Evaluation of Superintendent Orientation Course Participants

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Abstract: The purpose of this research is to evaluate the success of the participant's training in the superintendent orientation course, Inspectorate and Quality Assurance (IQA) in Ministry of Education (MOE) Malaysia in intellectual aspects and problems faced. The research instruments were survey-based and as many as 84 respondents involved. The factors being studied were the knowledge of new superintendents on MOE and IQA organizations, current educational policies and programs, public services work culture, inspection procedure and preparation of inspection report. The results of the study show the overall achievement was on a very high level. Open-ended questions analysis found that short time, superintendent skills, accommodation and training centres facilities are not conducive and more are among the problems faced by participants of the course. The results also suggested that the superintendent orientation course should be continued from time to time by lengthening the time duration of the training and focus on the superintendent skills aspect.

Key words: Training program, school superintendent, evaluation, inspection skills, inspection report

INTRODUCTION

Superintendent orientation course was developed by the inspectorate and Quality Assurance (IQA) in Ministry of Education (MOE) Malaysia with the purpose of equipping new Superintendent with knowledge on superintendent ship. Hamilton (2012) stated that a school superintendent or in Malaysia, known as the school Inspector, must have the knowledge, skill and characteristics required to ensure the school can focus on student's achievements. Machumu (2012) and Hursen and Ceker (2011) also think that superintendent skills training is a need that must be improved especially in the aspect of knowledge and evaluation. This need is clearly stated in Education Act 1996 when it emphasized that knowledge on superintendent-ship is a need for every school superintendent to ensure the Guardian of Standard is fulfilled.

Superintendent ship knowledge can only be gained through superintendent orientation course. This course is a pre-requisite before being certified as a school superintendent. Superintendent orientation course was conducted for five days and it covers superintendent-ship knowledge aspect such as IQA and MOE organizations, current education program and policies, public service work culture, inspection procedure and preparation of the inspection report. This means to conduct superintendent duties effectively, ideally the school superintendent's knowledge must be higher than the teacher's or administrator's expertise at the school he or she supervises (Ansar, 2015). MohdIdrus (2012) research

found that the knowledge or competency that needed to be mastered by Malaysian school superintendents are conducting superintendent ship, making sound judgements, provide professional service, interpersonal communication and self-management. All of these knowledge about superintendent-ship should be mastered by new superintendents after participating superintendent orientation course. Kotirde and Yunos (2015) stated that a successful school superintendent should be knowledgeable about educational leadership, management and administration.

Hence, this research intended to evaluate the level of achievement of the new superintendent in learning from the course, especially in the aspect of knowledge regarding superintendent ship after attending the superintendent orientation course for 5 days.

Background of the study: In Malaysia, until now there is almost no empirical research about the superintendent training program conducted even though the superintendent training program started during the early foundation of IQA since year 1957. Previous research regarding IQA in Malaysia by Normah (1999), Abdullah (2000), Thiruchelvan (2009) only focused on the headmaster's perception towards the school superintendent's roles. MohdIdrus (2012) research were about the skill and confidence level of school superintendents. Meanwhile, recent studies by Hamid (2013) was about the inspection duties and training needed by the school superintendents. Realizing the importance of the training, IQA had conducted on the

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jobtraining programsby focusing on the theory and practical aspects as recommended by Fessler (2011). In study regarding the preparation program on 314 new superintendents in United States of America, he suggested more focus on practical experience such as trainings, finance and budget issues, more facilitators from successful superintendents, more practices regarding politics and its culture, mentoring program and more information about building positive relationship with the school.

Brandon *et al.* (2013) studied about the Superintendent Compatibility Induction Program in Canada towards 26 superintendent and 25 mentors and found the process of education leaders transitioning into a new position will be more successful if the induction program conducted is of good quality having five components in the program such as standard base design, orientation, mentor training, support from favourite teams and support from bigger groups. On the other hand, the new superintendent induction program in Malaysia is structuralized and divided into several phases. Nevertheless, the passing requirement for new superintendents to get certification is to pass the superintendent ship orientation course and mentoring program. Support in professionalism aspect for new superintendents are only limited to senior superintendent, mentor or higher-positioned officers within the same unit.

Essoudi *et al.* (2014) research on new superintendent professional skills training assessment in Morocco found that the component cognitive skills and organizational and management skills can be mastered efficiently by new superintendents on the final session of the training. While personal skills, attitude skills and andragogy skills were minimal or are not mastered at all by new superintendents. The next result of the analysis found two new skills which are supervising skills and adapting skills where both are considered important for new superintendents. Literature review by Essoudi *et al.* (2015b) also found that the obstacles for high quality training were involving three main factors which were decrease in relevant indicators, non-availability of template and measurement tools that have high reliability to measure the quality in the education and training non-integral quality approach in the training system. Hamid (2013) stated that among the main training needed by school superintendents in Malaysia are organization leadership course, changes in management course and report-writing workshop. On the job training in educational institution is the most suitable place and method to integrate knowledge and school superintendent ship skills. Based on the literature review

it can be concluded that the school superintendent training program in Malaysia or superintendent in abroad country need training and professional support from organizations continuously to fulfil the gap of knowledge dan professionalism as school superintendent or a competent superintendent.

Objectives of the study: This study intends to evaluate the participant's level of understanding and learning after participating in superintendent orientation course in terms of. Participant's knowledge level related to components:

- IQA and MOE organizations
- Current education programs and policies
- Public sector's work culture
- Inspection procedures
- Preparation of inspection report

Challenges faced by new superintendents while participating in the superintendent orientation course.

Problem statement: Every year IQA trains new superintendent to equip them with superintendent ship knowledge. However, realistically the effectiveness of the training program cannot be gauged. That is because the quality problems and training assessment that often being globally debated (Essoudi *et al.*, 2015a). Less effective training quality caused the school superintendents to be unable to guide the school and the teachers in improving their performance. More so, the arrival of superintendents, for the school are a nuisance that disturb their daily routine and do not bring any impact because the superintendent themselves are not skilful (Hamid, 2013; Ekinci and Karakus, 2011) and less confident (MohdIdrus, 2012). This is further proven in research that discovered only 54% superintendents have high level of skills and confidence in order to supervise the school management quality in Malaysia.

Based on research abroad, the same problems regarding school superintendent training also occur. The lack of quality as school superintendent in Nigeria causes the teaching and learning process become ineffective as the school superintendents do not have the basic qualifications (Kotirde and Yunos, 2015). Aydin and Boz in Hursen and Ceker (2011) stated that school superintendent in Turkey did not get sufficient benefits from the on the job training attended and they were not satisfied with the results of the training. Hursen and Ceker (2011) also stated that while superintendent supervises school teachers for the purpose of professionalism improvement, they also might have weaknesses or facing with problems during the process. According to Fessler

(2011), many researchers in United States of America emphasized that the school superintendent training programs were no longer strict as it was previously (Levine, 2005; Young *et al.*, 2007). Training programs were also seen as a failure in providing adequate training for their new roles as school superintendent (Levine, 2005).

The scenario above shows the problem regarding the quality of the program that were similarly faced by other countries. If the problem is ignored continuously, it is worrisome that it will affect the organization and educational system in general. According to Lindgren *et al.* (2012), report from the inspection by school superintendents have a direct affect towards the education policies, changes in methods, in education and administration in the education. According to MohdIdrus (2012), low quality superintendent ship affects the efficiency of the organization which acts as the assurance of the integrity of the educational standard.

With that, evaluation is needed in order to know the strength and weaknesses of the program for the purpose of improvements. IQA should know how far the level of success of a training program conducted. The next evaluation results should help the involved authorities in making decisions or plans regarding the training program in the future.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design: The research on this program's assessment was made using Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006). Evaluation model as the base for assessing the learning achievement level for the superintendent orientation course participants using the five components of knowledge which were IQA and MOE organization, the current education program and policies, public sector work culture, inspection procedures and preparation of inspection report. Survey-based research is used to assess the learning level of the participants. To determine the participants level of learning, as many as five level of minimum score interpretation (value from 1.0-5.0) is used.

Sampling: The research target are the new superintendents that had attended the IQA superintendent orientation course. The cohort year 2011-2014 results from the total of 84 participants (48 men, 36 women) was the target group. Because of the small population group, <100, thus, all the school superintendent of the cohort year 2011-2014 batches were absorbed as research respondents (Johnson and Christensen, 2008).

Data collection: Researchers used survey-based instrument, comprising of five components of knowledge (115 items) which are IQA and MOE organization (7 items), current education program and policy (40 items), public sector work culture (9 items), inspection procedures (46 items) and preparation of inspection report (13 items). About 5 level Likert scale and open ended questions items regarding the challenges faced when participating in the superintendent orientation course were also used. Apprentice studies on 25 new superintendents found that the α value of survey instrument trustworthiness after being tested with Cronbach Alpha test were between 0.701-0.797. This means the items in the survey is qualified because the value of $\alpha>0.7$ (Hair *et al.*, 2009).

Ethical consideration: Researcher had written permission from the inspectorate and quality assurance, education policy research and planning division, MOE to conduct the research, gain information and get the involved school superintendents name lists. To ensure confidentiality, researchers protect their information and data from being accessed or misused by unauthorized parties.

Data analysis: The data gained from the real research is analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 2.0 Software to analyse descriptively. Open-ended questions items were analysed manually by calculating the frequency of the surfacing theme, results from respondent's answers towards the questions that were being asked.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Newv superintendent's knowledge level after participating in superintendent orientation course: The evaluation for new superintendent's in the aspect of knowledge covering the IQA and MOE organization, current education program and policies, public sector work culture, inspection procedure and preparation of inspection report. Table 1 shows the min score for the superintendent-ship knowledge aspect that had been learned during superintendent orientation course. Research shown the public sector work culture (min. = 4.53), inspection procedure (min. = 4.17), preparation of inspection report (min. = 4.59) constructs are on a very high level. Meanwhile min score for IQA and MOE organization (min. = 4.19) and the current education program and policies (min. = 4.17) are only on high level. This clearly shows the course attended successfully improve the level of knowledge for school superintendent in the aspect of school inspection and the preparation of

Table 1: Level of knowledge after participating in superintendent orientation course

Superintendent knowledge aspect	Min. score	SD	Level
IQA and MOE organization	4.19	0.59	High
Current education program and policies	4.17	0.72	High
Public sector work culture	4.53	0.50	Very high
Inspection procedure	4.60	0.48	Very high
Preparation of inspection report	4.59	0.57	Very high

inspection report are higher compared to the knowledge about IQA and MOE organization and the current education program and policies.

Parallel with Hamid (2013) research, when he also stated that the majority of the school superintendents have high level of knowledge in the aspect of school inspection. Hamid (2013) also emphasized that school superintendents have high level of confidence to inspect school because before being school superintendents, majority of them were experienced teachers and had hold the position as leading teachers, senior assistant teachers, deputy headmasters or headmasters themselves. These experiences made them skilful with evaluation and development of the subject syllabus and their options.

Like any other professional fields, superintendents are also required to follow proper superintendent-ship ethics while conducting their tasks and this is one of the characteristics of a public sector work culture. Based on literature observation, researchers agree unanimously with Roberts and Sampson (2011) which stated that school superintendents are considered to have high level of integrity and ethics when conducting their job. Hence, every decision made are based on professional consideration and certain ethical code as stated by Gonzales. According to Gonzales, the framework used by school superintendents in United Stated of America in making decisions are based on sound mind, experience, ethic codes, law, researches, politics, intuition, religious background, collaboration, punctuality and universal principles. Researches proved that school superintendents in Malaysia realize and acknowledge the need for following superintendent-ship ethics while conducting their tasks. Thus, Fitch (2009)'s suggestion in Roberts and Sampson (2011) to add more training in decision-making based on ethics for school superintendent preparation courses in United States of America is not a need in Malaysia because the superintendents are already applying superintendentship ethics while doing their job. On the other hand, the level of knowledge for IQA and MOE organization's level and the current education program and policies were only at a high level due to the frequency of changes based on scenarios within and outside the country. Organization leadership and policies that often change caused some new superintendents to be confused and unclear as

stated by Kotirde and Yunos (2015). Kotirde and Jailani found that among the factors that obstruct the success of the school inspection system by superintendents in Nigeria were due to the frequent changes in education policies, caused by the politician's personal agendas. The scenario happening in Malaysia during 2010 until 2013 saw many significant events in education world such as the implementation of Education Transformation, Education's National Key Result Area Program (NKRA), Malaysia 10th program and more, also affect the knowledge of the in training new superintendents. Nevertheless, this is not a big issue as with time, it can be overcome through experience while conducting tasks and training in continuous services by the school superintendents in Malaysia.

Obstacles faced by new superintendents while attending the superintendent orientation course: Table 2 showed the obstacles faced by participant's aspect which were as many as 66 (78.5%) from 84 participants gave written responses based on the open-ended questions item. The results from the theme frequency analysis showed there were ten obstacles face by the participants as listed in Table 1. Overall as many as 28 (42.4%) responses given were regarding "short span o f time" as the main obstacle faced. Next, 11 (16.6%) responses were "superintendent ship skills" and 9 (13.6%) responses given stated "accommodation and training facilities are not conducive." Then, each recorded 3 (4.5%) responses regarding "limited hands on training" given to participants. As many as 2 responses (3%) given by participants regarding "age factor", "limited training and education materials", "speakers are not prepared" and "limited experience in education world."

Obstacles regarding the short time span showed that the majority of participants cannot follow the training program at a comfortable pace. Due to the participants coming from all kinds of backgrounds and work histories, IQA training unit should factor in their ages, experiences and the course's time to plan the next training programs in the future. These results are parallel with the researches by USDE that found the short time span were among the obstacles in ICT usage within pre-service education program for teacher in United States in America. However, the research results contradict with Goktas *et al.* (2009) research which stated that short time span was not the factor that become the obstacle in their research about the main obstacles and the possible variables for ICT integration in headmasters education Program in Turkey. Instead, Goktas and Yildrim found that the lack of on-the-job training is the main obstacle for school teachers in Turkey.

Table 2: Obstacles faced by new superintendent while attending the superintendent orientation course

Obstacles face by participants (66 respondents answered the questions)	Response frequency	Percentage (%)
Short time span	28	42.4
Superintendent-ship skills	11	16.6
Accommodation and training facilities were not conducive	9	13.6
Limited hands-on training	4	6.0
Course content are not suitable	3	4.5
Preparedness of new superintendents	3	4.5
Age factor limits the involvement in certain activities	2	3.0
Limited training and education materials	2	3.0
Speakers were not prepared	2	3.0
Limited experience in education world	2	3.0
Total	66	100.0

Meanwhile, for obstacles from the superintendent ship skills aspect, Essaoudi *et al.* (2014) assumed that the form of training does not visualise the true reality of working life as a school superintendent. Because of that, the change of status from a teacher to a school superintendent do not provide instant benefits due to the work specification that differs and require continuous training. These results are parallel with Hamid (2013) researches that stated the skills of current school superintendents that are still at an unsatisfactory level is the capability of preparing inspection results. The preparation of inspection results is among the components in superintendentship skills. This means IQA need to conduct a course or training in writing the inspection results continuously to improve the level of inspection results preparation. Aside from continuous training, effective coaching system also is capable in providing work satisfaction to individual and let them become highly motivational with whatever they are doing. Hence, school superintendent will maintain their inspection results skill level and be confident when doing school inspections.

The obstacles of lacks in accommodation and training facilities also got the attention of the participants. They needed somewhere more suitable and training facilities that are more conducive to allow them to give their full focus on the course they were attending. Hamid (2013) stated that the training environment which refers to the condition around and of the training, can affect the success or failure of the training conducted. Thus, IQA should take note on the suggestion and response of the participants of the superintendent orientation course by taking account each comments and suggestions for further improvement.

Obstacles in terms of hands on approach training is closely related with the content of the course. Too academic, unrelated and isolation between modules from real experiences on the field would cause the transition of the knowledge to skills becoming difficult (Jamet, 2013; Essaoudi *et al.*, 2015a).

Next, the obstacles regarding the preparedness of new superintendents, ages and lack of experiences factors are all related with the new superintendents themselves. According to Merlin and Essaoudi *et al.* (2015a), the profession of a school superintendent is not just as a control factor but largely it is to support the system and methods of the education resources management. Hence, school superintendents must act professionally because of the variety of their duties such as stated by most researchers (Essaoudi *et al.*, 2015b; Bruggen, 2010). To enforce their tasks effectively, they must always be ready, healthy and constantly improving their expertise to be on par with the education system.

Aside from that, the obstacles involving the speakers such as usage of teaching and learning tools and their lack of preparation are miniscule compared to other issues. According to Ansar (2015), the weakness of this aspect is due to the limited source in any department such as human resources, finance and information resources. Some departments see the implementation of the training program as superintendents not a priority as any important program and the existence of superintendent position not as significant compared to teachers and headmasters.

Based on these obstacles stated, IQA training unit should take heed and plan the superintendent training programs not only in terms of improving the success of education system but also capable to improve the achievements in careers terms as school superintendents.

CONCLUSION

Overall, it can be summed that the level of knowledge of the participants in the superintendent orientation course were at high level, proving that the course successfully achieved its objective. All aspect of knowledge learned hopefully can be shown while conducting their work. In other words, it is with high hopes that the knowledge will transits into the work field and improve the education quality. That is because previous researches found that among the main cause of

the staggering drop in education quality is due to the weak school inspection mechanism, unprofessional evaluation and weak support system towards the educational institutions that require help. Even though the majority of the participants considered the time for the course is too short, the superintendent ship skills, the non-conducive accommodation and training facilities as among the main obstacles they faced, the program itself can be seen as playing an important role in producing charismatic and high-competency superintendents Machumu (2012).

The implication of the research suggested that IQA training unit should take note on the obstacles stated by the participants specifically in the aspects of time, superintendent ship skills and lack of conducive accommodation facilities. The participants background aspect that come from different ages and physical capabilities also need to be taken into account in planning the course content, especially activities that involve physical fitness. Next, IQA training unit should conduct continuous coaching and professional development to new superintendents so that their level of knowledge gained is parallel with the needs of the current education. IQA management need to ensure the recent education policies are spread widely and in depth to school superintendents effectively to avoid confusion from happening.

From the evaluation aspect, this research is capable in fulfilling the gap of knowledge regarding the process of school superintendent training evaluation, that was held for the first time in Malaysia. The results from the research can also be made as reference and guide for IQA themselves and the public regarding what knowledge needed in order to become a school superintendent.

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