experience which is often preoccupied with covering syllabuses and preparing students for examinations. Community activities also provide opportunities to develop social cohesion through learning to live with others in harmony, respecting the diversity of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural society.

h) Schools need support in setting objectives, assessing student achievements, determining what learning experiences are necessary to ensure success, and then measuring and reporting on the outcomes. To support schools in this activity, it is proposed that standardized tests in core curriculum areas which would provide normative data would be developed and made available to schools for use by teachers.

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