Conference Paper

Benefits of New Principal Preparation Program in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the benefits of a new principal preparation program (PPP) in Indonesia in this decentralization era. A qualitative interpretive approach was employed. The participants consisted of eight principals of public schools in Yogyakarta who graduated from the new PPP. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Data were then analyzed using the grounded theory method which included open coding and analytic induction. The trustworthiness criteria were used to ensure the quality of the data. The findings showed that the principals who graduated from the PPP felt the benefits of the recruitment and selection system which was standardized and rigorous. Also, the training for the prospective principals helped them to develop their managerial competencies, leadership skills, and self-confidence.

Keywords: principal preparation program, school principal

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1. Introduction

The study more than twenty years ago shows that school leadership, especially principal leadership has a significant effect on the improvement of school quality [1]. Principal leadership is known to have the second-largest effect on the quality of learning and students' achievement [2]. The results of this study support the implementation of effective principal preparation program (PPP) in many countries around the world. Moreover, education decentralization and school-based management that have become the international trend and believed to be an effective way of reforming requires strong school leadership to be succesful [3].

PPP is not new, especially in developed countries like the U.S. Educational administration courses designed to train principals to become effective school administrators were first developed in 1881 at the University of Michigan by William T. Pane, a former school superintendent [4]. The courses have been developed into an educational administration study program in graduate schools [5]. PPP development continues along with the demands for higher quality education and more complex education challenges.

Further, the PPP in many countries have also adopted the administrators' professional standards developed by professional organizations to develop their curriculum. In addition, administrative licensing programs have been developed to recruit talented school leaders who have no education background in education field. [6].

In Indonesia, education decentralization was first implemented in the early 2000s, in which PPP began to receive serious attention. For example, in 2010, the government introduced a new PPP model to be used as a reference by the local governments across the nation when they are preparing school principals. The ultimate goal is to produce professional school principals [7]. The PPP consists of principal recruitment, selection, training, and certification.

The recruitment process begins when the District Education Office (DEOs) informs school principals or supervisors that there is a vacancy in the school principal position. They are then required to identify and recommend teachers that they consider having the potentials to be a principal and meet the administrative requirement set by the government. Teachers recommended as prospective principals are then required to a paper andportfolio, then submit them to the DEO. Based on the paper and portfolio, the DEO recruits teachers as prospective principals [7, 8].

The recruitment process consists of initial administration and academic selection and training. Initial administration involves reviewing documents related to the general and specific qualifications of school principals and examining the portfolio. Academic selection involves determining if prospective principals meet minimum standards for participation in the training for prospective principals. This selection is conducted by means of a written test, portfolio assesment and paper presentation [7, 8].

The qualified practicing teachers who pass the administration and academic selection procedures, then, are trained by the authorized training agency within the country called the *LPPKS*. The training is directed towards the mastery of the following five dimensions of principal competency including personality, managerial, entrepreneurship, supervision, and social dimension. The training lasts for 300 hours and consists of the following learning phases:

1. In-service learning 1 – an initial face-to-face training workshop designed to be conducted for 7 days for a total of 70 hours.

2. On-the-job learning – workplace learning conducted over 3 months for a total of 200 hours.

3. In-service learning 2 – face-to-face follow–up and assessment conducted for 3 days for a total of 30 learning hours [7].

The final stage of the training is certification. Prospective principals who meet or exceed the minimum passing grade of the training are awarded a principal's certificate. Then, it is up to the DEO to assign the person as a principal and place him or her in a particular primary school. The length of a principal's assignment is for two periods of four years each, and then they may return to teaching jobs. Only principals with exceptional cases of excellent performance can the period be extended [8, 9]. In 2013, this model was implemented in 25 regencies/cities [9]. Since then, it has become the local government's reference in conducting principal preparation programs in their region. The PPP model itself has developed, especially regarding with the training.

This new model of school principal preparation program has attracted the attention of many researchers [10–15]. The studies show positive findings in some aspects for example, in terms of training approaches, contents, methods. These aspects are considered better than the prospective principal preparation program designed and organized by the district/local government [13]. Studies conducted by [11] and [15] found that the program graduates views that the curriculum is comprehensive. In addition, the program provides sufficient facilities. Thus, in general, the new policy related to PPP is a form of improvement related to training for prospective school principals. In relation to it, this study aims to investigate the graduates' perspectives on the benefits of the new policy of PPP in this country in decentralization era.

2. Literature Review/Related Works

2.1. The Definitions and Types of PPP

School principal preparation program aims to provide leadership training to individuals before assigned as school principals or put in the senior position [16]. In the 1980s, no country had a global systematic framework and standards for preparing school leaders. Appointing teachers for administrative or principal positions without preparation was very common in Europe, Asia, and Australia at that time. America is one of the few countries conducting pre-service certification or preparation programs [17]. Today, preparation and development programs for school principals turn into a global industry. Some developed countries conduct this program and require prospective school principals to participate and pass the pre-service qualifications before assigned at schools. Since 1984, the Singapore government has required principals to have a leadership qualification by a Diploma in Educational Administration. It is a one-year full-time program for prospective school principals with an eight week-internship at

schools. Then, in 2001, this program was changed into "the Leaders in Education" Program [16, 18]. The design and implementation of PPP are very diverse. Based on the results of studies conducted in the United States, this program can be classified into two categories, namely university-based and non-university-based PPP.

University-based PPP is a program organized by the educational administration or educational leadership study program at universities, one of which is Delta State University Educational Leadership Cohort Program. This university conducts a master's degree program in Educational Leadership as well as a certification program for administrators in Mississippi, USA. Participants of this program are required to complete compulsory courses which are a combination of university courses and experience-based courses. In addition, the participants should pass the School Leadership License Assessment [19].

Non-university-based PPP is a program whose ownership and training are not related to the department or study program of educational administration or leadership. This program can be classified into five, namely:

1. Profit-oriented PPP. This is a school principal certification program held flexibly online or face-to-face by private institutions. When it is held as a master's degree program, the university only admits students who have worked at schools so that they have access to conduct observations or internships to apply the concepts obtained in the courses that they participate in. Moreover, the students should be graduates of accredited universities.

2. State-based PPP. This program is a school principal training program administered by the education department of a state. The participants who passed this program obtain a certificate to be used as the requirement to apply for the principal position.

3. Foundation. It is a principal preparation program whose funding is fully or partly provided by several foundations such as the Wallace foundations, Anneberg Foundations, Ford foundations, etc.

4. Partnership. It is a principal preparation program in which the implementation is based on a partnership between, for example, the foundations and universities, private companies, states, schools, or academies.

5. Outsourced program. It is an online principal preparation program conducted by private institutions whose lecturers/trainers are from various countries or institutions.

This program offers different curricula, length of study, the requirement of registration [20]

2.2. The Characteristics of Successful PPP

The studies have identified the characteristics of successful PPP. Firstly, PPP requires purposeful and targeted recruitment. This program needs to work with local governments in identifying, recruiting, and even sponsoring outstanding teachers with good leadership potential and commitment to make necessarychanges in the education field [21]. Secondly, training programs for prospective principals should have standardized curricula that focus on improving the quality of schools, students, and instructions [18, 19, 21, 22] well-designed, tightly integrated coursework and fieldwork and robust internship [19, 21, 23, 24]. Participants should be given the opportunity to select and discuss the experience or field practice that they need with the principals of the schools where they do an internship. The activities include observations on leadership practice which mainly focuses on some activities, for example, school-based decision making, solving problems related to curriculum and learning, managing school budgets and finances, as well as school principals' regular activities. At last, the program should be able to create cohort groups and collegial networks in which training participants can collaborate, share experiences and knowledge to solve problems [21].

In addition, the successful implementation of PPP is a collaboration with the local government that fosters the schools. The local government should be involved in the school principal recruitment and training process [19, 21]. The government should also be involved in activities related to the establishment of criteria and selection procedures or program development such as integrating program activities with schoolwork [19, 24] because the government knows the required quality for recruiting principals. They also need to provide and allocate resources needed to conduct the program [19, 24].

2.3. The Benefits of Effective PPP

The PPP quality improvement has been done in many countries to improve its benefits. The research findings by Klosstermann about PPP in Illinois shows the benefits of the new policy on PPP, namely a more rigorous selection, better training programs with competence-based internship that are more extensive and not only focus on management, but also instructional leadership and school quality improvement, more intense

collaboration between the programs and the region, and consistent PPP standardization [25].

Research findings on effective PPP in various states in the United States prove the benefits of the program on the graduates. Graduates of the program show a high level of satisfaction on the PPP they participate in, as well as high levels of confidence and efficacy on administrative tasks, in addition to cooperating well with teachers in order to improve the teaching-learning process quality. It is also easier for them to achieve and remain in management position as the skills they acquire from PPP allow them to overcome the complexity of school management organization [19].

The same study identifies six skills or competencies of a principal as an instructional leader with a great role in the teaching-learning process. The following competences are expected to be acquired by graduates of the principal preparation program.

1. The ability to influence the feelings, skills, motivation, and satisfaction of the teachers

2. The ability to create the organization condition and culture, as well as an environment which supports the teaching-learning process

3. The ability to encourage professional collaboration

4. The ability to encourage and support the instructional abilities and professional development of the teachers

5. The ability to direct the organization's resources and system for the development, support, and assessment of the teaching-learning process, and

6. The ability to increase the participation and support of parents and stakeholders [19].

3. Material & Methodology

3.1. Research type

This study applied a qualitative approach with an interpretivism paradigm that is relevant to the objectives of the study, namely to reveal the various meanings that people give to situations and behaviors in their social context [26, 27]. Interpretivism believes that human experiences and actions have meaning and that the task of researchers is to interpret the meaning in their social context [28].

3.2. Research subjects

The subjects of this study were eight public school principals who were selected using a purposive sampling technique, which is a data sampling technique that select samples with certain considerations in accordance with the expected objectives [29]. The subjects were graduates of the in-on-in training at PPP in Yogyakarta with a new model held in 2013. When this research took place, they had served as school principals.

3.3. Data collection technique

The data collection technique in this study was semi-structured interviews. The purpose of semi-structured interviews is to identify the problems more openly, in which the interviewees were asked to convey their opinions and ideas. When conducting interviews, the interviewer must listen carefully and record what the informants say [29].

Document study was used to complement interviews. The documents include various policies and reports related to PPP issued by the governments or authorised institutions.

3.4. Data analysis technique

The collected data were analyzed using the data analysis method grounded theory, which involves open coding followed by an analytic induction. Open coding is used to generate conceptual labels and categories to build theories that fit the data [30, 31]. Analytic induction is used to formulate a complete and universal statement about a social phenomenon [32] by interactively examining the phenomenon and its forming factors. If there are inconsistent cases, a complete statement or hypothesis is formulated, then the hypothesis is modified [33].

3.5. Data quality

This study used the criteria of trustworthiness [34] which includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability [35, 36] to ensure the quality of the data. The peer-review technique involving experts in the field of educational leadership [37] was used to meet the credibility criteria, whereas adequate descriptions of the research process and context were used to meet the transferability criteria [35, 38]. Lastly, the audit trail was used to meet the criteria for dependability and confirmability [36, 39].

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Rigorous recruitment and selection of principal candidates

The results show that the recruitment and selection of prospective school principals with the new policies were viewed as more transparent and orderly, according to procedures. The program graduates revealed the following.

> In the past, the recruitment and selection process was not transparent. The requirements and principals involved were not announced openly, whereas today, the information is clear and shared (W6.EL.1).

> The recruitment follows the rule. The principal recruited me with certain considerations. I was asked whether I agreed to be a candidate. Once I expressed my consent, the principal gave me the letter of recommendation (W5.NU.1).

> When my name was proposed as a principal candidate, my abilities were taken into account, and my school principal at the time took the matter seriously when making a recommendation (W8. BB.7).

The findings of the documentation study support these testimonies. The government has established a set of general and specific requirements for prospective principal candidates. Potential teachers will not be recommended if one of the requirements is not met, for example, over 56 years old (exceed the maximum age required) or having lesser than 3 years of teaching experience.

Graduates also expressed similar views in regard to the selection of prospective principal candidates, which they saw as objective and rigorous or selective.

> PPP is good as there are transparent selection stages which I feel have a great objectivity value to produce well-selected training participants (W7.AM.11).

> The positive thing is that because the program is more objective, fair. It begins with an administrative selection, followed by giving a written test, conducting an interview before determiningwho can participate in the in-on-in training (W8.BB.7).

> The requirements for administrative selection have been clearly stated. So is the objectivity value. the District Education Office has conducted the selection of propspective principals accordingly, honestly (W7.AM.11).

> Following the administrative selection, there was the academic selection, which I consider as the deciding stage for prospective participants on

whether they pass or not. The academic selection examines the experience of prospective participants based on their competencies (social, personal, academic, and managerial) and self-development potential (W4.BU.3).

However, program graduates also said that this improved selection process could not guarantee to generate the expected prospective school principals.

The results show that the new PPP policy is useful for increasing rigor and eliminating subjectivity. This policy is in line with current policies in other countries that seek to improve the recruitment and selection of prospective school principals with the aim of producing qualified prospective school principals [19, 25]. The results of the study also show that improving the quality of PPP is important to produce the expected prospective school principals. However, despite the improvements made, recruitment and selection still face various challenges [25,40-42]. The same condition occurs in Indonesia. Recruitment and selection of prospective school principals face challenges, one of which is related to the low number of enthusiasts [43].

4.2. Improving the competencies and self-confidence of the program graduates

The graduates reveal several benefits of PPP that they feel when they serve as school principals. Principals who graduate from PPP feel that their knowledge and skills in managing and leading a school have been improved as detailed below.

After the training, I feel that my competence increases, especially the managerial competency (W4.BU.3).

I think this program gives us a lot of knowledge. Those with zero knowledge become more aware of the new knowledge, whereas those with little knowledge have more knowledge than before, and those with already great knowledge become the best (W1.AR.15).

Because of this training, as a principal, I become aware of what is transparent and open management. I also learned that I need to be flexible, that I have to be ready to sign paperwork anywhere, that I must be open with the views and inputs from teachers and students, as well as the importance of having a good relationship with teachers and students (W6.EL.1).

I learned various leadership styles during the training, and I chose the participatory style. I want the school community to be responsible and take part

in achieving the school objectives. I consider this to be effective due to their participation and aspirations (W2.JU.9).

The findings of the document study support these testimonies. The prospective school principals' training curriculum involves the theories and practices in management, leadership, entrepreneurship, and supervision with an emphasis on managerial competence. In addition, the program structure offers a field practice opportunity through internships.

Regarding the training materials, one of the participants stated that not all the theories taught were relevant or applicable in the workplace.

> There were theories and regulations which I learned during the program that become difficult to apply due to the school condition and situation, for example regarding the online student admission process. Our school has poor access and is located in a densely populated area. The locals' understanding of the system is also low, making online admission ineffective. Therefore, to keep recruiting students, we apply the manual admission system (W3.SU.2).

Nevertheless, generally, the knowledge and skills acquired from the program remain beneficial.

> Theories may not always be applicable in practice. However, at least we could use the most relevant ones (W2.JU.9).

Furthermore, the program also managed to improve the confidence among principals when they serve, as noted by one of the graduates.

> After the training, my confidence level increased and I have become an excellent principal (W5.NU.1).

The participant added that the increased confidence level affects the work as a school principal. Confidence allows people to be more aware of their daily tasks and responsibilities.

Graduates of the new PPP model revealed that PPP improved their managerial competence and confidence to serve as a principal. This finding is in line with previous studies in other countries [19]. Nevertheless, another finding shows that excellent PPP graduates are not necessarily able to improve the education quality of the school they lead [24]. In regard to this, the study recommends the need for a leadership license that is linked to work performance when serving as a school principal.

5. Conclusion

The new policy on PPP in Indonesia in decentralization era has improved the quality of PPP including the recruitment, selection, and training process. It brings many benefits including a more rigorous principal candidates' recruitment and selection process, as well as improving the managerial and leadership competence among school principals through training that integrates the theories into practice through an internship or on-the-job learning. Nevertheless, further research is needed to understand the impact of such benefits. For instance, whether the more selective and nationally standardized recruitment and selection have generated the expected outcome among candidates of prospective school principals or not, or whether graduates with higher quality are able to improve the education quality of the school they lead or not. Such information will be useful to identify PPP components that need to be improved and the support needed by graduates when they become school principals.

Acknowledgement

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