LEADERSHIP TRANSITION: PRE TO POST NPQH- A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of study – School Leadership Training Program is perceived as one of the most effective ways to improve leadership knowledge, skills and attitude for future leaders. To reap these perceived benefits, Institut Aminuddin Baki, Malaysian Ministry of Education Malaysia had introduced the National Professional Qualification for Headship Program (NPQH) to prepare potential teachers to be future school leaders. The objective of the study is to explore and understand the leadership transition of these participants before and after their engagement as participants in the NPQH Program in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude and also achievement of leadership capabilities as school leaders.

1.0   BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The democratization of education, the rapidity of change, the continuous creation of new knowledge, new demands in education and the ever-widening access to information, had encouraged school leaders to participate in learning programs and the number of these leaders who are continuing their education is increasing throughout the world today. Cawelti (1982) stated that:

> *"Few social institutions could withstand the pressures faced by school over the past decade. The mix of various responsibilities has placed demands on school administrators for skills unheard of several years ago".*

The notion of being a great, mediocre or poor leader is based on one's performance in initiating change within and around the organization. Sloane (2009) suggested:

> *"...leadership is the key to any change initiative at a school site or in a district, but the type of leadership that is necessary might vary depending on the situation, the need, and the vision of the school or district."*

However, there seemed to be some confusion on the term leadership and management. One may say that it is the same but most scholars agreed that these two terms are very different in meaning and also in discharging their duties. Sloane (2009) also added that while *"Managers do things right, the leaders do the right thing"*. Sometimes we see school principals acting as managers where they were so tied up with doing the right thing such as paper work, budgeting, planning, meetings and others that they seldom have the ability or time to initiate change for the betterment of the institution.

School leaders have the responsibility to initiate and direct change in addition to their normal responsibilities as principals. They have to be better equipped to face the different challenges in their profession and be creative and innovative in their approach to cater to the needs of the new breed of clients who are more advanced, knowledgeable and demanding in their demands for service and products that were offered to them. Normore (2004) reiterates that:

> *"...Hardships related to lack of training for leadership positions for the persons who climb the career ladder to leadership roles; and little support, sometimes even outright hostility, from the public, political entities and other stakeholders".*

School leaders who wish to undergo training programs will be facing difficulties in adapting to new challenges due to the imbedded beliefs and values in life. In discussing adult learning, Durr (1994) stated that adults have a set of beliefs that may be influenced by a set of previously established mindsets that provide a guideline for the adult learners' behavior in their approach to learning. Therefore, Long (1994) proposes that there is a need for these learners to undergo a shift in their beliefs before becoming more accepting towards learning. Learners need to

adjust their mindsets to fit in with the new learning systems thus enhancing their capabilities to learn and be able to initiate the necessary changes as schools leaders Cowie and Crawford (2007) stated that:

> *"…The starting point is a belief that principal preparation is a crucial aspect of school development and progression, and that program of preparation should have positive outcomes for those who undertake them".*

Thus the study will look into the important perspective which will come from the school leaders who were graduates of the NPQH program initiated by Institut Aminudin Baki (IAB). The overall research objectives of study are to examine how the NPQH training program influenced their leadership and management practice and how the NPQH participants handled the experience of becoming school leaders after graduation from the program.

1.1   Statement of the Problem

The major backdrop to the study is the unrelenting pressure on schools and school principals to strive for improvement in what they do. Cowie and Crawford (2007) stated that:

> *"Anxieties regarding school underperformance in an increasingly competitive global economic environment have brought political pressure to raise educational standards and in the past two decades school principals have had to come to terms with increased expectations, performance management and increasing public accountabilities".*

Past studies have consistently reported that training programs makes a significant impact on the adult learners' achievement (Wan Zawawi, 2007). These programs will affect continuing interest of the learner in learning, which is critical, as society becomes more complex and changes rapidly more than ever. However, Kirkpatrick (1994), stated that only few studies have focused on if or how preparation

programs influence changes in participants' leadership practices. Similarly, few studies have a comparative emphasis with attention being paid to the differential effectiveness of different approaches, although attention is now beginning to be paid to these issues.

Years of being teachers and exposed to the pedagogical approach in learning and teaching have turned many school leaders into passive learners that need to be fed with information and instructions to learn (Lunyk-Child et.al., 2001). These school leaders have a set of beliefs that may play a significant role in their learning as adult-learners. They may have difficulties in learning programs that warrant them to be more self-directed, responsible and empowered to their own learning process (Gugleilmino 2001). The need for them to be more alert in adapting changes and receive training with an open heart is prerequisite in order for them to succeed in any training programs.

In ensuring the continuation of quality education in Malaysia, the importance of having leaders who are knowledgeable, innovative, creative, and independent and a thirst of knowledge need to be given attention. With adequate training, the notion of transitional leadership from being a manager who are doing the right thing into a leader who are doing things right would be a reality. These leaders will in turn initiate changes in schools and be global players in years to come.

Given the scarcity of research in the understanding of these issues and the growing need to help school leaders develop their leadership skills especially in the Malaysian context, attention needs to be paid to understanding the transitional phases that successful leaders had gone through in leadership training programs such as the NPQH program initiated by Institut Aminudin Baki, Ministry of Education Malaysia. Questions pertaining to how and what they had gone through and how training had changed them into leaders need to be looked into to get a clearer picture on the impact of the NPQH program in training future school leaders in Malaysia.

1.2   Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate the Leadership Transition by teachers enrolled in the NPQH program based on the following research questions:

a. What were the Participant's Leadership Capacities before NPQH?
b. What Leadership Capacities were the Participants exposed to during the NPQH Program?
c. How was Leadership manifested after NPQH?

1.3   Significance of the Study

Education has the power to be an agent of change, both individually and socially (Friere, 1970; Mezirow, 1991; Foley, 2001). As one of the primary tenets in adult learning theory, the study on the leadership transition would contribute towards a larger body of knowledge especially in the understanding of school leaders in the Malaysian context. The study will be focused on understanding and identifying the issues pertaining to the prior beliefs and experiences, phases of intervention and the manifestation phases of leadership by school leaders who had graduated from training programs in Malaysia. Findings of the study would be a significant contribution in helping IAB, academic professionals and other institutions to enhance the effectiveness of conducting training programs for school leaders.

In summary, this study is important because it would add to the body of literature on leadership transitions, and in particular addresses the school leaders who are engaged in learning programs. This study would also contribute to a better understanding of school leadership training programs and its implication to the respondents, especially school leaders enrolling in the long term courses at the Institute and other educational leadership training program in the Malaysian setting.

1.4   Scope of the Study

The study examined the respondents' experiences and the transitional phases of school leaders in a long term training program at Institut Aminuddin Baki. Thus the scope of the study lies within the boundaries of participants as school leaders, their beliefs and experiences, and the manifestation of leadership capabilities in their profession. Since the study was designed to identify and investigate the transitional phases of school leaders based on their experiences and the nature of manifestation from the respondents point of view, the qualitative approach was the most appropriate to be used. This research paradigm offered a more precise reflection of the situation where the research questions were framed to seek meaning and understand how people made sense of their experiences. The framework of the study was bounded by the theories of adult learning (Knowles, 1984; Rogers, 1989, Keegan 1990), educational leadership (Chance & Chance, 2002; Fullan, 2002and Kirkpatrick, 1994;) and also adult transitional phases (Wan Zawawi, 2007).

1.5   Definition of Terms

There are various terms used in this study, which needs clarification for better understanding of what they mean within the context of the study. The definitions of terms are as follows:

1.5.1   Leadership Transition

Leadership is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent. Northouse (2007) defines leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Leaders carry out this process by applying their leadership knowledge and skills. Leadership Transition is about realizing the opportunity to make a bigger impact in the future. It will broaden participants' scope of vision and the sphere of influence they have cultivated in the past, involving those who already have strong leadership capabilities, whose careers are progressing steadily and adequate leadership training or leadership potential (Ibarra, 2011)

1.5.2 NPQH (National Professional Qualification for Headship)

NPQH or The National Professional Qualification for Headship program was initiated by Institut Aminuddin Baki (IAB) as a professional qualification program adopted and adapted from the NPQH United Kingdom model in an effort to fulfill the country's aspirations to create world class education by preparing quality potential school leaders. The program was established in 1979 with the aim of improving educational quality and increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the education system through human resource development in educational management and leadership at all levels in the education system. With all the training and knowledge gained, It is hoped that the NPQH program will be able to develop a generation of leaders who are learned and skilled in managing change in line with the country's growing demands and aspirations.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate and understand the leadership transition and the manifestation of leadership skills amongst Malaysian teachers who were involved in the NPQH program at Institut Aminuddin Baki (IAB), Ministry of Education Malaysia. The review of literature will provide a strong foundation for the study, which will include the understanding of aspects relating to school leadership, training program and its manifestation in real life situations. A review on school leadership, training programs and application of knowledge, skills and attitude of school leaders will explain the effects of a training program in enhancing school leadership capabilities. Theories and principles of school leadership will be discussed to help explain the complexities of school leadership and management and why training is crucial for them to succeed.

2.2 School Leadership

School leadership is widely recognized as complex and challenging. School Leaders are expected to develop conducive learning environments, build the professional capacity of teachers, counsel parents and communities, engage in collaborative and consultative discussion making, resolve conflicts, engage in educative instructional leadership, and attend respectfully, immediately, and appropriately to the needs and requests of stakeholders. This comes with the tremendous pressure to demonstrate that every child for whom they are responsible is achieving success. Lashway (2006) defines School Leadership as:

> *"...the process of strategically influencing and managing an organizational organization with an explicit aim to raise learning outcomes through providing direction, developing capacity of others, pioneering change and establishing an orderly environment".*

However, leadership should not be seen as only managing an organization alone. Certain aspects such as motivating and inspiring people to higher values and principles are also crucial. Drucker (2002) stated that:

> *"Leadership is not magnetic personality - that can just as well be a glib tongue. It is not 'making friends and influencing people' - that is flattery. Leadership is lifting a person's vision to high sights, the raising of a person's performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations."*

The definition of leadership can sometimes be quite confusing and sometimes seems mysterious; one of the many reasons is the different number of definitions, theories, and researchers that discusses the issue. Stogdill (1974), a prominent leadership researcher said, *"...there are almost as many different definitions as there are people who have attempted to define the concept."* Although the concept of leadership can seem inexplicable, its various definitions are critical to understand

the concept and principles of leadership. Leadership has different meanings to various authors. However, most authors and researchers agree on certain aspects of leadership such as influence. Most agreed that leadership involves the art of influencing people so that they will strive willingly and enthusiastically toward the achievement of group goals (Hollander: 1978; Bennis, 1959; Chemers, 1997; and House et.al; 1999). Chemers (1997) and House et.al. (1999) also agreed on the notion that leadership would be widely accepted by the majority of theorists and researchers as a process of social influence in which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task towards the effectiveness and success of the organization.

In summation, it could be said that leadership involves how one can organize and inspire a group of people through spoken and unspoken influence, having the ability to clearly articulate a direction and a purposeful mission statement to fulfill the aspirations of the stakeholders. However, Drucker (2002) stresses that: *"Leadership evolves through experience, training and practice"*.

2.3   Training

In discussing training, Cawelti (1982) Educational leaders have responded to outside pressures with a heavy press for a management approach in running schools or systems thinking and all that goes with such efforts for efficiency and effectiveness. Precise goals in both short and long term planning, closer teacher supervision and others are now characterized in all. The mystique of management continues, even though the concept is not well understood by the school administrators.

The leadership demands on our educational system never seem to end. That is why successful leaders are always in search of ways to enhance their own capacity and that of their teams. Commitment to continuous professional learning is the key to maintaining their *"leadership edge"*. It is vital to the growth and effectiveness of their team. It is also essential to realizing the vision and goals of the team, school and system.

Cawelti (1982) stresses on four components that need to be included in school leadership training program to ensure intellectual leaders in a community, are comfortable with new ideas and have a zest for new knowledge:

1. Training in leader behavior; Leaders are expected to lead, to provide a sense of direction, to motivate others towards attainment of goals and to build consensus.
2. Training in management skills; the management approach to leading an institution is very simply a disciplined way of looking at one's job that helps put leader behavior in perspective.
3. Training in instructional leadership; the need for administrator HRD activities lies in the areas of skills and processes used to improve instruction.
4. Traditional (generic) administration course topics; topics such as collective bargaining, public relations, educational technology and community involvement have become necessary to success in today's school leaders.

In terms of conducting school leadership training program, there seemed to be a number of views which were results of different aspirations from different program providers. Gronn (2003) stated that:

> "...despite the general consensus that the role of the school principal as both a manager and a leader matters and that preparation is important, there are considerable disagreements, often philosophical and political, about what kinds of principals are needed, what skills and attributes are needed and how they should be trained".

In another perspective, training programs should also consider the learners background and readiness to accept changes. This aspect is quite significant in ensuring the realization of the desired goals of the training program. Kirkpatrick (1994), for example, argued that development programs should be evaluated in terms of participant perceptions, learning, performance and ultimate impact.

2.4   Why Training?

Fullan (2002) stated that: *"...to develop and support cultural change in principals, we must turn our attention to sustainability – the likelihood that the overall system can regenerate itself towards improvement".* The key components are developing a social environment, learning in context, cultivating leaders in many levels, ensuring succession and enhancing teaching profession. Normore (2004), stated that:

> *"...Traditionally educators have moved into an administrative position when their attributes and abilities were seen by current administrators as having a good fit with the organizational structure".*

Today institutions worldwide have learned that quality leadership preparation must target not only a few individuals with identified potential, but also be extended to include a wide array of persons who will undergo a lengthy process of disciplined review of leadership talent as they engage in ongoing activities designed to support their growth as leaders (Bogotch 2001, Kelly & Peterson 2002, Brown-Ferrigno 2003, Normore 2004).

Crawford, (2005) suggested two imperatives that overlaps when considering principal preparation. One relates to the needs of the system to consider succession planning and to ensure the quality and development of schools. The other relates to the needs of individuals. From the system's perspective there is a supply problem with large numbers of vacancies anticipated over the next few years. From the perspective of individuals, it is important that people are encouraged to want to do the job first and foremost, and that opportunities are provided to allow aspiring school principals to acquire appropriate knowledge and understanding. Candidates also need to have opportunities to practice the skills and abilities the job demands in order to deal productively and confidently with the leadership and management issues they are likely to face on appointment.

Crawford (2005) emphasizes that:

> *"...perhaps even at a common-sense level, most stakeholders and professionals involved in education would agree that without competent principals schools may be ineffective and efforts at school improvement are unlikely to succeed".*

2.5   Impact of Training

The goal of a leadership institute is to provide relevant, learner-directed training and professional development (Filian & Seagren 2003). Optimally faculty participants will learn not only the relevant curriculum designed to help them improve communication skills, learn to lead with objectivity, and to increase performance across skills and competencies (such as academic publishing), but also to observe and emulate the coaching model, stewardship and dedication to lifelong learning that is the hallmark of their leadership mentors.

In discussing pressures of work and responsibilities amongst school leaders, Grace (1995) argued that this pressure had greatly intensified the work of school principals. One outcome of these pressures is that the global education community faces a crisis, with school systems finding increasing difficulty in recruiting school principals with the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience (Gronn, 2003). This phenomenon creates anxiety amongst educational institutions where Grace, (1995) stated that in England and Wales, there are fewer people than in the past who are interested in becoming a school principal.

The pre-requisite for training of school leaders need to cover opportunities to practise the skills and abilities the job demands in order to deal productively and confidently with the leadership and management issues they are likely to face on appointment. It is therefore quite a monumental task for training providers to look into the content and context of leadership training program in order to fulfill the current demands of school leadership today.

2.6   NPQH IN Malaysia

In line with the country's aspirations to create a world class education and to create a high quality workforce in the civil service, there was a need to improve the quality of headship and school management at the grass root level. Hence, IAB embarked on the NPQH program, a professional qualification program adopted and adapted from the NPQH United Kingdom model. The initial proposal was for NPQH diploma to become mandatory in the appointment of new principals in Malaysia. However, this proposal was not implemented.

IAB or also known as the National Educational Management and Leadership Institute, established in 1979, aims at improving educational quality and increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the education system through human resource development in educational management and leadership at all levels in the education system. IAB aims at building and developing leadership and educational management professionalism among leaders in schools. It is believed that through professional training, leaders will play their roles effectively in developing the nation through education.

The NPQH program which awards a Diploma NPQH to successful candidates began in 1998. The course was designed upon the following assumptions:

i.   That educational managers (including Principals, Headmasters, Senior Assistants) once given quality and systematic training shall be able to develop an educational institution well.

ii. That the new generation of school managers should have confidence and high competency in their job in order to ensure that our education system will achieve world class standard. Leaders in schools must possess the ability to compete with managers in the private sectors.

iii. That school managers need exposure to the latest knowledge about the world around them to enable them to manage their organizations effectively.

iv. That competency to manage effectively is a crucial factor to ensure the success of any educational institution. (IAB, 2000)

Based on the above assumptions, the NPQH program was designed with the rationale that with the well-planned training programs, school managers will have the opportunity to be the 'prime movers and leaders' in the Malaysian Education service. Through the NPQH program the school managers are given the opportunity to review their knowledge on latest government policies and educational management. They will also be able to build up a professional network for continuous improvement in management and education leadership. The experience gain through the training will allow them to reflect on their own practices and thus, improve themselves in their work. With all the training and knowledge gained, the NPQH program will be able to develop a generation of leaders who are learned and skilled in managing change in line with the country's growing demands and aspirations.

2.7 Transitional Model of Adults in Training Programs

Adults in any training program will have to undergo a transitional period whereby they will have to go through certain phases of learning before they were able to execute the newly learnt knowledge and skills and also a change in their attitude. In discussing the leadership transition of school leaders before and after participating in training programs the findings of a study done by Wan Zawawi (2007) depicts the transitional phases of adults in a training program. Figure 1, revealed that the transition process started with the recognition of a set of prior beliefs imbedded in their minds. The trainee had to go through the phase of disorientation where the training content and context is in conflict with their prior beliefs. These trainees then had to experience the phase of exploration where they scrutinized and explored all the possibilities that caused the conflict where upon reaching a plausible answer to their predicament, they proceeded towards the transformation phase where the trainees tried to change their approach towards training. This phase of transformation progresses towards the adaptation phase, where they applied the newly found skills in learning. Once they realized that the application of the new approach had helped them, they would reach the phase of reconciliation where they would now be comfortable and conformed to the new approach and had also mastered the knowledge and skills of what is being trained to be employed in their expected capacities.
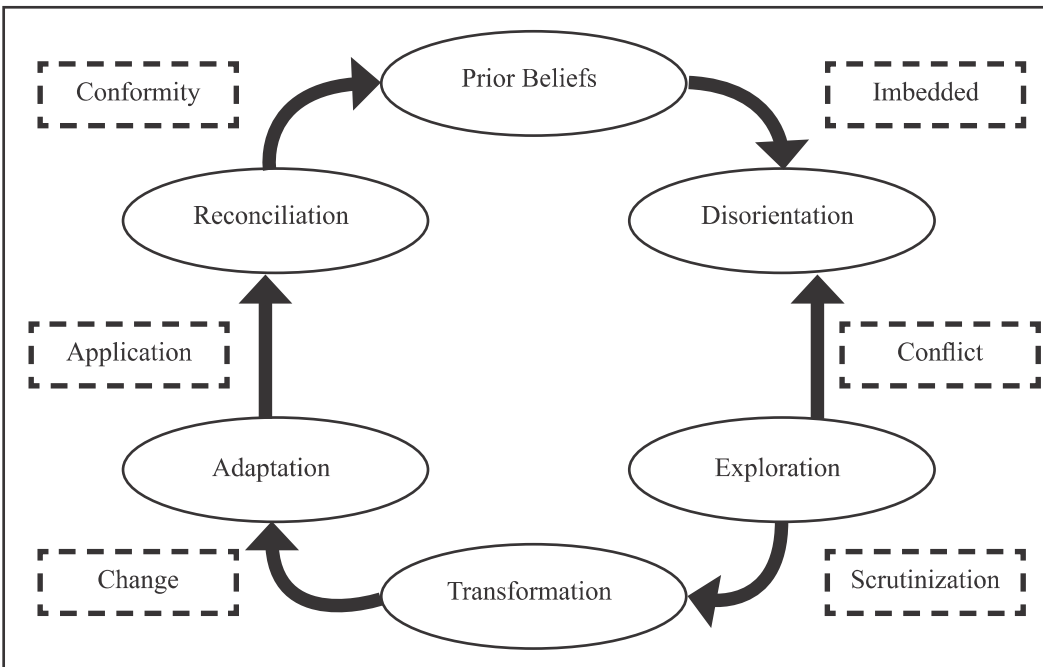
Figure 1: **Phases of Transition in an Adult Training Program**
(Wan Zawawi, 2007)

Boyatzis (2001) also came up with another self-directed learning model where he introduces the five discoveries (Figure 2) that learners must go through before being self-directed. Even though the processes might not be linear, Boyatzis (2001) emphasizes that in one way or another these learners will have to go through all the different route of discoveries before they are able to be self-directed in their learning.
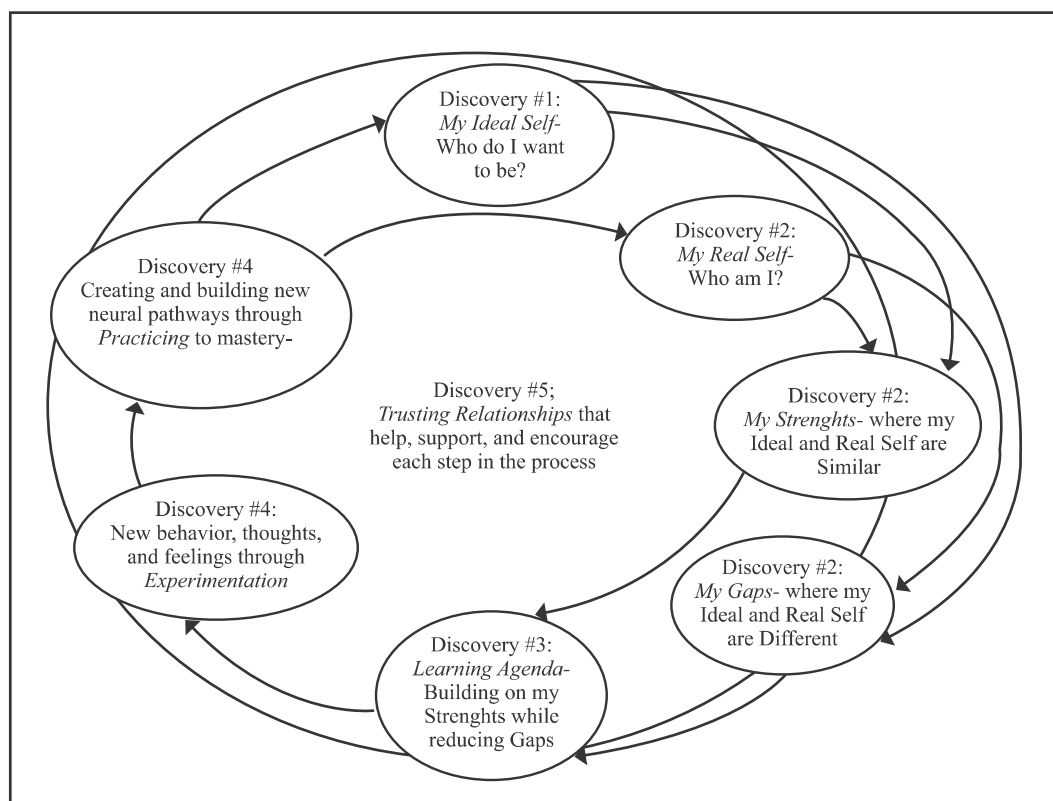
Figure 3: 5 Discoveries by Adults (Boyatzis, 2001, pg. 12)

The first discovery and potential starting point for the process of self-directed learning is the discovery of who you want to be, one's mission in life or what they wanted to achieve in life. They will next go through the second process of assessing who they really are, their potential, strengths and weaknesses (discovery 2), building on the strengths and reducing the gaps in their weaknesses (discovery 3).

The fourth discovery and potential start of self-directed learning is to experiment and practise desired changes. Typically, following a period of experimentation, the person practises the new behaviors in actual settings within which they wish to use them, such as at work or at home. During this part of the process, self-directed change and learning begins to look like a "continuous improvement" process. Once they had gone through all the process of discoveries, they will reach the final process of when they will be comfortable and confident

with their learning. This process is where they are more comfortable, confident and trusting in their relationship with the learning environment (discovery 5).

These relationships give the learners a sense of identity and guide them as to what is appropriate and "good" behavior, and provide feedback on their behavior. The learners gained self-confidence during their engagement in the learning program. This confidence will help them to be better self-directed learners thus enhancing their chances of being successful in their learning activity.

2.8   Summary

The chapter discusses about the basis of leadership, educational leadership training, the NPQH program and also the phases of transition in adult learning. Models of adult transitional phases were also tabled and discussed to enhance understanding of the subject matter. Attributes and expectations in school leadership and how training should be organized and carried out to ensure maximum output from the said programs were also discussed. Lists of prior researches and findings from prominent scholars were deliberated to ensure a clear grasp of the subject matter.

The chapter also mentioned about the introduction of the NPQH program in Malaysia and what are the aspirations of the Malaysian Government behind its implementation. Discussions on the mode of training and intended outcome from the training program were also discussed.

Towards the end of the chapter, a discussion on the transitional phases of adults in a training program was also mentioned. Models from Wan Zawawi (2001) and Boyatzis (2001) were tabled and discussed to provide additional grasp of the process gone through by the school leaders in a training program.

In summary, the review of literature gives a clearer view about school leadership, the need for training, the NPQH program and the phases of transition faced by adult learners. The literature provided a basis for research where there is a need for organizations to investigate and explore the justification and fulfillment of any training programs. The emphasis on whether the trainees of the said program

were able to adapt and adopt leadership capacities and capabilities still remains a big question to be answered and needs to be explored.

3.0   METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

A lot of research had been conducted on school leadership by researchers either in Malaysia or abroad as stated in the literature review. However, the number of researches done on the impact of training program for school leaders and its manifestation in practice especially in the Malaysian context is still quite rare, if any. The purpose of the study as stated before is to examine and understand how school leaders had gone through training and manifested it in practice who had participated in the NPQH program at Institut Aminuddin Baki (IAB) Ministry of Education Malaysia. The study employed the qualitative approach as the researcher believed that this approach would further enhance the findings with a more humanistic touch which would surely bring forth more evidence on how the participants experience the transition from training to the manifestation in practice from the participants' point of view as a supplement to the descriptive analysis.

3.2   Rationale for a Qualitative Approach

Since the study is trying to identify and investigate the leadership transition of respondents who had enrolled in the NPQH program by IAB from their perspectives, the qualitative approach is the most appropriate to be used. McBride and Schostak (2002) argued that a qualitative research offers a more precise reflection of a situation rather than just numerical perception. Merriam (1998) in agreement with Lincoln and Guba (1985) also stresses that *"If you want people to understand better than they otherwise might, provide them information in the form in which they usually experience it"*.

Qualitative methodology is the most suitable because it "describes systematically the facts and characteristics of a given population or area of interest"

(Merriam and Simpson, 1989) where data are collected and presented directly in the form of actual quotation or definition either spoken or written. Patton (1987) said that qualitative data consist of *"direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge"* and this describes people's activities, behavior and actions. In this study the researcher intended to understand and explore how the respondents experienced the NPQH training program. Furthermore the study was designed to answer the researcher's interest in gaining in-depth understanding of whether NPQH enhances leadership transition and how it was manifested by them in actual school environment. In-depth interviews were employed to generate data. The insights of the respondents were sought to explore and understand their experiences before and after enrolling in the NPQH program.

3.3   Selection of Respondents

There is no specific rule to determine the size of a sample in qualitative design (Luborsky and Rubinstein, 1995). The goals of the research, methods, personnel and financial resources were assessed when the researcher decided the size of the sample. A purposive sample will be selected for this research. Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that *"one wants to discover, understand, gain insights; therefore, one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most"* *(Merriam, 1998, p.48).*

Information from the Registrar of IAB was sought to determine the respondents of the study. Thirteen (13) graduates from the NPQH program were selected as respondents based on the criteria that they are holding leadership roles in their respective schools and were able to provide information about their experiences as participants of the NPQH Program and how the program had made an impact on their roles as school leaders. The selection of the respondents was also based on the assumption that they still had relatively fresh memories concerning their experiences as participants of the NPQH Program at IAB and they would also be able to provide detailed information on their experiences prior to being learners at IAB.

3.4   Data Collection

In-depth interviews with the respondents are the main form of data collection. After the approval by the respondents had been obtained, in-depth interviews were conducted and recorded. For all aspects of this study, confidentiality was assured and participation was completely voluntary.

3.5   In-depth Interviews

Glesne & Peshkin (1992) stated that an interview can be the sole basis of a study or it can be used in conjunction with data from observations. However, for this study, in-depth interviews were conducted for the purpose of gathering data. Observations from the interview sessions were only applied as part of the verification procedures to justify claims from the respondents.

The interview process was conducted in two stages. The first stage was questions pertaining to a number of demographic issues such as personal details and basic information such as name, gender, work experience and also some basic information on their current profession. The second stage was the in-depth interview which was audio taped lasting one to two hours based on the interview guide. During the interview, open-ended questions pertaining to their experiences before, during and after enrolling in the NPQH Program were asked.

3.6   Data analysis

Mishler (1986) stated that in an interview, both the researcher and the respondent contribute towards the construction of meaning. In spite of all the effort to be subjective, the data collected would sometimes be influenced by the questions asked and the respondents' perception of the researcher's motives and expectations in asking the questions. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) stated that data analysis is a process of systematically searching and arranging the interview script, other materials and field notes to increase understanding and also enabling the researcher to present what had been discovered.

Merriam (2002), states that the process of data analysis starts from having a filing system for the data, reading through the text from the interviews, making notes and forming initial codes. This was followed by describing meaning of the experience for the researcher. The researcher then located and listed the statements of meaning into units. A textual description was prepared followed by structural description and lastly the development of an overall description of the experience or the essence of the phenomenon. The last step in analyzing was the representation of a narration of the essence using tables, figures of statements and meaning units. Findings were to be presented using the themes based on the descriptions of the respondents' experiences. The themes were defined and labelled, with examples of narratives that illustrated the theme. Quotes from the narratives for each theme were used to illustrate it. Simple language was used to avoid misuse of words that will take away or adds up to the actual meaning of the findings.

3.7   Validity and Reliability

Merriam (1998) stated that regardless of the types of research, validity and reliability remains to be the main concern that needs to be addressed. Several strategies were used to enhance the validity and reliability of the study. Triangulation and peer examination strategy were applied to ensure validity and reliability of the findings. Merriam and Associates (2002:27) stated that:

> *"...strategies a qualitative researcher can use to ensure consistency and dependability or reliability are triangulation, peer examination and audit trail where independent readers will authenticate the findings of the study".*

Another strategy used was peer examination which came from colleagues in the field as well as the committee members of this study. This strategy was adopted as some sort of authentication of the confirmation done during member checks as mentioned earlier. In an effort to enhance reliability, the researcher also exercised audit trail where he made a careful and detailed description of how the data were collected, codes and categories were derived and themes were generated.

3.8   Assumptions and Limitations

The methodology of this study had some limitations. First the study was mainly dependent on self-reported data. The study was solely dependent on the trustworthiness of the respondents and therefore there will always be a possibility of the respondents giving inaccurate information and on the assumption that the respondents are school leaders. The study was also solely dependent on the assumption that they had gone through the transitional phases of leadership.

Finally, the study did not attempt to determine a universal theory about educational leadership training program. The purpose of the study was to learn more about the beliefs, experiences and the leadership transition of the respondents and therefore could not be generalized to other leadership training program.

4.0   FINDINGS

4.1   Introduction

The study involved thirteen (13) respondents who were selected based on a set of criteria which include 1) the respondents are NPQH graduates 2) They are currently school leaders, 3) accessibility of the researcher to the respondents; and 4) the respondents' willingness to participate in the study. All thirteen had graduated from the NPQH Program at Institut Aminuddin Baki, Ministry of Education Malaysia and were selected because these respondents are leaders in their current school that fits the purpose of this study. The demographic details of the respondents are as follows:

Respondents of the Study

No.	NPQH (Year)	State	Age	Sex	Qualification	Leadership Level
1	2003	Johor	43	Male	Masters	Senior Assistant (1) Secondary School
2	2005	Johor	47	Male	Masters	Senior Assistant (1) Secondary School
3	2007	Johor	49	Female	Masters	Senior Assistant (1) Secondary School
4	2001	Selangor	53	Female	Masters	Senior Assistant (1) Secondary School
5	2005	Selangor	51	Female	Bachelor	Head Teacher Primary School
6	2002	Selangor	51	Female	Masters	Senior Assistant (1) Secondary School
7	2002	Kelantan	42	Male	Masters	Head Teacher Primary School
8	2004	Kelantan	45	Female	Masters	Senior Assistant (1) Secondary School
9	2003	Kelantan	48	Female	Masters	Head Teacher Primary School
10	2004	Pahang	52	Female	Bachelor	Head Teacher Primary School
11	2004	Pahang	51	Female	Bachelor	Head Teacher Primary School
12	2005	Kuala Lumpur	48	Female	Masters	Senior Assistant (2) Secondary School
13	2005	Kuala Lumpur	52	Female	Bachelor	Head Teacher Primary School

This study employed a qualitative design. From December 15, 2010 to May 12, 2011, the thirteen selected respondents were interviewed in a face-to-face setting for a period of approximately two hours by six different researchers. All the interviews took place at the respondents' place of work. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. The researchers then did the transcription for all the interviews, resulting in 300 pages of conversation. A handwritten note was sent to all respondents after each interview expressing gratitude for their participation in

this study. The respondents were also contacted again at least once for clarification of data and an official meeting or member check with each of the respondent were also conducted where the respondents confirmed the findings presented in this chapter.

4.2   Findings of The Study

RQ1: What were the Participant's Leadership Capabilities before NPQH? Knowledge and Skills

Prior to joining the NPQH program, response from the respondents indicated a pattern whereby many did not hold any formal administrative post in school. This finding indicated a lack of formal training in leadership knowledge and   skills and hence a lower level of leadership. If at all, any leadership skills displayed were at the lower ranks and obtained through experience or trial and error. For instance R1 indicated:

> *"Normally, when at the school level, our leadership is more focused to the head of subject department, we have no power to lead others. At the school level, at that particular stage, my leadership is merely at the school head subject of department".*

This was supported by R13 who also said; *"Oh, before that, not really, not as a administrator. I only hold the post as a head of subject department".*

Moreover, the leadership skills displayed were largely based on their experiences and responsibilities to which they were assigned to at the lower levels of school administration. This is noticed in the following responses by R12 and R3. R12 noted:

> *"I feel that the leadership skill is acquired since born… I also was receive leadership skill as ketua panitia (head of*

subject department), ketua pengawas SPM and PMR (chief invigilator for SPM and PMR examination), and PK Koku… (co-curricular senior assistant)"

The notion by R12 was supported by R3 who said:

"My experience only as resource room teacher, head of subject department and a few examination post; merely smaller scale of leadership post".

Akin to that, in another example, respondent R3 elaborated that her experiences of leadership were merely on a smaller scale *"Me…only basic!."*

Hence, the above shows that respondents displayed minimal grasp of formal knowledge in leadership as their experiences confined them to very basic and small scale management... R2 revealed that *"I feel that i need to have knowledge or practical so that it can really benefit us."* R5 reinforced this notion which is illustrated below:

"...as a normal teacher, we see administrator, we don't really understand what their job is. But, when we are in their shoes, their orders are like that. Their orders are ad hoc."

In addition, responses such as: *"...I don't have any knowledge…"* and *"...because we used to ask our seniors (previous administrators)."* indicated that both respondents lacked leadership knowledge before they joined the NPQH program. Two concrete excerpts underpin the above notion. R2 reflected that: *"Previously, we did not have any skills at all such as teaching and learning. managing among colleagues, how to implement program."* while R3 opined : *"I don't think I have skills… I am more to experience. So I don't have other skills."*

Clearly these two respondents (R2 and R3) admitted that before joining NPQH program, they did not possess any skills related to school leadership.

Likewise, R11 reported a similar notion in his response; *"Before this, I managed based on my own experiences."*

Via the interviews, the researcher realized that R3 and R11, shared the same notion about school management which were only based on their experiences i.e. they did not have any formal training in leadership and management.

It is interesting to note that there was a need for knowledge in school management. For instance; two respondents below agreed on the need of possessing adequate knowledge and skills in leadership while managing their school, as clarified by R8:

> *"I encountered with the school management especially about the student affairs at the primary school, especially the year six students where they have problems with the school regulations. Right? So I have to get some knowledge of how to get them to understand why they…"*

R10 reiterated that *"…everything was in trial and error but if we already know the skills, then we follow the channel"*

4.3 Attitude and Confidence

In relation to the attitude of the respondents before joining NPQH, two respondents perceived positively towards managing school as follows, R1 affirmed *"Before this time, I reckon managing the school is very easy because the senior assistant task is very common."* This was asserted by R10 *"I see that my Headmaster is very free because all the work done by the senior assistant."*

However, the researcher also discovered some inconsistencies related to the notion perceived by another respondent pertinent to how the headmaster managed his schools. Through the researcher's analysis, it was noticed that R2 portrayed a sense of negative perception towards school leadership before he joined NPQH as illustrated by the following quote:

> *"Before NPQH, implementing leadership in school seems more difficult and it is possible that we really need time to manage students and school physical itself."*

This quote seems to imply that the respondent believed that administrators encountered difficulties in managing schools without appropriate leadership capacities. This is reaffirmed by R10 who expressed *"In my earlier perception towards my headmaster, seems that he does not portrayed leadership within him."*

Besides their perception towards leadership capacities, the study also showed that there was a lack of interest in reading amongst the respondents as illustrated by R1 *"… before continuing my study in NPQH, I have less interest in reading… interest in reading is not much. We don't even know the name of our educationist"* The lack of interest in reading also hampered their appeal in pursuing their studies as stated by R13 *"…if before this I didn't think about furthering my studies"*

The respondents also admitted that they lacked confidence in managing schools especially in areas involving teachers and students as noted by R3:

> '…*before this I have no confidence in managing various issues amongst staff and student, maybe if there is no such program I won't be able to manage school as afternoon senior assistant. Now I feel I can manage better'*

R13 cited this lack of confidence as a deterrent to his being appointed as headmaster because he perceived that being one meant bearing more responsibilities. Again the researcher noticed that the lack of confidence is prevalent amongst the respondents as expressed by R3: *"I have no confidence to influence someone because of lack of knowledge, lack of method"* and was corroborated by R5 *"But at that time a lot of things I don't know, but after enrolling NPQH… I start… what to say… starting point"*

Apart from their previous experiences as school administrators, the participants also emulate their headmasters' role in managing the school, as quoted from R3 who said; *'Learning just based on experience, I ask a lot'* and supported by R11:

> *'... before this… managing just based on my previous experience as a GPK administration, GPK co curriculum and GPK student affair… I just make my previous headmaster as a model... Whichever I think is good I'll proceed…"*

Regardless of the lacking of knowledge in leading and managing the school, some of the participants are still committed towards learning as mentioned by R1; *'...to polish my management and administrative skills and upgrade my knowledge"* R9 even do some research about the NPQH before enrolling for the course:

> *'...some people advised me to take the offer, so I took the offer…aaa…aaa... did some discussion... During the discussions there were pros and cons, those who were pros stated it was for my better prospect in the future'"*

4.4   Conclusion

Focusing on the leadership capabilities, it has been pointed out by a few respondents in this study that they strongly admitted their shallow knowledge and skills of leadership before NPQH program. In terms of attitude and learning the respondents also acknowledge that they had low level of confidence, minimal interest in reading and also lacking in experiences. This account demonstrated how the respondents of the study typically perceived a positive perception that inspired them to join NPQH program. Hence, the beliefs about building leadership capacities through the process of learning are reckoned as interrelated aspects in this particular NPQH program. To conclude, broadly speaking, it seemed that most of the respondents believed that strong leadership capacities are the lynchpin to school management.

RQ 2: What Leadership Capabilities were the Participants exposed to during the NPQH Program?

Respondents were exposed to a yearlong NPQH program where they were exposed to the theoretical and practical aspects of educational leadership for an equal length of time. Knowledge, Skills and Attitude are the 3 interrelated aspects of the program.

4.5   Knowledge and Skills

During the NPQH program the respondents were exposed to a number of modules such as School Management, Leadership, Time Management and Strategic Planning. They were expected to acquire skills and knowledge of leadership and management as the NPQH program was a training ground for them to be future school leaders. The findings indicated that during the program, the participants experienced drastic changes in leadership skills and knowledge. The findings of the research established two major themes - theory and practical, which are the impetuses of the whole program.

The study discovered that the respondents had acquired theoretical aspects of leadership skills and knowledge. This is evidenced in the response given by R1 who stated *"...received a lot of knowledge. We can use this knowledge…"*. And this notion was supported by R12 who mentioned: "… *management, ways to be instructional leader and the different styles of the leadership in different situation …*"

Attaining leadership skills and knowledge is imperative for school leaders as this will help them to be better leaders. The theory imparted by the lecturers during the NPQH program was pertinent and facilitated them to be better school heads. Respondent R4 concurred on this by saying "… *related to our job…*"

The findings of the study revealed two themes during the NPQH course namely; the enhancement of knowledge as well as the challenges in acquiring knowledge. These two themes could be seen when R1 reflected by saying: "…

(NPQH) had helped me in enhancing my knowledge in leadership and management." Moreover, this reflection substantiate by another concrete statement from the same respondent stated that:

> "The NPQH course that I had attended in 2003 is a very beneficial course whereby were exposed a number of things related to school management, which were revealed to us in detail and what it really meant in practice."

These view were also concurred by R2 and R4. R2 related his view pertaining to theories and practices: "…during the program we were taught about the theories and practices in school management…". Similarly, R4's statement below is also in line with R1's and R2's perceptions.

> …the overall content of the NPQH program really helped them because most of them were focused on the aspect of their profession as aspiring leaders for example, strategic planning, item analysis, statistics and others which corresponds to the roles of school leaders. …the program had also disclosed the art of leadership to us."

During the course R5 reported that she acquired knowledge on strategic planning and decision making as quoted. She felt thR5 declared that the program had helped a lot in understanding strategic planning by saying; "…*I learnt about strategic planning from En Edaris and En. Bustamam had also explained in detail about strategic planning and decision making to us.*"

R11 when interviewed, stated that the NPQH program had helped her to further understand the intricate feature in leadership where she declared:

> "…during the program I was able to differentiate the difference between management and leadership where before this I was thinking those two was quite the same. …we were also explained about data processing whereby before

this were thought those were just documents to be kept in schools."

The respondents also disclosed that while attending the NPQH program, they had been well informed about the necessary skills in program planning and they were also trained to be more confident in communicating with others. R2 revealed:

> *"During NPQH we learnt a lot about how to communicate with others. ...From what I see, the first skill that was exposed to us was how to communicate with our peers especially in the same NPQH program, program planning and also building self confidence."*

This notion was supported by R7 who said:

> *"IAB taught us a lot about communicating to solve problems. Before this we used to worried when facing problems. We learnt how to discuss and look for the cause of the problems and talk about it. ...usually lots of problems could be solved..."*

In terms of their experiences in learning while being in the NPQH program, the respondents talked about how they were challenged to learn and cope with the tribulations of being an adult learner. R6 disclosed that *"...if you want to be knowledgeable, you just strive on it. In the end, I tend to like it."* R12 also stated that:

> *"I did a lot of reading on many educational materials, this course has to read a lot, also discussing with friends, listening to lectures and presenting views. ...I used to think I knew enough, and then I realized that there were lots more that I need to learn."*

Thus in terms of knowledge enhancement, the findings revealed that while attending the NPQH program, the respondents had acquired skills in leadership and management such as strategic planning, program management, decision making, communication, data processing and others. They were also challenged to learn as adult learners where they have to do a lot of reading and accessing information.

The findings of this research show that the participants had gained knowledge in terms of management theory. The NPQH program had offered the participants the theoretical aspect of leadership skills and knowledge. In order to be better school heads, the application of the knowledge and skills that is acquired is essential. The NPQH program provided the participants with leadership skills and knowledge that is applicable. This is indicated by R4 who said "…*Can apply*" and supported by R5 who revealed "…*I try to apply.*"

The findings of this study also indicated that the six months attachment at schools that the NPQH participants undertook during the program was vital and useful. The following excerpt by R5 exhibits that the participants had acquired much knowledge and skills during the attachment program: "*Hmmm…I think the theory part (management and leadership theory) is normal. The attachment program is helpful*" R2 supported this notion by stating "*I think 6 months practical was very useful*" and "*…I think I have learnt a lot…*" Moreover, R6 felt that the attachment program was very beneficial. This is evidenced by the following excerpt: "*Attachment program helped a lot*".

The participants carried out activities such as benchmarking and planning program during their attachment to schools. R2 reiterated by commenting "*… We did a lot of benchmarking…*" and "*… I used the Program planning and self-development skills…*".

The acquired knowledge was used during the respondents' attachment at schools. R5 affirmed that notion by stating "*… When I went back to school, I carried out a project…*"

During the NPQH program, much leadership skills and knowledge was attained by holding discussions with their friends and doing their own readings. R7 indicated that discussions and readings had facilitated him in understanding the course content by saying "…*Discussed the modules with frien*ds…" and also *"… did own readings …Looked for materials, read and discussed with friends*" This view is supported by R9 who had this to say:

> *"Sometimes we are asked to do things that we are uncertain of; therefore we have to get clarification. The learning experience in IAB illuminated me … asked friends, lecturers, searched the internet, and looked up in books …"*

The ability to solve problems is a skill that is useful for a school head. Problem solving skill will assist them to better lead and manage the school. R7 felt that the learning experience at IAB had a tremendous impact in gaining problem solving skill by saying *"…IAB taught us to solve problems…"*

During the NPQH program, the participants realized the importance of team work. This can be seen in the response given by R9 "…*we could solve many problems when we worked in groups* …". The following excerpt shows that this notion is supported by R10:

> *"I think now I understand the importance of teamwork … Last time I used to do all the thinking alone but now I ask others. Also we need to have networking with friends … easy to discuss problems, activities, others …"*

As a school leader, one has to make decisions which will affect the outcome of the school and touch many lives. The NPQH program provided the participants opportunities to make decisions. R8 concurred that by saying *"… Well, sometimes I must decide on my own and sometimes also I had to discuss with my friends…"*

The internet played a major role in facilitating the NPQH participants to attain leadership skills and knowledge. This is evident from the response given by R8: "Yes, *I think the internet had really helped me in learning.. It's good because we could find anything through the internet*". Interestingly R9 also revealed "Browse *the internet to look for materials*" and "If *necessary, we will download... Otherwise we will just make references*..." In addition to that, R8 also mentioned that ICT skill which was acquired during the NPQH program aided in obtaining resources and assisting other teachers in school:

> *"Yes... Sometimes I felt, when I surfed the internet I couldn't get what I wanted. It's very frustrating... And one of the lecturers taught me how to surf for materials and I was able to get it quite easily... That was another skill that I had acquired."*

And,

> *"...that is one that i must be thankful to IAB... they taught me to use the computer. Now my power point is one of the best in the school... hehehe... you know, before I don't know how to use the LCD projector? Hihihi... Now I teach my teachers to do it..."*

R10 benefitted from the action research and financial management modules. This is evident from the response given, *"Action research is very good because it can help us to see and overcome our weaknesses*" and *"...we were exposed to financial management ..."*

The findings of this study revealed that the participants of the NPQH program applied the leadership skills and knowledge during their attachment at schools. This enabled them to gain invaluable experience. Nevertheless, R4 felt that the attachment was too short by stating: "*Attachment program - Too short time*"

4.6 Attitude and Confidence

The findings of the study had also revealed that NPQH has had an impact in changing the attitude of the respondents in terms of their behavior and confidence level. The data revealed that the respondents believed that while being in the program their attitude especially in terms of their perception towards learning and their confidence level had been enhanced and this helped them in their studies.

R1 believed that NPQH had changed her perception about learning by saying that:

> "...I did a lot of photocopying because I believed that this was the time to concentrate on acquiring knowledge. ...in terms changes in attitude, NPQH had changed me a lot. ...I used to be quite casual in my daily activities especially in managing time, but when I enrolled in NPQH, I have to be more concerned about learning while being a married person."

The change in attitude towards learning was further confirmed when R3 concurred with R1 by saying that: "…*when I enrolled in the program I tend to read more, search for information using the internet and try to solve problems on my own.*"

Apart from changing their perception about learning, the respondents also acknowledged that enrolling in the NPQH program had enhanced their confidence level. The respondents believed that NPQH had inspired them to be more positive in their thinking and are more confident in facing difficulties.

Throughout the interview, the researcher could sense that the respondents have a high confidence level and were quite positive in their thinking. This was confirmed by R1 who stated, *"...then I realized that I have a high EQ level, because I will not be easily troubled by any circumstances."* R8 agreed by saying:

> *"...You see, now I'm a very confident person in terms of learning, my self confidence is higher. I think I am a better person than before. IAB changed me."*

R13 also corresponded by saying: *"...I became more open minded and more positive in my thinking."*

In discussing the enhancement of confidence level of the respondents, data from the research revealed that NPQH had indeed helped in boosting their confidence level. This is evidenced when R3 responded by saying:

> *"...I am more confident in solving problems. When approached by others, I never looked behind and there is satisfaction in my actions."*

R8 agreed by stating: *"... The Malay students you see... they came to me and ask things like that, and I was very confident and I am confident in that sector."*

The findings revealed that not only the respondents' perception about learning had changed during NPQH but it also enhanced their confidence level and this was shown in their responses during the interview. They believed that their perception about learning had changed during their participation in the NPQH program and they now see learning from a different point of view.

In summary, the findings of the study revealed that during their tenure as NPQH participants, they had acquired skills and knowledge about leadership and management, challenged to learn, had a different perception about learning and also attained a higher confidence level. The NPQH program had changed them into being a better person and are better prepared to be leaders in the future.

4.7   CONCLUSION

The research shows that the experience gained during the NPQH program increased the level of confidence of the participants. This is evident from the response given by R4:

> *"I think ... A new experience. Long time I didn't study. Most of my friends were doing part time studies. New experience for us… How to be better leaders"*

The research indicates that during the NPQH program, the participants gained substantial experience of leadership skills and knowledge in terms of theory, principles and its applications. The respondents of this research maintain that they were able to apply the leadership skills and knowledge during their attachments at schools. The respondents also faced challenges as adult learners and there was improvement in their image.

RQ3: How was Leadership manifested after NPQH?
Knowledge and Skills

The findings of the study indicated that after undergoing NPQH program, respondents experienced changes in leadership knowledge and skills. Several major themes appeared through data analysis. The themes are Improvement in leadership knowledge and skills and application of leadership knowledge and skills. The findings indicated that the respondents gained knowledge and improve leadership skills after attending NPQH program. For example, the respondent R10 believes that she acquired leadership knowledge and skills that enable her to lead others and seek further improvement. This is shown in the following excerpt:

> *"It is true that we acquired knowledge through NPQH, before this when we lead others, we learnt on our own. Now that we have had some guidance and we have the skills, so we followed what we learnt and now we have good references".*

R2 substantiate the notion of how NPQH have helped her improved her leadership capabilities by stating: *"I learned a lot during NPQH on how to manage... when we are feeling down. NPQH is a guideline"*.

4.8   Application of leadership capacities

Similarly, respondent R9 reflects that he acquired knowledge on leadership and management. He described his experience:

> *"Perhaps, the most important aspect is the knowledge learnt. Things such as leadership and management, human resources, and others… By learning from other researchers and experts, we tend to know a lot about management and leadership. …help me understand management and leadership better"*.

Unlike before attending NPQH, these responses indicated an improvement in leadership knowledge and skills after the program. Going further, R3 indicated that she looked at leadership role as the ability to influence her teachers. She realized that as a successful leader, there was the need for her to influence her teachers. Her comments indicated her knowledge on leadership, *"If I'm able to influence others, I think my leadership is a success"*. R4, explained that she leads by example. She involves herself in various school activities with her teachers, provides leadership through her actions, she influences her teachers in doing things. This is clearly shown in the following excerpt:

> *"I did it. I move them. I did it first. I gave examples. I am involved. They just follow. For example, I prepared class relief. In whatever activities, I am involved.   It means that I am involved"*.

R11, who believed that as a leader, she must lead her teachers and play an effective role as an instructional leader in the classrooms. R11 stated:

"I lead teachers towards effective teaching and learning, we do supervision. I always emphasize to my teachers so that they used the right pedagogical method so that students are not bored with the lessons. My priority is teachers teach and students learn".

As a school head, it is vital to lead teachers towards effective teaching and ensure student learning takes place. R11 explains that under her leadership, she encourages and influences her teachers and consequently, she manages to gradually increase the number of top scorers among her students in public examination:

"I managed to influence my teachers to get better result. With the involvement of all teachers, from 4 students obtaining 5As (in UPSR exam), we managed to improve to 6 students, and last year, 7 students obtained 5As".

The findings also indicated that after attending NPQH program, respondents acquired management skills. For example, R11 admits that she only realized about the importance of setting school vision and objectives as shown in the following excerpt:

"After the NPQH, I realized that every school must have clear vision or objective so that all members of the organization could work together with us towards achieving the goals".

Moreover, the following comment from R5 who applied strategic management in both the schools she served after her course:

"During our stay at IAB, we learnt strategic management for a month. So we found out its quite normal, that one school have its own plan, the other did not even have one. So I tried to follow the one who did..."

On human resource management, these findings showed that when necessary, respondents applied knowledge and skills to motivate their teachers, instilling excellent working culture and enforcing regulations to ensure students achievement. R3 expressed her readiness to build a strong team among her teachers. She applied the good practices that she picked up during the attachment program. She seeks ways to ensure unity among her staffs.

> "...I called all my teachers and I told them…no matter what happen, we stand as one. During assembly, I wanted my teachers to sit close to me, and I experienced this during my NPQH practicum program at the Batu Pahat High School. That was one of the most important aspect that I learnt from NPQH".

On a similar note, R4 empowered her teachers to work in a team. When she empowered her teachers, she allowed them to perform and only stepped in if and when there was a need to do so. Her comments below strongly indicated that she advocated teamwork and empowerment:

> "If there is a loophole somewhere, we tried to mend it together; we already have culture of teamwork. The culture of working hard. We are not expert in all fields. All senior head of departments helped to supervise their subordinates. They were empowered to do so. If they can't solve the problems, I tried to help them.

However, when confronted with issues of absenteeism among teachers, R5 exerts immediate action. She made sure that teachers followed procedure and came to school. She also helped her teachers in overcoming their problems. Below are some of the respondent's reflections.

> "You know, when I go to that school, there are whom …you know came to school only there was a need to do so. If not they would not come. One of them is very talented in music.

So during the nights, we went to play music somewhere to earn more money and came back late at night. So I tried to help him by placing him in the afternoon session and made sure that my clerk phoned his house at 12 noon to remind him of school. It worked..."

"*I really did that. But I used all the steps that I learnt la... First, I called him up and asked them to explain, then I gave a show-cause letter, I really discussed with them...*"

The above excerpts provide an insight into some of the challenges that the respondents have to maneuver with skills and knowledge. Some of these challenges do not appear to have clear or simple solutions. In another instance, R13 expressed her passion to educate her students:

"*Here, students need to be given proper care because this place is full of challenge. Here, we have gangsters and many drug addicts. We need to guide our students towards the right path or they will pick up the bad habits. I am interested to learn the best way for the students*".

Similarly, R6 faced a dilemma when her principal showed symptom of depression and could not lead the school. She enlisted the help of Parent Teacher Association to present the matter to higher authorities. Below is the excerpt:

"*I went to the ministry with the Chairperson of Parent Teacher Association to present the problem to them. We wanted to tell them about the Principal's condition. The officer at the Ministry said that he can't act on it and asked us to go to the State Education Department due to certain procedures. So, I went to the State Education Department to settle it*".

When asked about particular skills that they had acquired during NPQH program, our respondents mention several skills, particularly interpersonal skills

with school heads and teachers. R4 reflected that she was able to work under all the four different principals who served her current school. As shown in the following quotes, she was able to apply interpersonal skills. She was able to adapt herself to suit different leadership and followed the lead of her principals.

> *"I can adapt myself. I hold on the concept, we respect our superior. We give suggestions. If our Principal doesn't like it, we just follow his suggestion. I have no problem. Easily I adapt myself with the Principal's wish".*

Another respondent, however, seems to approach her principal to understand a decision made. It is interesting to note that she applied negotiation skills when necessary, a skill that she confessed that she learned during the NPQH program. R8 described her experience:

> *"...we need to improve our English and all teachers must try to speak in English... So everybody was soooo angry. But once we talked and rationalize it, everybody agree it is good for them and most important it will be good for the students... So the art of negotiation that I learnt at IAB came in handy..."*

Another example further indicates application of interpersonal skill. R7 explained that she applied interpersonal skills in her interactions with fellow teachers. She seek their opinions and respected their different views. Her comments were:

> *Errr...if we have shown respect to our friends, discuss with them they too will respect us in return, but if we were too proud, then it will be a problem. We have to treat them like friends, not our slaves... sometimes there are leaders who only issue instruction... but did not discuss or appreciate, then it will be troublesome... we too will be annoyed. One more thing, we must try to seek opinions from our teachers ...at times they disagree with our decisions... so we must*

know why...then we start discussing ...then we gain their
respect.

Likewise, R8 demonstrated that she too seeks to maintain good working relationship with her teachers and she puts it this way:

"I always treat them as my friends... Some are even older
and more experienced than me... so if I am not friendly with
them they will not respect me... As you know we always have
pot luck and birthdays in our department..."

The above responses from R4, R7 and R8 strongly indicated that after undergoing NPQH program, they were able to apply interpersonal skills with their superior or fellow teachers. NPQH participants benefited much in terms of knowledge particularly in the leadership and communication aspects of the course.

4.9   Leadership Knowledge

In terms of leadership knowledge after the NPQH program, the respondents indicated that they had gained much knowledge and information on educational leadership and management. This can be seen in R10's response:

"...after going through the NPQH programme, I was able
to differentiate between leadership and management... And
now to my knowledge there is a major difference ..."

This was agreed by R7 who said; *"Haaaa...that is really true... from being not knowledgeable to being knowledgeable about... We know more about leadership and management".*

The respondents were pleased to note that specific components of the program were very handy in nature and could be utilized in school. One such component is strategic planning which R4 mentioned, *"Strategic planning. I have got the knowledge... Now I use it in my school".* In agreement, R12, who stated that

"I used much of what I have learnt in planning activities for my school's afternoon session". It is noted that the respondents are applying their newfound knowledge and skills in planning and executing the plans as indicated by R12:

> *"The first thing that I learnt was how to communicate with others. I also learnt about Strategic planning, qualities of an effective school, acquired other school improvement strategies through visiting to other schools, socializing with friends, finance management, ways to be instructional leader and the different styles of the leadership in different situations"*.

The course on financial planning and management was especially useful in the running of schools. This notion is supported by R10 who said; *"...had some exposure on financial management when I was there, and it was good for me as when I became a head, I knew what to do…"* R2, in agreement also indicated:

> *"For example, must prepare a budget for broken things. Everything must be replaced and must think and act fast... We must look at the financial and most importantly the problem solved! Otherwise it worsens"*.

R10 also agreed with this notion by saying:

> *"If the participant is not the Headmaster as i was, definitely I want this financial management course to help me understand the practical aspect of it. But if you were a Headmaster then you are accustomed to it already"*.

While others shared what they learnt, it should be noted too that respondents also benefitted from what had been shared by others during the program. R5 explained:

R5 " When I first went in, people told me, as far as human resource is concerned, you have to control the teachers. That is the first thing I look into. I want the teachers to know that I am very strict especially in terms of their attendance.

Suffice to say, the respondent participants displayed a better grasp of leadership and management knowledge. Such vital knowledge pertaining to leadership and management skills, finance and planning, ICT, doing action research and how to successfully implement projects have helped them to be better administrators in schools.

4.10 Communication skills

In terms of communication skills, the respondents indicated that effective communication skills helped them lead and manage better. Such skills are particularly necessary in ensuring staff discipline without being autocratic. R5 affirmed this by saying:

"I do that. Yes, I really do that. But I know the steps lah. First of all, I call them in. I make them explain. As for show-cause letters, I discuss this with the ones concerned. What is your problem? That is during my first meeting with them. I told them my style. To make them know my vision."

R8 complimented this by saying:

"Like last time he said that we need to improve our English and all teachers must try to speak in English... So everybody was soooo angry. But once we talked to him and rationalize it, everybody agree its good for them and most important it will be good for the students... So the art of negotiation that I learnt at IAB came in handy".

Dealing with subordinates is one thing but it is no easy task communicating an opinion with superiors either. With better communication skills honed from NPQH program R13 had this to say;

> *"Yes, I become tougher and not afraid to voice out my opinions especially during meetings with the people from the department people. I will always tell the truth and not keep to myself".*

R2 believed that the key to achieving success in schools is to have certain skills such as effective communication to promote teamwork. She clearly enunciated; *"Teamwork and effective communication skills goes hand in hand. We need both to make the other work".* R12 also concurred with the others by saying:

> *"The schools activities require team work and good communication skills. This too after I have had discussions with my principal and the senior assistants. We plan for the school together".*

The respondents also indicated that they have better understanding as leaders and it helps them in their leadership and effective communication, as stated by R2: *"We must make accurate decision. Being a manager and the decision maker at the same time".*

Stakeholder involvement in school activities is very much needed to ensure that school activities are not hampered. The stakeholders include parents; Parents Teachers Association (PIBG), the immediate community and forging good relationships go a long way. This is proven in a comment from R12 reiterated; *"...effective communication skills with organizations, community members and the PIBG has helped support and realized many school activities".* R13 confirmed this notion by stating; *"...I think I learnt to communicate better and this I am able to apply in school when communicating with the teachers and parents".*

The findings revealed that the respondents came to an agreement the knowledge gained while being a participant of NPQH have helped them realized the importance of having communication skills to ensure that all interested parties will be able to work together towards achieving the desired goals.

4.11   Attitude

4.11.1 Life Long Learning

The research shows that the Post NPQH participants are more apt at acquiring knowledge after they had undergone the NPQH program as mentioned by R7; *"I can't say all the time...but i manage to find the time...still interested to know new things..."* However, some participants are more serious and into the lifelong learning as they used it to help them retrieve information and solved problem as illustrated by R3:

> *"Got! Got aaa...because I feel after NPQH, I read a lot,*
> *I surfed the internet for information and to help me solve*
> *problems. I think experience alone is not enough, I need to*
> *read to upgrade myself."*

This was agreed by R11 who said; *"I can access the internet and read books. Not enough to read only once. When facing with issues and problems, I always refer to books".* And confirmed by R7;

> *"Haaa... That's right... a lot... from not knowing to better*
> *understanding, if last time I don't read but now I read*
> *more regularly... hihihi... and it helps me to make better*
> *decision".*

The findings also revealed that NPQH graduates found a renewed desire in learning new things which inevitably could impact their skills as leaders. R3 *demonstrated this by stating that;*

> *"...only when I started the course, did I start to read and research. I surfed the internet looking for information and even problem solving. I think experience alone is not enough to get us by, we need knowledge and that we can get through reading".*

4.11.2 Confidence

The research findings implies that NPQH program has successfully boosted the respondents confidence level and prepared them to face challenges at hand as claimed by R8:

> *"You see... Now...err after IAB, I like to take challenges, like when before I always hide, hihihi... now if anything I will try to do it... You know the satisfaction is always there when you do something right and successful. But sometimes I fail so if before I will hide again but now I try to change it and make it better...and I read a lot now...".*

This notion is shared by R13:

> *"Yes, I become tougher and not afraid to voice out my opinions especially during meetings with people from the department. I will always tell the truth and not keep quite. I know it is not easy to be a headmaster especially in this school but I have to do the best".*

The research reveals the participants are more innovative in managing their organizations in their problem solving for they are more open-minded, able to think things more thoroughly as mentioned by R9, *"People say we think deeper...people say think out of the box...".* Furthermore, they were also confident in handling human relations and quite positive on such matters as illustrated by R12:

"Take it positively and be open-minded. Face it with the right intention to help society and enjoy it and always show appreciations... Always try to handle problem internally, unless is serious matter I will refer it to principal".

The research findings state the level of confidence of the participants increased drastically as mentioned by R10:

When I was there I got the exposure, so it is very beneficial to me when I was appointed as the Headmaster I know what to do...from there...get to know the people and if they are interested in administration, I give the course".

4.11.3 Knowledge Sharing

It should be noted that generally the respondents shared their strengths learnt from NPQH with others. R4 believed the knowledge acquired from NPQH have helped her to lead her school in achieving excellence:

"I use the knowledge I acquired and I also build on it. I lead by example so that teachers can see. I succeeded in setting up proper documentation for my school to this day. In fact I obtained the certificate of excellence from the ministry. ...Now, I am always giving in-house courses. I myself give the course. This includes item building, headcount... we need to know all these... And when we are unsure, we learn together'.

This notion is further authenticated by R7 who further added; *"...only when we know then can we share with others".* In knowledge sharing some of the respondents advocated action research as a basis for program planning. R7 emphasises:

"We learnt Action Research those days in IAB ... its proven useful... these days we still use it... I get the teachers to do action research in their classrooms...only then will we know our weaknesses".

Respondent R10 concurred on this when he said; "*Action research is especially useful because we can detect where we are weak at and take appropriate measures to improve.*"

5.0   DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the leadership transition of the NPQH Program Graduates initiated by the Institut Aminudin Baki, Ministry of Education Malaysia. The primary research questions guiding this study include: 1. What were the Participant's Leadership Capacities before NPQH? 2. What Leadership Capacities were the Participants exposed to during the NPQH Program? And 3.How was Leadership manifested after NPQH?

A qualitative research design was used to explore the phenomenon, and data were analyzed inductively using the constant comparative method. Thirteen NPQH graduates were purposefully selected and interviewed for this study. All the respondents had graduated successfully from the program and are now holding leadership post in their respective schools. Each of the interviews lasted for about two hours where they provided insights of how they felt, their beliefs and experiences as graduates of the NPQH Program. Follow-up meetings with all the respondents served as a member check and confirmed the findings of this study. This chapter comprises the summary of the findings, discussions and conclusions drawn from these findings followed by the implications for practice and recommendations for further research.

5.2   Discussions

The overwhelming majority of participants felt that the NPQH program was successful in helping them develop their leadership careers. They felt that NPQH covered a range of leadership skills and knowledge and these were developed throughout the duration of the said program. All of the respondents had been designated as leaders in their own organization and they acknowledged that they would not have been successful without NPQH.

The respondents of the study also declared that the NPQH program had enhanced their confidence in leadership and they could sense a change of attitude amongst them after completing the said program. Another important issue that was highlighted was NPQH had actually boosted their capabilities in leading their schools.

Such views echo the recognition of the NPQH program which places central importance on the enhancement of leadership knowledge, skills and attitude and along the way develops leadership capabilities, inter-personal and intra-personal skills amongst the respondents which is crucial in the execution of leadership in schools (West-Burnham 2004, 2005; West-Burnham and Ireson 2005). The respondents also attributed their success as school leaders to the NPQH program where they were exposed to certain values, behavior and purpose during their tenure as NPQH participants. Leithwood, et al, (2006) and Fullan (2007) agreed that emphasis must be given on the understanding of the relationship between values, behavior, and purpose and how it affect school improvement.

Another advantage of the program as declared by the respondents was that NPQH had build-up professional development which is acknowledged to be crucially important in maintaining and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Goodall, et al. (2005) affirmed that research has shown that *"... where teachers are able to access new ideas and to share ideas more readily, there is a greater potential for school and classroom management."*

Thus the experiences gained from their involvement in the NPQH programs had in fact initiated change amongst the respondents to be better leaders by exposing them to the crucial aspects of leadership. The NPQH program had changed their perception, attitude and enhanced their capacities as leaders who are capable to face the challenges in running a school.

RQ 1. What were the Participant's Leadership Capacities before NPQH?

Hurd (2002), stated *"All learners come to their studies with their own particular beliefs, assumptions and expectations about the learning process and about themselves as learners."* This research uncovered three main issues about the respondents' leadership capabilities before enrolling in the NPQH program which are: 1) Low level in knowledge and skills, 2) Negative attitude towards learning and leadership, and also 3) Lacking in confidence.

The findings revealed that prior to the NPQH program; the respondents had little or no knowledge and skills in leadership where the only exposure that they had was through their experiences and observations of their leaders in their perspective organizations. The respondents had enrolled in the NPQH program because they believed that this engagement would help enrich their life. They signed-up as NPQH participants with the hope of developing themselves in their profession, self-satisfaction or to prove themselves. In describing adults as learners, Moore (1981), stated that adults look at learning as a complement or addition to the earlier education and also for self-enhancement especially in professional courses. Aziah and Suryani (2005), in agreement added that adults had chosen to continue their studies for the purpose of enhancing their careers and self-fulfillment. Life enrichment for the respondents comes in the form of supplementing and updating their existing knowledge and skill and sometimes they strive for personal growth, and so forth.

In describing their lack of knowledge and skills, the respondents revealed that prior to joining the program, they did not hold any formal administrative post in their respective schools. The findings indicated a lack of formal training in leadership knowledge and skills and any exposure towards leadership were only

acquired at the lower ranks and obtained through experience or trial and error. This phenomenon will create concern if they were to be appointed as school leaders. Lacey-Haun and Whitehead (2009), stated that; *"Traditionally many educators have moved into administrative positions without adequate training"*. Normore *(2004),* reiterates that:

> *"Hardships related to lack of training for leadership positions for the persons who climb the career ladder to leadership roles; and little support, sometimes even outright hostility, from the public, political entities and other stakeholders"*.

This lack of knowledge, and skills had attributed towards a negative attitude towards leadership and consequently affected their confidence level; hence making them incompetent leaders if they were to be appointed as one. Crawford (2005) declared that:

> *"...at a common-sense level, most stakeholders and professionals involved in education would agree that without competent principals schools may be ineffective and efforts at school improvement are unlikely to succeed.*

Thus, there is a need for training programs to help enhance leadership capacities and capabilities to face the challenges in education today. Therefore, quality leadership preparation must be proposed by targeting individuals with identified potentials and also a wide array of individuals to undergo a lengthy process of disciplined review of leadership and engage in activities designed to support their growth as leaders (Bogotch 2001, Kelly and Peterson 2002, Brown-Ferrigno, 2003).

RQ 2. What Leadership Capacities were the Participants exposed to during the NPQH Program?

In looking at the process during the NPQH program, the findings of the study revealed that the respondents were exposed to a number of leadership modules

and were motivated and groomed to be better leaders in the future. They were expected to acquire skills and knowledge of leadership and management as the NPQH program was a training ground for them. This could be seen during the NPQH program where the respondents were exposed to modules such as School Management, Leadership, Time Management and Strategic Planning. Apart from that, the respondents were also given real live experiences as school leaders through the attachment programs where they had to undergo a six month practical session in schools.

The findings indicated that during the program, the participants experienced drastic changes in leadership skills, knowledge and attitude apart from changing their perception towards learning as a whole. This concurred with Wallin (2006) who stated:

> *"...leadership training has been shown to be effective if it is designed to have an impact on individual growth. ...and must respond directly to the needs of leaders and the realities in which they will serve".*

Another important aspect learnt by the respondents during the NPQH programs was that they were provided real-life leadership learning and experience of the interpersonal and intrapersonal challenges that may need to be encountered in order to achieve effective leadership development. This approach aims to ensure that participants have already experienced and overcome significant organizational leadership challenges before being appointed to a formal senior leadership role. Wider school focus work often begins before any formal leadership promotion has been achieved (Attfield and Jones 2007; Jones 2007).

The findings also revealed that, NPQH had covered certain areas considered as essential in any leadership training program as advocated by Cowie and Crawford (2007), which are:
1) organizational operations and environment,
2) departmental leadership and management and also interpersonal effectiveness.

It was also discovered that NPQH had given opportunities for the participants to practice certain skills needed in leadership by having workshops, discussions and other forms of activities embedded in the training program. This proved to be very crucial in leadership preparation as stressed by Crawford (2005) who said:

> *"...it is important that opportunities are provided to allow aspiring school principals to acquire appropriate knowledge and understanding. ...to have opportunities to practise the skills and abilities the job demands in order to deal productively and confidently with the leadership and management issues they are likely to face on appointment".*

In summation, the findings of the study revealed that during their tenure as participants of the NPQH program, an intervention process was being carried out where they were exposed to certain fundamental aspects of leadership which along the way influenced their perception and confidence. Therefore NPQH had accomplished a significant job in the training of future leaders as affirmed by Kirkpatrick (1994) who stated that; *"...development programs should be evaluated in terms of participants' perceptions, learning, performance and the ultimate impact".*

RQ 3. How was Leadership manifested after NPQH?

Another important perspective of the study looked into how NPQH had influence the participants after their graduation. The study seek to examine how the program graduates handle the experience of becoming a school leader in terms of the manifestation and application of knowledge, skills and attitude in their leadership and management practices. This is crucial because there is need for future leaders to be appropriately trained to face challenges that they will be facing in real life situations. Micheals et al. (2001) and Tulgan (2001) in discussing the importance of training and development for leaders agreed that leadership development, recruitment and talent management are now widely seen as key strategic priorities with the level of challenge compared to a war. This is quite true considering the array of challenges faced by school leaders today.

The findings of the study showed that the respondents were consistent in agreeing that NPQH had helped them in executing their responsibilities as school leaders. In a research done by Lamborghini and Dittemers (2002) on the effect of leadership development program stated that; "…95% of the respondents reported that their leadership development program improved their leadership skills" and these findings was also supported by Garza (2000), in a research done on a leadership training program which discovered that:

> "…leadership program participants perceived that the program had effected their acquisition of leadership skills and job competencies necessary for advanced leadership positions".

On the subject of attitude change among the respondents, the findings of the study revealed that there was a significant change in their perception towards leadership, knowledge and also lifelong learning. This is evidenced when the majority of the respondents were positive that NPQH had changed their perspectives about leadership and made them more open to new ideas and thoughts and are more prepared to learn. This finding concurred with Leithwood et al. (2006) when discussing about effective school leaders stresses that; "…evidence warrants the claim that, at least under challenging circumstances, the most successful school leaders are open-minded and ready to learn from others".

The study also revealed that NPQH was able to motivate and boost the respondents' level of confidence in performing their duties as school leaders. The courses offered during their tenure as NPQH participants had broaden their knowledge, polished their skills and also uplifted their confidence to face the possibilities in school leadership. In a statement by the Teacher Training Agency in the United Kingdom it was suggested that the NPQH will equip school leaders with the skills and knowledge needed to lead a school successfully and this contributes significantly to raising the status of teaching and improving morale within the profession (TTA, 1997). This was proven to be true amongst the respondents when they responded to the subject of improvement in confidence level; the majority agreed that NPQH had helped them in facing difficulties in their profession.

5.3 Summary

Despite the plethora of leadership programs offered across colleges and higher learning institutions, quite few empirical investigations were conducted into the benefits of such educational efforts its impact over time that would greatly assist the understanding of how leadership is developed (Bass, 1998; Rubin, 2003; Kruger, 2003; Posner, 2004; Felser, 2005). Thus, this study was conducted to fill the gap in research and to understand how the NPQH program had influenced the leadership transition amongst its participants.

The findings of the study revealed that before engaging in the NPQH program, the respondents have had minimal experience and exposure on school leadership. It was also revealed that their perception towards school leadership were quite negative and their own attitude and confidence level to be future school leaders were quite low due to their insufficient knowledge and skills needed to be school leaders. This notion corresponds with Gronn (2003) who stresses that on the anxieties of being school leaders in the increasingly competitive global economic environment which has bought additional pressure to school leaders. Therefore, the inadequacy of knowledge and skills amongst the respondents could be understood due to their low confidence level in leadership.

The study also disclosed that when the respondents registered for the NPQH program, they were exposed to the different aspects of leadership in terms of knowledge, skills and also practical sessions where they were asked to go on an attachment stint to schools in order to experience school leadership. During their tenure as NPQH participants, the respondents were also given opportunities to sharpen their interpersonal and intra-personal skills which were the two most important aspects in leadership. This aspect makes the very core of any leadership training program as advocated by Nokana and Toyama (2003) who stated that:

> "Knowledge creation is conceptualized as a dialectical process, in which various contradictions are synthesized through dynamic interactions amongst individuals, organizations and the environment".

This concurred with Kouzes and Posner (2003) who stated that in addition to mastering the leadership areas, school leaders should be even more relationship-based in their content knowledge and skill sets.

In looking at the leadership transition process, the study revealed that the respondents were able to apply their new found knowledge and skills in their capacities as school leaders with confidence. Their attitude towards learning and upgrading themselves were also upgraded where they were more prepared to listen to new ideas and eager to learn and upgrade themselves. The findings of the study also revealed that after they had graduated from the NPQH program, they had attained greater confidence in their interaction with others. When discussing about educational leadership, Leithwood et al. (2006) and Fullan (2007) both agreed that interpersonal and intrapersonal skills should be recognized as the central importance in school leadership because of its relationship between values, behavior, purpose and school improvement.

In conclusion, the process of leadership transition and the manifestation of leadership in schools should be looked as a process where the respondents had to go through and embrace the different experiences that are part and parcel of whole evolution leadership. Prior experiences of the respondents towards being a successful leader had in a way helped them in embracing the new concept of leadership thus ensuring changes in the learners' paradigm about leadership. The findings revealed that the respondents went through the process of determining, investigating and evaluating their needs that is crucial for their learning progression. When these reflections became critical to them, the respondents needed to transform themselves to fulfill the needs of learning. The findings also revealed that during the NPQH program, the respondent had acquired strategies towards being a better leader. These strategies include the learners' effort to increase their knowledge and skills, develop critical thinking, enhancing confidence, improving communication and also creating a supportive climate in their school environment.

5.4 Implications for Practice

The results of this study can inform educational practitioners about leadership training programs and the process of leadership transition in the preparation of future school leaders especially in the Malaysia context.

The first implication relates to perception of trainees prior to engaging in a leadership program. The findings revealed that prior beliefs and perception might have an effect on the learners' attitude and confidence in learning whereby experience alone could not be taken as the main orientation towards being a successful school leader. It is therefore crucial for institutions and practitioners of leadership training program to recognize its importance and find ways to enhance leadership training. The researcher also believed that an understanding of the perception and beliefs would promote better mechanisms to aid leadership transition and in the planning of the training program.

The second implication relates to the training program itself where the core content should be based on training transfer which encompasses effective and continuation application of learning acquired from training. This requires the transferability of the knowledge and skills acquired through training could be transferred to the work environment and also the maintenance of the acquired skills over time.

The third implication relates to the importance of practical and on-site training for the program participants. This aspect should be looked into seriously because the trainees needed to have opportunities to practise their skills and abilities the job demands in order to perform productively and confidently with the leadership and management issues that they were likely to face upon appointment.

The fourth implication relates to the importance of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills in leadership training. Trainees must be given the opportunities for communication and engaging in and maintaining fruitful discussions available as school leaders. Ongoing communication is considered a vital source through which the trainees improve and exchange knowledge.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

The area of leadership training provides many opportunities for research that could benefit the diverse group of trainees enrolled in an educational leadership training program and other learning institutions that may administer School Leadership Programs like the NPQH.

While the researcher believed that there can be no single "best" way to study, educational leadership, the key for future research development will be the ability to look at research problems in innovative ways. The researcher also sees potential for directing research on the roles and functions of institutions in terms of the roles of faculty members in relation to school leadership. Based on the findings of this study, what kind of role can or should the faculty members play in support of leadership training? How can the faculty foster greater impact of training? Are there ways to better address the initial perception of the trainees? How can the faculty speed up the leadership transition among the trainees in a training program?

Another area of research that could be explored by researchers is on the formation of new beliefs by school leaders after they had graduated from the training Program such as the NPQH.

This study applied the qualitative approach in which the aim was to explore the issues under study in details with a relatively small sample of subjects. Therefore, it is recommended that a quantitative study be conducted with a larger sample to enhance the generalizability of the findings of the study. Such studies will provide insights on whether the findings of the study can be applied to other types of leadership training programs.

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the NPQH program by Institut Aminuddin Baki, Ministry of Education Malaysia had resulted in greater leadership behavior by the respondents. This was true on the premise that the graduates had demonstrated understanding

of the subject matter and had manifested their learning in the execution of their responsibilities as school leaders.

The NPQH program was able to satisfy the pivotal criteria in leadership training which encompasses four levels as advocated by Kirkpatrick (1996) which are: 1) Reaction; how does the participants react to the training program? 2) Learning; what new knowledge and skills did the participant learn? 3) Behaviour; to what extent did the training program cause participants to change on the job behavior? and 4) Results; what changes occurred as a result of training?

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