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SCHOOL-BASED TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN SRI LANKA

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Teacher professional development is a key factor for improving the quality of student outcomes. Under such a situation, teachers have to update and intensify their knowledge, skills, attitudes and practices according to student demands. In this context, School-based teacher professional development is a very important concept, because it allows teachers to plan, organise and implement their own professional development programs, considering their particular needs, as well as those of students and schools. However, this concept has not been extensively developed in the Sri Lankan education context.

A new concept for Sri Lanka, school based management was introduced in the late 1990s to the Sri Lankan education system. Through school-based management the power and authority were decentralised from the central government to particular individual schools. Therefore, since the last decade principals and staff have had the opportunity to plan, organise and implement their own teacher professional development. As such, focusing on the Sri Lankan secondary school context, this study examines the possibilities, effectiveness, strategies, issues and challenges involved in implementing these programs. Simultaneously, the situation of non-school-based teacher development programs are also examined because these are currently prominent and this study assumed that both programs need to be integrated in order to provide balanced teacher professional development. The research design was based on the qualitative research approach and the case-study strategy was been employed. Ten secondary schools were selected from three educational districts in two provinces in Sri Lanka. The data were collected by conducting interviews, non-participative observation and sample-based documentary search. The data was coded, presented and discussed in four themes. Further, the data were analysed using the Activity Theory framework in order to investigate the complex inter-relationships of the individual components of the school-based teacher professional development program's activity system. According to the findings, eleven recommendations were proposed and relevant guidelines were suggested for future researches.