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Perera, Ruwnadika; Hathaway, Tanya

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PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL CONDITIONS ON EARLY ADOLESCENTS' MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING AND THEIR MOTIVATING PRACTICES (IN LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISTRICTS IN SRI LANKA)

Ruwandika Perera

PhD candidate, University of New England, Armidale, Australia
rperera4@une.edu.au

Tanya Hathaway

Lecturer in Higher Education, University of New England, Armidale, Australia
thathawa@une.edu.au

Abstract

In Sri Lanka, a significant proportion of junior students fail to complete their education and withdraw early from secondary school. This is particularly true of students in low socio-economic districts. This inquiry sought to investigate principal and teacher perceptions of the school-related conditions and motivating practices that contribute to early adolescents' motivation and engagement in learning. The study used a qualitative research design. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling method, from ten government schools, representing type two schools, (Five from each Sinhala and Tamil medium), and located in Monaragala and Nuwara Eliya districts in Sri Lanka. Ten principals and ten teachers agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews. The maticanalysis was used to analyse the data and the theoretical construct of Self-determination theory (SDT) was applied to interpreting the data.

The results inform two main themes in relation to the school conditions that impact students' motivation and engagement in learning: (1) impact of human conditions and (2) impact of physical conditions. Regarding the practices taken to increase motivation and engagement in learning, three themes were emergent: (1) parent awareness, (2) individual support and (3) short term initiatives. First, it can be concluded that numerous problem exist in relation to school conditions, and second that the practices of principals and teachers do not successfully addressed these problems, particularly in Tamil medium schools. It is suggested that, evidence-based intervention programmes be implemented in the most seriously affected schools to increase student motivation and engagement in learning, and slow attrition rates. It is imperative that future research extends to examine early adolescents' motivation and engagement across different subjects.

Keywords

Early Adolescents, Motivation and Engagement, School Related Conditions, Motivating Practices

1. Introduction

Although, Sri Lanka is recognised as a South Asian country with a high literacy rate, this statistic masks major shortcomings of the education system (Liyanage, 2013). Sri Lankan education has been experiencing a number of problems. These include high student attrition rates, low participation in education and poor attendance, particularly in the secondary and tertiary levels. Poor performance in mathematics and science, unequal distribution of resources among schools mainly rural and urban, and over-loaded curricula are also major issues (Liyanage, 2013).

The World Bank (2007) revealed that over 90% of children in the 11-14 age groups are enrolled in junior/lower secondary education (Grades 6-9) in Sri Lanka. Attrition rates were higher in these grades, compared to others, and higher for males than for females (Department of Census and Statistics, 2008). Poverty has an impact on this age group as the gap has increased between the participation of students in the lowest income quintile (61%) and the richest income quintile (76%).

Furthermore, in Sri Lanka overall student attrition rates from schools at the junior secondary level are 19.5% for the country as a whole. Females (18%) have a slightly lower attrition rate than males (21%). The attrition from junior secondary education was greatest in

Tamil plantation schools where 46% of students withdrew from school early, compared to 19% and 14% for rural and urban areas respectively. Across economic groups, attrition rates increased for economically disadvantaged people. At the lower secondary level, the withdrawal rate for economically disadvantaged students was 68% (World Bank, 2005). Thus, it appears that there are nationally high attrition rates in junior secondary level in Sri Lanka, and it is most acute in low socio-economic areas.

The above information has established that junior secondary students' school attrition is considerable in Sri Lanka. The reasons for this attrition are varied, but a number of the conditions, in particular teaching style and overall teacher behaviour towards students, appear to impact negatively on student motivation and engagement (National Education Research and Evaluation Centre, 2003; World Bank, 2005; Ministry of Education, UNICEF, & MG Consultants, 2009; Jayaweera & Gunawardena, 2009; Jayaweera & Gunawardena, 2013). Thus, lack of motivation and engagement may well be one of the main drivers of attrition.

The principal objectives of this in-depth study are as follows.

- To examine the school-related conditions impacting junior secondary students' motivation and engagement in learning
- To examine the motivating practices have been taken to increase junior secondary students' motivation and engagement in learning

1.1 The Context of the Sri Lankan Education System and Objectives of the Study

Sri Lanka is an island nation located in the tropics just south of India. It has a population of 20 million, of whom 28.9 % are children aged less than 18 years and 17.8 % are children aged 5 to 14 years (the compulsory-education age group for Sri Lanka) (UNICEF, 2011; Department of Census and Statistics, 2011). The country was divided into nine provinces during the 19th century as per the 13th amendment to the constitution. Each province has two or three districts and altogether there are 25 districts across the country.

An important socio-economic category that needs to be defined for this study is the plantation sector (Nuwara Eliya district was chosen from this sector). It comprises the tea and rubber plantations established during the British colonial administration. The community is formed from the descendants of South Indian Tamil immigrants brought over from South India by the colonial administration as estate labourers and has been a marginalised population since the 19th Century. In particular, it has been disadvantaged educationally, confined initially to

plantation children who still remain at a disadvantage to infrastructure at the secondary education level (UNICEF, 2013).

There are five levels of education in Sri Lanka (see Appendix 1): primary for 5–9-year-olds (grades 1–5); junior (or lower) secondary for 10–13-year-olds (grades 6–9); senior (or upper) secondary for 14–15-year-olds (grades 10–11); and collegiate for 16–17-year-olds (grades 12–13). In 2010, there were 9,675 government schools classified into four types (see Appendix 2): Type 1 AB, Type 1 C, Type 2 and Type 3 (a clear criterion is lacking for this classification. These initials do not stand for anything and are just used for classifying purpose). Type IAB schools offer instruction for grades 1–13 or grades 6–13 in all curriculum streams (Science, Commerce and Arts) in GCE Advanced Level; Type IC schools offer instruction for grades 1–13 or grades 6–13 only in Arts and Commerce streams in GCE Advanced Level; Type 2 schools offer instruction for grades 1–11; and Type 3 schools offer instruction for grades 1–5 or, in a few instances, for grades 1–9 (UNICEF, 2013).

2. Literature Syntheses and Theoretical Framework

2.1 School Conditions and Student Motivation and Engagement in Learning

Considerable research has shown a decline in motivation and performance for many students when they move from primary school into secondary school (Graham & Hill, 2003; McGee, Ward, Gibbons, & Harlow, 2004). Research demonstrates that the nature of motivational change on entry to junior secondary school depends on characteristics of the learning environment in which students find themselves (Callahan, Clark, & Kellough, 2002).

Research focusing on motivational direction in junior secondary classrooms (Patrick, Ryan, & Kaplan, 2007; Wang & Holcombe, 2010) suggests that task-oriented classrooms (learning to finish the task) are linked to motivational and attainment declines, while mastery-oriented classrooms (seeking to improve competence) are connected with increases in motivation and academic achievement. Further, Jayaweera and Gunawardena (2013) indicate that curriculum reforms should focus strongly on transforming the learning culture in schools to a more activity-oriented approach that challenges junior secondary students and maximises their active participation in Sri Lankan society.

Further, research reveals that junior secondary students show high levels of anxiety for a diversity of factors that contribute to reducing motivation and educational performance, such as increased academic requirement and quantity of homework, numerous teachers and personalities,

and peers. These and other issues directly impact students' emotions, stress, and fear, leading to decline in students' motivation and performance (Bullock & Gable, 2006).

In addition, early adolescents face difficult challenges at this stage of their educational experience. External pressures, such as family participation, peer and teacher relationships, and an importance on high-stakes testing, joined with internal forces such as self-efficacy, self-confidence, and identity make important stressors (Epstein, 2001; Dweck, 2006). Since educators are at the forefront of teaching and supporting students, these professionals must be equipped with the knowledge of how and why adolescents both learn and avoid learning. They must also be skilled in the strategies to efficiently employ their students' emotional mindset (Feinstein, 2007; Medina, 2008). With suitable coping skills and supports, stressors faced by junior secondary students can be managed successfully.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that having a developmentally appropriate school climate is essential to meeting the needs of junior secondary students and to facilitating a positive learning experience (Davis, 2003). Developmentally appropriate junior secondary schools are characterised by a relevant and rigorous curriculum, learning related to the lives of students, and acknowledgement of students' individual learning needs (Hester, Gable, & Manning, 2003; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Manning, 2000). It is clear that school leaders must identify and mitigate the school-related conditions that contribute to junior secondary students' stressors and engage students to be motivated to learn.

2.2 Leadership and Teaching Practices that Motivate

Jazzar (2004) emphasised the instructional leadership role of the school leader, and saw it as a major determining factor of academic improvement. Good teachers are in fact, the number one factor for excellence in student achievement, followed by high-quality leadership (OECD, 2008a, 2008b). Moreover, according to Glaze, Pervin and Maika (2007) the principals' precise vision of students' achievement and their high instructional leadership is crucial to the high achievement of students. Especially, in coordinating numeracy and literacy programmes (in and outside classroom hours in collaboration with parents and community). Similarly, Panizzon and Pegg (2007) identified that in remote rural schools in Australia, enhancing strategic methods of teaching mathematics and science, and promotion of information and communication technology was important in reducing the attainment gap between rural and urban schools.

Teachers can foster a responsive learning environment that supports adolescents' evolving cognitive, social, personal, and emotional needs by providing increasingly sophisticated and challenging curriculum, active and relevant instruction, high-quality relationships characterised by care and trust, and opportunities for exploration (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Jackson & Davis, 2000). Further, teachers might support students' needs and their motivation in school through their teaching practices (Adkins-Coleman, 2010; McHugh, Horner, Colditz, & Wallace, 2013; Meece, 2003). Junior secondary students are exceptionally unique and respond well to traditional practices including engaging in practices that encourage respectful and gentle relationships, encouraging and challenging students, and implementing genuine learning activities (Meece, Herman, & McCombs, 2003).

In addition, Billington and Di Tommaso (2003); Skinner, Pappas, and Davis (2005) mention that, classroom instruction must always compete for student attention with other sources of reinforcement. There are two ways that the teacher can increase the student's motivation to attend to class: by decreasing the reinforcing power of competing (distracting) stimuli, and/or by increasing the reinforcing power of academic activities. Further, teacher-directed cooperative learning activities can be highly reinforcing for adolescent students, who typically find opportunities to interact with classmates to be a strong motivator (Beyda, Zentall, & Ferko, 2002; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002).

2.3 Theoretical Considerations: Self-Determination Theory

The theoretical construct of this study is based on self-determination theory (SDT) and is used to address how teachers can help motivate students. This theory distinguishes between two types of motivation: autonomous motivation and controlled motivation, and their related characteristics and consequences (Ryan & Deci, 2013). Further, according to Ryan and Deci (2013) SDT provides a framework for explaining three categories of needs of students: (1) sense of competence, (2) relatedness (belonging) to others, and (3) autonomy. Competence involves understanding how to, and believing that one can, achieve various outcomes. Relatedness involves developing satisfactory connections to others in one's social group. Autonomy involves initiating and regulating one's own actions. Most of the research in SDT focuses on these three needs (Jang, Reeve, Ryan, & Kim, 2009; Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Sheldon, & Deci, 2004). In this study, SDT is used to examine the leadership practices and teaching practices that are affective in increasing students' motivation and engagement in learning.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design involving semi-structured interviews conducted with school principals and teachers, in low socio-economic districts in Sri Lanka.

3.1 Sampling

For this study, Monaragala and Nuwara Eliya districts were chosen; both have recorded the highest attrition rates of junior students from secondary schools in Sri Lanka (except war affected districts). According to the records of both Provincial Departments of Education there were 119 type 2 government schools in three educational zones in Monaragala district and 172 such schools in five educational zones in Nuwara Eliya district. Five Sinhala medium schools with high attrition rates were chosen representing all three education zones in Monaragala district and five such Tamil medium schools were chosen using purposive sampling, representing all five education zones in Nuwara Eliya district. Accordingly, five principals and five teachers were recruited to represent all the sample of schools using purposive sampling method.

Table 3.1: *Study Sample*

District	No. of schools	No. of principals	No. of teachers
Monaragala (Sinhala)	5	5	5
Nuwara Eliya (Tamil)	5	5	5
Total	10	10	10

3.2 Data Collection Method

Semi-structured interviews were used for collection data for this study. The interviews focused on examining principals perceptions in the following areas: characteristics of low motivated students, school related conditions affecting students motivation and engagement in learning, actions taken by the school to increase their motivation -direct and indirect initiatives, future plans etc. Interviews with teachers focused on: characteristics of low motivated students, school related conditions affect students motivation and engagement in learning, tactics employed to motivate students, disagreements with low motivated students about unfinished work, bullying, truancy, failure to listen etc. and situations causing low motivated students to reduce their motivation and engagement in learning further-receiving low marks for tests, problems with classmates, being embarrassment in front of others, assessment procedures taken and allowing classroom discussions etc.

3.3 Data Analysis Method

Interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). Further, a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (p.82). First, students responses coded manually, and then categories identified. After that, suitable sub themes and main themes were identified.

4. Results and Discussion

According to the thematic analysis of principals and teachers interview responses, two main themes were emerged in relation to the school conditions: (1) impact of human conditions and (2) impact of physical conditions. For each theme, a set of sub-themes were identified and are presented here with qualitative description.

4.1 School Conditions Impacting Students' Motivation and Engagement in Learning

4.1.1 Impact of Human Conditions

Under the theme of impact of human conditions four sub-themes were emergent: apathetic leadership, lack of teacher excellence, students' lack of intrinsic motivation and influence of peers.

• Apathetic Leadership

Almost all Sinhala and Tamil medium school principals are disinterested or show low levels of interested in being a principal in that kind of school. As one principal expressed, "I do not get any support from either school internal or external community. Sometimes, I have to spend my own money for school activities. I am unmotivated in being a principal of this school". Most of the teachers also mentioned that their school leadership is not powerful or supportive. Teachers frequently stated that they do not want to increase achievement of students" .Tamil medium teachers expressed that, "Our principal does not want to do anything to increase students learning"; "He does not want to get any resources for the school. He is planning to get a transfer to another school".

As mentioned by Guay and Valleland (1997), SDT postulates three essential elements of learning: perceived competence, belonging, and autonomy; each of which can be fostered by teachers in classroom contexts. School leadership is highly impactful for students learning. Hattie stated that the effective principal is the one who creates "... a climate of psychological

safety to learn ... a focus of discussion on student learning ...” (2009, p. 5). Therefore, it could be expressed that the school leaders of these schools, particularly in Tamil medium schools do not have belonging with teachers and students. And, it is particularly impact in relation to increase students’ self-determination.

• **Lack of Teacher Excellence**

Lack of teachers and lack of qualified teachers was a common issue identified in the interviews. This compromised their ability to support successful student-teacher relationships and design of teaching tasks that provided autonomy. This is surprising as most of the teachers in Tamil schools are qualified to advanced level, but do not have a degree and are not formally trained for teaching. According to Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon and Barch (2004), trained teachers displayed significantly more autonomy supportive behaviours than untrained teachers. As a whole, schools do not have qualified and trained teachers for mathematics, science, English and aesthetic subjects. Most of the time teachers do not have mastery of the subject matter they are teaching, “In our school we do not have a maths teacher. So, I teach maths. I do not have training on teaching maths. What to do?”; “I want to cover the syllabus. So, I use a teacher to do that. I cannot think about their proficiency in teaching” stated principals. Autonomy-supportive practices include listening to student input, providing informative feedback, providing optimally challenging tasks and activities, offering students choices about what to work on or how to complete assignments, and showing students affection (Assor & Kaplan, 2001;Black & Deci, 2000). Students experience competence when challenged and given prompt feedback (American Psychological Association, 2004). It seems that in those school teachers are unable to provide such support to their students to increase their autonomy and competence, due to their own lack of competency to teach.

Teachers’ negative attitudes appear to impact students learning “I do teaching because I do not have another job to do”; “Teaching for this kind of students is very stressful”; “They [students] do not engage in learning. They have lots of family issues. I cannot motivate them at all” mentioned teachers. As mentioned by principals “Some teachers do not want to cover the syllabus”;“They take lots of leave”;“I know they punish to students”; “ Some teachers are not friendly with students”; “ their teacher-student relationship is minimal”;“They are also not motivated in teaching”; “They also do not have targets. So, how they guide students to have life targets”. Teacher supports have been referred to in the literature as one important means of developing students’ sense of belonging at school. Further, when teacher support is directed at

developing student independence, a student sense of belonging and autonomy are addressed simultaneously (Fried & Konza, 2013, p, 28). It seems that teachers do not provide sufficient support to increase students' competence, relatedness and autonomy in learning.

• **Students' Lack of Intrinsic Motivation**

Most principals mentioned that students do not attend school regularly and they are not motivated to learn. "Actually, they do not know the value of education. They want to earn money"; "Students low attendance is a major problem in our school". Teachers also agreed with the principals responses. Further, they mentioned that students who show low motivation in learning tend to present unfinished work in the classroom and home, are involved in bullying, lying, tardiness and failure to listen. "Actually, I cannot motivate them at all. They do not do anything at class"; "They do not complete home work. They just come to school. They do not like to learn. So, how can we praise them?"; "They tell lots of lies for not coming to school. How can they continue their learning without coming continuously?"; "They have lots of pressures in doing tests and homework" stated Tamil medium teachers. Further, they affirmed that "They always get low marks for tests", "Cannot realise the classroom demands", and also they are "Uncertain about the future". It seems that unmotivated students fail to exercise intrinsic engagement in learning. To promote students' interest in learning requires them to value their education and receive affirmation of personal capabilities (Thaliah & Hashim, 2008, p.496).

• **Influence of Peers**

Both principals and teachers strongly emphasised the impact of peers on students for their motivation and engagement in learning. "Students do not have competitive friends. They all are in the same level. So, there is no competition in the classroom"; "Some of their friends go for work with their fathers and earn money. So, they also want to imitate them". Teachers mentioned that "They want to deal with elder students. They do lots of misbehaviours with them"; "Since our village is a poor one, lots of robe less students are in every classroom. So, their behaviour negatively impact to all students"; "We cannot get them for cooperative learning at all". Cooperative learning has been referred to in the literature as a mean of developing students' sense of belonging at school (Fried & Konza, 2013, p.28). Students experience relatedness when they perceive others listening and responding to them. When these three needs are met, students are more intrinsically motivated and actively engaged in their learning (American Psychological Association, 2004). According to teachers responses these students doubt their sense of belonging in learning.

4.1.2 Impact of Physical Conditions

Under the theme of impact of physical conditions, three sub themes were emergent: difficult subject matters, lack of classroom resources and lack of school resources.

- **Difficult Subject Matters**

In accordance with almost all principals and teachers, students are low motivated in learning mathematics, science and English. “Most of the students hate learning maths, and their achievement is also very low”; “They cannot cope with maths, science and particularly with English”; “I think the subject matters of these subjects is too heavy for students and they are not engaged properly in those” all teachers expressed. Further, participants perceived that some of the teachers, who teach these subjects, do not listen to student input, and they control students’ behaviours and they also have pressure in teaching those subjects. Pelletier , Séguin-Lévesque & Legault (2002) observed that the more teachers perceive pressure from having to comply with an imposed curriculum, pressure toward performance standards etc., the less autonomous they are toward teaching, which in turn was associated with teachers being more controlling with students.

- **Lack of Classroom Resources**

According to both principals and teachers, all of these schools do not have sufficient classroom resources, especially in Tamil schools. As teachers mentioned, “We do not have enough facilities within the classroom to conduct group activities. Even, we do not have enough chairs or desks”; “Actually in our classroom we have very short chairs. The allocated money is not sufficient for purchasing quality inputs. Even though, the amount allocated for one year, they last in the first term”; “We do not have even a globe in our school”; “We do not have a piece of sodium to do an experiment in Science”; “We do not have a science lab. I put all the science materials in to a cupboard. They are older than twenty years. So, chemical reactions are not occurred. So, how can we do group works”; “As a geography teacher, I would like to do group works. I know students also like to do. But we do not have facilities for doing such”; “We do not have separate classrooms. In one building there are four classrooms without partition. So it is very difficult to have group works here”, a principal stated. According to Niemiec and Ryan (2009), learning activities in the classroom develops students’ perceived competence. It seems that in those schools do not have enough resources to have learning activities and due to that students are unable to practice and master certain competencies.

• **Lack of School Resources**

Participant responses acknowledged that the majority of schools, particularly in the Tamil regions do not have a science lab, home science room, library, computer facilities, separated classrooms, sports instruments and aesthetic instruments etc. Further, in these schools there is no sufficient extracurricular activities are held. “I’m teaching Geography. I need to refer some books for doing activities. But there is no library in our school”; “I’m the music teacher in this school. We do not have instruments’ to teach. This is very unhappy situation in this school”, teachers stated. According to Niemiec and Ryan (2009), learning activities in the classroom that develop students perceived competence include those that are optimally challenging, those that enable students to access tools they need to succeed and those that provide feedback that emphasises student effectiveness. In relation to the situation of these schools, it is difficult to see how students can adequately develop competency in certain areas or have the opportunities for repeated practice.

4.2 The Motivating Practices

According to the thematic analysis of principals and teachers interview responses, three main themes were emergent in relation to the practices have been taken to increase junior secondary students’ motivation and engagement in learning: (1) parental awareness, (2) individual support and (3) short term initiatives.

4.2.1 Parent Awareness

Since, all of the schools face high student absenteeism, most of the principals and teachers have taken action to make students’ parents aware. For the most, parents have not participated in the meetings. They do not appear to value the education of their students. Participants expressed these concerns, “Their parents are illiterate. They do not value the education. Even, they do not come for the meetings”; “When I meet some parents, I asked the reason for not coming for the meeting. They just laugh and do not say anything” teachers stated. Hardré, Sullivan, and Roberts (2008) proposed that the support of teachers and their families at both school and community levels are essential for improving achievement in rural schools. It could be exposed that, interventions are minimal in Tamil-medium schools and these kinds of interventions were not successful in those low socio- economic areas.

4.2.2 Individual Support

The majority of principals and teachers mentioned that they counsel the students who have problems. “Some girls have problems regarding sexual abuse. We counsel them to continue the

education. We do not have a counselling teacher at our school. But we do the best as we can”; “Some students have problem with peers. They always fight with each other. So, we bring them to the principal office and advice”; “Most of the students have family problems. We encourage them to learn, but they do not change their behaviours” principals stated. Teachers affirmed that “I do practicals as much as I can in Science. So, I’m able to help weaker students”; “I give more exercises to weaker students. But they do not like to do such”. Teachers can foster a responsive learning environment that supports adolescents’ evolving cognitive, social, personal, and emotional needs by providing increasingly sophisticated and challenging curriculum, active and relevant instruction, high-quality relationships characterised by care and trust, and opportunities for exploration (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Jackson & Davis, 2000). It seems that, even though, most principals and teachers provide individual support to students, they were not successful in these districts to a great extent.

4.2.3 Short Term Initiatives

Some schools have initiated short-term programmes to increase students’ achievement and prevent school attrition, particularly in Sinhala medium schools: offering extra classes after school and during weekends, holding counselling sessions using experts, improving basic writing and reading skills programme, going on educational trips, giving rewards to students, having progress review meetings, and doing past papers and revision. One principal stated that, “even though we do not have money, we had a small prize giving ceremony last year. We do not have well wishers. But that was successful”; “We cannot bring our students up to the expected level. Actually, we try to improve their basic reading and writing skills. So, we conducted a programme. But it was not successful as we thought”; “Some non-government organisations and zones of education helped to increase the education in our schools. But the attempt is also not successful due to various reasons. Mainly, negative attitudes of teachers and parents are caused” another principal stated. As mentioned by Eccles and Roeser (2009) schools need to change in appropriate ways if they are to provide the kind of social context that will continue to motivate junior secondary students’ interest and engagement as the students mature. It could be revealed that even though some Sinhala schools have taken action to increase their students’ motivation and engagement towards learning, those initiatives are short-term and without a proper supporting mechanism.

5. Conclusion

As per the principals and teachers responses about the school conditions related to early adolescents' motivation and engagement in learning, two themes were identified: impact of physical conditions and human conditions. In relation to the main practices taken place to increase students' motivation and engagements in learning, three themes were identified: parental awareness, individual support and short term initiatives. It could be concluded that, there are numerous issues exist in schools which affect students' motivation and engagement in learning. Also, the motivating practices of principals and teachers do not successfully address these problems, particularly in Tamil-medium schools. Therefore, meeting students' needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness and thus, increase student self-determination is a problematic endeavour. Researchers have developed and evaluated instructional interventions and supports to encourage self-determination instudents. Therefore, it is imperative that schools address this situation immediately. Interventions are needed that foster students' intrinsic motivation and meet students' needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness. In turn, these will positively affect students study behaviours leading to the successes that contribute to their engagement with school. In this way, attendance will become more regular and pupil attrition may be reduced. It is imperative that future research examines the same constructs across different subjects.

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Appendix 1

Table 1.1: *The levels of education in Sri Lanka*

Level	Age group	Grades
Primary	5-9 years old	1-5
Junior(lower) secondary	10-13 years old	6-9
Senior(upper) secondary	14-15 years old	10-11
Collegiate	16-17 years old	12-13

Appendix 2

Table 1.2: *Types of schools in Sri Lanka*

Type	Description of schools
1AB	Offer instruction for grades 1–13 or grades 6–13 in all curriculum streams (Science, Commerce and Arts) in GCE Advanced Level
1C	Offer instruction for grades 1–13 or grades 6–13 -only in Arts and Commerce streams in GCE Advanced Level
Type 2	Offer instruction for grades 1–11
Type 3	Offer instruction for grades 1–5 or, in a few instances, for grades 1–9