

# The Pre-Service Training of Education Administrative Officers: Experiences of Education Administrators in Sri Lanka

**Dr. Chandana Kasturiarachchi**

Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

## ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study was to investigate experiences of the administrators, trainers and the trainees on the pre-service training program offered to the novice Educational Administrative Officers in Sri Lanka. This training program is conducted by the National Institute of Education under the supervision of the Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka. This study employed qualitative inquiry and case study approach. Participants were selected by using purposive sampling technique. Data was gathered in administering semi-structured interviews and document surveys. Data was analyzed using a thematic analysis. The findings revealed that the trainees were quite unsatisfied with the pre-service training program since their expected requirements have not been adequately fulfilled through the pre-service training program. Poor course design, outdated course content based on deep theoretical aspects, ineffective course delivery methods, lack of practical activities, poor quality of the trainers, unsatisfactory course coordination were the main issues of the pre-service training program. However, the majority of participants were contented about the effort has been made by many parties to organize such pre-service training. The study concludes that a requirement of a policy based on theory and practice for selecting and training the novice officers in Sri Lanka. The selection of trainers needs to be systematic, and qualified, experienced, energetic, motivated intellectuals must be the trainers of the newly recruited officers. The content, delivery strategies, technology must be suited for enhancing the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills of the officers.

**Key Words-** Pre-Service Training, Education Administrators, Training, and Development, Principals

## INTRODUCTION

The Sri Lanka Educational Administrative Service (SLEAS) comprises of three categories as Class I, Class II and Class III officers. They are working as officers in the Sri Lankan school education system in representing different positions in different organizations under the Ministry of Education Sri Lanka (MoESL). The SLEAS officers are the officers who actively engage in realizing the national education aims and goals in Sri Lanka. Especially, the SLEAS officers are expected to perform various roles in the education sector in Sri Lanka. The contemporary educational

administrator's role is undergoing rapid changes (Gamage, 1990 and 1996c; Cranston, 1996). Therefore, professional development of them is very imperative since they play key educational administrative roles in the country. It has been mentioned in the service minute of SLEAS that the officers should be provided with the professional development, and according to the constitution of National Institute of Education, that it is one of the duties to provide professional development for the personals in the education sector. Other than these no policy statement can be

found regarding the professional development of the SLEAS officers.

All the newly recruited SLEAS officers are mandatory to undergo a pre-service training programme. Especially, the SLEAS officers who are being recruited through open examinations are expected to follow the one-year Pre-Service Training Programme (PSTP), which is being conducted by the National Institute of Education (NIE). The PSTP is offered to novice SLEAS officers is titled as, the Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Management (PGDEM), and it is a one-year course.

Generally, and typically, as a mandatory activity, many countries conduct pre-service training programmes for the education officers in a different manner. This situation, compulsory pre-service training for SLEAS officers can appear for several years in Sri Lanka also. It is called an induction training conducted by an organization decided by Secretary of the MoESL. According to the service minute; all officers recruited to the SLEAS service should successfully complete an induction training programme. Those found to be unsuccessful at the test conducted at the conclusion of such training will be reverted to the posts they previously held in the public service or discontinued from the service. The SLEAS officers recruited through an open competitive examination will be provided twelvemonths of induction training. The newly recruited SLEAS officers, who recruited through a limited competitive examination, will be provided three months pre-servicetraining, and the pre-service training for the SLEAS officers recruited on service experience and merit basis will be two months. This induction training programme is officially offered by the NIE with the supervision of the MoESL (Gazette extraordinary in Sri Lanka, 2002).

### **International experiences of education training programmes**

In many countries school, education administration and leadership training programmes are organized in a diverse

manner. In Finland, education leadership programmes are categorized: principal preparation or qualification programmes, specialist qualification in management programmes, professional development programmes, advanced studies in universities, and other courses and studies (Varri& Alava, 2005).

Education leader, principal preparation and training programmes should be guaranteed constant valuation of competences of aspiring principals to improve student learning is important. Orr and Orphanos (2011); Bottoms, O'Neill, Fry, and Hill (2003) have identified a number of key/ fundamental characteristics of education leadership training programmes as well-defined leadership theories, a comprehensible curriculum, school improvement, change management, etc. Principal training programmes should employ an active learning strategy that merges theory, practice, and encourages a positive reflection. Programmes must provide both social and professional support. Criteria and strategies should be applied to choose high-quality candidates and people with adequate knowledge of curriculum and instruction with a passion especially, to improve student learning (Orr, 2010).

It seems that in France, Germany, China (Shanghai) and South Korea, school leadership training programmes organized and funded by the relevant government authorities and are only accessible to those who have been accepted as principal candidates. It can be seen that most of the other countries usually offer training programmes reachable to school teachers who are interested in the principalship. In several countries, generally the qualification procedure includes two stages: candidates are supposed to first obtain satisfactory elementary knowledge to take up a principal's position and are then it is mandatory to obtain a professional qualification or certificate during their first years in the position to gain permanent qualifications. In those cases, pre-service

and induction training make up a whole that delivers the qualifications. It can be apparent that in most of the countries some kind of mentoring system is in place. According to the findings of many research studies, training for new principals is implemented with government funding and in keeping with a national curriculum in many countries. This model appears appropriate, since it encourages accomplishment of the objectives of national education policy, while also contributing to principals' informal networking (Hale & Moorman, 2003; Hall, 2008; Hargreaves et.al., 2007; Peterson, 2002; Caldwell et. al., 2003; Finnish National Board of Education, 2012).

In France, those admitted through the spring entrance examination are immediately appointed to positions at the beginning of the following school year. The Ministry of National Education is responsible for training supervisory personnel for secondary level schools. They organize a preparation course including a total number of 15 in-class days. In addition, the same ministry is responsible for organizing the training during the first and second school year, with a total number of 45 in-class days (Peterson, 2002; Caldwell et. al., 2003; Finnish National Board of Education, 2012).

The nature of the pre-service training in France appears that: each and every new principal is allocated a training tutor, who is a more experienced and qualified, principal from some other school. Regularly, the training is supervised by a training team of the relevant school administrative authority, the head of the school where the training takes place and the administrative and pedagogical inspectors. Throughout the induction stage, each new principal is provided a tutor appointed by the school administrative authority, who works at a different school than the inductee. The tutor's role is to meet the trainee frequently and monitor the progress of his or her induction into the

occupation (Hargreaves et.al., 2007; Peterson, 2002).

In the German state of Baden-Württemberg, frequently a three-week continuing education training course is organized for those appointed as school principals. Human resource development, quality management, and teamwork will be covered within two years. The courses are provided for free of charge and funded by the State Ministry of Education (Hale & Moorman, 2003; Hall, 2008; Hargreaves et.al., 2007).

It can be seen that Shanghai in China offers training programmes for newly appointed school principals. The nature of training is included both preparation and induction and the key aim of the training is for providing all the principal participants to master basic knowledge concerning the curriculum management and school administration. The participants are awarded a certificate of professional qualification. New principals are required to start the programme within six months of acceptance of the principal position. The time duration of the programme is about 300 hours (Hale & Moorman, 2003; Caldwell et. al., 2003).

Scotland new head teachers (principals) are provided an induction training which includes a short, half- or one-day programme with themes mostly related to the work and the working environment as well as competence development opportunities. A new headteacher is assigned a mentor at the school. If the principal has not completed qualification training previously when working as a teacher or deputy headteacher, it is possible to complete it after being appointed as a headteacher. However, in the Netherlands does not seem to have a consistent or even common practice for induction of new principals (Finnish National Board of Education, 2012).

In the Canadian Province of Ontario, school districts regularly organize induction and orientation training programmes for newly recruited principals, in which they specify the contents of the programmes

autonomously. The Ontario Principals' Council and continuing education organizations also offer training programmes for intended principals also (Hale & Moorman, 2003; Finnish National Board of Education, 2012).

In New Zealand, the University of Auckland is carrying out a principal training programme in order to induct newly appointed principals. The main objective of that is to develop principals' knowledge, skills and capabilities to support their successful school leadership. This programme is conducted free of charge, and travel expenses, accommodation, meals, and resources are provided for free of charge. This principal induction training programme contains three days two residential courses; a mentoring programme, with two school-based visits, participation in three professional learning groups and an online community-based activity, and telephone support; formative evaluations and self-assessments completed by the participant principals to inform the continuous improvement of the programme (Hargreaves et.al., 2007; Peterson, 2002).

The newly recruited principals in Sweden are mandatory to participate in the government-funded National School Leadership Training Programme which is organized by the Swedish National Agency for Education as commissioned by the Government authorities. Their induction and orientation programme contains three modules. School law and administrative procedure; management by objectives and results; and school leadership. The programme is running for 3-4 years (Hale & Moorman, 2003; Peterson, 2002).

The Executive Board for Education and Training in Norway organizes the government-funded National Programme for new Principals. This training programme is mainly projected for newly appointed principals, but other principals also can apply if there are seats available. The duration of the programme is about 18 months and it is worth 30 credits. Mainly the programme focus is on leadership. The

training is divided into five main areas for instance: educational management and school administration; cooperation and networking, human resource management; pupils' learning outcomes and learning environment; education development and change; leadership role of the principals (Hargreaves et.al., 2007; Peterson, 2002; Caldwell et. al., 2003).

The principals' induction training programmes in Finland are mainly organized by the universities and the Educode (formerly National Centre for Professional Development in Education). The responsibilities of the induction training programmes are divided among that universities, and those programmes are organized in their own locations and focused on practical applications of theory, whereas the Educode concentrates on the solution of everyday problems and organizes many induction programmes in different parts of the country. This induction training programme is conducted based on a curriculum prepared by the Finnish National Board of Education. It comprised of nine credit subject areas. The contents of the programme are school organization, administration, and finances; school curriculum and learning results; human resources management and leadership; employment relationship issues; strategic planning (Finnish National Board of Education, 2012).

### **Nature and constitution of the SLEAS**

The constitution of SLEAS was published in 1986 through a gazette notification by the Sri Lankan government. Since then most of the managerial positions of the school education sector have been held by SLEAS officers. For the establishment and functioning of the said service, a service minute of the Sri Lanka Education Administrative Service published in the Gazette Extraordinary No.1225/32 of 01st March 2002, and it was affected from 17.04.2015. It includes several rules, regulations, procedures, instructions, etc. regarding the said service. They are appointing members to that service under

four categories like; Grade III, Grade II, Grade I and to Special Grade. The key roles of that officers have been explain in that service minute as; assisting in the formulation of national education policies encompassing the general education towards the overall human resource development in Sri Lanka and the implementation, direction, regulation and evaluation of such policies and the establishment of interrelationship between secondary education and post-secondary education contributing towards the learning and teaching process and the management and supervision of all institutes in the education system thereby ensuring the qualitative improvement of the education. Their salary scales also have been mentioned in the minute under two categories as Senior Executive and Executive. The general cadre positions will be filled by 50% from the open, 20% from the limited and 30% from the special candidates, and all the special cadre positions will be filed by limited candidates. All must be graduates except for some of the special cadre positions. At the first time, all the officers will be recruited as Grade III officers into the SLEAS (Gazette extraordinary in Sri Lanka, 2002).

#### **Recruitment procedure of SLEAS officers**

Usually, the SLEAS officers are recruited by the Ministry of Education via a competitive examination and an interview. The subjects for the open competitive examination for recruitment to Grade III of the Sri Lanka Education Administrative Service are Comprehension, Intelligence Test, General Knowledge, Essay and Precis. And the subjects for the limited competitive examination for recruitment to Grade III of the Sri Lanka Education Administrative Service are General Knowledge and Intelligence Test, Comparative Education, Education Administration, and Management. The subjects for the Competitive Examination for appointment on service experience and merit to Grade III of the Sri Lanka Education Administrative Service are; Comparative Education and

Case Study on Education Management. For the open candidate, the age limit is 22 years and 30 years and for other candidates, the age limit is 55 years in applying the post. All will be selected through a competitive examination and an interview. The Commissioner General of Examinations in Sri Lanka is conducting the examination. The qualified candidates apply under open category can attempt two times, and under limited category will be given three chances for selecting into the service, and however, a maximum of five occasions. The appointing authority of the officers for the SLEAS is Public Service Commission of Sri Lanka (Gazette extraordinary in Sri Lanka, 2002). This SLEAS post is permanent and pensionable. Contributions have to be paid for the Widows'/Widowers' and Orphans' Pension. All the officers appointed to this post are subject to a probation period of three years (Gazette extraordinary in Sri Lanka, 2002).

#### **Promotion procedure of SLEAS officers**

All the SLEAS officers are supposed to go through three efficiency bar examinations. For the first efficiency bar examination must be faced before three years following the recruitment to Grade III of the SLEAS, For the second efficiency bar examination must be met before three years following the promotion to Grade II of the SLEAS, and for the third efficiency bar examination must be faced before five years following the promotion to Grade I. In addition to that, all the officers are required to acquire proficiency in one of the official languages before the confirmation in the post. The promotions of officers to Grade II of the Service, whose appointments were under Special Cadre, are made within the Special Cadre itself. In order to promote SLEAS III officers to SLEAS II are supposed to have passed the first efficiency bar examination on the prescribed date. They should have acquired the appropriate level of proficiency of the other official language. They also should have passed or had exempted from the link language, should have successfully completed the

capacity building training course in educational management and administration, and they are supposed to have passed the Post Graduate Diploma in Education (Gazette extraordinary in Sri Lanka, 2002).

In order to get SLEAS I promotion, all the SLEAS II officers are required to pass the second efficiency bar examination on the prescribed date. And they are required to successfully complete the capacity building training course on the prescribed date. The requirements for the promotion to special grade from Grade I have been indicated in the service minute as the candidates, the SLEAS I officers should have passed the third efficiency bar examination on the prescribed date. They are required to obtain a Post Graduate Degree, they are supposed to have successfully followed the capacity building training course during the prescribed period (Gazette extraordinary in Sri Lanka, 2002).

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The main aim of this study was to explore the experiences of participants of this study on pre-service training of SLEAS officers. For this purpose, a case study approach under the qualitative research method was chosen in this study. Merriam (2009, p13) points out that “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world”. Since this study expected to investigate the experiences of the participants, the qualitative research method was appropriate as it allows the researcher to investigate in-depth information.

The main research question is; how do the trainers, trainees, and the administrators perceive the pre-service training programme offered to the SLEAS officers in Sri Lanka? And objectives of the study were to: identify the implementing process of PSTP; recognize the curriculum implemented for PSTP; discover the perception of the trainers; trainees and

administrators on the delivering system of the PSTP offered to the SLEAS officers in Sri Lanka.

In general, qualitative research focuses on the inner experience of people, as they interact with others. “A primary purpose of qualitative research is to describe and clarify experience as it is lived and constituted in awareness. In particular, it was expected to investigate the experiences of participants on PSTP offered to newly recruited EAO in this study. In order to gather the in-depth information related to this phenomenon a case study approach, as a most appropriate research approach was used to gather the qualitative data in this study.

The case study research 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 aims to explore deeply the experiences of participants about the experiences on PSTP offered to newly recruited EAO, case study approach was more appropriate to investigate their experiences.

Interviews and document surveys were employed to gather information in this study. Interviews were the main data collection methods which were administered to gather information from the participants. Interviews allow the researcher to gather direct information from the participants, and the researcher has an opportunity to get more clarifications about the information provided by them. Therefore, it seems that the interview is a more appropriate method of accessing people’s insights, sense, and definitions of situations and constructions of reality (Punch, 2009). As this study intended to investigate the experiences of participants, the interviews were able to capture their ideas, experiences, and

perceptions about the PSTP offered to the EAOs in Sri Lanka.

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”. In this study, public documents were one of the data sources used. Documents are important because documents provide the formal frameworks for the PSTP offered for EAOs. The documents in this study were the minutes of the meetings, professional development plans, ministry and government regulations, policy statements, project reports, training & development programme reports, and training & capacity development guidelines, etc.

The semi-structured interview protocol was administered for gathering information from the participants. Interview data were collected only from 10 trainees who participated in the PSTP, 04 trainers and 01 administrator from NIE and 02 administrators from MoESL who have involved in the PSTP. The interview protocol was pilot tested with 02 trainees who participated in the PSTP, 01 trainers from NIE and 01 administrators from the MoESL who were not included in the sample of this study. All the questions were open-ended in this protocol. The same interview protocol was administered to gather information from all the participants. At the beginning of the data collection process, it was made steps to obtain permission from respective immediate supervisors of the participants in this study. All the information regarding this research and the role of the interviewees was described. Almost all the participants verbally gave their consent for participating in this study as research participants. Then it was taken their convenient time for the interview. According to the interview plan, each interview took about one-hour time, and some interviews took less than one hour. All the interviews were digitally

recorded with the permission of the interviewee and then transcribed into text form. For conducting interview one research assistant participated in helping to get notes and for handing digital voice recorders. In order to analyze data in this study, some direct quotations were taken from the interviews, however, before analyzing the interview data a member checking process occurred. Several codes were used to identify participants and their organizations in order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of the information and sources of information in this study. The participants and organizations that they work were named by using pseudonyms when they interview.

Thematic analysis is one of the most common approaches of qualitative data analysis (Bryman, 2001; Mutch, 2005) and it was the most appropriate method for analyzing qualitative data in this study. It was identified themes, coding, categorizing and identifying patterns was useful to find out the similarities and differences between the cases in this study.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Altogether 18 participants were involved in this study by providing information. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants in this study, a coding system was used to recognize them. The codes have been used to identify trainees as TR1, TR2...TR10, Trainers as TA1...TA4 and Administrators as AD1...AD4. The data analysis was conducted under the following themes. For instance; the course content and design of the PSTP; the trainers and the delivering methods of the PSTP and the training and learning activities of the PSTP.

The course content and design of the PSTP Administrators, Trainee, and Trainers presented various views about the course design and the objectives of the course. According to an administrator, this training course was not sufficient since the selected SLEAS officers have no basic or prior knowledge and experiences of the field

of Education. As he (AD2) stated: *“Unfortunately, in Sri Lanka, there is no such professional organization for Education which impose rules, regulations, and criterion that the new recruits need. No policy statements are other than the service minutes which state the requirements for the personals to be recruited to the field of education. They are just being selected from a competitive examination evaluating something on IQ, language, general knowledge and so on. For such officials, just an orientation program is not sufficient”* (AD2).

Another administrator indicated about the background knowledge of the trainees of this PSTP and his view on the existing PSTP offered to the newly recruited SLEAS officers who have been selected through the open examination into the service. *“Many of them do not at least knowledge on background concepts of education such as sociology, psychology, philosophy of education...From this course, little knowledge of those areas can be given. Actually, they need complete professional training along with practical sessions and internship. All these needs cannot be covered from this one-year course”* (AD4).

On the other hand, SLEAS trainees complained that this training program was not sufficient for them at all. According to one of the trainees (TR1), *“there were many problems regarding the course design. Actually, they had not planned the course before it was started”* (TR1).

Consequently, it can be seen that there is a noticeable gap between the opinion of the administrators and the trainees. According to the administrators; as the trainees do not possess a basic knowledge of the field of education, they need to be given more theoretical knowledge. On the other hand, as the trainees need practical knowledge to work in the field. It highlights the fact that many problems regarding recruitment and course designing need to be addressed immediately.

Blanchard & Thacker (2007) reveal the importance of needs assessment before commencing the training programme. They find that conducting a thorough needs assessment before training is designed and delivered helps set appropriate goals for training and ensure that trainees are ready to participate. A similar finding is revealed by Fowlkes et al. (2000) and they state that a needs assessment maximizes the benefits of training.

Further, most of the participants commented on the lack of practical activities and lack of quality in lectures on theory. One of the trainees (TR4) elaborated: *“only at the end, we understood the course design. If they illustrated us the course design, objectives, the purpose of the subjects and their application to the working field at the beginning we could have listened more attentively and then the course would have been more effective”* (TR4).

One trainer mentioned his ideas about the curriculum of the programme. *“I believe that this curriculum is a little bit outdated. So, it needs to be updated very soon. The new curriculum must be included new administrative techniques, how to use technology for administrative activities. For instance, how to use digital technology in administering organizations”* (TA4).

All the participants in the study spoke a great deal about the inadequacy and the lack of relevance of the course content. They specified that the course content is inadequate to meet the needs of their work requirements in real organizational environments. Further, it is not balanced and is much academically oriented and even more traditional as it lacks the relevance to the modern context at present. As one of the trainees (TR10) commented: *“instead of many theories if the content was consisted of what we have to do in our jobs it would have been very helpful and useful for us. When we went to our workplaces, we had to face so many problems regarding circulars, methods of handling money, files, etc. We were taught about those in the course but it*



was very little and not adequate as major attention was paid to explain deep theories” (TR10).

Sitzmann et al. (2006) find out that web-based instruction more effective than classroom instruction for training personals and also it has been effective for teaching procedural knowledge. Wesson & Gogus (2005) reveals that the impact of novel training technologies on outcomes of the training sessions. They find that computer-based training methodologies are more effective than the traditional methodologies during training sessions.

Alternatively, the administrators remarked that they have composed the content relevant to the training program. One of the administrators (AD1) explained: *“this is an institute to train Educational Administrators. Since we have conducted many such training programmes we have a thorough understanding and experiences about what should be the content of training programmes”* (AD1). Further, he indicated about the subjects they have included into the curriculum of this pre-service training programme as: *“when the trainee SLEAS officers become professionals, they should be able to solve their problems by themselves. Therefore, we have included research methods for the course content and get them to do action research enabling them to solve their professional issues by themselves. In addition, we have included education law, human resource management, physical resource management, etc.”* (AD1).

Arthur et al. (2003) conduct a study and it is revealed that training has an overall positive effect on job-related behaviors or performance of the trainees. Fairly similar findings are revealed by Hill & Lent (2006) and Satterfield & Hughes (2007) through their studies and they indicate that training-related changes should result in improved job performance and other positive changes. Driskell et al. (2001) find that training has been beneficial in that trainees performed well under a novel stressor and when performing a novel task.

However, one administrator mentioned that the course content is composed by educationists after a panel discussion, but quite contrarily another administrator revealed that it was composed by one person and sent it for several other lecturers for a review and simply few of them have approved it. Another trainee critically explained: *“the content of this training program is not updated along with the new trends. I came here previously for another leadership training program. The same lectures, the same facts I had to listen to this training programme also. When we take subjects like Management, they taught us all outdated facts, they should have found new facts from modern resources. Mostly the problem is with the resource persons”* (TR9).

Another trainee mentioned his understandings about the course content of this PSTP as follows. *“we need new knowledge and experience. Unfortunately, the content mainly consisted of deep theories”* (TR5).

However, as find out by Barkhuizen and Borg (2010) the training is maximizing opportunities for trainees to develop their practical skills and theoretical knowledge.

According to the statements made by many participants, it appears that the course content of this PSTP is a little bit outdated. It seems that during the PSTP delivery the trainers have described more theoretical aspects than the practical components. It was revealed that the administrators are not happy about the real background of the trainees of this programme. However, almost all the trainees appreciated some components of the programme. For instance, since the training program was residential the trainees had been provided opportunities to take part in aesthetic activities and to learn English and Tamil in the evenings. They appreciated those programs as they had got a chance to enjoy as well as to improve their knowledge of other languages.

**The trainers and the delivering methods of the PSTP**

Almost every trainee commented that the training methods were monotonous and they became hectic since listening to lectures for hours and hours. As one trainee said: *“due to the problems in the course our needs were not fulfilled as we expected. The methodologies were not much effective, so sometimes we lost our motivation also to learn. The problem was mainly with the trainers. They should have searched for modern and most suitable methods by referring to various sources. Unfortunately, except for few lecturers and trainers, some of them are retired personals, very lethargic to respond or being motivated for changes”* (TR1).

As every trainee explained they preferred practical methodologies along with a smaller number of lectures to acquire the theoretical aspect. As one trainee (TR3) stated: *“one lecturer did her activities outside the lecture hall in a practical way. Some of us had not known how to do research. That lecturer showed how to collect data and categorize data through practical activity. And also, some of us were new to the field of education. For them, these activities were very helpful”* (TR3).

One of the trainees explained about one lecturer's teaching methodology which has been used for conducting her sessions in this PSTP. *“there was a lecturer made our lecture hall as a school. It was a role play. In one side there is principal and teachers on the other side there were parents. Then that lecture gave us some practical issues to be discussed. In that way, we learned a lot. But unfortunately, only one or two lecturers used such methods”* (TR2).

The results of a study which was carried out by Arthur et al. (2003) show that the benefits of training vary depending on the type of training delivery method, the skill or task being trained.

The majority of trainees indicated that even during the lectures on theories if the lecturers included their real-life experience those lectures could have been more interesting and trainees could have remembered the theories well. At the same

time, they could have understood the practical aspects of those theories. As mentioned by the administrator and as confirmed it by many of the trainees some lecturers have attended the sessions without any preparation. Sometimes the same lesson has been conducted by several lecturers. A large portion of the course has been delivered through lectures and there had been few practical lessons. Most of the trainees have expected more hands-on experience; however, they had to listen to many lectures throughout the PSTP.

One trainee indicated about the lectures of the training course as: *“we did not know what the lecturers were talking, how relevant that fact to us, how or where to apply those theories, whether they are outdated or not etc. Even they had not designed the activities convenient to the trainee (TR6). Another trainee explained about the time they spent during the lecturing sessions of the programme. “Sometimes throughout the morning session we had to listen to a lecture and again after lunch, in the afternoon session, we had to listen to another boring lecture. The content was based on traditional facts, and there were a lack of new concepts and practice, and methodologies and so on...”* (TR7).

Similarly, Kraiger & Jerden (2007) indicates that high learner control has only marginally beneficial effects on learning. And, Klein et al. (2006) also find that learners have a higher motivation to learn when they have a high learning goal orientation (rather than a lower learning goal orientation) and when they perceive environmental conditions (e.g., time, Internet access) as learning enablers (rather than as barriers).

One administrator indicated his views on the technology which was used for conducting the programme as: *“we are happy about the classrooms which we were provided for conducting the sessions of the programme. All the classrooms were equipped with new technological instruments like smart boards. However, I noticed that some of the lecturers did not*

*have knowledge of handling such new equipment. So, they were embarrassed in the classroom. Therefore, the lecturers must have appropriate training in handling new educational instruments and technology” (AD3).*

One of the trainees had an enthusiasm to explain the researcher, the nature of the course coordinator and the quality of the delivering of this PSTP, and she explained her views as: *“The coordinator of the course did not get feedback on the lectures done by various lecturers. The lecturers are not aware of the content; sometimes they decide the topic after coming to the lecture hall. They don’t know which areas to be covered and which areas are not covered. To tell the truth, there was no plan at all. As a result, we become disappointed and our needs were not being catered to” (TR6).*

However, as find out by Frayne & Geringer (2000), the trainees who participated in the training programme demonstrated higher self-efficacy and outcome expectancy. Likewise, Towler (2003) find some evidence in support of the effectiveness of charismatic influence training on the performance and attitudes of the participants who participated in the training programme.

It was realized that the administrators are well aware of the fact that qualified and competent resource persons cannot be recruited for the training program mainly because of low payment rates. According to the trainees competent and qualified resource persons were not recruited for this program. At present, a handful of resource persons who have been just recruited are used to come to this institution to deliver lectures for all the training programs conducted by the institution. Thus, most of the time all the subject areas are covered by these available resource persons. As the trainees expressed the administration does not bother much to find the most suitable resource persons for specialized subject areas. Even most of those trainers are not dedicated to

motivating the trainees with except for a few trainers who are professionally qualified all the others are principals, retired principals, retired directors, etc.

The training and learning activities of the PSTP

When the trainees were asked whether they were satisfied with the available training activities they revealed that there were a handful of various activities however not adequate to get them oriented towards their working environments. The main problem was; since most of them did not have any prior experience or even theoretical knowledge of education. They needed more exposure through a variety of activities particularly related to job orientation since they have to work as education administrators and bear many responsibilities. Most importantly an education administrator requires to be experts in education as well as in administration. When the trainees do not possess previously acquired knowledge on either of these fields their requirements from a job orientation program are vast. Added to that the training program had been designed with considerably few training activities. Consequently, the trainees indicated that there were not enough training activities in this PSTP.

As one of the trainees explained: *“during this program around 90% of lessons were on theory and delivered in lecture method while only about 10% of lessons were allocated for practical activities such as field trips, group work, role-playing, action research, problem-solving, etc. However, most realistic learning took place during those practical activities” (TR8).*

Sirianni & Frey (2001) evaluate a training programme and it is included 13 training modules like, managing conflict, motivating others, priority setting, etc., and they find that the participants are beneficial of those modules.

Whereas, Moorosi and Bush (2011) indicate that the pre-service for preparation and in-service for development of

employees. Arag´on-S´anchez et al. (2003) explore the relationship between training and organizational performance, on-the-job training and training inside the organization using in-house trainers, were positively related to most dimensions of effectiveness and efficiency.

However, as mentioned by the majority of trainees they have enjoyed the time they spent during this PSTP, and especially, they appreciated the extracurricular activities of the programme. The administrators view is that the content of the PSTP is suitable and updated. They believe that this programme is being coordinated in motivating the participants. Some of the trainers indicated that new subjects should be included in this programme, and also new subject areas need to be covered during the training programme. However, the majority of the participants do not happy about the teaching methodologies and the delivering methodologies which are used in conducting in this programme. Most of the participant appreciated the service rendered by the MoESL in organizing such a pre-service training program for them since they are very new to the education sector. They considered this PSTP as their induction and orientation programme which is offering for newly recruited SLEAS officers. However, they expect to be modernized the programme.

## CONCLUSION

As a few participants indicated that the PSTP was helpful to carry out their duties whereas the majority, of them, revealed that the training program was versatile only to some extent in performing their duties. Further several others are in the opinion that the training program was useful very little to discharge their duties although no one has mentioned that it was not useful at all for their job profiles. They are in the view that the large part of the training program weight upon deep theoretical aspect quite contrary to their expectations and needs to obtain a practical application to

carry out their duties and responsibilities effectively at their work environment. Many participants indicated that the weaknesses in the course design, outdated course content, ineffective training methods, insufficient training activities, incompetent trainers, problematic course coordination, etc.

The administrators, trainers and the trainees spoke about the importance of this job orientation training program for the novice SLEAS officers. However, the trainees revealed that although this training program is essential for the trainees, due to its weak points the trainees' expectations and needs are not adequately meted out. This was mainly due to the lack of planning the design of the course, not updating the content parallel to the new trends in the global context, mainly delivering the course content through traditional lecture methods, less importance is given for practical activities and not recruiting competent resource persons. Particularly some of them emphasize the need to update the existing PSTP content in accordance with the international trends. The majority appreciated the extracurricular activities contained within the PSTP.

## Recommendations

Almost all the trainees severely criticized the PSTP content, coordination, delivering strategies and also the trainers who are engaged with the programme. In designing a training programme the coordinator needs to follow various methods such as attractive remuneration to attract competent trainers along with their well reputed academic profiles with a well-planned schedule to reap the maximum benefit. And the PSTP delivering methodologies need to be updated and suited for providing 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills. In order to produce a well-equipped education administrator, the course content also needs to be well fitted with new technology and 21<sup>st</sup>-century requirements and trend also.

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