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Paper: Sustainability

An exploration into deputy principal role in the Colombo district national schools in Sri Lanka

The role of the deputy principal in the national schools in Sri Lanka is one that has attracted much less research interest compared to the role of the principal. The intention of this study is to explore the role of the deputy principal in the Colombo district national schools in Sri Lanka.

Three research questions were formulated, namely what are the roles and responsibilities of the deputy principal in the national schools, what is the satisfaction experienced by them in their current roles and lastly, what are the challenges faced in performing their leadership role as a deputy principal in the school. A qualitative methodological approach was undertaken encompassing the methods of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

Five national schools were purposively selected from the Colombo district. Five principals and ten deputy principals participated in this case study, providing information. The findings revealed that the role was primarily concerned with managerial and administrative tasks and lacked clear definition in schools. Most of the deputy principals have not been provided autonomy and sufficient decision making power to perform their role. However, they play their role as administrative managers rather than instructional leaders. Since they face difficulties in decision making and performing their role, majority of participants in the study reported that deputy principals are satisfied in their role.

Majority of the principals suggested that deputy principals in their schools do not have sufficient leadership or management training to carry out their role in the school effectively. The conclusions from this research point to concerns about the time to take on fuller leadership roles in national schools due to conflicts with other more ordinary tasks. Recommendations at school level point to the need for a clearer definition of the role and possible restructuring of the role to leverage more time to lead as instructional leader in schools. Recommendations at a system level suggest advocating a set of professional leadership standards for the deputy principal in the secondary school.

Keywords: Deputy principal role, School leadership, Leadership role, Job satisfaction