

## Organizational management improvement factors in the novice principal induction program

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### ABSTRACT

The need for effective principal in every school is critical and the demand for leadership talent is increasing especially among novice principals. Therefore, an effective induction program would be crucial to support novice principals in improving their knowledge and leadership skills. This quantitative study aims to determine the level of implementation of the novice principal induction program regarding professional development course, coaching, and mentoring; and to identify the main components that contribute to the improvement of organizational management among novice principals. A total of 417 novice principals who participated in the induction program in Malaysia provided their feedback in a questionnaire consisting of 44 items. The items include three components in the induction program, encompassing the professional development course, coaching, and mentoring in improving organizational management. The study found that the professional development course is the main component followed by coaching in improving the management skills of novice principals. Hence, novice principals' learning in induction should be directly linked to their own professional development to increase the effectiveness of school operations and student achievement.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Principal leadership has been outlined as an important theme in school improvement and the education reform movement [1]. Over the past two decades, studies have shown that principals influence teacher motivation and school culture, making it one of the most significant factors in student achievement [2]. Stable and effective school leadership is important in school improvement efforts, promoting teacher learning and teaching development, as well as increasing motivation, commitment, and the school environment [2]. Thus, principals need to be ready to face any change in order to adapt to any situation.

Despite having the knowledge and experience through the preparatory program and existing experience, novice principals are expected to use their authority and make decisions related to effective leadership in all school activities immediately after being appointed [3]. Furthermore, the appointment of a novice principal in a school is mostly accompanied by high expectations from various parties, including parents, teachers, students, and administrators. However, the newly appointed leaders are not skilled in leading and managing schools and are unable to improve student achievement. This is because they lack knowledge, skills and preparation to lead and manage schools effectively [4]. Therefore, novice principals need support and guidance such as an induction program especially in the first year of service.

The induction program is an important process that orients new principals into the roles and responsibilities of leaders, in addition to addressing the challenges they face [5]. In the implementation of this program, quality support and coaching are provided in order to prepare them to adapt to new demands in a short period of time [6]. As such, a key feature of the induction program involves helping new leaders respond to the contextual demands of a school so that the school can achieve its goal of educating students. However, the induction process does not work by simply providing information to new leaders. As a matter of fact, it also involves the creation and construction of experiences that require high skills, particularly in the aspect of human relations as well as the need for adult learning through the coaching process [7]. Thus, this study was conducted to identify the significant contribution in the implementation of the induction program in improving the organizational management skills of novice principals. This study is important because it explores the importance of continuous professional development through comprehensive courses, coaching and mentoring among novice principals. Therefore, this paper can be referred to those who want to improve the effectiveness of induction program implementation for novice principals. The findings of this study can be used by various parties to improve the implementation of professional development, especially in producing effective and quality novice principals.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In Malaysia, the Ministry of Education has introduced an induction program for all new principals appointed from 2014. This program helps prepare and strengthen the competencies required by novice principals in carrying out their duties as school leaders. The main goal of the induction program is to ensure that each newly appointed principal is highly capable of leading to achieve improvement in all aspects of school management [8]. This program is implemented over a period of one year that includes three levels: professional development course, mentoring, and coaching.

### **2.1. Professional development course**

Novice principals' benefit from continuous learning when taking on their new roles, especially in the aspects of policy, law, and procedures. In addition, they also need professional development courses to address their specific roles and responsibilities. Professional development courses help novice principals produce three levels of outcomes including: i) learning new knowledge and skills with active participation; ii) using the knowledge and skills learned to improve teaching and leadership; and iii) learning and student achievement that will improve learning outcomes in the professional development course attended [9].

It is known that professional development courses for school leaders must be conducted more consistently, be designed more comprehensively, emphasize knowledge and skills, and provide more opportunities for sharing knowledge and learning best practices. While Klein and Schwanenberg [10] opined that professional development courses can improve flexible delivery mechanisms where the learning process involves integrated actions and unique experiences in the learning process itself. Thus, courses for school leaders should be implemented more reflectively using an approach towards leadership and organizational management, thereby improving staff management skills as well as their quality and leadership skills.

### **2.2. Mentoring**

Mentoring is an important strategy to help new leaders during the initial phase, including in the induction program [11]. In this phase, the soon-to-be-appointed principal undergoes a mentoring process with coaching and training from mentors at the residency school. Mentors can bridge the gap between new roles and leadership practices that will facilitate their career development [12]. As a matter of fact, effective mentors share their expertise and help new leaders in performing tasks and facing the challenges in schools [13].

The mentoring process is effective when it ensures good mentor-mentee compatibility based on several key characteristics such as demographics, geography, or other similar personal characteristics. According to Oplatka and Lapidot [14], mentees benefit in terms of leadership development and capacity when they have the same educational philosophy and experience as their mentors. Conversely, poor compatibility leads to discussion topics that are limited to school management rather than broader topics such as curriculum innovation and shared leadership. The simultaneous and effective implementation of mentoring and induction of new leaders in the school community, therefore, leads to the integration of school culture [15].

### **2.3. Coaching**

Starr [16] defined coaching as a focused relationship with the goal of improving desired skills or performance of the coaches in different aspects such as clinical, leadership, speaking and teaching. Coaching among novice principals in schools is an effective component of the induction program where their learning

includes personal, professional, emotional, and social transformations aspects [17]. Consistent with the literature on socialization and induction, mentors help socialize new leaders into the profession and build relationships that reduce their feelings of isolation and anxiety. Coaching is also a safety net that provides the space and support needed to identify and deal with the uncertainties and pressures faced after being appointed as a school leader.

In the induction program, the coaching process for novice principals is carried out in the initial phase, which involves an experienced coach in each District Education Office (DEO). The coach is responsible for providing guidance to novice principals for a period of six months, which begins after they completed the professional development course. At this stage, novice principals need to explore their own learning in order to continuously improve knowledge and skills over time. Therefore, the role of the coach is to facilitate the process of self-reflection, which will eventually be performed by the principals themselves. To facilitate this process, the coach must have various elements, including superior cognitive ability, self-awareness, a high level of empathy, strong emotional control, and sound judgment. Each of these elements is important for the coaches to build trust, ask appropriate and timely questions, as well as listen attentively, besides making the coaches truly reflective and thoughtful [18].

#### **2.4. Organizational management of novice principals**

Organizational management is an important aspect of forming effective school leadership and school leaders need to emphasize organizational management aspects to increase student achievement [19]. Specifically, organizational management refers to the competence of leaders in using resources to achieve school goals particularly in continuous learning, dealing with change, as well as personal and professional qualities [20]. Indeed, school leaders should be knowledgeable in related fields, have professional values, and implement best practices in carrying out duties to meet the specified standards.

Leaders who carry out management responsibilities are capable of enabling their schools with good academic achievements [21]. On the contrary, the inability of some leaders to foster team spirit, a weak relationship with teachers, and inconsistent monitoring are barriers to effective teaching and learning [4]. In general, leaders as school managers need to carry out their role by taking into account the needs and abilities of school members. Thus, this study evaluated the main factors in organizational management to enhance the novice principal's induction program.

### **3. METHOD**

This study was conducted using a quantitative approach through a survey method. A quantitative approach was used to obtain information related to the research variables using a questionnaire before analyzing it using statistical procedures. The selection of the sample was made using the staged cluster technique, while the selection of elements for each stage was carried out using the simple random sampling method. The study sample consisted of 417 new principals appointed from 2014 throughout Malaysia. Notably, a total of 417 respondents exceeds the minimum number of samples of 361 based on the sample size determination table by Cochran [22].

Before performing the validity and reliability process, the research instrument containing 61 items was adapted from previous studies on professional development courses with eight items, mentoring with seven items, coaching with 10 items, and organizational management with 19 items. In addition, the demographics of the respondents consist of three items, encompassing gender, position, and experience as a school administrator. A five-point Likert scale is used to evaluate three components in the implementation of the induction program, ranging from 1 with 'strongly disagree' to 5 with 'strongly agree'. Meanwhile, the scale used to measure the level of organizational management of novice principals ranges from 'very low' to 'very high'. The level of implementation of the induction program is determined based on the interpretation of the mean score: very low (1.00-1.80), low (1.81-2.60), medium (2.61-3.40), high (3.41-4.20), and very high (4.21-5.00).

The instrument review process was carried out by a panel of 12 experts in related fields to obtain the validity of its content. The assessment was carried out using the content validity ratio (CVR) method. The CVR method has been widely used to measure the content validity of instruments in various fields, including education, organizational development, and psychology [23]. Overall, based on the findings using the CVR method, 17 items were dropped because they did not reach the minimum value set for the 12 experts involved, which is 0.667 [24]. Therefore, the number of remaining items is 44 according to the following variables: professional development course (8 items), mentoring (7 items), coaching (10 items), and organizational management (19 items).

Next, a pilot study was conducted involving 53 novice principals working in the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya. The analysis results showed that the reliability index for the instrument,

which refers to the value of Cronbach's alpha, was 0.91. Specifically, the reliability index for each variable is as: professional development course (0.80), mentoring (0.81), coaching (0.87), and organizational management (0.90). All values are above 0.8, which indicates that the items were valid, acceptable, and very good [25]. A total of 500 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to novice principals across the country; however, 417 sets of questionnaires with complete data were obtained for analysis. The data were subsequently analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 29.0 software.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The respondents for this study include 417 novice principals. Of 417 principals, 231 are males (55.4%) and 186 are females (44.6%). The findings of the analysis are explained in detail to answer two research questions: i) to identify the level of components in the implementation of the induction program and ii) to determine the main components that contribute to improving the organizational management skills of novice principals.

##### 4.1. The implementation of induction program

The study found that the level of two variables, namely professional development course and coaching, was very high. Meanwhile, the variables of mentoring and organizational management of novice principals were at a high level, as shown in Table 1. This shows that novice principals have successfully implemented the three main components of the induction program, which include the professional development course, mentoring, and coaching, in improving organizational management. This finding also suggests that the induction program conducted among novice principals indirectly helps them enhance their learning, thereby improving school management.

Table 1. Analysis of variable

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Level
Professional development course	4.28	0.37	Very high
Mentoring	4.03	0.41	High
Coaching	4.24	0.38	Very high
Organizational management	4.15	0.38	high

The implementation of the induction program for two components, namely the professional development course and coaching, was at a very high level. Meanwhile, the mentoring component was at a high level. Novice principals have made a high commitment to developing their knowledge and skills in managing school organizations through professional development activities. Besides, the majority of the novice principals felt that the course was relevant to their professional development needs. Furthermore, the course is structured, has clear objectives, is delivered by experienced facilitators, and gives them the opportunity to share their experiences with other participants.

In addition to the implementation of the course, the novice principals were also very satisfied with the coaching provided by the coach and mentor in helping them to clearly set the performance goals to be achieved. In this regard, the coach has successfully built a good relationship and communicated openly with the novice principals throughout the coaching period in the initial phase. Meanwhile, the mentoring process has also helped novice principals build a strong culture and encourage school members to achieve their school goals. In fact, the coaches were reportedly able to provide feedback that builds their confidence in performing their roles more effectively. This leads to positive results in the professional development of novice principals, especially in the professional learning process at the early stages of their service [26].

Professional learning that school leaders value the most is relevant to the challenges they face in their daily work. This is because continuous learning opportunities on the job have an immediate impact on the school leaders, besides enhancing their focus on the achievement of the learning outcomes. Therefore, professional learning sessions should be student-centered and in line with the principles of the adult learning theory, which focuses on problem-solving, in addition to being relevant and goal-oriented [27].

##### 4.2. Key components in the organizational management of novice principals

Subsequently, multiple regression analysis (stepwise) was used to determine the main components in the implementation of the induction program that contribute to the organizational management skills of novice principals. Before conducting the analysis, the assumptions for the multiple regression test were followed, including the data measured on an interval scale, normal data distribution based on normality tests

through skewness and kurtosis values, homoscedasticity, and the existence of a linear relationship between variables. The skewness value of 0.443 and the kurtosis value of -0.314 are considered normal and comply with the conditions of the normality test [27]. Tables 2-4 show the multiple regression analysis results.

Table 2. Regression model summary

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
1	0.582	0.339	0.336

Table 3. Variance analysis of regression model

Analysis	Sum of squares	df	Mean squared	F	p-value
Regression	20.349	2	10.174	106.135	0.000
Error	39.687	414	0.096		
Total	60.036	416			

Table 4. Multiple regression coefficient analysis

Variable	Unstandardized coefficient B	Unstandardized coefficient SE	Standardized coefficient beta	t	p-value
Constant	1.324	0.197		6.724	0.000
Professional development course	0.396	0.053	0.389	7.459	0.000
Coaching	0.268	0.056	0.250	4.816	0.000

Overall, the analysis results showed that the regression model was significant [ $F(2,414)=106.135$ ,  $p<0.000$ , and  $R^2=0.339$ ]. Two independent variables in the induction program component, namely the professional development course ( $b=0.396$ ,  $t=7.459$ ,  $p<0.000$ ) and coaching ( $b=0.268$ ,  $t=6.724$ ,  $p<0.000$ ), served as the significant predictors of novice principals' organizational management. Specifically, the professional development course was the main predictor identified, which explained 30.2% of the variation in the organizational management of novice principals, followed by coaching with 3.7%. Meanwhile, the remaining 66.1% was explained by other factors that were not examined in this study. Therefore, the significant contribution of the two components of the induction program to the improvement of novice principals' organizational management can be formed using the regression equation, as in (1).

$$\text{Organizational management} = 1.324 + (0.396) \text{ professional development course} + (0.268) \text{ coaching} \quad (1)$$

Based on the (1), for every one-unit increase in the professional development course, organizational management skills would increase by 0.396 units. On the other hand, for every one-unit increase in coaching, the organizational management skills of novice principals would decrease by 0.268 units.

The main goal of this study is to determine the components in the induction program that mainly contribute to the organizational management skills of novice principals. The results showed that the two components studied, namely the professional development course and coaching, had a significant relationship and contribution to the improvement of novice principals' organizational management. The professional development course component is the main contributor in this study, which is in line with the findings of previous studies where professional development activities help novice principals maintain high standards in the management of school organizations, which ultimately have an impact on all stakeholders [27]. In addition, new learning and sharing of expertise about the professional practices of effective school leaders in the implementation of coaching help address their specific role [19]. It can also help novice principals understand their roles and challenges as well as provide a platform to share problems and difficulties encountered with colleagues. This can indirectly create and encourage positive interactions with colleagues.

In the context of organizational management, novice principals are reportedly skilled in various aspects, such as developing a safe school environment, managing staff and teachers, handling finances and resources, and building relationships with external parties. This is in line with the completion of the professional development course in the induction program, which includes several key aspects such as strategic management, financial management, managing change, as well as the responsibilities and challenges of novice principals in managing schools. Furthermore, in terms of resource management, novice principals can systematically manage school finances by optimizing allocated expenses. In addition, they can ensure that capital property, assets, and infrastructure are regularly maintained according to the requirements and established procedures. This supports the findings of the study by Tahir *et al.* [4], which reported that

professional development courses can improve the knowledge and leadership skills of novice principals as well as their self-confidence in carrying out their duties as school leaders.

Novice principals were also found to be capable of managing human resources to improve the quality of work and practice professionalism by monitoring the work performance of teachers and school staff on a regular basis. This finding complies with the standards in which school leaders play a role in the distribution of tasks, detailing tasks according to needs, as well as evaluating the work performance of teachers and staff transparently. Moreover, the professional development program is implemented in a planned manner according to the current development and needs of teachers and school staff [27]. However, the evaluation of the effectiveness of such a program is scarce among novice principals. The evaluation aspect of the program's effectiveness also plays an important role in identifying the program's strengths and weaknesses, besides providing important information so that appropriate action can be taken. Therefore, emphasis needs to be placed on the aspects of knowledge and skills related to the evaluation of training programs, whether in the form of professional development course content or coaching sessions conducted among novice principals.

In terms of relationships with external parties, novice principals were found to be capable of building networks and links with various stakeholders through strategic consensus. In addition, novice principals tend to gain support from parents and the local community by involving them in school activities whilst promoting school achievements and showcasing student work. This effort is aimed at obtaining contributions and creating a community network with certain mechanisms according to current needs, creatively achieving the school's goals [27]. In terms of school climate management, novice principals were also able to provide a conducive learning environment for students and a comfortable work environment among teachers and school staff [28]. This involves cooperation and contributions from external parties to ensure a safe environment, buildings, and other facilities for the use of school members.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The main component in the induction program that implicates socialization theory is the implementation of professional development courses with a relatively high percentage of contributions compared to the mentoring aspect. This finding provides important information that the course component in the induction program is able to improve the quality of novice principals' leadership. In addition to socialization, the professional learning aspect of novice principals also has implications for adult learning theory. In this context, the results of the study show that the guidance process provided by the coach is a key factor in improving the leadership practices of novice principals. This means that self-learning methods based on workplace experiences used by coaches have had a positive impact on the learning theory of novice principals. Therefore, they need continuous quality guidance especially from trained and experienced mentors throughout the duration of the induction program.

The study also found that compliance with the set standards, namely organizational management, successfully improved the quality of novice principals, particularly in the aspects of financial resource management, school climate and strategic consensus. This means that the systematic management of resources as well as compliance with established procedures is a priority in the management of the organization of novice principals who follow the induction program. The study was also able to identify the issues and challenges of novice principals through their reflection on the functions and actions taken as well as school improvement and development strategies. This provides important information to policy makers to strengthen the leadership of novice principals in an effort to improve the quality of school leaders in Malaysia.

In conclusion, novice principals play a key role in leading schools, fostering a positive learning culture, and improving student outcomes. Based on the results, this study provides meaningful insights, especially in efforts to improve the skills of novice principals in the realm of school leadership and management. The unexpected finding in this study is the mentoring aspect is not a factor in improving the organizational management skills of novice principals. On the other hand, other studies have found that mentoring is the main approach used in induction programs. This matter needs to be explored to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the mentoring in the induction program in future studies.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

This journal uses the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) to recognize individual author contributions, reduce authorship disputes, and facilitate collaboration.

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C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

Fo : Formal analysis

I : Investigation

R : Resources

D : Data Curation

O : Writing - Original Draft

E : Writing - Review & Editing

Vi : Visualization

Su : Supervision

P : Project administration

Fu : Funding acquisition

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

## DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author, [AMMA]. The data, which contain information that could compromise the privacy of research participants, are not publicly available due to certain restrictions.




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