LEADERSHIP INDUCTION

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ABSTRACT

When new leaders take up their appointments in a new organisation there are considerable adjustments that have to be made by both the individuals concerned and the organisations they join. This paper attempts to look at the transition process undergo by new principals based on selected literatures. Among the problems faced by these incumbent principals include the uncertainties of one's capabilities, the acceptance from the staff and communities, getting rid off predecessors' shadows and gaining substantial influence to make some impacts on the institution they head. By understanding what they are going through we might gain some insights as how they can be helped to settle in to their new roles effectively.

INTRODUCTION

To be selected to head an organisation is indeed an honour for the chosen few. With this honour comes the heavy responsibility as well as the high expectations from the various stakeholders to ensure all the values and standards of the organisation are uphold without any reservation. Indeed any new leader that has been nominated to fill up a vacancy or has his or her informal status of leadership acknowledged will be considered a newcomer to the post and thus begin the leadership induction process. This leadership induction programmes can be conducted formally or informally depending upon the types of organisations the newcomers are from. What is important here is suitability of the input or the underlying components in the planned programmes. How does an organisation determine that the training given helps the prospective newcomer handle the varied situations in the new settings? Perhaps the answer to it lies in understanding the concerns or anticipating the problems and conflicts that might arise from the new placement. It is wise therefore that induction programmes should be planned to address those matters.

Institute Aminuddin Baki or IAB is the training wing of the Malaysian Ministry of Education. As a National Institute of Educational Management and Leadership it is the role of the Institute to conduct appropriate courses to either principals to be or beginning principals to ensure smooth succession in their respective organisations. As one of the workforce there, I cannot help but feel the importance to understand the needs of these beginning principals or principals to be. This paper attempts to look at some of the research evidences of the many concerns of the newcomers. These evidences, in addition to some professional experiences that I have gone through while holding the post of Assistant Principal not long ago and some interchanges that I have with experienced principals would also be included in the discussions. The unfolding micro – political relations prevalent in such organisations might provide a good insight as how the newcomers might be prepared for the faced-off or at least getting them some good guidelines to work their way through these new experiences. As suggested by one of the researchers, (Louis, 1990), acculturation in the workplace is a process by which new members come to appreciate culture and climates indigenous to the work setting in an organisation and by this

process and a little help of some training programmes may perhaps reduce uncertainties and allowed newcomers, in this case, the principals, to make predictions and gain control in the new environment.

ENTER THE EMERGENT LEADERS-
THE TRANSITION PROCESS

Becoming a newcomer in an organisation invoked many uncertainties in the thoughts and deeds of beginning principals. To be able to function effectively, a clear understanding of what these newcomers are going through is essential so that the induction programmes that are planned and developed would bridge the gaps or narrow them to the point they can assimilate themselves in the new environment successfully. As suggested by the studies by Beeson and Matthews, 1992 of eight beginning principals; these principals had certain concerns regarding the current dimension of changes. These changes include a shift in policy making and control, the press for accountability, influences in policy development and restructuring.

The scenario is similar in Malaysia. As a developing country, the leaders realised the survival of the nation lies in the strength of the economy and its ability to compete at the global stage. It is part of the national mission therefore to raise the capacity for knowledge and innovation and nurture 'first class mentality'. Thus the Ministry of Education has the responsibility of ensuring equitable access and quality education for its nation and by virtue of it, the principals as heads of the education institutions are responsible in carrying out policies and programmes to achieve the national mission. How far and how much of these policies have been carried out in the schools varied from school to school and are subjected to the existing principals' interpretations and abilities impressed by them upon the schools. So when a principal is being replaced by a newcomer, the incumbent person would feel the need to make some adjustments and changes according to his or her perspective on the policies. They too, have concerns in changing policies, about being accountable to the new organisation so on and so forth. But all these would be later concerns as the more immediate problem would be surviving in the new position.

Most principals spent their early days in the principalship focusing from administrative task to arrangement of staffing, relationship with students, parents and council. Among the major concerns that were voiced in the studies by Beeson and Matthews, 1992 were policies and curriculum, relationships with staff, the image of the school in the wider community, administrative matters, communication, discipline and time management. They feel the pressure of dealing with constant demands and need to be able to manage time effectively and prioritize tasks. Indeed in my interactions with these new principals in IAB, often I heard them remarked about the burden of responsibilities they are shouldering and worried about leaving their schools to attend the courses. They felt the need to work harder and longer and often feeling tired at the end of the day, especially in the early months. These experiences were not unique but were voiced out by many principals new at the job, everywhere.

UNDERSTANDING THE NEWCOMER EXPERIENCE

Parkay, Curries and Rhodes, 1992 in their longitudinal studies followed twelve school principals through their first three year period of principalships. The multiple case studies developed as part of the inquiry indicated that there are identifiable stages of professional socialization that principals experience. The stages characterize the principals' actions were, first the stage of survival where individuals experience "shock' and the personal concerns and professional insecurity were overwhelming. The second stage is control where the primary concern is with setting priorities and "getting on top of" the situation. Behaviours are legitimized by the position held than personal. The third is stability stage where frustrations become routinised, management related tasks are handled effectively and efficiently and difficulties related to facilitating change are accepted. At this juncture, the individual achieved the "veteran" status. The fourth stage is when individual starts exhibiting educational leadership capabilities and the prime focus is now on curriculum and instruction. Behaviours are 'legitimated' by personal power. Finally at the zenith of the profession, the individual focus on attaining personal vision. At the fifth stage of professional actualisation, the confirmation of one's capabilities comes from within the self.

These stages are assumed to be held at different level by different principals even at the beginning of principalship. They progressed through the stages at different rates, and the evolution depends on the individual characters and situation, not any particular factor. Finally they maybe at more than one stage simultaneously. Regardless of the position held, a new person at a job would identify with some of the stages mentioned earlier. The first stage of shock would probably be true for an unprepared newcomer but in my experience, the utmost concern is of being accepted. Other personal issues include being looked upon as good and competent enough to hold the post. Even as a subordinate, one would be questioning the incumbent leader abilities because in the Malaysian Education System, the new principals are selected among the senior teachers and for a few; their capabilities are yet to be put to test.

Another problem faced by the newcomer is exorcising the shadow of the predecessors. As the study by Gilmore and Ronchi, 1995, (p11) indicated, "... a burdensome shadow impeded a new leader's effort to take charge ..." This is more acutely felt by successors of schools that had predecessors longer than they can remember. In the article by Gilmore and Ronchi, 1995, the problem faced by the new leader was more towards detaching the negative images of his two predecessors and putting the trust of his subordinates into the leadership. However, the central issue was still the same. Having the shadow of a predecessor required a lot ingenuity and work so that such presence would not cause resistance to change and progress. Many instances that were shared by these incumbent principals, told of stories about staff referring to the actions of the ex-principals in specific situations thus belittling or demeaning efforts by them as the new leaders. To encounter such difficulties some would resort to forcing policies upon the staff which could backfire many good intentions. Without strong staff support, change is almost impossible. To deal with such issues requires much sensitivities and ingenuity on the part of the new leaders. The leaders must know their own mind and standing on those matters and work firmly and consistently at communicating their thoughts and reasons behind actions taken.

In most cases, to be in the second stage of wanting to set priorities right would be the level of many new principals. They would prefer to get the job done no matter what the situations were. If anything, this will be a kind of personal milestones for the individual principals. As for stages three, four and five, it will be some time before many would reach the levels.

INSIDERS' VERSUS OUTSIDERS' ISSUES

Another issue that has positive and negative ramifications on the initial year of succession of a new principal is whether the person is being promoted from within or outside. The studies by LeGore and Parker, 1997 also looked at influence of the insiders versus outsiders' succession. The issue of getting insiders and outsiders has been dealt by many researchers theoretically and empirically with regard to whoever was chosen to lead a school and its impact on school organisation and culture. In their case, if the new principal is transferred or promoted from within the district, he or she is considered to be an insider. They compared with Hart, 1993 studies which reported that the entrance of an outsider generally suspends the informal network and groupings of teachers and they were apt to bring more positive change in school effectiveness. Despite being an insider, it was found that the school had changed for the better and the principal had performed more like a traditional outsider successor. One of the possible reasons for that to happen was that the faculty and staff were ready to change simply for the sake of change and that made the job easier for the principal.

Being an insider has its advantages. Distress of being in a new environment can be eliminated totally from the list. The insider would understand the organisational culture, the work setting and the quirks of the colleagues. His presence as a person was already generally accepted. The need to make sense of his environment was not necessary. The disadvantages being promoted from within could not be discounted. These principals felt that knowing their colleagues as peers would be problematic, now that his status in the organisation has changed. Delegating responsibilities would be a big issue if legitimate tasks were looked upon as directives by peers now subordinates, when the relationships got too comfortable. Changes

that needed to be made as a result of new policies would be construed by peers as showing off new authority. The constant dilemmas faced by the new administrator might impede him from doing his work efficiently and effectively.

Outsiders, on the other hand faced another set of obstacles. In my own experience, when working in a new place, the first worry is fitting in and being accepted. But holding the leading post in an organisation imposed a bigger problem. The new principal not only needed to fit in but sometimes get away from the predecessor's shadow and established his authority as the head of the organisation. Changes might be looked upon as threats to the existing culture. Decisions were always questions first before being carried out until mutual trust were established. To overcome this period of "newness" took some valuable working time but must be invested by newcomers to ensure long lasting and trusting relationships to develop between these heads and the staffs.

Research also showed involvement with the newcomers can have profound effect on insiders' attitudes, performance and knowledge. Through selection and socializing tasks , Sutton and Louis, 1987 were able to distinguished seven situations that newcomers would influence insiders' own sense-making with regard to their selves, the organisation and other social systems. Four of those situations involved during the selection process while the other three while socialising. In practice, most principals' interviews and placements were done by the district offices; so not much of the impact of the interviews as outlined by the research could be felt by the insiders. However the socialising aspects of the new principals did have certain influences on the insiders. One major impact is the distribution of powers among insiders. Undeniably in the Malaysian school system there were clearly defined hierarchical power distributions at the administration level. But one could not dismiss the possibilities of influence that new principals might have by the choices they made and actions taken. If one of the assistant principals was more in synch with the new principal than the other, there could be a shift in power at a more covert level. Other influence by socialising with new blood could be self re-evaluation of the organisational value and norms affected during the orientation period of the new principal even if it was conducted informally.

INSIDERS' SENSE-MAKING

Ogawa, 1991 research presented the other side of the coin. Instead of looking at what new principals underwent in the process of succession, he sought the point of view of the faculty and staff. Changes in teachers' sense-making over time as far as the new principal is concerned consisted of three stages which were enchantment, disenchantment and accommodation. At an early stage, staff tended to view the successor favourably as he did not violate the autonomy they have enjoyed under the predecessor. However, the disenchantment developed when the school's secretary was transferred and teachers focused on their individual relationships with the principal. The insecurity feeling although was widespread, was responded individually rather than as a group. In the final stage of accommodation, teachers again acted individually where they find sanctuaries in the privacy of their classrooms. There were a few noteworthy observations from this paper. The first was that in this type of organisation the staff responded positively to successor who adhered to existing organizational norms but they expected that succession would bring about change. This change was to be brought about just by holding the position rather than having to establish their credibility. This point however must be cautioned about because the successor in the case happened to be an experienced one.

This research attempted at comprehending the point of view of the staff. There were certain regards held by staff upon a newly appointed head, which is quite a natural phenomenon. Anywhere we might expect that leaders were chosen because of their known capabilities. At the beginning of their office many would try to impress their subordinates and might be able to woo most through their display of efficiency and charming manner. Over time when the principal found that certain organisation work ethics or even personnel not measuring up, he or she would make changes that would not be agreeable to all, thus staff became disenchanted. This cycle of events was inevitable. Nobody could be pleased all the time. This was about the time when the staff and principal could engage in a negotiation that would work for almost everyone. The spell was indeed broken-realities dawn on both sides.

I am reluctant to agree the term of accommodation coined by the authors, following this disenchantment period. If at this point of time both parties would come to a certain point of agreement in a good negotiated situation than this would be considered as accommodating one another. But if one party could not win over the other there would be two possibilities in the turn of events. The first possibility would be one party would just give up and resign to fate and let the situation be. In the case of the staff resigning to fate would be like the situation in the study where each individual resorted to his individual sanctuaries in the classroom. The principal who was resigned to fate would feel overpowered and would settle down within the existing organisational culture. In the second situation, the principal would feel he had to exercise his positional power to make changes and this might not sit too well with the staff. If agreement was arrived by using authority rather than understanding, the organisation might be heading towards internal crisis which would be problematic for both. In this kind of situation, the term "accommodation" phase would not seem quite correct.

GAINING INFLUENCE AND ACCEPTANCE

When taking on a new role, especially that of head of an education institution, the incumbent person faced the task of acculturation, a term used by Louis, 1980 in her research. Acculturation involved process of the newcomer coming in as lay ethnographers, scanning the environments to comprehend and appreciate the cultures and climates indigenous to the work setting of the organisation. This was one method of gaining knowledge in order to function efficiently and effectively. Cultural knowledge was tacit, contextual, informal, unofficial, shared and emergent, thus not easily or even problematic in the transmission of it. This cultural information could be made available under a few circumstances such as situations where newcomers needed to cope with their own surprises. These surprises could spring from a mismatch of job expectations and actual experiences. Under those circumstances, the new principal would try to develop an explanation for the discrepancies and capture salient features of the organisational culture when modifying behavioural responses, thus being made aware of the existing culture.

An awareness of the existing culture did not mean an expectation for the new principal to conform firmly to it. Rather it would help lessen any further confrontations later. Neumann, 1995 analysed the evolving relationship between the college president and the campus participants. It was suggested that by forming relationships that support their own learning about beliefs and values of whom they seek to relate, the leaders would be creating relationships that foster learning. They might not be able to induce change in people but might be able to do via the organisational setting. Gaining presence and acceptance, in this case, would not be successful or long lasting if ones beliefs and thoughts were forced onto others. Rather, a leader should listen and attend to the thinking of others, framed his thoughts and actions together with them allowing a much better relationship to develop. A lot of ground work was required of a beginning principal to attain such level.

In her article 'Settling-in', Izraeli, 1977 examined the problem incurred in the process of socialisation when the newcomer entered into the organisation.' The process of settling-in as discovered by her research involved political play whereby the newcomer did not gain control and influence based on his position but by using certain tactical manoeuvres which were further discussed in another of her research paper (Izraeli, 1972). It must be reminded her studies involved middle managers, therefore lacking of influence might cause power deficiency. This power deficiency would result in poor performance as he would not be able to influence decision making, which is a vital factor in implementing a policy and thus ensuring a productivity level acceptable to his superiors.

What is interesting here were the tactics used to expand his power base. The four tactics included neutralisation of known supporters, replacement of those supporters, commitment of those not yet committed and mobilisation of support from top management. Now, how could this information be useful to new principals, one might ask? For one, the tactics could be used to gain influence and strengthen supports especially when making changes. Although the tactics were there for taking, it was the subtlety in applying it that should be considered. Again this goes back to the ability of the new principals to understand the culture and establishing good rapport with staff, students and the stakeholders. They must learn to be selective in activities and forming relations. By understanding the

workings of the organisations, they should be able to align themselves with the work cycles and rhythms and also the right people to strengthen their power base. Once this is established, they would be influential enough to make changes.

In summary, some of the guidelines were given here for successful successions which were modified from Gmelch, 2000. To be successful, a new principal must be able to manage his management molecule. In the Malaysian school setting this would mean his leadership team comprised of the Senior Assistants (Assistant Principals') and senior teachers (Leading Teachers), the staff and the students, the external constituents that included the Ministry, the State and District Education officers (the stakeholders) and the communities comprised of parents and local leaders. Most importantly, the principal must be able to manage himself. Second key to success was learning the context of principalship. This could be formally or informally learning and understanding the organisation culture. The best approach would be developing good relationship by taking time to know the staff and supporting staff as outlined earlier. Thirdly, would understand the content of the principal's role. IAB as a training institute played a major role in providing leadership induction programmes to Malaysian School principals. In this area, much support in terms of comprehending their roles was given formally by the Ministry. Finally, establishing ties and good networking with other principals would be a push factors towards succeeding in their new roles.

FORMULATION OF GOOD INDUCTION PROGRAMMES

In one part of Louis's article (p 248, 1980) on Surprise and Sense-Making, she proposed that

> ..*entry practices that enhance newcomers' experiences in and of the new organizational settings will facilitate newcomers' adaptation. Socialisation practices should be developed that help provide newcomers' with insiders' situation specific interpretations and setting-specific interpretive schemes. The insiders' view can supplement and balance natural inadequacies in newcomers' sense-making tendencies and can hasten the development of more adequate long-term self-sufficient functioning*

It would further facilitate accuracy in newcomers' interpretations of their immediate experiences, on the basis of which individuals choose affective behavioural responses to early experiences on the job and in the organisation. The significance of this kind of research is towards formulating a good supporting induction programme for the beginning principals. There are two aspects that should be consider in formulating a good and useful induction programmes for newly appointed principals. The first is the preparation of the principals in terms of leadership and management and secondly is building leadership capacity.

In preparing the principals for the new tasks ahead, the programmes should centre on the issue which is related to their working environment that is leadership and management. These would include aligning management system, team building and developing the professional self and other individuals. The managerial leadership is essential in ensuring efficient use of available resources in terms of both human and capital. Effective principals must be able to manage people, build their commitments and drive the schools towards improvement, creating education vision and implementing them. These then requires them to build their leadership capacities. To provide support in managerial and leadership skills activities such as shadowing experienced principals, professional learning opportunities from seminars and conventions and providing diagnostic tools such as educational leadership feedback or simple management checklists would go a long way. In the Malaysian context, some of these programmes are already taking place and some may need further fine-tuning.

CONCLUSION

For beginning principals, being at their new jobs created many fixed feelings. Elated at being selected might be one of them but the anxiety about keeping up to the expectations of the stakeholders would be the main issue. This essay has discussed the many situations that newcomers have to face. The uncertainties of one's capabilities, the acceptance from the staff and communities, getting rid off predecessors' shadows and gaining substantial influence to make some impacts were some of them.

Then the paper also dealt with the problems of being promoted from inside and outside.

In the next part we looked into the actions that the new principals might consider taking to gain influence and acceptance. Findings by Hart (1963) as reported by LeGore and Parker (p381, 1997), showed to successfully enhance the outcomes of their performance, these principals must looked for the opportunities to "demonstrate that they have the critical skills, experiences, and contacts from which the entire school can benefit". For these "valued knowledge and skills" attributes, their principle in study managed to garner unanimous endorsement from the staff early in her succession and was accorded the informal power or authority to control the school. Indeed, in realities, anywhere the ability to exhibit professional skills would be helpful in having a successful career.

The discussion was concluded at what the organisations might do to assist the new principals. IAB, as a training institution in Malaysia has conducted many Induction Programmes for beginning principals and principals to be. However, a lot more can be done to ensure successful and effective succession to take place. I hope this paper endeavours to highlight the matters related to leadership induction might be found useful in establishing a more dynamic and concrete programmes in the future.

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