Support System for New Teacher Development Program

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Abstract: The New Teacher Development Program (NTDP) is part of continuous professional development to support new teachers to reach their potential through structured guidance at school. However, inadequate pre-service training and support systems during the induction period affect the teaching of new teachers and subsequently student learning. Hence, this study aimed to identify the level of support system in the implementation of NTDP and its differences based on school level. The survey design was selected and questionnaire was used as the research instrument. The data are quantitatively analyzed to determine the support system level from three aspects, namely teaching and learning support, external task support and development of teaching professionalism support. The results showed that the level of support system was high. In particular, new teachers received excellent support from teaching and learning aspects, as well as external duty in implementing NTDP. Meanwhile, the support given by the school for development of teaching professionalism was at a high level. In addition, the study found that there was no significant difference in the support system for new teachers following NTDP based on school level. Support systems needed to be strengthened to help new teachers adapt to the teaching profession, enhancing their potential in carrying out their duties and developing their continuous professional competency throughout their service.

1. Introduction

The first year of service is the most challenging time for those who are new in the teaching profession (Karatas & Karaman, 2013). New teachers faced problems in terms of adapting to tasks (Dickson, Stringer, Tennant & Kennetz, 2014), self-efficacy (Redman, 2015), teaching and learning (Confait, 2015), relationships with various parties (McCann & Johannessen, 2004), classroom management (Koca, 2016), and lack of teaching resources (Boakye & Ampiah, 2017). The difficulty they faced when performing their duty, in addition to the lack of support and guidance make them feel frustrated, isolated from colleagues and at the end leave the profession (McCollum, 2014). This situation requires a special mechanism such as an induction program to support and guide new teachers to successfully face the transition from a student at a teaching institute to a full-time teacher (Ingersoll, 2012).

Induction programs are implemented in schools all over the world to support and guide new teachers in the early years of service. The main aim of the induction program is to improve performance, maintain teachers' competency in the profession, promote the development of professionalism and personality, and build the foundation for continuous professionalism development (Northwest Territories Education, Culture & Employment, 2011).

In the United States, the involvement of new teachers in the induction program has increased by 40 percent since 1990 (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2006). New teachers who receive this support not only remain in the profession (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop & Darling-Hammond, 2016), they can even overcome classroom management issues and able to focus on teaching (American Federation of Teachers, 2001). Whereas in Europe, the induction program is compulsory and part of the policy in teacher certification (Kessels, 2010) to reduce drop-out rates, improve teaching quality and support the development of new teachers' professionalism (European Commission, 2010). In Japan and China, induction programs are implemented comprehensively by focusing on learning rather than retaining teachers through professional support from school and educational institutions (Fulton, Yoon & Lee, 2005).

In Malaysia, every new teacher is required to undergo an induction program known as the New Teacher

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Development Program (NTDP) from 2011 to support the development of new teachers' professionalism in achieving professional competency as outlined in the Malaysian Teacher Standards (Teachers' Education Division, 2009). NTDP is implemented for a year through structured guidance by experienced mentors and support from administrators and colleagues (Teachers' Education Division, 2015).

New teachers have an ongoing support of the school in carrying out NTDP activities such as professional learning communities, action researches and internal courses. Three key features of effective inductions include comprehensive guidance, a variety of activities appropriate to the needs of new teachers, and continuous support from various parties (Wong, 2004). However, the minimum implementation does not have the desired effect as new teacher does not get the support as they should (Kearney, 2017).

In the early stages of teacher development, support from administrators and colleagues is especially needed in terms of psychological and professional support (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). However, new teachers are found to have less support from the administrators especially in teaching and learning as they are more focused on school management and administration (Rosli & Wan, 2007). Whereas in terms of psychological support, new teachers received lack of appreciation and professional recognition from the school (Hudson, 2012), there was lack of collaboration and they feel isolated from their colleagues (Headden, 2014), as well as lack of access to human resources and equipment at the school (Gavish & Friedman, 2010).

In addition, the internal courses were 'one size fits all' fails to meet the needs of new teachers in complex organizations (Carden, 2010). Overall, the weakness in the school's support system towards new teachers is not only disruptive for their professional development but also makes it difficult to succeed in the teaching profession (Wong, 2004). Based on the identified problems and challenges, this study is conducted to discover the level of support system received by new teachers who have followed NTDP. In addition, this study is also conducted to test the difference in NTDP support system based on school level.

2. Support Systems

As a new teacher, it is a complex task to successfully carry out the role as an instructor. The pre-service training is still insufficient to fortify their teaching and learning in terms of knowledge, skills, and motivation in facing the situation in the classroom (Mohammad, 2007). Based on the teacher development theory (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011) the school plays a role in providing a learning environment that will help new teachers efficiently perform their duties through guidance and support programs. This guidance and support or induction program has a positive impact on new teachers,

particularly in the aspect of teacher commitment and retention in service, classroom teaching practices, and improvement of student learning and growth (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Support gained through a comprehensive induction program is very important to help new teachers adapt to the school culture and the local community. The social environment which was different from their experience during the teaching practice also affects the socialization of new teachers, especially in terms of the number of students, student discipline and support from administrators and other teachers at school (Rosli & Wan, 2007). This is in line with the teacher development model (Fuller, 1969) in which in the early stages of their career, they require the support of administrators and mentors to build working relationships with school staffs and this will determine the acceptance of other teachers towards them as a professional in the organization.

The key rationale for providing excellent support in the early stages of the service is to further develop the acquired skills during pre-service training and help overcome weaknesses that may cause them to leave the profession (DeAngelis, Wall & Che, 2013). Additionally, the ultimate goal of the support system in the induction program is to increase student growth and learning (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). A study on producing a new teacher socialization model found that support systems from the aspects of teaching and learning, tasks other than teaching and learning, as well as the development of teacher professionalism could improve work performance (Heck & Wolcott, 1997).

There are three aspects of support system for novice teachers namely, support for teaching and learning, administrative, and external tasks (Mohd, 2016). Support from teaching and learning aspects refers to mentoring activities carried out by new teachers with mentors and other teachers such as ongoing monitoring in the classroom and discussions on teaching feedback. The administrative tasks in addition to teaching and learning include organizational management and organizing special programs through positive involvement between school and local community. The third aspect of the development of teaching professionalism refers to the independent learning activities carried out by the new teachers and the ongoing training organized by the school or other educational institution. Therefore, the support system is an important aspect in helping new teachers be more prepared to carry out their duties as competent and qualified teachers.

3. New Teacher Development Program

The main objective of this program is to help new teachers (i) adapt themselves to the environment, community and the school culture, (ii) to enhance self-potential through positive attitude and improvement in teaching and learning skills, and (iii) develop the professional competency

(Teachers' Education Division, 2015). New teachers are required to undergo NTDP with guidance from mentors appointed by the school administrators. The mentoring program plays an important role in helping new teachers face challenges and difficulties in terms of adaptation to the education system, pedagogical issues, student interaction and professional development (Fairstein, 2016).

The NTDP is implemented in three phases, namely the Orientation Phase, Mentoring Phase and Professional Development Phases that occur simultaneously. The Orientation phase is conducted during the first three months aim at helping new teachers adapt to the school climate. The school climate aspects such as physical environment, social system, as well as relationships with the administrators, teachers, students, communities, and co-workers are the basis of good quality teaching and learning (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2009). The content of this phase encompasses educational policies, school culture, co-curriculum management, and student affairs; providing opportunities for new teachers to perform in the real situation.

The mentoring phase is continuously implemented for a year with professional, structured guidance and support from experienced mentor. The program implementation guideline stated that mentoring activities can be formal and informal for at least two additional hours of the school timetable (Ministry or Education, 2012). The main goal of this phase is to improve the professional competency of new teachers in terms of knowledge, skills and professional teaching values. These components need to be applied in teaching and learning, assessment and measurement of student achievement, co-curriculum, and classroom management.

The Professional Development Phase is carried out throughout the NTDP period which aimed to guide and develop new teachers' professional competency. Professional development is defined as a process and activity designed to develop professional knowledge, skills and attitude of teachers in order to enhance student learning (Guskey, 2000). Teachers engaging in professional development activities can indirectly increase the confidence and expertise that later affects all students in their classroom (Altun, 2011). Professional development will be more effective if teachers are actively involved in conducting action research, collaborating with colleagues, improving teaching practices, and conducting assessments formatively (Creemers, Kyriakidēs & Antoniou, 2013).

4. Methodology

This study was conducted quantitatively using survey methods to answer the objectives and research questions. The population comprised of 863 new teachers stationed in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur in 2015 (Education Department Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, 2018). The sample was selected through stratified random

sampling technique according to school level i.e. primary and secondary school. A total of 289 respondents were selected which were exceeding the minimum of 270 samples based on the sample size determination table (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000) and at least 266 samples based on the formula (Cochran, 1977). There were 98 male teachers (33.9%), while female teachers were 191 (66.1%). In addition, 147 respondents (50.9%) were stationed in primary schools and 142 teachers (49.1%) in secondary school.

The research data were obtained using a questionnaire consisting of 11 items to measure support system component from teaching and learning aspect, external task, and development of teaching professionalism. The five-point Likert scale was used in instruments with ranges of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Item validity was determined by using the correlation value between the item score and total scores, and the correlation between the corrected item value and the total scores. Correlation value for all items was between 0.487 and 0.785. The Cronbach Alpha value was 0.900 which means the reliability was high.

The data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially using the SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to answer the first research question, which was to identify the level of support system in the implementation of NTDP. Interpretation of the mean score to determine the level of mentoring and the new teacher support system was divided into five levels which were: 'very low' (mean = 1.0-1.8), 'low' (mean = 1.9-2.6), 'moderate' (mean = 2.7-3.4), 'high' (mean = 3.5-4.2), and 'very high' (mean = 4.3-5.0) [42] (Education Planning and Research Division, 2006).

Whereas, inferential statistics involved independent t-tests to answer the second research question, which was to identify the difference between mentoring and support systems in NTDP between primary and secondary schools.

5. Results and Discussion

The findings of descriptive analysis to identify the support system level for new teachers participating in NTDP are assessed based on mean score and interpretation level. Whereas inference analysis findings are based on the t-test to identify the differences in support systems implemented in primary and secondary schools.

4.1 Support System Level in NTDP

The support system in NTDP is seen in three aspects: support in teaching and learning, support for external work, and support in the development of teaching professionalism. Participants in the support system include school administrators and colleagues. The results of the analysis show that the level of support systems in the implementation of NTDP is very high (mean = 4.310, s.d = 0.389; refer to Table 1).

Table 1-Support System Level

Types of Support Syatem	Mean	SD	Level
Teaching and learning	4.400	0.447	Very high
External work	4.360	0.493	Very high
Development of teacher professionalism	4.271	0.476	High

New teachers get excellent support in all three aspects from school administrators and co-workers. In addition to the guidance of mentor teachers, new teachers also often refer to their colleagues for information and share their views on the problems they faced in teaching and learning. Regular meeting sessions with colleagues and other new teachers help them to interact and work together to effectively solve problems (Portner, 2001). This situation applies particularly in the transition process in which new teachers face difficulty in adapting the skills and knowledge acquired during pre-service training to the real situations in the classroom.

Based on teaching experience, colleagues include senior teachers and administrators give collaboration and assistance needed by new teachers to carry out better teaching and learning. Furthermore, administrators also support new teachers by providing opportunities to interact with colleagues and encourage their learning (Kessels, 2010).

Support for external tasks such as co-curriculum management and school-specific programs are also at an excellent level. Continuous coaching from Assistant Principal of Co-curricular Affairs, sports teachers, and senior teachers can enhance the confidence of new teachers in managing co-curricular activities. In addition, the implementation of One Student One Sport (1M1S) policy from 2010 provide infrastructure, facilities and sports equipment in the schools which greatly help teachers and students to smoothly carry out co-curricular activities (Sport Division, 2011).

In addition to co-curriculum management, new teachers are also received excellent collaboration from the appointed school committee members to organize yearly special school program. This finding is in line with the study (Mohd, Rossheta, Wong & Azni, 2014) where new teachers get good cooperation and have a more meaningful relationship with colleagues and support staff in implementing special school programs.

New teachers also have good support in the development of teaching professionalism from school and colleagues during NTDP. In the Professional Development Phase, new teachers' knowledge and skills in teaching and learning and organizational management are strengthened through the implementation of short-term workshops organized by the school (Teachers' Education Division, 2015). Thus, the administrator always gives exposure on the importance of lifelong learning by encouraging new teachers to participate in online and face-to-face training organized by the school and outside parties.

Indirect support from co-workers' through knowledge-sharing sessions and discussions in the subject committee provides opportunities for new teachers to improve their professional practice in carrying out their duties. The participation of new teachers in this professional development activity is in line with MOE's main agenda to improve the quality of teachers as set out in the Continuous Professionalism Development Blueprint (Ministry of Education, 2014).

4.2 Differences in Support Systems Based on School Level

To see the difference in NTDP support systems between primary and secondary school, a t-test was conducted to test the null hypothesis. The results showed that there was no significant difference in support system in the implementation of PPGB based on school level (refer to Table 2). The value failed to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 2 - Differences in Support System Based on School Level

Group	n	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
Primary School	147	4.323	0.381	-0.873	0.384
Secondary School	142	4.365	0.432		

New teachers at primary and secondary schools get the same support in the teaching and learning aspects possibly due to the factor of mentor teacher selection. Based on the selection criteria set out in NTDP guidelines, mentor teachers need to be knowledgeable and have at least five years experienced teaching the same subject as the new teachers, motivated and responsible, think reflectively, and have skills to train and guide.

Factors such as the mentors' academic qualifications which possessed at least bachelor's degree are similar for primary and secondary schools. Therefore, the guidance and

support obtained from mentor teachers, especially in the teaching and learning aspects, are the same at both school levels.

School administrators play an important role in providing the support system needed by new teachers in both primary and secondary schools. This is because administrators are a critical factor in determining the success of new teachers, especially in providing meaningful and thorough feedback (Roberson & Roberson, 2009).

Based on NTDP's implementation guidelines, school administrators are responsible to provide support for new teacher professional development and implement monitoring especially in the areas of teaching and learning on a regular basis throughout the NTDP period (Wong, 2004). Besides, supportive and knowledgeable administrators who are willing to provide guidance in teaching and learning can help new teachers cultivate the best teaching practices and maintain research-based approaches in the classroom (Towers, 2012).

6. Conclusion

Support for new teachers is critical in the implementation of induction programs in schools. Without strong and persistent support, only a handful of new teachers can effectively improve student achievement (Reio & Sutton, 2006). This study shows that new teachers get very good support from mentor teachers, administrators, and colleagues in helping them perform their duties. Excellent support can help new teachers to socialize in organizations such as adapting to school culture, building good relationships with colleagues, and being knowledgeable in the field of work (Goldrick, 2016). This information is important for school administrators to make improvements in mentor selection, training to mentor teachers, and monitoring of mentoring activities continuously throughout the program.

The ongoing support received by new teachers in the induction program from school administrators and colleagues affects the development of teacher professionalism and retention in service (Mingo, 2012). This is in line with NTDP's main goal to help new teachers adapt to the school culture, expanding the potential of new teachers through the positive attitude and mastery of skills in teaching and learning, as well as developing professional competency (Teachers' Education Division, 2015).

Based on the results of the study, several suggestions could be made to improve and strengthen the implementation of NTDP in terms of support systems. School administrators need to build good relationships, provide adequate teaching resources, provide opportunities for planning and learning, and distribute jobs that are relevant to the ability of new teachers. Additionally, professional development support for new teachers should be enhanced by conducting in-service training and promoting their engagement in action research as well as

professional learning communities (PLC). Moreover, colleagues and senior teachers need to provide support in terms of task management such as co-curriculum, student affairs, and special school programs.

To ensure the effectiveness of the program, the NTDP assessment should be carried out comprehensively based on the standards and criteria set by the MOE. On the whole the cooperation and commitment of school community in providing various forms of support can ensure that NTDP is implemented successfully.

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