

## PRINCIPALS' PRACTICES TOWARDS THE QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS IN SRI LANKAN SCHOOLS

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Quality assurance (QA) is a systematic process to see whether a product or service being developed meets a specified set of requirements. QA in the education sector is one of the major initiatives in the Sri Lankan education system. The QA process is mainly divided into two types: internal and external. Internal evaluations have been carried out by schools. In order to implement evaluation, circulars and all relevant guidelines are provided by the Ministry of Education, and training programmes are conducted at the provincial and national levels for principals. Even though QA has already been introduced to the school system, the evaluation process has not yet reached the expected level. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to investigate the practices of the principals towards the QA process in schools. The methodological approach of this study is entirely quantitative. In this study, 68 principals were selected from 5 provinces using the stratified random sampling technique. The data were collected using a questionnaire and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. According to the findings, 6% principals had not prepared an internal evaluation plan, 7% principals had not prepared School Education Quality Index, 3% principals had not conducted progress review meetings, and 8% principals had not attended to the feedback activities. In addition, correlation of the background information of the principals (gender, service [Principal Service or Sri Lanka Education Administration Service] and period of service) was tested against the nine statements in the questionnaire, using the Pearson correlation coefficient. The results showed that gender and all statements in the questionnaire were not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. In addition, there is a high correlation between 'establishment of the committee' and 'service, which was statistically significant ( $r = -.352$ ,  $n = 68$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Further, there is a good correlation between 'preparing a School Education Quality index (SEQI)' and the variables of 'period of service as a principal' ( $r = .267$ ,  $n = 68$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This study revealed that although most of the principals (98%) had been aware of the evaluation process, they had not implemented the activities related to QA in schools properly as they did not have a clear understanding about the benefits of the evaluation process. However, this study shows that the principals' service and the period of service had influenced their practices related to QA in schools. There was no influence of gender on the QA practices of the principals.

*Keywords:* Implementation, Quality Assurance, Principals