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Leadership Preparatory Training Design Characteristics and Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Aspiring School Leaders in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Leadership preparatory trainings given to aspiring school leaders (ASLs) are huge investments. However, the added-value of these trainings are questionable and continue to be a major cause of concern locally and internationally. These trainings have been severely criticized for falling short in adequately preparing educational leaders for the challenging task of school leadership. The key criticism of the leadership preparatory trainings identified at local and global fronts was the weaknesses of the training design characteristics (TDCs). The self-efficacy construct which is recognized in the general training models and literature, is also not given due consideration in leadership preparatory trainings. This paper reports on a part of the larger mixed methodology study that evaluated the effectiveness of the National Professional Qualification for Educational Leaders (NPQELs) preparatory training in Malaysia in developing the self-efficacy beliefs of ASLs. It discusses the relationship between the TDCs and self-efficacy beliefs of the ASLs. A total of 226 NPQELs trained ASLs responded to a 66 item, nine point scale questionnaire on TDCs and self-efficacy beliefs. Bivariate Spearman's Rank Order Correlation test was used to analyse the quantitative data. The findings showed that there was a significant positive correlation between TDCs and self-efficacy, $r = 0.494$ at the level of significant $\alpha = 0.01$. Among the four TDCs tested, training internship revealed a positive and the most significant correlation in all the self-efficacy dimensions. This was followed by the relevancy of coursework to practice and, trainers and instructional practices' sub-factors. The TDCs which had the least correlation with self-efficacy beliefs was the selection sub-factor. The research indicates the importance of leadership preparatory trainings to identify and structure its TDCs to develop the self-efficacy beliefs of the ASLs to ensure training effectiveness.

Keywords: Leadership Preparatory Training, Aspiring School Leaders, Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Introduction

There is a growing importance in Malaysia on the development of human resources. This is very evident with the huge increase in the government allocation for training and development in recent years (Tenth Malaysia Plan, 2010). Various new and current policies and programmes were introduced and implemented taking into account the goals and aspirations of the National Vision Policy, in order to have a competitive edge in the global market (Haslinda & Mahyuddin, 2009; Ho, 2004). In this endeavour, the education sector has a vital role to play as the "*development of education in Malaysia, is directly interwoven in the planned national development agenda of the nation*" (Ibrahim, 2000, p. 50). To take the national education to greater access and heights, the National Education Blueprint (NEB) 2013-2025 clearly identifies the important roles of school leaders in leading and managing

the school organization to cope with future challenges (The New Malaysian Blueprint, 2012). Understanding the current challenges that the school leaders in Malaysia face and the future demands that they have to meet, trainings of these leaders are of ultimate importance. Hence, quality training programmes that are suitable and which are designed specifically to support them to meet the educational challenges are extremely vital (Chan & Sidhu, 2009; Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007; Wallace Foundation Report, 2008).

The National Institute of Educational Management and Leadership (Institut Aminuddin Baki/IAB) which is the sole institution in Malaysia, accountable to train, and design training programmes for aspiring and serving school principals (Ibrahim, 2000) had conducted numerous trainings in its quest of providing better school leadership. In the Tenth Malaysia Plan, IAB had targeted to further increase the number of participants in its training provided to school leaders to 14000 per year as compared to 8,000 previously (Tenth Malaysia Plan, 2010). The National Professional Qualification for School Leaders (NPQELs) is a training specifically conducted by IAB for aspiring school leaders (ASLs) and there is a huge investment in this training. Therefore, it is important to examine how the training addresses the ASLs' needs related to learning, behavioural change and performance improvement. However, there is an extreme limitation of literature in Malaysia regarding the preparatory training and development of educational leaders especially pertaining to ASLs (Gurcharan, 2009; Sazali, 2006). Generally, the limited number of studies done locally on the NPQELs preparatory training in Malaysia found that the ASLs perceived the training to be effective, as they had improved significantly in the respective areas of knowledge/skills, dispositions and performance. The NPQEL graduates were also found to demonstrate good ability in applying knowledge and skills acquired from the training (Aziz, 2003; Malaysian Educational, Planning and Research Department / EPRD, 2006; Kamaruzaman, Norasmah, & Siti, 2009; Rusinah & Lee, 2006; Gurcharan, 2009).

However, there were also many areas of concerns documented at the local front which were similar to the common criticisms of school leaders' preparatory training from different perspectives at the international front. The most common criticism was on the inadequate ability of the leadership preparatory trainings to prepare and support ASLs to take on the challenging task of school leadership (Chapman, 2005; Creighton & Jones, 2001; Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007; Levine, 2005; Mitgang, 2012; Wallace Foundation Report, 2008). The criticism both at the local and international front, were mainly on the training design characteristics (TDCs), which included (1) weak selection criteria, (2) irrelevant curricula (disconnection between theory and practice), (3) inadequate clinical practice, (4) weak faculty (teaching staff) and instructional practices (EPRD, 2006; Kamaruzaman, et al., 2009; Levine, 2005; Mitgang, 2012; Rusinah & Lee, 2006; Singh, 2009).

As these trainings are huge investment of money, time and labor (Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001), it is crucial that training efforts are fully realized. There are also significant gaps in the training literature generally on training design factors and self-efficacy, especially school leaders' self-efficacy beliefs which is often not given due consideration in leadership trainings (Mc. Cormick, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004), although self-efficacy is widely recognized in the general training models and literature. There still remains a vacuum in this area especially in the Malaysian context as research specifically addressing the self-efficacy development of the ASLs in leadership training is under-explored and is non-existent (Sazali, 2006). There are evidences that appropriately designed training interventions can alter leaders' self-efficacy (Fisher, 2010; McCormick & Taguma, 2007; Bandura, 1997; Saks, 1995). In addition, knowledge about the contributing TDCs or factors to school leaders' self-efficacy beliefs can support the improvement and development of school leaders' preparatory programmes. (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Therefore, it is vital that the

these TDCs that can enhance the self-efficacy beliefs are determined and further developed. This study is an effort to further enhance the quality of the NPQELs preparatory training in Malaysia.

Purpose of the Study

This paper reports on a part of the larger mixed methodology study that evaluated the effectiveness of the NPQELs preparatory training in Malaysia in developing the self-efficacy beliefs of ASLs. This paper examines and discusses one specific purpose of the larger study which was to examine the relationship between the TDCs (selection, trainer and instructional practices, relevancy of coursework and training internship) and the self-efficacy beliefs (instructional leadership, moral leadership and management) of the ASLs.

Research Question

The research question and null hypothesis tested in the study were as below:

RQ1: Is there any relationship between the training design characteristics (selection, trainer and instructional practices, relevancy of coursework to practice and training internship) and self-efficacy beliefs (efficacy in instructional leadership, efficacy in moral leadership and efficacy in management)?

Null Hypothesis 1 (H01): There is no statistically significant relationship between training design characteristics (selection, trainer and instructional practices, relevancy of coursework to practice and training internship) and self-efficacy beliefs (efficacy in instructional leadership, efficacy in moral leadership and efficacy in management).

Theoretical Framework

This research was based on the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). Bandura's model from his SCT that states human behaviour is dynamic and operates in a process of 'triadic reciprocal causation' (Bandura, 1997). The theoretical framework for this study was based on Bandura's (1989) '*triadic reciprocal causation*' and self-efficacy concepts from his Social Cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977; 1986). This theoretical perspective believes human functioning and behaviour is the result of continuous active interaction among personal/individual factors (cognitive, affective and biological events), behavioural and environmental influences (Bandura, 1986). The '*triadic reciprocal causation*' concept believes that interpretation of one's behaviour informs and alters the environments and the personal factors one possesses. This will in turn will inform and alter subsequent behaviour (Bandura, 1986). Application of this *triadic reciprocal causation* model within the context of this study is shown in Figure 1 where the personal, environment and behaviour factors are represented by ASLs' personal/individual factors, educational leadership training and leadership practices/behaviours respectively. The environment in the context of this study referred to the educational leadership training for ASLs' in Malaysia.

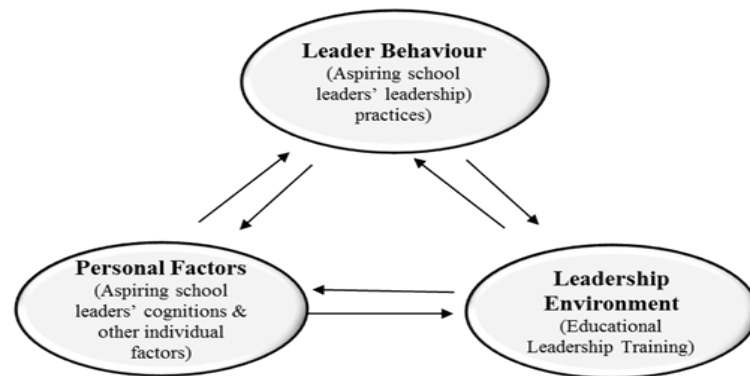


Figure 1: Bandura's (1977) 'triadic reciprocal causation' model as applied in this study

ASLs' personal factors such as internal thoughts, self-efficacy beliefs and other individual factors influence their leadership behaviours and these elements are in turn shaped by the external environment which is the NPQELs preparatory leadership training.

Bandura's key argument with regards to the role of self-efficacy beliefs in human functioning is that "people's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively true" (Bandura, 1997, p. 2). Self-efficacy belief is "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Bandura (1997) found that rather than people's actual abilities, it is their beliefs or judgments about their capabilities that drive them to achieve their goals. The stronger their self-efficacy beliefs, the more persistent are their efforts. Bandura asserts that the judgment of what a person can do with the skills he or she possesses is more important than the skills alone. "It is when one is applying skills that high efficacy intensifies and sustains the effort needed to realize a difficult performance" (Bandura, 1997, p.394). Pajares (2002) also agrees that knowledge and skills alone are poor predictors of an outcome. This is because as advocated by Bandura, self-efficacy beliefs determine what individuals do with the knowledge and skills they possess, therefore people's behaviour can often be better predicted by the beliefs they hold about their capabilities than their actual capabilities. This is why people's behaviours are sometimes not in line with their actual capabilities. In fact, even with similar knowledge and skills it may differ widely (Pajares, 2002).

Therefore, basing Bandura's concept in the contexts of this study, it is the beliefs that the ASLs' have about their capabilities rather than their actual abilities that make them persist to achieve their goals (Bandura, 1997). This means that the behaviours or the courses of actions undertaken by the ASLs can be better predicted from the self-efficacy beliefs that they possess about their capabilities. This is because these self-efficacy beliefs help determine what individuals do with the knowledge and skills they have. Therefore, how well these ASLs' integrate the knowledge and skills from the NPQELs' training into their school leadership is also determined by how much the training is able to heighten their self-efficacy beliefs.

The justification for applying Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and the self-efficacy construct to leadership training was because of the very strong validity of the theory and well-supported 'triadic reciprocal causation' concept by a large body of empirical research (Mc Cormick, 2001). In addition, Bandura's framework although has been recognized by researchers in other fields, it has not been the case in the leadership studies (Mc Cormick, 2001). Herein, lays the contribution of this research.

Literature Review

Self-Efficacy

The term *self-efficacy* was first coined in 1977 by Albert Bandura and the definition of self-efficacy from the guru himself is "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Self-efficacy beliefs are peoples' beliefs of their abilities to have control over events that happen in their lives (Bandura, 1989). The fundamental to this self-efficacy belief is, the fact that "what people think, believe, and feel affects how they behave" (Bandura, 1986, p. 25). Self-efficacy beliefs are important determinants of human motivation, affect and action. Efficacy beliefs are formed through a complex cognitive process (Bandura, 1989) through four fundamental sources of self-efficacy beliefs. According to Bandura, the four fundamental sources that influence the development of peoples' efficacy beliefs are namely; (1) Mastery experiences, (2) Vicarious experience, (3) Social persuasion, and (4) Physiological arousal or Emotional states (Bandura, 1989, 1997). According to Bandura, the combination of these four sources produces self-efficacy beliefs that regulate human functioning through four major kinds of processes: "cognitive, motivational, affective and selection" (Bandura, 1989, p. 1175). However, information from the four sources of self-efficacy must first be cognitively processed and integrated through self-reflective thought before it can be accepted as judgment of competence (Bandura, 1989; Pajares, 2002).

Review of Studies on the School Leader Preparatory Training in Malaysia

In Malaysia, with the introduction of the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), a special training programme for school heads was first realized. NPQH was a unique one-year programme, introduced in 1999 by the Ministry of Education and was conducted by IAB (IAB, 2004). In July 2011, the NPQH training was revised to The National Professional Qualification for School Leaders (NPQELs) training. With regard to research on the NPQELs training, there is an extreme limitation on this sole headship preparatory programme in Malaysia. A review of local studies done on the previous NPQH training would assist in understanding the importance of this research with regard to the NPQELs training.

Generally, the limited number of studies done on the NPQH preparatory programme showed that there exist a positive reaction by the participants about the programme effectiveness (Aziz, 2003; EPRD, 2006; Gurcharan, 2009; Kamaruzaman, 2009; Rohaya et al., 2006; Rusinah and Lee, 2006). The NPQH graduates were found to have had improved significantly in the respective areas of knowledge and skills, dispositions and performance due to the NPQH preparatory training (Aziz, 2003; EPRD, 2006). The effectiveness of the programme was found to be satisfactory namely in course objectives, suitability of course content, course duration, facilities, resource materials, delivery of content by trainers, practicum and attachment programmes (Kamaruzaman, 2009; Gurcharan, 2009; Rohaya et al., 2006). It was found that participants were motivated by positive motivational orientations to participate in the training. The highest ranked motivational orientations were 'professional advancement', followed by 'educational preparation' and 'cognitive interest' (Rusinah and Lee; 2006).

Despite the NPQH training being effective, the findings also had several areas of concerns highlighted by the NPQH graduates.. Firstly, many were dissatisfied with their placement after the training as there was no proper systematic planning regarding the placement. Many NPQH graduates were posted back to the post that they held prior to the course or as classroom teachers. The graduates were disappointed as they were not appointed

as school heads even after several years. This was seen as wastage of human resources. Their plight was due to the existence of many 'senior' teachers. Thus, appointing the NPQH graduates to the school headship position was deemed by the Ministry of Education as doing injustice to these senior teachers who were waiting for time-based promotion. Even though these senior teachers do not possess the NPQH certification, priority was given to them. This raised dissatisfaction among the NPQH graduates who had the certification and were also in the time-based promotion zone. Accordingly, they expressed disappointment as they were not able to practice what was learnt – "theory without power is difficult to practice" was their point of argument (Aziz, 2003; EPRD, 2006).

Secondly, the study also found that the theoretical component was too compact to be covered in a short period of time, which was about six months. Due to the time constraints, the facilitators had to rush through the components that needed to be covered. This had a negative impact on learning (EPRD, 2006). Another criticism was on the lack of expertise of the trainers in adult learning and also on understanding adult needs (Aziz, 2003). The participants were not convinced with some of the knowledge areas of the training as those who disseminated the knowledge (the trainers/lecturers) had no prior experience working as a school heads. This was a credibility issue (Aziz, 2003; EPRD, 2006).

The previous studies also listed a few recommendations to further upgrade the NPQH training programme. One of the recommendations was that the direction of the NPQH graduates after their training must be clearly identified. It was suggested then that the promotion to the headship position should also be based on competence and not on seniority alone. Therefore, the appointment of headship should be re-evaluated. It was also recommended that stringent procedure should be followed in the selection of participants for the NPQH training. Improvement must be made to the selection criteria to include more senior teachers in the time-based zone. Those who were already holding administrative positions such as Senior Assistants, Afternoon Supervisors and Head of the Departments should be given priority in the selection for the training to ease the posting process of these participants after the training. In addition, to further enhance quality, non-NPQH senior school heads /principals were suggested to be invited to share their wealth of experiences and to give lectures. These senior school heads would be able to share first hand information based on their headship experiences with the participants.

Suggestions to upgrade the delivery of content by the trainers were also given. Firstly, various teaching and learning strategies should be employed to ease participants' understanding. Secondly, increase hands-on activities or practical activities in the teaching and learning process. Finally, it was suggested that professional development of the lecturers should be initiated by IAB from time to time to ensure quality of the programme (Kamaruzaman, 2009, Gurcharan, 2009). It was recommended support be extended to the NPQH graduates by IAB and the experiences from the NPQH heads ought to be utilized by the organizers (Gurcharan, 2009). It is also suggested that the NPQH training cater for the differences of the contexts of schools. School visits were also suggested to be led by Senior Principals or NPQH certified principals (EPRD, 2006; Kamaruzaman, 2009; Gurcharan, 2009). Other themes that emerged were on the examination format in the assessment of the NPQH training, the documentation of experiences of NPQH heads, creation of a post for NPQH heads in the training division of each State Education Department (SED), and introduction of incentives in the form of salary increment for graduates of NPQH (Gurcharan, 2009).

In conclusion, from the limited number of studies done on the NPQH programme, there exist a positive reaction by the participants about the programme effectiveness. Similarly, the limitations and weaknesses identified suggested further improvement to the

programme. Some of these recommendations were taken into consideration and revised in the current NPQELs training. However, there is still room for improvement. It was also apparent from the review that none of the studies focused particularly on the self-efficacy of the participants in the NPQH training. This study intend to fill the gap of the limited studies done thus far on the sole school leaders' preparatory training in Malaysia, This study also provides a richer perspective through its investigation on the self-efficacy beliefs of the ASLs in the NPQEL training.

Methodology

This paper examines and discusses one specific purpose of the quantitative part of a larger sequential mix-methodology study. It examined the relationship between the TDCs (selection, trainer and instructional practices, relevancy of coursework and training internship) and the self-efficacy beliefs (instructional leadership, moral leadership and management) of the ASLs. The sample of the study consisted of 226 NPQELs trained ASLs who responded to a 66 item, nine-point scale questionnaire on TDCs and self-efficacy beliefs. The ASLs were those who held senior management positions in schools such as Senior Assistants of Academic, Senior Assistants (Students' Affairs), Senior Assistants (Co-Curricular) and Afternoon Supervisors. The 'School Leaders' Preparation Programme and Self-Efficacy Questionnaire' (ASLPSE) which featured a 66 item questionnaire had two sections. Section I included 8 items on demographic factors and 40 items regarding school leaders' perceptions of their NPQEL preparatory TDCs. Section I of the 'ASLPSE' was adapted from the questionnaire used by Versland (2009) in her study. The original source of the questionnaire largely came from the findings of the Stanford University (Stanford Education Leadership Institute, 2005) and the Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB, 2006) School Leadership Study. Section II consisted 18 items on school leaders' self-efficacy beliefs. This part of the study utilized the Principal Self Efficacy Scale (PSES) developed by Megan Tschannen-Moran and Christopher Gareis (2005). The PSES section was used to identify aspiring school leaders' beliefs in their abilities to accomplish aspects of school leadership. The PSES assessed the school leaders' judgment of his/her own ability and capability to manage the school organization, lead instruction, and establish a learning environment (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2005). The PSES measured self- efficacy beliefs based on three sub-factors namely; Efficacy for Management, Efficacy for Instructional Leadership, Efficacy for Moral leadership.

Data Analysis

The researcher aimed to identify the relationship between the training design characteristics and the ASLs' self-efficacy beliefs. The Null Hypothesis 1 (H01) was tested using the Bivariate Spearman's Rank Order Correlation test. This is the non-parametric alternative to Pearson's product-moment correlation (Pallant, 2005). Spearman's Rank Order Correlation (ρ) is used to calculate the strength of the relationship between two continuous variables. Spearman's Rank Order Correlation (ρ) produces a correlation coefficient (r) value, which indicates a direction and a magnitude of strength of the relationship between the variables. The magnitude of strength of the correlation is not dependent on the direction (either positive or negative) or the sign. In this study, Bivariate Spearman's Rank Order Correlation test was conducted on the training design characteristics as the predictor variable and self-efficacy beliefs as the outcome variable. The strength of the relationship between the variables was determined by using the Cohen's Scale (1988). The general interpretation of Cohen's scale is that anything greater than 0.5 is large, 0.5–0.3 is moderate, 0.3–0.1 is

small and anything smaller than 0.1 is insubstantial or trivial (Cohen, 1988). Below are the findings of the Spearman's Rank Order correlation.

Findings

Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Findings for Overall Correlation between Training Design Characteristics (TDCs) and Self-Efficacy Beliefs.

Table 1 below presents the overall findings of Spearman's rho Correlation between the TDCs and ASLs' self-efficacy beliefs.

Table 1

Overall Findings of Spearman's Rank Order Correlation between Training Design Characteristics (TDCs) and Self-Efficacy Beliefs.

Correlations			Training Design	Total diff. SE
			Characteristics	(pre/post)
Spearman's rho	Training Design Characteristics	Correlation Coefficient	1	.494**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0
		N	226	226
	Total Difference between the prepost SE	Correlation Coefficient	.494**	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0	.
		N	226	226

Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Findings between Each of the Training Design Characteristics (Selection, Trainer and Instruction, Relevancy of Coursework, Training Internship) and Self-Efficacy Beliefs.

Table 2 below presents the findings of Spearman's Rank Order Correlation between each of the TDCs and self-efficacy beliefs.

Table 2

Spearman's Rank Order Correlation between Each of the Training Design Characteristics and Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Training Design Characteristics	Spearman's rho	Total Self- Efficacy belief
Selection	Correlation Coefficient	.236**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0
	N	226
Faculty & Instruction	Correlation Coefficient	.373**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0
	N	226
Relevancy of Coursework	Correlation Coefficient	.496**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0
	N	226
Training_ Internship	Correlation Coefficient	.545**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0
	N	226

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings showed that there was significant positive correlation between each of the TDCs (selection, trainer and instruction, relevancy of coursework, training internship) and ASLs' overall self-efficacy beliefs with differing magnitude of strength in their influential relationship. Based on the Cohen's scale (Cohen, 1988), the strength of the relationship was small/low for selection ($r = 0.236$), medium/moderate for faculty and instruction ($r = 0.373$) and relevancy of coursework ($r = 0.496$), and large/high for training internship ($r = 0.545$) respectively, at the level of significant $\alpha = 0.01$.

This proved that generally there exists a positive and moderate to high influential relationship among the three TDCs variables (faculty & instruction, relevancy of coursework and training internship) and ASLs' self-efficacy beliefs. However, the strength of relationship between selection and self-efficacy was low indicating a very small but positive relationship.

Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Overall Findings Between Each Of The Training Design Characteristics And Each Of The Self-Efficacy Dimensions.

The findings of Spearman's rho Correlation between each of the TDCs (selection, trainer and instruction, relevancy of coursework, training internship) and each of the self-efficacy beliefs dimensions (efficacy for instructional leadership, efficacy for moral leadership and efficacy for management) are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Spearman's Rank Order Correlation between Training Design Characteristics and Self-Efficacy Sub Factors

Training Design Characteristics	Spearman's rho	Efficacy for Moral Leadership	Efficacy for Instructional Leadership	Efficacy for Management
Selection	Correlation Coefficient	.215**	.225**	.212**
Faculty & Instruction	Correlation Coefficient	.308**	.369**	.374**
Relevancy of Coursework	Correlation Coefficient	.428**	.477**	.454**
Training Internship	Correlation Coefficient	.483**	.486**	.533**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings showed a significant positive correlation between the TDCs and ASLs' self-efficacy beliefs. In summary, the findings of Spearman's Rank Order Correlation analysis showed that there was a significant positive but differing magnitude of strength of relationship among the three TDCs namely, trainer & instruction, relevancy of coursework and training internship with self-efficacy dimensions (efficacy for moral leadership, efficacy for instructional leadership and efficacy for management). The strength of relationship among these three training design sub-factors across the self-efficacy beliefs dimensions ranged between moderate to high at the level of significant $\alpha = 0.01$.

Training internship revealed a moderately high influence in all the self-efficacy dimensions. The strength of the relationship was high for efficacy for management ($r = 0.533$) and moderate across efficacy for moral leadership ($r = 0.483$), and efficacy for instructional leadership ($r = 0.486$) respectively, at the level of significant $\alpha = 0.01$. This was followed by relevancy of coursework and, the trainer and instruction sub-factors with a moderate relationship with self-efficacy dimensions. The strength of the relationship between relevancy of coursework and self-efficacy dimensions was moderate/medium across all three sub-factors of self-efficacy namely, efficacy for moral leadership ($r = 0.428$), efficacy for instructional leadership ($r = 0.477$) and efficacy for management ($r = 0.454$) respectively, at the level of significant $\alpha = 0.01$. The strength of the relationship between the trainer and instruction sub-factor was also moderate across all three dimensions of self-efficacy efficacy namely, for moral leadership ($r = 0.374$), efficacy for instructional leadership ($r = 0.369$) and efficacy for management ($r = 0.308$) respectively, at the level of significant $\alpha = 0.01$. Of all the TDCs, only the selection sub-factor had a small/low relationship across all the three self-efficacy sub-factors namely, efficacy for moral leadership ($r = 0.215$), efficacy for instructional leadership ($r = 0.225$), and efficacy for management ($r = 0.212$).

The overall findings of Spearman's Rank Order Correlation between TDCs and self-efficacy proved that there existed a significantly positive and moderately high correlation between the two variables. This is also evidenced by the correlation coefficient findings for each of the TDCs sub-factors across the dimensions of self-efficacy beliefs namely, efficacy for moral leadership, efficacy for instructional leadership and efficacy for management.

Therefore, the Null Hypothesis 1 (H01) which stated that there is no statistically significant relationship between the TDCs (selection, trainer and instruction, relevancy of coursework, and training internship) and self-efficacy beliefs (instructional leadership, management skills and moral leadership) was rejected.

Discussion

The study's findings confirmed that each of the TDCs (selection, trainer and instruction, relevancy of coursework, training internship) had significant relationship or influence in all the three dimensions of self-efficacy beliefs (instructional leadership, management skills and moral leadership). This study's findings were supported by Tschannen-Moran and Gareis' (2005) study which found the principal preparation program to be a significant factor related to principal self-efficacy. On the other hand, this study's findings were not supported by Gary's (2008) study which did not show any statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and the principal preparation variables, years since certification, quality of the professors' instructional practices, and quality of experiences obtained from the program which was tested in the study. However, 70% of the principals in Gary's (2008) study rated their programme as high and felt that they were well prepared by their programme. These differing findings could be due to the manner the research was carried out and the differences in the demographic or personal factors of the principal population.

The most significant influence of the TDCs variables in the present study came from the training internship and relevancy of coursework in the training. This differed from Versland's (2009) study which found these training elements to be ineffective. On the contrary, Versland (2009) study found that the most effective principals' preparatory programme elements were from instructional strategies such as case studies, problem based learning and teaching staff who were regarded as possessing relevant administrative experience and promoting rigor and relevance throughout the programme. These effective training elements identified by Versland (2009) were not supported by the findings of this study, which found these training characteristics to have moderate correlations on the self-efficacy beliefs of the ASLs. The plausible explanation for these differing results could be the differences in the training design characteristics itself, for example the content, delivery, coursework, teaching staff, instructional method and others. Versland's (2009) study also provided support for this explanation as her study also found that there were differences in the perceptions of the principals regarding the effectiveness of the institution where they earned their certification. Therefore, the differing results of both the present study and Versland's (2009) could be due to the differences in context and also culture.

Overall, the findings of this study together with Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2005) study and Versland's (2009) study indicated the importance of initial preparatory of school headship training in influencing the self-efficacy beliefs of the ASLs.

Limitations

The major limitation of this study was due to the change of the mode of training from NPQH training to the present NPQEL training. This change inevitably posed limitations in terms of samples size and time taken to complete the study. Secondly, the results of the study may also be limited from the effects of common-source bias. This is because the primary data for both dependent and independent variables were from self-reported instruments from the samples. Thirdly, the study was also limited in the sense that factors other than the NPQEL training that could have caused the changes observed to take place which influence the ASLs' perceptions of the training could not be eliminated.

Recommendation

Research on the construct of leadership self-efficacy beliefs can further benefit the knowledge base in this area as there are limited numbers of studies specifically on school leaders' self-efficacy beliefs. Research specifically addressing the self-efficacy development of the ASLs training is non-existent especially in the Malaysian context (Sazali, 2006). There still remains a vacuum in this area specifically on how to develop the self-efficacy of the ASLs to meet the ever-increasing change in the education field. A similar study can be undertaken on the practicing principals' trainings or other school management trainings conducted in IAB or by the Ministry of Education for school leaders to gauge the effectiveness of these training in developing the self-efficacy of the participants.

Conclusion

This study confirmed that TDCs have significant influence on the self-efficacy beliefs of the ASLs. This finding verified the Bandura's (1989) 'triadic reciprocal' model from his Social Cognitive theory. The study confirmed and refuted previous findings in the training and self-efficacy research. The results from this study added to the growing knowledge base on the self-efficacy beliefs and its influencing factors in leadership preparatory training. The study complemented the literature reviews' support that developing the self-efficacy in leadership training should be a vital strategy for improving leader's effectiveness (McCormick, 2007; Paglis & Green, 2002; Wood & Bandura, 1989). Therefore, given the important role of self-efficacy in behaviour and performance, it is vital that that leadership preparatory training is designed to purposefully develop the self-efficacy beliefs of the future leaders to ensure organizational excellence.

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