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WHAT FACTORS MOTIVATE TEACHERS TO SELECT TEACHING AS A CAREER?

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Previous research has identified three categories of motives as being important i.e. extrinsic, intrinsic and altruistic motives in choosing teaching as a career. However, other factors behind this career choice have not been systematically studied in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study aims to examine the nature of motivation of Sri Lankan teachers in selecting teaching as their career. The objectives of the study were to identify the factors that motivate teachers to select this profession as their career and to develop insights about ways of improving the level of motivation of teachers in schools.

The sample consisted of 700 teachers randomly selected from 50 government schools in the Kandy district. Data were collected through a questionnaire survey, which included both closed and open ended questions. The response rate of the questionnaire was 72.4%. There were two parts in the questionnaire. In the first part, seven orientations to teaching factors scale and one future career expectation item were included. The responses were analysed using percentages. The second part of the questionnaire included open ended questions that focused on motivational factors which made teachers select this profession as their career. The responses were analysed using the constant comparison method.

Only 33% of the respondents indicated that they always wanted to become teachers whereas 54% of teachers stated that teaching was not their first career choice. Therefore, it can be inferred that the majority of teachers who participated in this study were not really interested in teaching as a career path. Twenty three percent of the respondents indicated that they thought teaching would fit well with their family commitments and 10% of the sample indicated that both the salary and the teaching hours did not influence them.

Although teaching was not their first choice of career, 63% of respondents would prefer to select teaching again, if they were given another chance. It also emerged in this study that teacher motivation depends critically on effective school management. Based on the above findings, it can be concluded that the motives of Kandy district teachers to become teachers may include their personal characteristics, intrinsic values and external factors. Implications of these findings for teacher recruitment, teacher management and further research are discussed in the paper.