Study of Stakeholders' Participation in Public School Management: Case in Matara District

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At present the government schools in Sri Lanka are implementing School Based Management *(SBM)* system. One of the key elements of the *SBM* is participatory management in schools. Therefore, this study was designed to investigate the participation of stakeholders in those schools. Sri Lankan version of SBM is titled as the Programme of School Improvement *(PSI)*. The research field was Matara district schools. Particularly, this study intended to: investigate the nature of stakeholders' participation in school management, involvement of the community members in the decision making process, and to discover limitations and challenges related to the community participation in the *PSI* schools. Case study approach was used in this study. Document surveys and interviews were employed to gather information from Principals, Deputy Principals, Teaching Staff, Parents and Past Pupils of the governing boards of the PSI schools. Descriptive statistical tools and thematic analytical technique were used to analyze data. According to the responses made by the parents and past pupils; the principals and the internal community members of schools are not willing to welcome ideas, suggestions and criticisms made by the external community members. The selections of the members for the school governing boards are influenced by the principal. Therefore, the decision making process is not functioning in a democratic manner. This study also revealed that the participation of stakeholders in school management is not encouraged by the school leaders. Although *PSI* policy encourages greater community participation in school management, it seems that the community does not satisfactorily participate in the PSI school management. However, it has fairly enhanced the participation of internal community members for school decisions and school management rather than the external community members. The *PSI* awareness programms conducted by the Ministry of Education are not successful. Lack of time, financial recourses and commitment of higher officers negatively affect the successful community participation in the *PSI* implemented schools.

Key words: Community Participation, School Based Management, Programme of School Improvement, Participatory Management