SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR NOVICE SCHOOL LEADERS TO LEAD: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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ABSTRACT: *Novice school leaders are believed to need a relevant and effective support system in shaping their leadership knowledge and skills during their induction period. This article aims to highlight the literature related to studies on support systems provided to novice school leaders in various countries. A systematic literature review method using the PRISMA model was utilized to obtain the selection process of relevant articles on the SCOPUS website. A total of 17 articles were selected for review based on the procedures established by the model. The findings of the literature analysis revealed that there is a complexity in the form of support systems provided, especially in the aspects of mentoring and coaching. This article also lists the advantages and disadvantages of the support system offered as well as suggestions for improvement. Furthermore, some implications have been highlighted based on the findings of the study. Besides assisting other researchers to understand the nature of support systems provided to novice school leaders from previous studies, it is also relevant to governments and non-government agencies in providing more effective support systems in the future.*

I.   INTRODUCTION

School leaders are the key persons who guide educational organizations toward achieving their objectives. However, an individual leader does not acquire leadership knowledge and skill overnight but rather takes time to develop. Therefore, many prior studies focused on various components of school leader preparation programs. Bush believes that principal preparation is often overlooked in many nations even though leadership is widely recognized as among the key significant component affecting student performance [1]. It is also highlighted by Yavuz, Peter and Abolafia that effective leadership requires successful leadership training to convey knowledge and skills that can be used by leaders in their leadership process [2]. Bush proclaims that there are six critical stages in the journey of becoming a school leader [1], such as:

1.   Talent management
2.   Leadership preparation
3.   Recruitment and selection
4.   Induction
5.   Mentoring
6.   Professional development

According to Bush, the induction stage typically refers to the novice stage of school leaders [1]. While Spillane and Lee mention that individual school leaders who are classified as novices ought to have a tenure of 1-3 years [3]. This stage is known as the process of transitioning duties and responsibilities from teaching in the classroom to leading a school organization, and previous researchers identified it as a difficult stage for a novice leader. According to Brown [4] and, Kilic and Gumus [5], such task shifts had not only altered the role of new leaders but had also increased their accountability for developing and advancing school-led initiatives. As a result, a support system is critical in assisting them in adjusting to these new tasks and responsibilities [3,6].

Previous studies claimed that mentoring was one of the most common forms of support and had a significant influence on the growth of new leaders [1, 7-10]. Although this term was frequently used interchangeably with the term coaching to describe the process of sharing knowledge between one

individual who was more experienced and another who was new to the job, there are differences in definition in terms of function and role. According to Clutterbuck, coaching was commonly used to achieve specific goals in one's work and life [8]. Meanwhile, mentoring was frequently associated with a broader scope, holistic development, and career advancement.

Rekha and Ganesh proclaimed that mentoring programs were frequently the focal point in developing an individual's professionalism and personality [11]. This was due to the fact that this aspect was important and frequently associated with an individual's success and excellence in their work [10]. According to Rhodes and Fletcher, mentoring could instil a sense of 'mastery' in school leaders and contribute to their self-efficacy to lead [9]. This process was regarded as critical in the process of professional development and occurred continuously, particularly in the phases preceding and early in the appointment of an individual novice leader in school. It is an important focus in preparing novice school leaders so that the "reality shock" they experience during the induction phase when they are referred to as novice leaders, does not harm their leadership style practices at the next level. According to Spillane and Lee, when novice school leaders begin to perform actual responsibilities as individuals who assume primary responsibilities in the organization, they experience a "reality shock" though they have obtained leadership experience through training and experience as middle leaders (Assistant Principal, Head Teacher, Course Leader, Coordinator) in the school [3].

This paper presents a systematic literature review of the support system provided for novice school leaders during their induction period. A systematic review is a research method and procedure for locating and critically evaluating relevant research, as well as gathering and analyzing data from that study [12]. The goal of a systematic review is to find all empirical data that answers a certain research question or hypothesis and meets the pre-specified inclusion criteria. Bias can be reduced by utilizing explicit and systematic processes when assessing papers and all relevant material, resulting in accurate findings from which

conclusions and judgments can be taken [13].

The sections below present the objectives, and systematic literature review methodology, followed by the principal findings of this study and conclusions.

Objectives:
1. To review the findings of the existing support system offered to novice school leaders
2. To investigate the suggestion given by previous authors to improve the leadership support system for novice school leaders

II.   METHOD

A.   Research design

A systematic review protocol was developed based on PRISMA by Moher et al., to explore research on the current practice of leadership support systems for beginning school leaders and the suggestion for improvement provided by the authors in the studies [13]. The content analysis method was used to review each of the articles retrieved from the selection procedure (PRISMA) according to the objectives mentioned above.

Search   strategy: TITLE-ABS-KEY ((*"new leader*"* OR *"newcomer* leader*"* OR *"novice leader*"* OR *"new head*"* OR *"novice head*"* OR *"newcomer head*"* OR *"new principal*"* OR *"novice principal*"* OR *"newcomer principal*"*) AND (*train** OR *mentor** OR *coach**) AND (*school*)).

Table 1: **Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Type of document	Journals (research articles with empirical studies)	Journals (Systematic Literature Review, Concept paper, bibliometric, books, chapter in books, conference proceeding, book series
Timeline	Between 2009 and 2021	Before 2009
Language	English	Non-English
Focus	Novice, beginning, new school principals/ headteachers/ leaders	Experience school leaders/ principals/ headteacher
Organization	Schools	Other than schools

III.   RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the reviewed literature and findings

In this study, the content of 17 articles published between 2009 and 2021 was examined and analyzed. The analysis was focused on articles with actual data (quantitative and qualitative data from fieldwork) and excluded articles on literature analysis, conceptual discussion, systematic review literature, and bibliometrics. Each article has a specific investigation topic, with a group of respondents that came from either novice school leaders (mentees) or experienced school leaders (mentors), or both categories. Several themes emerged that related to leadership training programs for preparing school leaders in several countries around the world.

A. Leadership training programs

For studies involving leadership training programs, the respondents involved were novice principals. Their perspectives and opinions on their participation experiences in leadership training programs examined by researchers which categorized into two, i.e., leadership preparation programs provided by the government [14][15] and leadership training programs run by non-government institutions such as school-university partnership programs [16] and bench learning programs introduced in Norway and Sweden [17].

i)   *Programs by government*

A study by Bysik et al. [14] and Ng and Szeto [15] discussed principal leadership preparation programs implemented in Russia and Hong Kong. Both studies elaborated on structured and centralized leadership preparation programs offered by the government and focused on knowledge and skills development aspects of leadership such as organizational administration skills, finance, curriculum, and teaching. Both studies found that such training was more of an organizational management training that less contributes to novice leaders' leadership skills development [14, 15].

This led both studies to conclude that there were deficiencies in existing programs and a need for improvement. A study by Bysik et al. suggested that training programs in Russia included several other elements, such as contextual aspects, and collaborative leadership approaches. The study revealed that novice leaders in Russia were more in need of several aspects, such as team building, people skills, and collaborative leadership approaches [14]. Meanwhile, Ng and Szeto suggested that the Hong Kong government provided formal and informal support to new principals during their induction period, besides meeting the learning needs of this group about organizational management and leadership. According to them, this will assist the new leaders in applying the knowledge and skills they gained during the leadership training to their workplace through action learning or research projects [15].

ii)   *Other leadership training programs by other institutions*

Walker and Downey highlighted the university-school partnership program as a support for beginning school leaders in Illinois, USA [16]. The basic aims of this program were to recruit, develop, and retain new and existing school leaders. In this study, the authors revealed that the program managed to increase the overall percentage of new district leaders by over 19 percent and met all seven of its established targets for leadership development and sustainability. Thus, the authors believed that such a program needs to maintain in the effort to provide formal and informal support to the new leaders [16].

Further, Aas and Bloom's study focused on a leadership training program in collaboration between Norway and Sweden for novice principals, which was called a bench learning program [17]. In the study, they tried to examine the effectiveness of this bench learning program that combines three main aspects, namely structured school visits, work in learning groups, and a theoretical foundation. This study found that the synergy of these three aspects could increase participants' motivation and motivate them to try new

leadership strategies. However, there were some suggestions given to increase the effectiveness of this program, such as the need for systematic and critical reflection elements and training for instructors of the training sessions in the program [17].

B.   Leadership coaching and mentoring program

Articles focused on the aspects of leadership coaching and mentoring were categorized into two, namely the characteristics of mentoring or coaching programs and mentoring strategies. There were 13 articles were analyzed and 7 of them were related to coaching and mentoring programs offered in the USA, authored by Silvera, Lochmiller, Copland and Tripps [7]; Celoria and Hemphill [18]; James-Ward [19]; Lochmiller [20]; Searby [21]; Gimbel and Kefor [22] and; Hayes [23]. Although their study was in the USA, the discussion among articles was different. The other 6 studies were discussed from different perspectives of other countries.

The two key themes focused on the studies related to; i) the characteristics of mentoring or coaching programs and, ii) the alternative strategies in mentoring proposed by researchers. The implications of these studies contributed to quality and effectiveness improvement in coaching and mentoring program for novice principals.

i)   Characteristics of mentoring or coaching program

Studies that examined the characteristics of coaching and mentoring programs were discussed several issues such as i) roles of the program as a support system for new principals in their induction process [7, 24] ii) factors for mentoring program's effectiveness [20, 23] iii) the impact of mentoring programs on mentors [25, 26] and, iv) the weaknesses of mentoring programs [22, 27].

Studies by Silvera *et al.* and Lokman et al. were about the role of mentoring programs as a support system for developing the leadership skills of novice school leaders [7, 24]. Silvera et al. focused on a coaching program by a private north-western university in the USA. This program aimed to provide support to new principals in the induction stage that combined three parties, namely leadership coaches (university), new administrators (new principals), and internship site supervisors (experienced school principals). The findings revealed that coaching has its value-added in supporting new principals during the induction process. Aspects that were stressed by this study were personalized support, the role of the site supervisor (experience school principals), and the support from the university during the intern's field experience [7]. Whilst a study by Lokman et al. on School Improvement Partners (SIP+) in Malaysia explained the role of mentoring as a support system that contributes significantly to the professional development of school leaders in several aspects. However, time constraint was a major factor in undermining the effectiveness of the process. Therefore, they suggested that this mentoring program be recognized as an official program by the Ministry of Education Malaysia, with a meticulous selection process of mentors. In addition, sufficient time is needed for this program for an optimal impact on novice principals [24].

James-Ward [19], Lochmiller [20], and Hayes [23] in turn focused on several aspects that were contributing factors to the effectiveness of mentoring programs in the context in which they study. James-Ward had studied on leadership skills of mentors or coaches. He believed that the skills set, and knowledge of a coach was critical to the coaching experience [19]. While Lochmiller found that successful coaching required a combination of coaching strategies. He argued about flexibility in coaching strategies and proposed reflection as a useful technique to help principals identify challenges, devise actions, and consider impacts [20]. Hayes in his study stressed strong developmental mentoring relationships and the role that mentors could play in the mentoring process to help novice principals develop their leadership skills [23]. These researchers provided suggestions related to mentors' selection, the suitability of mentor-mentee pairing, time of mentoring session, and duration of the mentoring program.

Scott's study in Canada on the systematic mentoring approach between experienced principals to new principals explained the positive and significant influence of mentoring from the aspects of socialization and enculturation [25]. Mentors refreshed their enthusiasm for their administrative roles and were more conscious of organizational processes resulting from mentoring. This study also found that limited time factors affect the potential effectiveness of this program in influencing the leadership behavior of novice principals. Thus, he suggested several things, such as increasing open discussion time, informal mentoring, and increasing opportunities for ICT -assisted discussions. Meanwhile, Aravena in Chile investigated mentors for leadership development in novice principals and revealed that mentors tried to improve their mentoring skills to make the process effective [26]. This study suggested that the effects of mentoring should be studied to find room for improvement of the program and informal mentoring practices as opposed to current formal practices.

Conversely, Oplatka and Lapidot and Gimbel and Kefor focused on the weaknesses of mentoring programs they studied [27, 22]. Oplatka and Lapidot who conducted a study in Israel found that the mentoring program was less emphasis on instructional leadership and has no clear and systematic process in the selection of mentors [27]. Thus, they suggested sufficient time for new principals to be prepared with current leadership knowledge and skills in the succession plan process. In addition, the implementation of mentoring programs needs to be reviewed and improved. A study by Gimbel and Kefor summarised some of the findings of mentoring programs in helping new principals performed leadership duties and responsibilities such as less precise mentor roles (less helpful in advising, less clear reflective practices), and new principals' challenges in their leadership process [22]. Researchers have suggested that the mentoring process needs to consider the suitability of mentor and mentee characteristics, the mandated hour, and the training of mentors who participated in the program.

ii)   Mentoring/coaching strategies

For the theme of strategies in mentoring and coaching, two sub-themes focused on criteria of the effective mentoring process [18][28] and the introduction to new approaches in mentoring namely Mentoring Mindset Framework [21]and Cognitive Coaching [29].

In California, Celoria and Hemphill conducted a study that

highlighted the process-oriented (i.e. questioning, paraphrasing, reflection, instructional approach, and facilitative approach) as the main mechanism in coaching [18]. They argued that the process-oriented led to the constructivist learning process approach rather than the transmissive or behaviorist approach which is used in a traditional leadership training program. Besides, Simon et al. in their study evaluated the effectiveness of coaching programs implemented by the Queensland Department of Education and Training in Australia [28]. Findings showed that the program has successfully formed positive leadership traits in new principals. Thus, they suggested a mentoring program should adapt to the similar, autonomous, and peer-supported program as practiced in the Queensland Department of Education. Such a program can motivate and energize new principals to continue being effective leaders.

Roger et al. and Searby in their studies examined methods that could improve the effectiveness of the mentoring process [29, 21]. Roger et al. conducted a study on Cognitive Coaching as part of the Leader2Leader (L2L) Leadership Pilot Program for beginning principals in Alberta, Canada. The study found that this approach was positively accepted in the leadership coaching process and suggested that this approach needs to be maintained in leadership preparation programs for new principals [29]. Meanwhile, a study by Searby examined the creation of mentoring mindset which explained how a protege needs to be prepared for mentoring relationships. As a result, the Protege Mentoring Mindset Framework was developed and proposed [21].

IV DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Even though leadership is widely recognized as one of the most important factors determining school success, principal training is frequently disregarded in many countries. Many researchers believe that a support system during their induction period is crucial in assisting them to acquire and adopt effective leadership skills [1, 5]. Based on the review analysis, the process of developing and consolidating the knowledge and leadership skills of novice school leaders required a support system to unearth and to shine their leadership talents. Further, the analysis also revealed that the support system whether in the form of professional development training, as well as mentoring, or coaching, was crucial in assisting novice school leaders to get through their induction stage effectively as leaders.

Based on the findings of the SLR conducted, it could be concluded that various programs offered by the government as well as non-government were to support novice school leaders during their induction period. The programs offered could also be seen to be comprehensive in nature by providing knowledge on the aspects of organizational management required by a leader, as well as focused programs i.e. bench learning and school-university partnership program. Many studies discussed components of mentoring and coaching as critical support systems in assisting novice leaders in efficiently performing their leadership positions during the induction period. However, each program described by the studies highlighted in this SLR also explained the weaknesses of the programs they studied and provided suggestions to strengthen such

programs in the future. Thus, various suggestions could be taken into account by the relevant parties to provide a robust leadership support program to novice school leaders.

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