

**IN-SERVICE TRAINING NEEDS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL
PRINCIPALS IN THE SRI AMAN DIVISION AS PERCEIVED BY
THE PRINCIPALS AND THE SCHOOL SUPERVISORS.**

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DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in this dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree of qualification of this or any other university or institution of higher learning.

ABSTRACT

Factors such as changes in the education system, the distance of schools from the head office and the demand that the society exerts on school principals to guide students to academic excellence make it necessary for school principals to be given regular in-service training to enable them to perform their jobs to expectation. To ensure that in-service courses implemented serve the needs of principals, in-service training needs analysis must be carried out. In the present system, not many in-service training needs analyses or in-service courses were implemented for school principals. This scenario has to be changed if school improvement were to be embarked on successfully.

This study looked into the in-service training needs and preferences of the secondary school principals in the Sri Aman Division. The principals' in-service needs and preferences were viewed from two different perspectives, that is, from the principals and the school supervisors' perceptions. A survey questionnaire was used to elicit opinions from seventeen principals and thirty-one school supervisors. The data were analysed using the SPSS, and the statistical methods used were the analyses of frequencies, means and the T-test. Analyses showed that there were wide areas of similarities between the principals and the school supervisors' perceptions on the in-service training needs and preferences of the principals.

The principals and the school supervisors felt that in-service courses were needed in all the aspects suggested in the study. Of paramount importance, it was expressed that principals need in-service courses to improve their skills and competencies on how to carry out professional enrichment activities for their teachers to improve their teaching abilities, be able to apply teaching and learning theories to practical use and competencies to bring about academic improvement in the schools. Other in-service need areas that were considered as important were those associated with financial procedures and financial management, staff and students' motivation, building team spirit, ability to counsel, advise and help their staff, carrying out appraisal and supervisions, fostering good public relations, conflict resolution and public speaking.

The principals expressed their preferences to be consulted and have some say in deciding the duration, venue and time for the courses. They wanted regular in-service courses. These courses should have specific goals and objectives, which are related to the problems that they faced in schools. "Expert" principals or principals who have excellent records in schools were considered as the best trainers in principals' in-service courses. The most suitable duration for a single course should be between one to two weeks, and in-service courses should preferably be carried out during the first and second term school holiday.

ABSTRAK

Faktor-faktor seperti perubahan dalam sistem pendidikan, jarak sekolah yang jauh dari jabatan-jabatan pendidikan dan harapan masyarakat yang tinggi terhadap peranan dan keupayaan para pengetua membimbing pelajar-pelajar kearah kecermerlangan akademik membuat latihan-latihan dalam perkhidmatan amat penting untuk para pengetua. Ini adalah untuk memastikan para pengetua dapat menjalankan tugas mereka selaras dengan expektasi tugas dan tanggungjawab yang telah diberi kepada mereka. Untuk memastikan agar kursus yang disediakan memenuhi keperluan-keperluan pengetua di sekolah, keperluan latihan mereka perlu dikaji dan diteliti dengan sekerap yang mungkin. Pada masa kini, perkara tersebut jarang sekali dijalankan. Kursus-kursus dalam perkhidmatan juga tidak diadakan sekerap yang diharapkan. Keadaan sedemikian harus diubah untuk memastikan segala usaha untuk memajukan sekolah berhasil.

Kajian ini meninjau keperluan-keperluan dan kehendak-kehendak latihan dalam perkhidmatan di kalangan para pengetua di Bahagian Sri Aman. Tinjauan ini mengambil kira dua sudut pandangan, ia itu, pandangan para pengetua sendiri dan pandangan jemaah nazir di Bahagian Kuching. Maklumat dipunggut melalui kaedah survei, dimana soalan-soal selidik dari 17 orang pengetua dan 31 orang nazir telah dianalisis. Data dianalisis dengan SPSS dan kaedah statistik frequenci, means dan Ujian-T digunakan. Hasil analisis yang dibuat menunjukkan persamaan yang nyata di antara persepsi para pengetua dan para nazir berkenaan dengan keperluan-keperluan dan kehendak-kehendak latihan dalam perkhidmatan untuk pengetua.

Kedua-dua pihak bersetuju bahawa latihan dalam perkhidmatan diperlukan dalam semua aspek yang dicadangkan. Keutamaan diberi kepada latihan untuk mempertingkatkan kemahiran dan kompetensi para pengetua melaksanakan aktiviti-aktiviti pengkayaan untuk mempertingkatkan kemahiran guru-guru dalam proses pengajaran, keupayaan untuk mengaplikasikan teori-teori pengajaran dan pembelajaran untuk mempertingkatkan prestasi pelajar dan strategi untuk mencapai prestasi akademik yang cemerlang di kalangan pelajar. Aspek-aspek lain yang penting ialah kewangan, pengurusan staf, cara memotivasi pelajar, mewujudkan semangat sepasukan, kebolehan memberi bimbingan, menjalankan penyelian dan penilaian staf, mewujudkan hubungan yang baik dengan masyarakat luar, penyelesaian konflik dan kemahiran berucap dihalayak ramai.

Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa para pengetua mahu terlibat dalam perancangan dan pelaksanaan kursus-kursus yang diadakan, terutamanya dalam aspek pemilihan tajuk kursus, jangka masa kursus dan tempat berkursus. Mereka berpandangan bahawa lebih banyak lagi kursus harus dijalankan untuk pengetua, dan kursus-kursus tersebut harus mempunyai objektif yang spesifik dan relevan dengan masalah yang mereka hadapi di sekolah. Pengetua-pengetua cemerlang dianggap sebagai jurulatih yang paling sesuai untuk kursus-kursus pengetua. Kursus-kursus tidak perlu lama dan setiap kursus seharusnya dalam lingkungan satu dan dua

minggu lamanya. Masa yang paling sesuai untuk berkursus ialah sewaktu cuti sekolah penggal pertama dan penggal kedua.

Biographicat Sketch

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to **my** three-year old daughter, Annalizie, and my new born son, Kevin, who have and will always be my inspiration to be a better person.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. General background of the study

This is an investigative study of the in-service needs and preferences of the principals as perceived by the principals and the school supervisors. The study, which is carried out in the Sri Aman Division, aims to investigate the different in-service needs of the principals in order to identify their different and common needs. Sri Aman Division is chosen as a research area, since to date no such study has been carried out there. Furthermore, the location of fourteen schools scattered away from the head office makes opportunities for self-improvement limited and the dissemination of information and directives difficult. These factors make in-service training important. The study is limited to only one division due to time and financial constraints.

The researcher feels that in-service training for school principals is of utmost importance in exposing, and retooling them with the latest relevant knowledge and skills to help them to function better in school environments that are constantly changing. At present, the Education Department is implementing changes, which will revolutionise the utilisation of materials, technologies and labour. Changes in the curriculum, examinations, management style, roles of school principals, and the emphasis on empowerment have great implications on the types of knowledge and skills needed by school administrators.

In these turbulent times, the needs for school administrators to become the forerunner in accepting and implementing changes become important. In accepting changes school administrators need to update their competencies, and improve their professional credibility. Thus, in-service training is critical and important in the principalship. It provides an avenue for school administrators to improve and upgrade themselves to meet the dynamism of the profession.

It is argued that in-service training is not only deemed as necessary, but its implementation should involve the participants. Individual's in-service needs should be taken into consideration and should form the basis of any in-service training programme. The choice of topics, time, place and duration are considered as important, and thus have to be deliberated on carefully, since these factors are seen as contributory to the effectiveness of the in-service programmes.

This study viewed in-service training-needs assessment as one of the prerequisites for effective in-service training programmes (Lawrence, 1974, Tymeson, 1988, Sullivan, *et al*, 1990). It argued that through in-service training need analysis, trainers would be able to come up with needs and requirements of the participants. Working together with the participants, trainers would then be able to formulate realistic and relevant programmes to serve the present as well as the future needs of the participants. From experiences as well as findings, however, training needs analysis is normally not carried out. Reflecting on this, the researcher feels that in-service training for the school principals should have these characteristics:

- a. training needs analysis has to be carried out prior to in-service training,

- b. short term and long term needs have to be identified and addressed,
- c. the in-services training preferences of principals have to be taken into consideration when planning for in-service courses,
- d. in-service training has to be approached systematically, planned elaborately and featured prominently and regularly in the professional life of the school administrators.

1.2. Statement of the problem

The role of the secondary school principals in shaping and deciding the direction that schools take in moulding the younger generation into morally responsible individuals, well adapted and developed holistically with clear goals and objectives in life is an issue of great interest to the nation. The success or failure of a school is often associated with the administrative and leadership abilities of its principal in utilising and manipulating the resources available at his disposal to achieve the department's objective. The principals' success in running their schools often depends on many interacting factors, of which their knowledge about their domains and their skills in utilising modern management techniques are important. It has been widely said that a lack of clear directive and jurisdiction on their supervisory, leadership and administrative functions; and a lack of clear guidelines on their consultative and leadership requirements are some of the factors contributing to their inability to carry out their responsibilities properly.

In order to have a clear glimpse of the training needs of the principals, training need assessments have to be carried out. The importance of training needs analysis cannot be disputed since it provides a vital link between the principals' actual needs and the department's perception of their needs.

Criticisms of principals' incompetent leadership, poor administrative and managerial ability have also prompted us to reflect back on the readiness of school principals to shoulder administrative, managerial and curriculum leadership roles effectively. Their bank of knowledge and skills may not be adequate to handle the challenges found in schools. Concerns about the principals' level of commitment and leadership capabilities; their lack of competence in guiding teachers in pedagogical issues and personal development; their inability to implement changes advocated by the department; and their inability to effectively guide as well as communicate effectively to their staff issues pertaining to feedback and improvement of schools activities make training and continuous education important.

Issues such as those mentioned above, make it fundamental for schools principals to be given regular and appropriate in-service training. Lessening the discrepancies between the skills and knowledge they possessed and the actual managerial and leadership skills needed will enable them to focus more on their desired and expected roles to achieve the goals and objectives of the department.

In Sarawak generally, and in Sri Aman particularly, the above issues are not only relevant, but deserved an in-depth study since the geographical distance, and the distribution of many schools away from the administrative centre make the school

principals the sole determinant for the successful implementation of the department directives, and as such, the success of the schools. Supervisions from the higher authorities have always been inadequate and infrequent. Many directives are merely sent out to the schools without further evaluation on whether they are implemented successfully or not. The degree and the seriousness of the implementation of these directives differ. Interpretation of the expected responsibilities sometimes varies and each principal often does only what he perceives as important and not what is expected of him by the department. School principals are thus, expected to carry out many new administrative and leadership functions without proper and elaborate training given to them. This phenomenon often leads to the failure of the implementation of many educational programmes at the school level.

These shortcomings arise due to the lack of regular in-service training programmes implemented for principals. Training needs analysis is also seldom carried out, either at the national, state or divisional level. Without prior knowledge of the in-service needs of secondary school principals, courses given are sometimes inappropriate, or at best too general; hence ineffective to meet the specific needs of the principals concerned.

In-service training for secondary school principals is considered as very important because of the constant changes that are occurring in schools. Principals, as administrators, managers, human resource developers, and instructional leaders need to constantly update the knowledge and skills that are related to their domains, roles and responsibilities. This is to enable them to meet the ever-changing demands that the department and the society put on them. Other than this, principals have to go for

in-service courses as often as possible to ensure that they are conversant in the latest technology and managerial styles to enable them to be in tuned with the changing needs of the education system. They have to improve and validate their competency to empower them to carry out their jobs effectively and efficiently.

Unfortunately though, in-service training for secondary school principals in Sarawak has never been a prominent feature in the Education Department human resource development programmes. There is no policy on the types and frequency of in-service training that every principal has to attend, either yearly or throughout the tenure of their principalship. No policy states that every principal should attend a certain number of in-service training hours within a specified period. Few courses are available, and participation for these courses is decided by the State Education Department; therefore, not every principal has the opportunity to attend these courses.

Courses are normally carried out on ad hoc and irregular basis, meant to solve immediate administrative or policy problems. Principals are not given opportunities to have any say on how they would want the courses to be like. Hanafi Mohd. Kamal (1980) for instance, disclosed that principals were merely asked to rank the course topics in terms of their importance and difficulty.

Most of the in-services courses; such as, courses for the newly promoted principals; short courses on new concepts, such as the TQM and ISO 9000; short courses on changes in the curriculum, examinations format, and the new appraisal system are only expository in nature, meant to satisfy short term needs. These short courses are inadequate to prepare principals for the enormous task of disseminating the

information to their staff and then applying the concepts to their schools administration. For instance, the TQM and ISO 9000 concepts are, until now, ideas, which are not fully understood by teachers and students in schools. Management courses, such as those conducted by IAB (Institute Aminuddin Baki), an institution responsible for providing in-service training for teachers and principals, are mostly theoretical in nature (see Appendix A for example). These courses are conducted by their academic staff. The impact of these in-service programmes toward improving the principals' administrative and leadership competencies as site managers are still questionable; firstly, because the training contents are theoretical and are sometimes difficult to relate to the real problems found in schools; secondly, such courses are not regular and do not involve the majority of school principals; thirdly, there is no effort to actually investigate the real in-service needs of the principals; and fourthly, there has never been any assessment on the impact of such courses.

Ad hoc courses that are carried out every now and then seem to be inadequate to prepare principals to meet the demand of the profession. Developmental in-service programmes catering for the short and long-term needs are still lacking. Until to date, in-service training provided for secondary school principals has not only been carried out sparingly, but has been implemented with minimal consideration to the principals' preferences and needs. Pre-training and post-training assessment are also not carried out, so the immediate as well as the long-term impacts of such training are not known. This scenario has to be changed if school improvement and effectiveness are to be taken seriously. Thus, the problems addressed in this research are:

- a. to identify and determine the in-service training needs of the principals;

- b. to identify and determine their short and long term in-service training needs;
- c. to identify and determine the principals' preferences in their in-service programmes;
- d. and to identify the differences or similarities, if any, of the principals and school supervisors' perceptions of the principals in-service needs and preferences.

1.3. Purpose of the study

There are several reasons why this study was undertaken. Firstly, schools, especially those that are located in the rural areas have needs and problems that are different, and are unique to that particular area only. These differences are not given due consideration when training materials are designed to cater for the general needs of principals. Doing training need analyses of specific areas enable trainers to be more focussed and thus increase their chances of achieving greater success in designing and implementing appropriate and workable programmes to help principals in that particular area.

Secondly, school principals are also under a lot of pressure to perform, and to carry out the various responsibilities explicitly or implicitly allocated to them. Because of the distance between the State Education Department or the Divisional Education Department and the schools, there are needs and happenings in schools that the education department are not aware of, or do not understand. Doing regular in-

service training assessments ensure that the education department is well posted with the current needs of principals.

Thirdly, school principals are not trained specifically to shoulder all the responsibilities expected of them. Since principals are not given any real training in the principalship before they are promoted to the post, in-service training becomes an important mean to expose them to the relevant skills and knowledge associated with the job. If they are to carry out these duties well, they should be trained not only continuously, but also appropriately according to their needs to enable them to shoulder the responsibilities expected of them. Regular in-service training serves as an instrument to remedy their shortcomings. Since principals have different educational background and experiences, their in-service needs differ. Thus, in-service training need assessments will provide information that can be used to provide meaningful contents for their in-service training programmes.

Fourthly, frequent in service training should be made compulsory for school principals due to changes in policies, curriculum, technologies, expectations and the declining performance of students. In-service training programmes need to be formulated to help principals prepare for these changes. The planning for the training curriculum will be easier, and the training provided more meaningful when the needs of the participants are known.

This study aims to investigate and determine the in-service needs and preferences of school principals as perceived by the principals and the school supervisors. It hopes to investigate and examine the principal's short and long-term in-service needs in

terms of the knowledge and skill required, and their preferences in their in-service programmes. It is hoped that the result of the study will provide a clearer picture of the various training needs of these principals. These needs will provide helpful indicators for the Education Department, or any training institutions interested in helping or improving the performances of the principals and the schools.

1.4. Significance of the study

The description and analysis of the principals' training needs could provide insight into the various short and long-term needs which could be used by in-service training institutions, such as IAB and the training division in the State Education Department, to design training curriculum for secondary school principals from this area. Identifying the long-term in-service needs of principals enable the education department to plan for a more elaborate and regular in-service courses to prepare principals to meet the challenges of the future. Simultaneously, determining the in-service needs and preferences of school principals of a particular area would help course designers to understand the specific and unique needs of certain locality. The researcher feels that doing training need analyses of smaller and more specific areas are more helpful in helping course designer to understand the needs that are urgently required in the area.

Since training is more effective and has more practical implication when it is designed based on localised needs, the researcher feels that this study will play its part in