

Assessment of IT teacher training needs in the school system

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This research study aims at the assessment of IT training needs in the schools system of Sri Lanka in 2004. This is the first study conducted after many donor-assisted programmes introduced computers to the schools system. The main objective of the study was to identify the training needs of IT teachers in the schools system and to provide the basis for the development of course materials for IT teacher trainers. The specific objective was to identify the present situation with regard to the availability of functioning computers and IT teaching - learning process as well as the future needs for IT teacher training according to the opinions of stakeholders. The identified gap between present and future needs would provide the basis for the development of IT training materials.

A population of schools with computer facilities and a random sample of schools with functioning computers, representing eight provinces were selected for the survey. The instruments used were questionnaires administrated by trained data collectors. Data were individually collected from 120 principals, 219 teachers, 444 pupils and 23 IT co-ordinators. Document analysis was done to triangulate the data. Percentages supported by significance tests and Spearman's rank correlations were used to analyze data. The principals, teachers and students have positive views on the usefulness of the computer as a teaching tool. According to principals time allocated for use of computers more than 20 hours per week. According to teachers in-charge of IT laboratories the period of their use for IT was 6-10 hours. This difference shows the practical implementation constraint in ICT at school level. IT teachers in schools had followed different ad-hoc courses, without uniformity in their training. As a result technical training and relevant resource materials deserve highest priority. Use of education software across the secondary curriculum had reached a few schools only in year 2004. However highest priority for science subjects is the use of educational software across the curriculum. Recommendations are proposed on three levels. Updating IT policy according to requirements, establishment of unique information net-work among different stakeholders and strengthening the monitoring system in IT education in the schools system are major issues at the administrative level. The establishment of a proper mechanism for the maintenance of existing computers and IT training is a need process level improvement. Appropriate educational software and resource materials are also needed to underpin the task at the working level..

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