

THE NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION FOR  
HEADSHIP (NPQH) PROGRAMME FOR SECONDARY  
SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS IN MALAYSIA:  
AN EVALUATIVE CASE STUDY

by

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## **Abstract**

The current focus on school leader preparation around the world is based upon the belief that school leaders make a difference in both the effectiveness and efficiency of schooling (Hallinger and Snidvongs, 2008). This study is an evaluative case study on the NPQH programme in Malaysia and it sought perceptions of eighteen incumbent secondary school headteachers who are graduates from the Masters degree group of the programme to determine the effectiveness of the programme in their headship practices. The study is a qualitative dominant mixed methods research which used semi-structured interview as its main method and adopted a mixed approach of key elements from various evaluation models. Overall perception of the NPQH training programme was sought with strengths and weaknesses identified and influence of school context considered. The extent of leadership learning from the time of graduation was also sought from those who were not appointed straight into headship. As NPQH in Malaysia was acknowledged as the proper national level programme in preparing heads, further improvements were indicated in this study. A tentative model for headship preparation in Malaysia, derived from the findings of this study, is presented alongside contribution of this study to the knowledge of school leadership preparation.

## **Dedication**

To my parents;

*Bishen Singh and Amar Kaur*

who taught me to be the best in whatever I do and  
gave me the strength of perseverance

To my mom-in-law;

*Dip Kaur*

who is always there with encouragement and support

To all my *Teachers*,

past and present,

who made me what I am today

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### **List of Abbreviations**

NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
IAB	Institut Aminuddin Baki
BERA	British Educational Research Association
MOE	Ministry of Education
SED	State Education Department
DEO	District Education Office
MEPADC	Malaysian Executive and Principal Assessment and Development Centre
NPQEL	National Professional Qualification for Educational Leadership
ICT	Information Communication and Technology
HISL	High Impact School Leadership
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
SEED	Scottish Executive Education Department
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
NGO	Non-government Organisation
SA	Senior Assistant
MP	Member of Parliament
EPRD	Educational Policy and Research Department
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Introduction

This study is titled 'The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) programme for secondary school headteachers in Malaysia: An evaluative case study'. The NPQH programme in Malaysia is a training programme initiated by the Ministry of Education Malaysia through its educational management and leadership institute, IAB (Institut Aminuddin Baki) in 1999. Similar to its namesake in England, the NPQH in Malaysia is a programme for aspiring school heads. Around the world today, much emphasis is being given to leadership development programmes as an element to enhance school effectiveness and improve educational systems. Hallinger and Snidvongs (2008) assert it as following:

“The current focus on school leader preparation reflects the importance societies around the world are placing upon the goal of improving their educational systems. The investment of substantial new resources into leadership preparation and development activities is based upon *the belief that school leaders make a difference* in both the effectiveness and efficiency of schooling” (p. 9 – emphasis in original).

In Malaysia the NPQH programme has trained more than one thousand aspiring heads from both the secondary and the primary school sectors. Some research has been undertaken (Aziz, 2003; EPRD, 2006) to ascertain the effectiveness of the



NPQH programme in Malaysia but there has been no research so far with a total focus on graduates who have assumed headship. Hence, perceptions of incumbent headteachers of secondary schools are sought to determine the effectiveness of the programme on their headship practices. The main objective of the NPQH programme in Malaysia is to produce able leaders for schools and it is therefore imperative to gauge the perceived effectiveness of the programme from the viewpoint of the participants who are now appointed into headship. As well as being an exploratory study as far as secondary school headship is concerned, this self-reported study also hopes to fill the void of understanding the programme and its perceived impact on the current role of the school heads. A better understanding of the programme from the perspectives of incumbent school heads will not only enrich the literature in this field but it will also provide the opportunity for the providers to reflect on further improvements and potentially enhance the training. The main aim of the study therefore is to evaluate the effectiveness of NPQH (National Professional Qualification for Headship) training programme on headship practices based on the perceptions of participants who have been appointed to the headship post.

### **1.1 Antecedents of the study**

This study is informed by the literature on leadership in school effectiveness and improvement, leadership development and learning, management and leadership training, training effectiveness and training evaluation. Different types of literature, drawn from various sources, are reviewed to capture the essence of these subjects

and provide the framework for this evaluative case study. The types of literature examined are books, research studies based on both empirical data and on scholarship, government reports and documents as well as opinion pieces from the practitioners and leading educationalists in the relevant field. Studies done on NPQH in Malaysia are also reviewed alongside the literature on the effect and impact of similar headship preparatory programmes in other context around the world. The review of literature in this study enables the derivation of a theoretical base with which to analyse, discuss and contextualise my own findings.

There is quite a rich literature on the importance of leadership and management in relation to educational outcomes as demonstrated by studies across the world (Bush and Jackson, 2002). Research for the past decades has stressed the importance of the quality of school leadership in creating effective schools (Mortimore et al., 1988; Stoll and Fink, 1994). This section derives literature from scholars such as Sammons et al. (1995), Reynolds and Teddlie (2000), Hallinger and Heck (1999) and some Malaysian perspectives from the local scholars like Wan Zahid (1995) and Zakaria (1996). The literature emphasises the importance of creating effective leadership in schools and this is further linked with the contribution of training towards that end.

The quality of school leadership is related to the initiatives taken to prepare the school leaders through management and leadership training. Leadership is critical to educational development and specific preparation is vital if leaders are to maximise their effectiveness (Bush, 2008a). Training can immensely contribute to

organisational development as it plays an important and integral part in enhancing human learning and development (Buckley and Caple, 2000). It is also a widespread belief that there is a positive link between training and organisational efficiency (Holden, 2001). This notion is important in this study as it relates to the initiative by the Malaysian educational authority to develop effective leaders for schools who will be given the responsibilities of improving the quality of schools and therefore the achievement of students.

The literature review further links training with leadership development and learning and its importance towards maximising the learning potential of participants. The concepts of transfer of training, retention (Buckley and Caple, 2000) and sustainability (Kotter, 1996) are discussed with relevant theories to set the platform of understanding of how leaders learn and develop. All these inform the study to understand better how the NPQH participants in Malaysia acquire learning during the programme as well as on their journey to headship.

From the review of literature which provides better understanding of training and its relationship with learning and development, further literature is sought to find perspectives of what makes a training initiative effective. A model of effective training by Joyce and Showers (1980) is used in this review section to provide a combination of components of training which are claimed to likely bring about the acquisition of new or improved practices performed in real situations. These literatures will be utilised to ascertain the perceived effectiveness of NPQH training in Malaysia.

## 1.2 The Research Questions

The review of literature produced a range of questions, of which six were significant and crucial for this study:

1. To what extent did the NPQH programme and each of its 27 units of study prepare the participants for headship?
2. What were perceived as the particular strengths of the NPQH programme with regards to the 27 units of study? Why these are perceived so?
3. What were perceived as the shortcomings of the programme? Why these are perceived so?
4. To what extent is the present school context influential in determining the effectiveness of NPQH programme?
5. What leadership learning has taken place between the graduation of these participants and now, in the following contexts?
  - (i) Professional learning in school;
  - (ii) Professional learning outside of school;
  - (iii) Learning outside of the professional context.

6. What additional support to enable effective headship would be helpful with regards to the following:
  - (i) Professional sources;
  - (ii) Non-Professional sources.
  
7. How could the programme be improved with regards to preparing the participants for headship?

The NPQH programme in Malaysia is underpinned by six main areas of study into educational management and leadership (Appendix 1). These six areas, which are further divided into 27 units of study, will be important for this inquiry for perceptions will be sought as to the impact of each of these units in preparing the headteachers for their eventual headship. The first research question is designed for this purpose. This study will also seek the strengths as well as the weaknesses perceived in these areas and these will be derived through the second and third research questions. These will provide a holistic view with regards to the detail areas of the programme and will not limit the study to only the general overview of the NPQH training programme.

The participants or NPQH graduates assume the post of headship at different periods after the completion of the programme. There are some who are appointed to headship soon after the successful completion of the programme whilst there are some who are still waiting for the post after having completed the programme as far

back as 2000. These heads have received the same training, albeit in different year cohorts, and they do not necessarily serve in schools with the same context. This study is based on assumption that school heads serve in different contexts and it is therefore imperative to link their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the NPQH programme to the context they are in and this will be captured through the fourth research question.

Since the aspiring heads are appointed to headship at different time intervals from the time they graduate from the programme, it is intended in this study to investigate what leadership learning they have acquired, be it at the professional level in school and outside of school as well as at the non-professional level. This information will be elicited through the fifth research question. I regard this information important as there have been perceptions from the NPQH participants in previous studies (Aziz, 2003; EPRD, 2006) that seem to suggest that the participants who do not get appointed into management roles in schools after graduating from the NPQH training are frustrated. The insights sought are also deemed important to ascertain the sustainability of the skills, knowledge and attitudes developed in the programme in the periods leading to the headship appointment. The heads are also asked to share their views and perceptions of the additional support, whether through the professional or non-professional sources, which might impact on the effectiveness of their headship. This is targeted by the sixth research question and it will help inform this study of the kind of support needed or found vital by the heads in undertaking their leadership roles in schools.

### **1.3 Research Design**

This study utilises the humanistic and evaluative knowledge domain as identified by Ribbins and Gunter (2002). According to Ribbins and Gunter, humanistic approach “seeks to gather and theorize from the experiences...of those who are leaders...” whilst evaluative approach “seeks to abstract and measure impact...” (p. 375). In this study, the perceptions of headteachers are sought to evaluate the NPQH programme and gauge its effectiveness on their headship practice.

This study proposes to adopt the qualitative (interpretive) methodology and adopts case study and evaluation as its strategy or approach. It is however supplemented by a quantitative method, i.e. a small questionnaire survey. The methodological strategy, according to Mason (2002), is “the logic by which you go about answering your research question...it is the logic which underpins the way you design your research project as a potential answer to your research questions...” (p. 30). Using this logic, case study and evaluation are regarded the most suitable research strategies to be used in this research. Robson (2002) explains that case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon. Patton (2002) defines programme evaluation as “the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programmes to make judgements about the programme, and/or inform decisions about future programming.” The evaluative case study approach is chosen for it will help the researcher find answers to the research questions, and will lead to

judgments about the NPQH programme. The judgments could be used to contribute to the development of theory on training for future secondary school heads.

This study adopts the impact evaluation form (Owen, 1999) and it will use the combination of various major approaches within that form, such as objectives-based evaluation, process-outcomes studies and needs-based evaluation.

The method proposed for this study is the semi-structured interview and a questionnaire in the form of a checklist. Denscombe (2003) suggests that interviews are appropriate for research when the desired data is depth rather than breadth for a particular issue. He further asserts that justification for choosing the interview method is likely to reference, amongst others, data based on experiences, feelings and data based on privileged information. The purpose of interviewing, according to Patton (2002), is to allow the researcher to enter into the other person's perspective. Qualitative interviewing, he adds, begins with the assumption that the perspective of the interviewee is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. The questionnaire, on the other hand, will be used to gather data to compliment the interviews in answering one of the research questions.

In this research, data is derived from eighteen secondary school headteachers who are graduates of the NPQH programme. They were chosen using purposive sampling as a form of non-probability sampling technique. Information is sought on their feelings and experiences from the NPQH programme and this is deemed as



privileged information for they are the practicing secondary school heads, the 'knowers' (Denscombe, 2003) of the phenomenon being investigated. A semi-structured interview method or 'general interview guide approach' (Patton, 2002) is adopted in preference to the unstructured method and the structured method for it allows the particular subject to be predetermined but at the same time provides a flexibility for the interviewer to pursue a line of questioning to elicit any other information deemed important by the interviewee. It also allows best use of the limited time available for the face-to-face interview.

The headteachers were contacted and their consent sought to participate in an interview. Interview questions were based around the themes of perceptions on the NPQH programme, the strengths and weaknesses of the programme, leadership learning and support in order to gain an understanding of the extent the NPQH programme has achieved its target of preparing aspiring heads for headship. The interviews were mostly conducted in the Malay language; which was more convenient to the respondents as Malay was their native language. The interviews were taped, transcribed and then translated to the English language. Data from the transcripts were then analysed manually by decoding the responses into the themes questioned and any others which emerged. This was done manually, similar to assertion by Field (2000) in his study, on grounds of convenience. The responses were compared systematically in order to look for any commonalities, remarkable differences and recurring patterns.

#### **1.4 Ethical Issues in the Research**

This study is done with highest importance placed on ethical considerations. The guidelines from BERA (British Educational Research Association) Revised Ethical Guidelines for Researchers, which was revised in 2004 from its original form of 1992, was used as the compass to maintain an ethic of respect for the person, knowledge, democratic values, the quality of educational research, and academic freedom in this study.

The participants in the study were consulted and their informed consent sought before carrying out the research (Appendix 2). This was done on voluntary basis in which participants were made to understand and agree to their participation without any duress. The participants were informed on the purpose of the study and the extent of their involvement as participants. They were given adequate information on the process of the study and explanation on the necessity of their participation as serving headteachers. They were also informed about the utility of the findings in the study and to whom it will be reported. Verification was also sought from the participants on their responses, after the transcribing process. They will also be informed and given access to the final study.

The participants were accorded the right to withdraw at any stage of their involvement in the study. The participants were assured of privacy and their views and responses are reported anonymously. They were assured of total confidentiality and anonymity

in the treatment of their data. This was to ensure that they responded as honestly as possible towards the subject of study and not feel intimidated at any point for their views.

In this study, I as the researcher proposed to make the best of my involvement in the research while protecting it from any apparent and purposive biases. My background as a trainer with the institution which carries out the NPQH training will be made clear. I have been a staff member at IAB since 1997 and have been involved in the NPQH training since its inception in 1999. I have been involved in all cohorts and it was inevitable that the samples included my own trainees. I ensured the interviewees that the data derived from them would be dealt with utmost confidentiality and their identities would be safeguarded. This, hopefully, have enabled them to part with their views in a more comfortable and less patronised way. On the other hand, I also used my 'self' to exert better understanding of their views and perceptions for I have been an 'insider' and would be able to empathise about what it has been like during their training. Insofar as being a trainer in the institution, my experiences helped to capture the interpretations imbedded through their perceptions of the programme. This was assuming the *etic* approach or an 'insider' who understands the value and culture of the researched (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, my present position is of a neutral one, because I am no longer a staff member at that institute and am assuming the role of an independent researcher. The use of my 'self' as an advantage rather than a hindrance goes in tandem with Denscombe (2003), who conveyed that "the

researcher's self should not be regarded as a limitation to the research but as a crucial resource" (p. 269).

Having explained my positionality in this research, I do not discount the fact that there could have been a potential bias on the responses of the researched. My previous position as a tutor to these participants could have potentially created an issue of control over their responses given that I was in a position of power when they were participants in the programme. The participants could have felt that their responses would be scrutinised because they were to express views on a programme in the Ministry of Education, the same ministry that employed them. The extent of this potential bias could have only manifested in the responses and could have raised my own suspicions if there was a tendency of only positive reactions from the respondents and if there was any indication of reluctance in their imparting of views on any aspect of the programme that indicated shortcoming or weakness of the same. Notwithstanding the issue of potential bias, I did not experience any of the abovementioned in the eventual responses of the research participants.

Permission was also sought from the Government of Malaysia to conduct this study in Malaysia. Permission was granted by the Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department as the legal body which approves and oversees any research done by citizens and non-citizens from foreign organisations and institutions. Approval was also sought from the sponsors, Ministry of Education Malaysia, and it was duly granted.

## **1.5 Reporting the findings**

Findings in this study are broken down into themes relating to the research questions. Tables and quotations from the interviewees are used to illustrate the findings and support the discussion. The purpose of the findings is to illuminate how the respondents perceive the NPQH training they received and the utility of what they learnt and experienced on their current practices as headteachers. The outcomes of the study are intended to further inform the research agenda, as well as enriching the literature on leadership preparation and providing some understanding of the training programme to the relevant authorities. It may also highlight the implications for school leadership development programmes in Malaysia.

As intended, the findings will be reported to the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department in Malaysia as this is the approving body for the research to be conducted in Malaysia. The providers of the programme, IAB, will be furnished with the findings so as to help gauge the attainment of this programme's objectives and to further improve it. The Ministry of Education and the stakeholders of IAB could also potentially benefit from the findings of this study for it will provide them with a perspective on the relevance and benefit of this important agenda for the preparation of future leaders for schools in Malaysia.

## **1.6 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis will be presented in seven chapters. The following chapter – chapter two will present the background and context of the study. The political, cultural and education background of Malaysia will be presented alongside the history of NPQH programme in Malaysia. Chapter three will be the review of the literature that informs this study. Literature from a range of relevant topics including school effectiveness and school improvement, leadership learning, leadership training and effectiveness of training will be synthesised to provide understanding of this research field. Chapter four will follow with a research design which discusses the methodology chosen for this research and the justification of using the preferred design for this study. Chapter five will be the findings and analysis of the qualitative data whilst chapter six will provide the discussion on the implications of the study. Chapter seven will encapsulate the study with the conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

#### 2.0 Introduction

Malaysia is a fast developing Southeast Asian country with a population of 27.7 million (November, 2008 estimate – Department of Statistics, Malaysia) and a total area of 127,331 square miles (about 330,000 sq. km). During the late 18th and 19th centuries, Great Britain established colonies and protectorates in the area of current Malaysia; these were occupied by Japan from 1942 to 1945. In 1948, the British ruled territories on the Malay Peninsula formed the Federation of Malaya, which became independent in 1957. The Federation of Malaya was expanded on the 16 September 1963 with the formation of Malaysia notwithstanding the opposition from Indonesia and Philippines (Swee-Hock, 2007). The larger political unit of Malaysia comprised of the eleven states in the former Federation of Malaya as well as the internally self-governing colony of Singapore (which left the federation in 1965) and the Borneo states of Sabah and Sarawak.

Malaysia consists of two regions that are separated about 400 miles apart by the South China Sea – Peninsular Malaysia in the west and the states of Sabah and Sarawak which are located in the island of Borneo in the east. Peninsular Malaysia, with a land area of 50,810 sq miles, is a more densely populated area than Sabah

(and a federal territory, Labuan) and Sarawak, which constitute an area of 76,510 sq miles. Malaysia borders the nations of Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia and Brunei.

Malaysia consists of 13 states: Perlis, Kedah, Pulau Pinang, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, Johor, Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan (in Peninsular Malaysia), Sabah and Sarawak. It also has 3 federal territories (Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan). Kuala Lumpur is the capital of Malaysia while Putrajaya is the administrative centre. Labuan is a tax-free port island off Sabah.

## **2.1 The Cultural Context**

Malaysia is a melting pot of several major culture traditions that originated from within Southeast Asia, China, India and Middle East. The Straits of Malacca was once the main maritime corridor and the meeting place of people from other parts of Asia, particularly in trade. Resulting from this, the population shows ethnographic diversity and complexity, all interwoven and sometimes intricate. The main ethnic groups are the Malays, Chinese and Indians, apart from the Orang Asli (aborigines) and the natives or the indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak. Other ethnic groups, albeit in smaller numbers, are Pakistanis, Sri Lankan Tamils, Europeans, Americans, Eurasians, Arabs and Thai. Together, the Malays and the indigenous people of Sabah (Kadazan, Dusun, Bajau, Murut, Bisaya and others) and Sarawak (Iban, Murut, Dayak, Penan and others) are known as Bumiputera which means “native of



the soil". The Bumiputera comprised of 65.1%, Chinese 26.0% and Indians 7.7% of the population.

The official language of Malaysia is the Malay language, officially known as Bahasa Malaysia which translates as the "Malaysian language". English is quite widely spoken in Malaysia and many international official functions and speeches are held in English. Apart from Malay and English, a host of Chinese languages – primarily Mandarin, Hokkien, Hakka, and Cantonese – are common, as well as Indian languages, especially Tamil, Telegu, Malayalam and Punjabi. In east Malaysia, there are also several indigenous languages, of which Iban and Kadazan are widely spoken.

## **2.2 Political and Administrative**

Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy headed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong ("paramount ruler"), customarily referred to as the king. The Yang di-Pertuan Agong is appointed for a 5-year term from among the nine Sultans (rulers) of the peninsular Malaysian states. The king also is the leader of the Islamic faith in Malaysia. 9 of the 11 states in Peninsular Malaysia have their own hereditary rulers who are also the leaders of the Islamic faith in their respective states. The remaining 2 states in Peninsular Malaysia, namely Pulau Pinang and Melaka, and the states of Sabah and Sarawak are headed by a Governor each. The Governor is a constitutional ruler who

is appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and need not be someone native to the state he is governing. In the states ruled under the Governors, the Islamic faith leader is the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

The Constitution of Malaysia clearly divides the authority of the Federation into three branches: legislative, judiciary and the executive. The division of authority occurs both at the federal and state levels, in keeping with the concept of federalism which forms the basis of the government administration.

Malaysia's predominant political party, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), has held power in coalition with other parties since Malaya's independence in 1957. In 1973, an alliance of communally based parties was replaced with a broader coalition — the Barisan Nasional (National Front) — composed of fourteen parties. Today the Barisan Nasional coalition has three prominent members — the UMNO, MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association) and MIC (Malaysian Indian Congress) and smaller parties that represent other ethnic minorities and ideologies both from the Peninsular, Sabah and Sarawak. The prime ministers of Malaysia have always been from UMNO, which is the biggest of the coalition and whose president is the chairperson of the coalition.

## 2.3 Education

In January 1991, the then Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, unveiled Malaysian government's Vision 2020. It is envisaged (2020) as the year by which Malaysia would achieve the status of an industrialised and developed country in terms of its economy, national unity, social cohesion, social justice, political stability, system of government, quality of life, social and spiritual values, national pride and confidence (Mahathir, 1991). Towards that end, the government identified strategies to meet the following nine challenges:

- (1) establishing a united Malaysian nation with a sense of common and shared destiny;
- (2) creating a psychologically liberated, secure, and developed Malaysian society;
- (3) fostering a democratic society;
- (4) establishing a fully moral and ethical society;
- (5) establishing a mature liberal and tolerant society;
- (6) establishing a scientific and progressive society;
- (7) establishing a fully caring society and a caring culture;
- (8) ensuring an economically just society;
- (9) establishing a prosperous society (Mahathir, 1991, p. 2-4).

Education is to play an important role in helping the country to meet the aforementioned challenges towards attaining the developed nation status. Specifically, education is regarded as an important initiative to promote national unity, social equality, and economic development. Education is an instrument for promoting and strengthening national integration by inculcating a common and shared destiny among the different ethnic groups, removing racial prejudices and encouraging cultural tolerance, and establishing the use of a common national language, that is Bahasa Malaysia (Lee, 1999).

The education system in Malaysia has a unique history because of its ethnic diversity. Before the independence of Malaysia in 1957, the education system lacked uniformity in curriculum and an articulated rationale for a policy that would be relevant to the political and socio-economic goals of the people. The country's three principal ethnic communities-Malays, Chinese and Indians (mostly Tamils from South India) - ran their own schools, the latter two often importing a syllabus used in the countries of their origin. In 1956 a committee, led by Abdul Razak, the first Minister of Education, was set up to establish a national education system that would promote the cultural, social, economic and political development accepted by the nation as a whole (Aziz, 2003). The committee produced a report known as the Razak's Report. This report, which was the basis of the Education Ordinance 1957, recommended a formation of a single system of national education, with a Malaysian-orientated curriculum and recognised the eventual objective of making Bahasa Malaysia (the Malay language) the main medium of instruction (MOE, 2008). The Razak Report recommended two

types of secondary schools: those using Malay as a medium to be called 'national schools' while vernacular schools using Chinese, Tamil or English were to be designated as 'national-type schools'.

Three years after independence, another report known as the Rahman Talib Report (1960) was released. This report reviewed the existing education policy with an intention of hastening national integration and unity among the people. It became the basis of the Education Act 1961 that provided a legal framework for the provision of the compulsory Malay language teaching in schools and in training institutions (Aziz, 2003).

Many of the far-reaching educational policies implemented thus far were aimed at restructuring the Malaysian society. During the first 10 years of independence, the great disparity of income between the Malays and non-Malays led to the outbreak of the infamous racial riots on 13 May 1969 (Lee, 1999). Since then, the Malaysian government has pursued various policies, educational included, providing equal opportunities to the economically disadvantaged groups, i.e. the Bumiputras. In education, for instance, access to higher education, which is often perceived as an avenue for social mobility, was reorganised and the government implemented the 'racial quota' policy whereby the ethnic population of the student population in the universities should reflect the ethnic composition of the country (Lee, 1999).

In 1979, a third report - Cabinet Committee Report on the Implementation of Education Policies, which was also known as the Mahathir Report, was commissioned. The effects of the reports are seen in the amendments done from time to time in the Education Act. The Education Act 1996 is the latest legislation that set policies in developing Malaysia to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Embedded in the Act is the National Education Policy, formulated in 1988, which states:

“Education in Malaysia is on-going efforts towards developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonic, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards and who are responsible and capable of achieving high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large” (Education Act, 1996: p. 11-12).

The realisation of the aspiration of the National Education Policy depends on the effectiveness of the school system, which in turn have a strong implication for the effective leadership and management therein.

## **2.4 Education Management and System**

The Malaysian Constitution provides a legal framework which states that education is the responsibility of the Federal Government, thus the control and management of education falls within the ambit of the Ministry of Education (MOE) (Jewa, 1991).

Generally the education administration can be divided hierarchically into four distinct levels: ministry at the federal level; State Education Department (SED) at state or federal territory level; District Education Office (DEO) at division or district level; and schools at school level (Aziz, 2003).

The Malaysian education system provides 11 years of basic education to every child in the country. The National Education System at school level under the government education institution category consists of pre-school education, primary education, secondary education and post-secondary (pre-university) education.

The pre-school education caters for pupils of 4 to 6 years of age. The primary education consists of national schools or national-type schools and this level is planned for duration of six years but may be completed in five to seven years. The secondary education consists of lower secondary and upper secondary. The schools available are academic schools, technical and vocational schools, and religious national schools. Post-secondary education is provided for individuals who have completed lower and upper secondary education, but excludes higher education (MOE, 2008). There are now a few more types of schools added at the primary and secondary level. The primary education has Special Education, Special Model, and Government Assisted Religious schools added to its cadre whilst secondary education now has Fully Residential, Special Education, Special Model, Sports and Arts schools in addition to the abovementioned three types.

## **2.5 National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) in Malaysia**

The NPQH training programme is a one-year fulltime headship preparatory training programme incepted in 1999 due to 3 main factors. Firstly, knowledge in the educational field was developing ever so rapidly globally and the demand for quality headship education worldwide was also felt in Malaysia. Thus, it was apt to prepare the aspiring heads in Malaysia with the latest relevant knowledge and skills. The new knowledge and skills will enable them to use conception and craft skills continuously in their work place (Guskey, 2002). Secondly, it was in line with the recommendations put forth by the Mahathir Report (1979) pertaining to the training of school administrators. The report proposed a setting up of a local management and leadership training institute for the officers of Ministry of Education. This was to reduce the dependence on overseas training due to the constraints of expenditure and the limited number of officers that could be sent at any one time (Cabinet Committee, 1979). The third factor was the influence of ideas and practices derived from professional development courses attended by the officials from the Ministry of Education in renowned institutions abroad. Thus, the licensure requirements for principalship in the United States (Council of Chief State School Officers, CCSSO, 1996) and the training framework of the English NPQH (Teacher Training Agency, 1998) were referred to when producing the framework for the NPQH in Malaysia (Aziz, 2003).



The NPQH programme in Malaysia has 5 objectives (IAB, 2004), whereby the participants are to achieve the following:

- (1) understand their own strengths and areas of improvement with regards to school management and leadership for optimum utilisation in their own schools;
- (2) demonstrate effective management and leadership in schools from the experience gained;
- (3) undertake given projects through specific programmes based on their experiences;
- (4) practice concepts, effective school characteristics and best practices in leadership based on the 7 core areas - vision building, effective organisational management; intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies; curriculum and cocurriculum leadership, and self enhancement; and
- (5) attain practical experience in identifying (through observation) aspects of management to be improved, plan innovative strategies and apply those strategies followed by evaluation of the implemented strategies.

The NPQH programme intake is advertised by Ministry of Education and applicants will have to apply by completing a specific application form issued by the School Division of the MOE. The division will vet the applications and forward a short listed candidates' list to IAB. Short listed candidates will be invited to go through a series of

assessment tests conducted by the Malaysian Executive and Principal Assessment and Development Centre (MEPADC), a body set up in IAB. The assessment results are then forwarded to School Division which then decides on the candidates to be selected for the course.

The first part of the NPQH programme is the Diploma in School Management and Leadership. This phase involves 6 months of fulltime residential input given to participants in the main campus of IAB in Genting Highlands, Pahang or its' branch campus in the northern state of Kedah. This first part includes 3 weeks of practical in a school chosen by each participant. The first part involves the Basic phase of 6 weeks, after which the participants go off for 3 weeks of Practical (observation of best practices) in a school of their choice. Upon returning to IAB, they reconvene their training with the Intermediate phase for 4 weeks and proceed to the Special phase for another 4 weeks before doing the Continuous phase for 4 weeks as their final phase in the first part of the programme.

The second part of the programme is the Attachment phase for 6 months in a school. This phase is for the participants to put into practice what they have acquired in the first part of the training. Normally the attachment is done by the participants in their own schools. In the 6 months period, the participants will be required to do tasks and report them in 3 portfolios. They will be assigned a supervisor each – a trainer from IAB – who will visit them from time to time to advice them as well as monitor their progress. During the attachment, the participants are required to do an analysis of

the school through observation and identify areas to be improved. They are then required to plan for an improvement strategy for each of the areas concerned and implement these strategies through specific programmes. The implemented programmes or initiatives are expected to be evaluated to gauge their effectiveness in addressing their intended aims.

The NPQH programme is now into its ninth year and 13 cohorts have been trained. The programme has recently been re-named to NPQEL (National Professional Qualification for Educational Leaders) (IAB, 2007). Even though many graduates have attained NPQH certification and are back into the school system, not many are appointed to school headship yet. Nevertheless, there are some who have assumed the headship post and there is a need to study the perception of impact or effectiveness of the programme to its intended final product, the headteacher. Furthermore the programme has other implications as well. For example, it is not only expensive but could bring some instability in schools when senior teachers are taken out and replaced by other teachers, some of whom are untrained, provided by the MOE through the SEDs (Aziz, 2003). As more teachers are going to be trained it is imperative to get the perspectives from the 'finishing line' on the perceived extent of the usefulness of this programme in providing the NPQH heads the relevant knowledge, skills and dispositions for their headship role.

Having discussed the context or background of the setting for this study, the next chapter will present the literature review pertaining to this study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

The main aim of this study is to examine the perceived effectiveness of the NPQH (National Professional Qualification for Headship) training programme on headship practices in Malaysia based on the perceptions of training participants who have been appointed to headship post.

This chapter presents a review of the literature that informs the study and enables analysis, discussion and contextualising of the findings. Different types of literature, drawn from various sources, are reviewed to capture the essence of this field and provide the framework for this evaluation study. The types of literature examined are books, research studies based on both empirical data and on scholarship, government reports and documents as well as opinion pieces from the practitioners and leading educationalists in the field of school effectiveness and improvement, management and leadership training and training evaluation. Majority of the reviewed literature is from the UK but literature is also drawn from authors in North America and Asia. As there is under representation of leadership literature in Malaysia, especially pertaining to the preparation and development of educational leaders, it was vital to draw on literature on the same from other perspectives.

Literature from the UK is deemed important because the impetus for the National Professional Qualification for Headship programme was the similar programme in England. Even though the foundational ideas are similar between the NPQH in England and Malaysia, there is some distinction in the implementation and structure of these programmes and this will be addressed by reviewing relevant papers in this chapter.

To be able to derive a rich foundation of literature for this study, an extensive literature search was conducted. Firstly, key words surrounding the topic of educational leadership training and evaluation (e.g. headship training, school leadership, school improvement, educational leadership training, headship preparation, aspiring school heads, National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) training, NPQH evaluation, programme evaluation, leadership evaluation and educational evaluation) were fed into the internet search databases and online library catalogues, both using the Library Services Direct provided by the Information Services at [www.is.bham.ac.uk](http://www.is.bham.ac.uk). Relevant articles in journals and publications were sourced using bibliographic databases such as British Education Index and ERIC, and from eJournal services such as SwetsWise. The Library Catalogue returned a list of various books whilst the eLibrary provided list of various journals and publications. The second process was to obtain the books from the library and also to go through some of the electronic books available from the online services via [www.ebrary.com](http://www.ebrary.com). These publications and articles were then reviewed, together with their references and bibliographies which led to a trail of more useful work by the

same authors and others. The articles were then narrowed down to the most relevant ones for this study. These systematic searching of literature led to the identification of key areas that would be useful to review. These key areas and the literature within were to underpin this research and provide conceptual frameworks which could be the base of this thesis.

The major areas of investigation in the review of literature are: leadership in school effectiveness and improvement, leadership development and learning, management and leadership training and training effectiveness. The review is done on a thematic basis. It is done by underlining the basic themes involved in informing this study and has a combination of different perspectives which are relevant within each theme. It is therefore reiterated that the different perspectives are adapted because literature in the Malaysian context on these themes is limited and the amalgamation with literature from elsewhere is deemed necessary to enrich the understanding informing this enquiry.

### **3.1 Leadership and School Leadership**

#### **3.1.1 Leadership**

The concept of leadership is mainly derived from the organisational and business literature (Fidler & Atton, 2004). There has been a wide perspective of the term leadership and many different approaches and theories have emerged in the quest to

better understand this phenomenon. Bryman (1992) traced the four stages of leadership thought as following:

- Trait ( from early years up till late 1940s)
- Style ( late 1940s to late 1960s)
- Contingency (late 1960s to early 1980s)
- New Leadership (since early 1980s – with transformational and charismatic leadership as the principal theories).

The notion of leadership is said to be elusive, confounding and arguably the most controversial area of inquiry or interest to human understanding (Allix & Gronn, 2005). When it comes to such an important part of human endeavour, especially in relating to other humans by means of formal structure or loose structure, leadership inevitably becomes an area which is so fascinating. The more we learn about the investigations into this phenomenon, the more there seem to be initiatives to embrace the desirable form of leadership to enhance the quality of organisations. Over the past century, as organisations have grown and their number spread across the landscape of human endeavour, concern with leadership development has widened and deepened (Kaagan, 1998). An interesting facet of this phenomenon is the debate of whether leadership quality is something one is born with or could be acquired by means of training and development.

Grint (2007) argues that the notion of teaching leadership is not one which is straightforward and without complexities. He reflected on the difficulty to teach leadership, even as early as 343 BC when the great philosopher Aristotle tutored Alexander the Great for five years. Aristotle did not imply age as a problematic element in developing a leader as much as it is in the absence of wisdom (Grint, 2007) but there is little evidence that Aristotle's teachings affected Alexander's political leadership significantly although it did encourage a desire for knowledge in the latter (Lane Fox, 2004). Grint's (2007) discussion concluded with the implication of Aristotle's work that leadership cannot be achieved simply through providing greater knowledge (Aristotle's *episteme*) and skills (Aristotle's *techne*) for the seeming tasks that leaders face. These two elements must be tied together with the element of wisdom (Aristotle's *phronesis*) to see what the good might be in particular situations and the ability then to enact the processes that generate the good. Grint (2007) asserted that "all three elements are necessary and mutually supportive: knowledge can be taught in lectures but skills must be honed through practice while wisdom can only be secured through experiencing leadership itself" (p. 242). He also argued that learning opportunities for leaders to learn wisdom through experience should be configured and learning methodology should not be merely limited to case studies with 'correct' or 'preferred solutions' (*episteme*). The question that perhaps comes to mind in response to this proposition is the ability to allow leaders learn in the real life situation. The fear might be in risking failure in the leadership task undertaken by the trainee leaders but the 'opportunity to fail' is exactly what Grint has included as an important ingredient in this leadership quest. Perhaps this is a noble



proposition but there might also be a constraint of not having enough real-life situations for the leaders to earn their experiences from.

Morrell (2007) in response to the 'problem of learning' put forth by Grint through the Aristotelian epistemology and moral philosophy argues that there is another way of acquiring wisdom (*phronesis*) and the telling answer is from Aristotle himself. It is suggested that the answer could be found within Aristotle's work in aesthetics, rather than his moral philosophy or politics. Morrell (2007) makes reference to the *Poetics* in which he argues that Aristotle put forth the 'modes of imitation' as the method of learning in fine art and this is also a key in ethics and politics. So, rather than learning by direct experience, *phronesis* could be acquired through imitation and the pleasure felt is 'no less universal' that it is through first hand experience. Morrell's illumination of this alternative mode of learning wisdom could probably provide a sigh of relief to many a leadership training provider insofar as opportunity for practical experience to trainees is concerned but it is in no way a discount to the fact that practical experience is vital in leadership learning.

Echoing the assertion by Grint (2007) that leadership could be learned, West-Burnham (2009) recently put forth the following:

"Leadership cannot be taught, it has to be learned. Equally, leaders are not born; they develop and grow subject to the same range of variables that determine every other area of human activity that is grounded in learning" (p. 3).

Avolio (2005) made the same assertion earlier that leaders are made and not born and he denied that 'leadership is fixed at birth' (p. 2).

The notion of leadership discussed so far has a bearing on this study as the NPQH programme in Malaysia is an effort to train future leaders of education. Adapting a view of Grint's discussion on Aristotelian principles, it can be assumed that the NPQH programme during its first part is a phase where participants are learning or acquiring the knowledge (*episteme*) and the skills (*techne*) whilst the second part is meant to expose the participants to the practical aspect of school leadership, perhaps leading to the acquiring of wisdom (*phronesis*). However the finding of this study will hopefully point to the effectiveness of acquiring those intended outcome by the graduates.

### **3.1.2 School Leadership**

Even though the concept of leadership is purportedly derived mainly from the business world, it found its way into the educational world. Bush and Glover (2003) in reviewing the broad literature on School Leadership for the National College for School Leadership define school leadership as following:

“Leadership is a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes. Successful leaders develop a vision for their schools based on their personal and professional values. They articulate this vision at every opportunity and influence their staff and other stakeholders to share the vision.


The philosophy, structures and activities of the school are geared towards the achievement of this shared vision” (p. 8).

The definition by Bush and Glover gives prominence to the shared vision by the school leaders. Leithwood et al. (1999) attempted to present approaches to educational leadership through their review of leadership theories which were present in four journals – two based in United States, one Australian and one UK based, spanning a period of eight years. They uncovered twenty concepts and assigned them to “six broad categories, referred to subsequently as models” (p. 7), as following:

- instructional – which dwells with influencing teachers’ educational practice;
- transformational – which dwells with change and empowering followers;
- moral – which dwells with the ‘rightness’ of decisions, ethics and values of leaders themselves;
- participative – which dwells with involvement in decision-making with the followers;
- managerial – which dwells with the tasks and functions that need to be carried out efficiently; and
- Contingent – which dwells with the adaption of different styles to different situations.

They intended to explain transformational leadership which seemed to them as an appropriate approach for the current conditions in order to develop something beyond it – post-transformational leadership. However, they conceded to the fact that ‘this body of evidence seems to provide only modest empirical support for using transformational approaches as a foundation on which to build a model of leadership for present and future schools’ (p. 38)

It is apparently difficult to assign or claim any one theory to be the most effective approach to education or schools because of the different context and situation faced by the school leader. Realising this, Fidler and Atton (2004) suggest that different theories of leadership are of values for different purposes in schools. They proposed a composite model of leadership in schools which is guided by the general principles which they assert should inform any approach to leadership – contingency, moral and educational considerations. They identified theories for particular levels of activity in schools. Their model is depicted in the following Table 3.1.

Increasing specificity of action  	General principles	Contingency principle	
		Moral leadership	Educative leadership
		Leading professional	
	Organisational level	Transformational leadership	Transactional leadership
	Internal working	Participative/ collegial leadership	Managerial/ political leadership
Influencing classroom teaching	Instructional leadership		

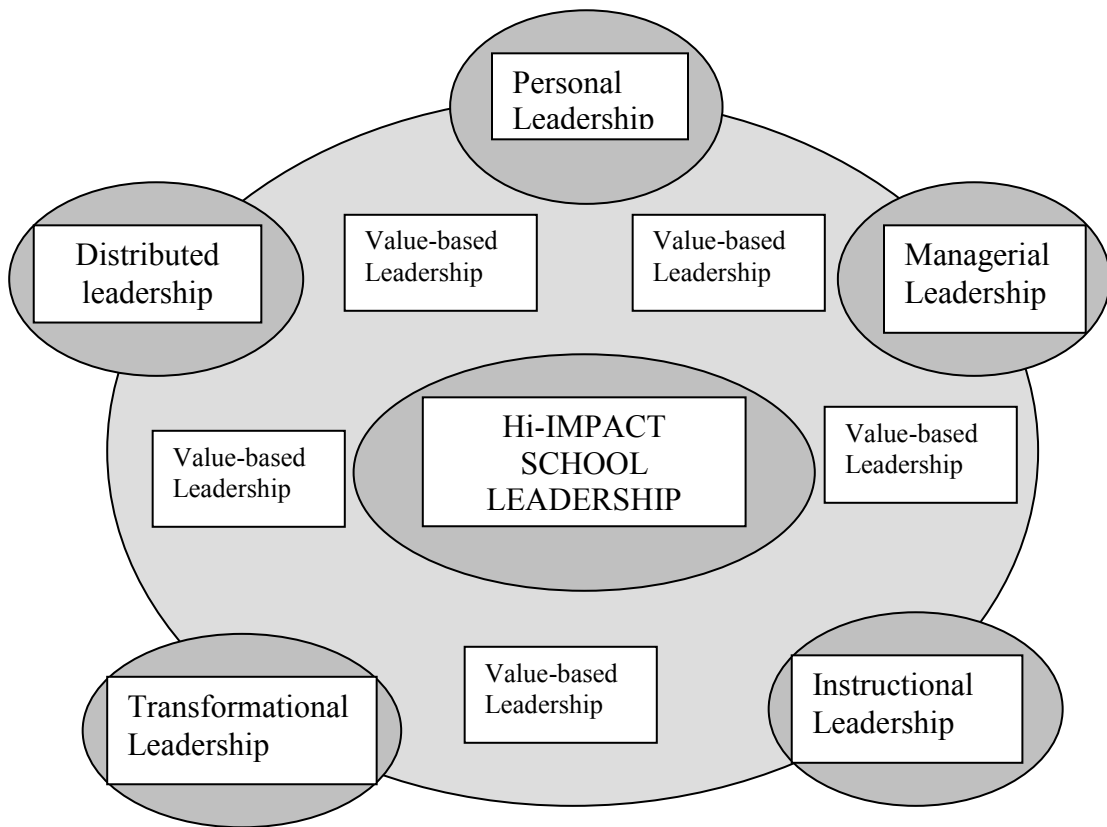
**Table 3.1: Composite model of leadership in schools  
(Adapted from Fidler and Atton, 2004)**

The model places contingency as the guiding principle whereby the leader could make a choice from the lower level alternative theories in the hierarchy to act in different situations in school. It also includes moral element which implies the need for moral principles and ethical conduct. The importance of contingency model was similarly forwarded by Bush and Glover (2003) who asserted that this model suggests a requirement for leaders to develop a portfolio of leadership styles so that they are able to carry out effective situational analysis to adapt their approaches to specific contexts.

In 2008, Amin reported that IAB (The National Institute of Educational Management and Leadership) in Malaysia, in its quest to improve its educational management and leadership training capacity, introduced a framework known as 'Managing Educational Leadership Talent (MELT)'. The framework emphasises on training and

continuous development elements. It contains 5 important components - Growth Oriented Training and Development (GOTD); High Impact Training and Development Initiatives (HITI); Leadership Competency Assessment (LCA); School Leadership Competency (SLC); and High Impact School Leadership (HISL).

The output of the MELT framework is High Impact School Leadership (HISL), which is supposedly the end product of all these initiatives undertaken by IAB. HISL is a concept which combines 6 different leadership styles – personal leadership, managerial leadership, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, distributed leadership and value-based leadership. It is depicted in Figure 3.1 below:



**Figure 3.1: High Impact School Leadership Model  
(Adapted from Amin, 2008)**

The literature reviewed in this section seems to point towards the complexity of leadership styles to schools because of the different context in which it is practiced. There are attempts as evident from the literature to encompass all the prevailing styles into the realm of school leadership. That seem to point towards the fluidity or flexibility a head is expected to have when leading a school insofar as using different styles that suit different demands of the job. The NPQH prepares future heads to

lead schools in the future and these heads are then to practice leadership styles in their own varying contexts. While this study examines the impact of the programme, it is also imperative to capture any notion of leadership style or styles that the graduate heads may imply in their interview responses to better understand the way they lead. Of course, leadership by the head is pertinent to a school and the following chapter will explore further the notion of leadership and its relationship to school effectiveness and improvement.

### **3.2 School Effectiveness and School Improvement**

Bush (2008b) notes that in the past decade there has been a global trend towards a more systematic provision of leadership and management development, particularly for school heads. In addition, there is ample literature on the importance of leadership and management in relation to educational outcomes as demonstrated by studies across the world (Bush and Jackson, 2002). It has also been asserted that leadership makes a difference to the school's ability to improve by influencing the motivation of teachers and the quality of teaching which takes place in the classroom (Rahimah, 1981; Hargreaves, 1994; Hussein, 1997; Day et al., 2000; Fullan, 1992, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2001).

Sammons et al. (1995, p. 8) have identified eleven factors for effective schools and have asserted on the importance of the leadership factor. Sammons (1999, p. 195)



claims that “almost every single study of school effectiveness has shown both primary and secondary leadership to be a key factor”.

Reynolds and Teddlie (2000, p. 141) declare that they did not know of a study that has not shown leadership as an important factor within effective schools and asserted that this leadership is “nearly always provided by the headteacher” (p. 141). Hallinger and Heck (1999) who reviewed previous research conclude that leadership of school heads is linked only indirectly to school effectiveness. However, they confirmed that the principals provide the most powerful influence in clarifying and articulating the purposes of the school.

In the UK the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) has made the following statement:

“The quality of the headteacher is a crucial factor in the success of the school...Good heads can transform a school; poor heads can block progress and achievement. It is essential that we have measures in place to strengthen the skills of all new and serving heads” (DfEE, 1998: 29-46).

In reviewing past research, Scheerens (1992, p. 39) found that effective schools research findings converged on five factors, namely: “strong educational leadership, emphasis on acquiring basic skills, and orderly and secure environment, high expectations of pupil attainment and frequent assessment of pupil progress”.

In concluding their study on the influence of school leadership on pupil learning, Leithwood et al. (2006) made the following claim:

“There is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership” (p. 5).

The literature reviewed thus far has asserted the importance of school leadership in determining the quality and effectiveness of schools. Similar sentiments were expressed in Malaysia amongst the policy makers and scholars alike. Wan (1995), a Malaysian educational scholar and the then Director General of Education, asserts that leadership and management are the most important phenomena to move the trained and knowledgeable workforce forward.

According to a report of a meeting by Effective Principals Movement on 5 March 1998 effective school leaders have:

“excellent communication skills, good at human relations, sensitive to diverse cultures and customs, possess clear vision, able to create a dynamic educational environment, accept tasks as a professional responsibility, make decisions through consensus, and , skilful in information technology and management, and other personal skills” (EPRD, 2006: p. 8-9).

The Ministry of Education Malaysia envisioned preparing an able group of school leaders who are capable of managing schools effectively. An effective headteacher is one who has good qualities in leadership, inter-personal communication, work targets and demonstrates good personality (EPRD, 2006).

The above desired characteristics of school leaders in Malaysia have much in common with the ideas in the western perspectives. The adaptation of ideas from the West is not without problems because of the varying contextual differences, such as differences in school governance and culture. This prompted scholars from the Asia Pacific region to call for the development of an indigenous knowledge base on leadership, one that is moulded with the culture and local context taken into account (Bajunid, 1996; Cheng, 1995; Hallinger and Kantamara, 2000). However, it can be assumed that the knowledge base on school leadership has been influenced greatly by western perspectives. This is inevitable because of the influence of British rule in Malaysia which is inherent in the Malaysian political, administrative and education systems. This influence continues and it is further amplified by ICT and globalisation (Aziz, 2003). As the researcher, I steadfastly hold the notion that knowledge generated elsewhere has a potential for contributing towards the understanding and practice of school management and leadership in the local Malaysian context.

Taking into consideration the latest knowledge on school leadership, Amin (2008), discussed the High Impact School Leadership (HISL) model (as presented in the previous chapter) using the combination of 6 different leadership styles – personal leadership, managerial leadership, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, distributed leadership and value-based leadership. Amin reported for IAB which studied and analysed competencies within all the leadership styles and produced the generic competencies suited to management and leadership of schools

in Malaysia. 27 generic competencies were identified and grouped into 6 domains; policy and direction, instructional and achievement, change and innovation, people and relationship, resources and operation, and personal effectiveness (please refer to Appendix 6).

All the literature which is reviewed points towards the importance of leadership in schools. It may be argued that the leadership factor is the most important factor as evident in some of the literature. There are nonetheless other literatures which suggest that leadership is but one factor which contributes to the effectiveness and improves the school. Being the most important or one of the important or crucial factors has warranted and accorded much interest to the development of leadership in education. Bush (2008b) points out that the growing realisation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that headship is a specialist occupation that requires specific preparation is attributed to the following reasons:

- the expansion of the role of school principal - whereby accountability pressures are mounting with a great deal of expectation placed on the head by the government, parents and the wider public;
- the increasing complexity of school contexts – emanating from the global economic integration leading to widespread recognition that education holds the key to competitiveness. This results in increased accountability pressures on the heads as they are the site-based leaders;

- recognition that preparation is a moral obligation – it is considered a right for the headteachers to receive effective preparation for their demanding role;
- recognition that effective preparation and development make a difference – this is based on various researches into the effectiveness of the preparation for leadership, leading to a widespread belief that leadership preparation and development actually make a difference.

The growing pressure on the headship role is also increasingly recognised through many researches done in the field of school leadership. For example, Briggs et al. (2006) recount the multitude of day-to-day pressures and changing demands found to be unsettling to new heads in a study tracing the development of a cohort of new heads towards their stability and establishment. These difficulties are compounded by immediate context new heads can find themselves in, especially if moving to a new school to take up their post (Holligan et al., 2006).

The NPQH training programme in Malaysia has been envisaged to prepare leaders who will provide effective leadership for schools and it is imperative to gauge the extent of the effect of this leadership training on the participants who are now incumbent heads in schools. Before further discussing the literature pertaining to the development of school leaders, a review of literature on management and leadership training is presented in the next section and related to the context of the study.

### **3.3 Management and Leadership Training**

#### **3.3.1 Training and Education**

Training can immensely contribute to developing an organisation for it plays an integral part in enhancing human learning and potential (Buckley and Caple, 2000). Training itself is planned and undertaken for the purpose of enhancing knowledge, increasing skills or competence and modifying behaviour. It is defined as a systematic and planned activity to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes of participants through learning experiences to improve performance (Schmidt et al., 1992; Buckley and Caple, 2000). Learning is defined as a process whereby individuals acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes through experience, reflection, study or instruction while development is defined as the general enhancement and growth of an individual's skills and abilities through conscious and unconscious learning (Buckley and Caple, 2000). Thus, the concepts of learning and development seem to be the central tenets of training and they are also related to education.

Buckley and Caple (2000), drawing on a number of sources, define education as follows:

“a process and a series of activities which aim at enabling an individual to assimilate and develop knowledge, skills, values and understanding that are not simply related to a narrow field of activity but allow a broad range of problems to be defined, analysed and solved” (p. 1).

They went further to make a distinction between training and education by pointing to the precision with which training is designed in a specific job context whilst education, being more person-oriented rather than job-oriented, is a broader process of change and less precise in its objectives. It could be argued then that training is designed for a specific purpose but having acquired the knowledge, skills and attitudes, a person can use these in a different context and that constitutes education. Both training and education are intended to develop an individual through learning.

### **3.3.2 *Training for School Leadership***

Even though it is now widely accepted that teachers need both initial training to be effective classroom practitioners and continuing professional development throughout their careers, it is equally noted that recognition of the need for specific preparation for aspiring and practicing school leaders around the world has been slower to emerge (Bush and Jackson, 2002). The issue of leadership development and school effectiveness attracts many a researcher and policy maker that it has become an on-going debate on which approach is best suited to headship training programmes (Leithwood, 1995; Olson, 2007, Hussein, 2007). It has been said that headship training does not have a correlation with school effectiveness because what is learnt in the university or training institute does not fulfill the real needs of school management and leadership (Amin, 2008). On the other hand, there are claims that headship training enhances the knowledge, skills and competencies of the aspiring school leaders (Bush, 2008; Aziz, 2003; Nur et al., 2006; Ruhaya et al., 2006).

Notwithstanding the effect of the training on the school, Bush (2008) made a strong call that school leaders should be accorded proper development as he describes it as a 'moral obligation':

“Requiring individuals to lead schools, which are often multimillion dollar businesses, manage staff and care for children, without specific preparation, may be seen as foolish, even reckless, as well as being manifestly unfair for the new incumbent” (p. 30).

It has also been claimed that formal training for school leadership has been relatively rare outside the USA (Willower and Forsyth, 1998). Brundrett (2001) informs that school leadership preparation can be traced back to the nineteenth century, making USA the first nation that formulated a theory of educational administration. In the same vein, Murphy (1997) reported that educational master degrees are mandatory in many American states and 35 states have adopted or adapted the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards.

In England, there were several disconnected initiatives in the training of school leadership and management during the 1980s and 1990s (Bush, 1998). However, the introduction of Headteachers Leadership and Management Programme (HEADLAMP) in 1995 to address the training needs of newly appointed heads, followed by the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) for aspiring heads in 1997, and the establishment of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in November 2000 signaled a much higher profile for school leadership and leadership preparation (Bush & Jackson, 2002).



In Malaysia, headship training has been provided by Institut Aminuddin Baki (IAB – The National Institute of Educational Management and Leadership) since its inception in 1979. In-service courses in the form of basic course for practicing heads - the one-month School Management and Leadership course, and other short courses that are relevant to headship roles are provided. In 1999, the first cohort of aspiring heads was enrolled to take up the NPQH (National Professional Qualification for Headship) course.

### **3.3.3 *Training for Aspiring Heads***

Bush and Jackson (2002) reported a study done for NCSL where teams of two to three people, including school principals, NCSL senior staff and other professionals and academics, visited 15 leadership centres in 7 countries (Australia, Canada, Hong Kong China, New Zealand, Singapore, Sweden and USA) in order to gather 'intelligence' about how those centres operate, with a view to inform the policy and practices of NCSL. They found that almost all of the centres, except in Sweden, operated programmes for aspiring principals. While reporting the existence of such programmes, they also made the distinction between those systems in that some countries have made the programmes mandatory whilst others have not. The study found that most American states appear to have compulsory programmes, echoing an earlier report by Daresh and Male (2000)

In Canada, particularly in Ontario (as reported by Bush and Jackson, 2002), aspiring heads must complete the Principals' Qualification Programme (PQP) before being appointed as a principal or vice-principal. Apart from the mandatory requirements in USA and Canada, the study also found that potential heads have to undertake a 30 hours compulsory training programme in Hong Kong which is complemented by non-mandatory master level courses run by three universities. In New Zealand, there were optional programmes offered whereas no such provision was reported in Sweden for aspiring heads. In Singapore, there has been a national programme since 1984 (Bush and Chew, 1999). Even though the programme (Diploma in Education Administration - DEA) is not mandatory but candidates, who are 'handpicked' for inclusion in the programme, are required to successfully complete it to ensure promotion. The DEA was later replaced with Leadership in Education programme in 2001 but both schemes are reportedly different from those in many other countries because the candidates receive their full pay while attending this full-time programme for six months (Bush and Jackson, 2002). Apart from these countries, many other countries, for example France, England, Scotland, Estonia, Slovenia and Malta also have introduced leadership preparation programmes and require aspirants to acquire the mandatory national qualifications for school headship (Brundrett and Crawford, 2008; Bush, 2008b; Brundrett et al., 2006).

Following the study on international perspectives on preparation for school leadership, Bush and Jackson (2002) reported that the content of the programmes had considerable similarities in different countries, "leading to a hypothesis that there

is an international curriculum for school leadership preparation” (p. 420-421). They identify the following common elements:

- leadership; including vision, mission and transformational leadership;
- learning and teaching, or ‘instructional leadership’;
- main task areas of administration or management – such as human resource management and professional development;
- financial management;
- curriculum and external relations (Bush and Jackson, 2002, p. 421).

In Malaysia, the NPQH training is a full-time 1 year programme which is fully financed and the participants receive their full pay while attending it. It is intended to achieve its objectives and develop future leaders for Malaysian schools.

Appropriate management training can help school leaders face the demands placed upon their positions as there is a widespread belief positively linking training and organisational efficiency (Holden, 2001). It seems logical then to assume that trained or educated leaders will be more professional and productive as the interventions generally focus on equipping them with the necessary management and leadership tools (Aziz, 2003). The argument that follows this notion is that the level of professionalism of practitioners will rise after training. Hoyle and John (1995) propose three features of professionalism: knowledge, autonomy and responsibility. It is

therefore only appropriate to expect this professionalism through a high quality training programme.

The assumption that training improves professionalism, hence performance, is only justified if it focuses on relevant areas in school management that the school leaders need. In the same breath, the perceptions sought from the participants in this study are intended to add to the understanding of the effect and impact of the NPQH programme which in turn will help, if necessary, to further improve the programme. The following section will dwell deeper into the relationship of training to other factors that culminate in the learning and development of school leaders.

### **3.4 Leadership Development and Learning**

Development is defined as the general enhancement and growth of an individual's skills and abilities through conscious and unconscious learning (Buckley and Caple, 2000, p. 1). It can be assumed that when learning occurs, there is development in the learner. These concepts are closely related to training because training is the intervention that is planned and undertaken systematically so that the individual learns and develops.

In recent years there has been a marked increase in studies on adult and professional learning. School leaders are adult learners who have special yet different learning needs, learning styles, learning strategies and learning preferences.

Knowles (1975) refers to the education of adults as andragogy, as opposed to pedagogy of teaching children and youths. According to Knowles, adult learners require learning that is self-paced, relevant to personal or career interests and participatory in nature, a process design is favoured over a content design. In general, any training and development programme for adults needs to take into account the knowledge from research into andragogy, the art and science of helping adults learn. Adults tend to learn best in a climate of mutuality, in which the learning setting contains features such as respectfulness, collaboration and informality. Brookfield (1986, p. 9 – 11) proposes six principles in helping adults learn:

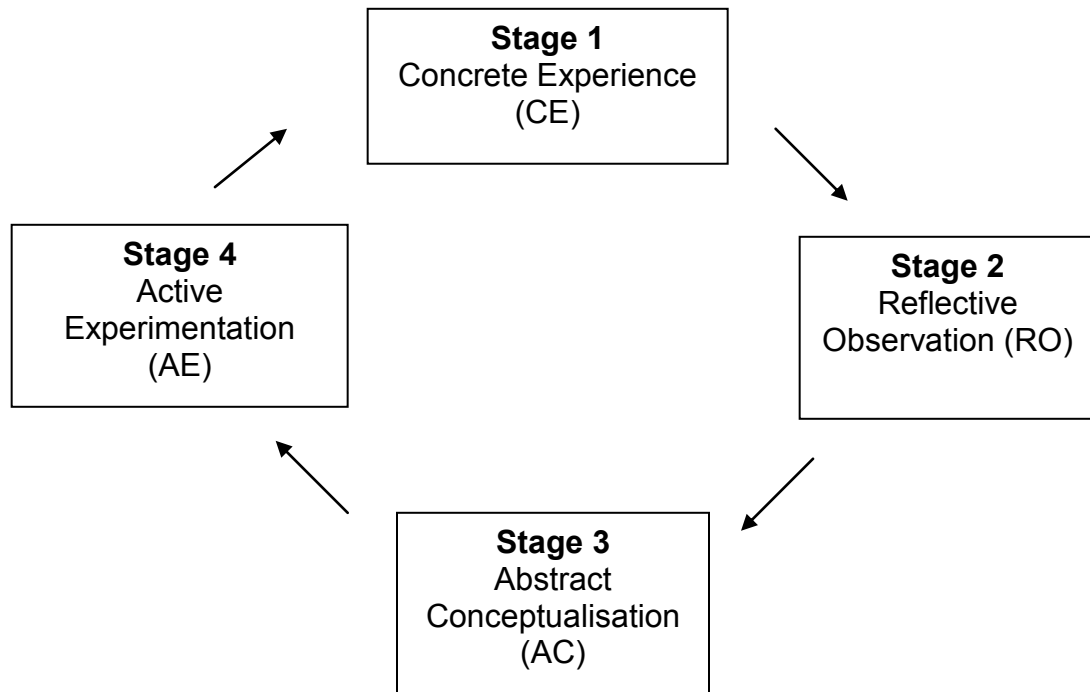
- voluntary participation in learning;
- respect among participants;
- collaborative facilitation;
- praxis (process) is placed at the heart of facilitation;
- aims at fostering critical reflection;
- nurturing self-directed and empowered adults.

The same assertion is made by Tusting and Barton (2006) who made two key points about adult learning: adults have their own motivations to learn; and adults have a drive towards becoming autonomous learners.

The above assumptions suggest that adult learning will be most effective if it focuses on practical issues facing the learners and also by taking into account their prior knowledge and experience. They also suggest that learning programmes provided for adult learners would be more effective if they are allowed to determine their own objectives, to pace their own learning and to draw on each other's knowledge and experiences.

These views are in line with earlier well-known work on learning theory by Kolb (1984). Kolb's Cycle of Learning (1984, p. 42), as in Figure 3.2, is built upon the idea that adults learn from experience. The learning cycle is significant in understanding the interaction between school management and the learning styles, skills and preferences of school leaders. In this framework there are four stages or modes, namely, concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation that learners must involve themselves in for the learning process to take place effectively. Based on their learning styles, Kolb categorised adult learners into four categories as the following:

- converger (AE and AC);
- diverger (CE and RO);
- assimilator (AC and RO);
- accommodator (CE and AE).



**Figure 3.2: Kolb's Cycle of Learning**  
(Adapted from Kolb, 1984, p. 42)

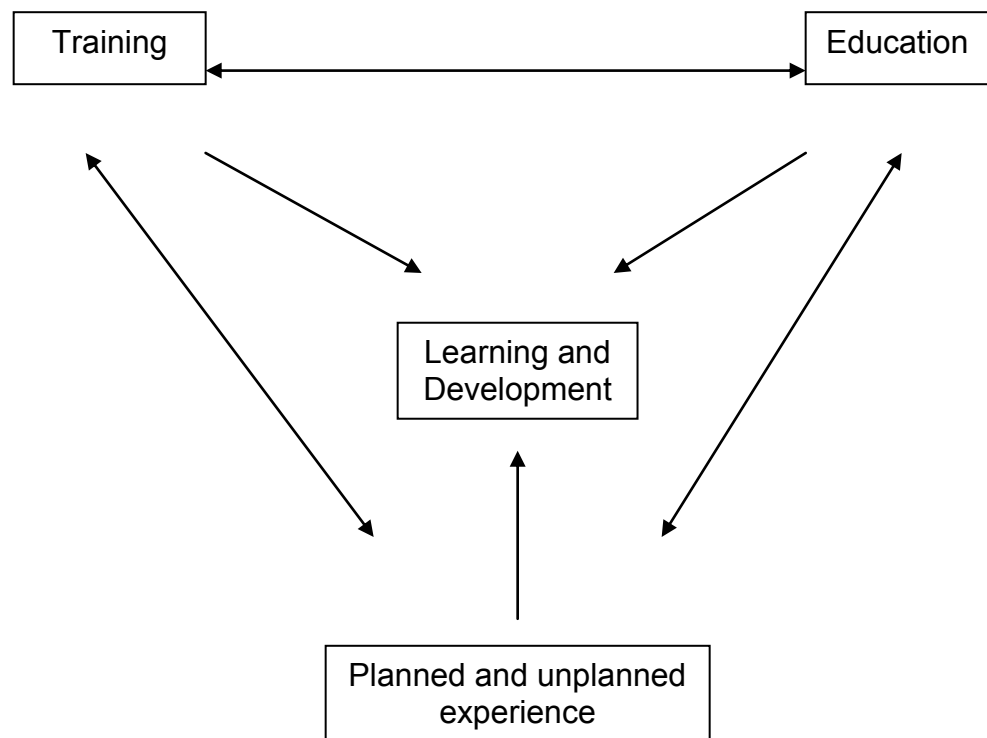
For effective learning, the theory calls for an ability to involve oneself fully and openly in all the four stages. This implies that learners must have some concrete experience by involving themselves experientially in some kind of activity, and some reflective observation by reflecting on the experience. Then the two stages should be followed by a phase of integrating their observation or building generalisation. The final phase is active experimentation, a stage where they can test their theories and use them in making decisions and solving problems.

As discussed previously, training and education are interrelated processes which are hoped to induce learning, hence development. Notwithstanding the fact that training and education are paramount in developing an individual, there is a call not to overlook yet another important element in this equation – experience. Buckley and Caple (2000) argue that experience, namely planned experience, is an interdependent and equal partner with training and education with regard to its potential contribution to learning and development. They offer the following in explaining the interrelatedness of these three elements:

“Competently conducted training can expedite the acquisition of specific job-related knowledge, skills and attitudes. Education, when carried out openly and in a spirit of enquiry, can equip individuals with the intellectual perspectives and the tools of analysis that can help to guide them and their organizations through present and future exigencies. Planned experience can integrate and act as the vital catalyst and ‘test bed’ for the skills, techniques, ideas, etc acquired in formal training and educational settings” (p. 3-4).

The same is depicted in Figure 3.3, in the following page.





**Figure 3.3: Elements that contribute to learning and development  
(Adapted from Buckley and Caple, 2000, p. 4)**

In this regard, the Malaysian NPQH does incorporate the notion of maximizing the learning potential of participants. It is embedded in a six months attachment period in schools (after completing the theoretical part of the training). By being reflective of the reality of schools where they are attached to, participants are required to identify areas that need improvement and undertake an improvement project. This is a planned experience element in the training programme. However, in the NPQH training, even though the training is similar participants come in with various

experiences and leave into different posts. Some are promoted to senior assistantship, some become heads whilst some are back as classroom teachers. This brings about the issue of transfer, particularly the transfer of training, and retention.

Perkins and Salomon (1988) described transfer as the use of knowledge or skills acquired in one context in a new situation. Buckley and Caple (2000) divide the transfer of training concept into positive transfer and negative transfer. The positive transfer in a training context happens when “the trainee is able to apply on the job what has been learned in training with relative ease or is able to learn a new task more quickly as a result of earlier training on another task” while negative transfer occurs when “performance on the job or on the new task is decelerated or hindered by what knowledge and skills have been acquired” (p.144). They further explain the transfer phenomenon using two sets of theories – the identical-elements theory and the transfer-through-principles theory. They claim that the identical-elements theory is useful when there is a high degree of common or identical stimulus and response elements in the training and work situations whilst the latter is when the trainee learns conceptual and behavioural principles that can be generalised and transferred to a set of varied situations.

Buckley and Caple (2000) further argue that retention of the skills and knowledge learned from the training is vital and is facilitated when they are fully used back on the

job for which the training took place. This is made difficult if there is little or no opportunity to practise the skills or to utilise the knowledge learned. Similarly, Bush et al. (2007) inform that the most successful learning experiences occur when there is a bridge between the work situation and the learning situation.

Apart from the context of the job after training which seems to be an external factor, the retention or the sustainability of the skills and knowledge has also been related to the trainee's self – the internal factor. Kotter (1996) claims that leadership learning is sustained if the learner is able to develop five mental habits, which include:

- 1) a willingness to take risks and step outside of the comfort zone;
- 2) self-reflection in a humble way to analyse and reflect on successes and especially failures;
- 3) an ability to collect information and ideas from others actively;
- 4) a propensity to listen to others; and
- 5) opening up to new ideas with an open mind.

It could be argued from the literature above that the retention of the knowledge and skills depend not only on the utility of what is learned during the training but also on the attitude and habits of the learner afterwards. Another important factor towards the

latter is self-directed learning. Self-directed learning seems to be an important path to leadership learning and an improved leadership practice (Eraut, 2000; Goleman et al., 2002; Walker and Quong, 2005). In the same vein, Goleman et al. (2002) asserts that “The crux of leadership development that works is self-directed learning: intentionally developing or strengthening an aspect of who you are and who you want to be, or both” (p. 107).

As leadership learning continues after training, it has been argued that some of the most powerful leadership learning occurs on the job – both incidentally and in structured ways (Woodall and Winstanley, 1998; Rainbird et al., 2004; Raelin, 2008). Woodall and Winstanley (1998) categorise workplace learning into three: learning from another person, learning from tasks, and learning with others. Southworth (2002) reported that headteachers learned most and developed their leadership practices by doing the job. In the same vein, Rhodes and Brundrett (2006) argue that if effective professional development is characterised by the on-the-job learning, then leadership training relying only on content-driven courses may be less effective in developing leadership talent compared to engagement by the learners in their own professional context. Even though leadership learning seems to be attributed to the workplace, it has been reported that learning by school leaders in the professional context is not only confined to the place they work in. Earley and Weindling (2004) synthesized more than 20 years of their headship and leadership development work in the UK by reporting that school heads believed the most valuable ‘on-the-job’

learning activity was working with others, especially effective headteachers. At the same time, the heads perceived that the most useful 'off-the-job' learning activities were attending courses, visiting other schools, networking with other headteachers, working on specialist tasks and having meetings or contacts with non-educationalists.

The claims and assertions made by these authors are relevantly related to the NPQH trainees in the presumption that the trainees acquired learning during the programme and some learning between the periods of graduation from the NPQH programme to the assuming of headship. The learning seems to involve the context they work in as well as their own attitude to further learning. However, the underlying important factor which will be needed to support this presumption is that the training provided is effective. Therefore, literature on the effectiveness of a training programme is also essential in this study and is reviewed in the ensuing section.

### **3.5 Effective Training Programme**

The literature on effective training identifies many conditions for professional growth, such as the value of engaging participants in collaborative decision-making, of identifying and meeting participants' needs, of modeling valued behaviours and providing different learning experiences. However these conditions are not always honoured in designing professional development experiences for school leaders (Levine et al., 1987).

Bedinham (1998) put forward a strong argument that the most effective training programmes are those which change behaviour on the job in a constructive way. He further argues that the real driving force for training would be whether the training makes an individual or group of people more productive, efficient or useful to an organization. He seems to echo the conviction made by Joyce and Showers (1980) that training which combines theory, modeling, practice, feedback, and coaching to application is the most effective (see Table 3.2) if the aim is to impact on behaviour in practice. According to this model, a combination of all the components of training is likely to effectively bring about the acquisition of new or improved practices performed in the real situation.

Joyce and Showers (1980) also assert that the absence of any of these components will cause the impact of training to be weakened in the sense that fewer numbers of people will progress to the transfer level (the level that has significant meaning for imbedding the new knowledge and skills).

Levels of Impact on Trainees

Components of Training	Awareness	Detailed Concepts and Organised Knowledge	Principles	Application and Problem Solving in 'Real Situation'
Theory	•	•	•	•
Modeling and Demonstration		•	•	•
Practice in Simulated Setting			•	•
Feedback on Job Performance			•	•
On the Job Coaching				•

**Table 3.2: Effective Training (Based on Joyce and Showers, 1980)**

The NPQH training in Malaysia seems to clearly encompass some of the components suggested by Joyce and Showers in the aforementioned literature. The training provides 6 months of theory input (course) with a following 6 months of practical work (school attachment). It can be assumed that the training provides the 3 components – theory, modeling and demonstration, and practice in simulated setting during the

one year duration. It can also be argued that the latter 2 components – feedback on job performance and on the job coaching also seem to be provided, albeit in the attachment phase of the course. However, these latter components are not covered directly by the training provider, IAB, once the participants complete the training and get posted back to their respective new positions. This support is presumably the responsibility of the District Education Office and State Education Department where the post is held (EPRD, 2006). It is therefore an aim of this study to investigate the perceived need for ongoing support and training once the participants assume headship and also in what form this support might take place or has taken place.

Affirming some of the factors already mentioned thus far in this section, Murphy and Hallinger (1987, p. 264) suggest the following set of specific factors to characterize the new administrative training movement:

- emphasis on the active role of the learner;
- focus on learning that is job related and useful;
- underscoring of the importance of self-directed learning;
- stress on informal learning and professional socialization;
- modeling of teaching and learning principles (for example, administrator as teacher);
- employment of a non-remedial perspective in training;
- provision of regular feedback during training;



- focus on meeting an array of participant needs (such as process and content needs);
- creation of an environment of trust and respect.

The suggestions by Murphy and Hallinger seem to be of a prescriptive nature, answering the 'how' question of ensuring the effectiveness of a training programme. On the other hand, OFSTED (1993) produced a list of factors that is claimed to ensure training effectiveness as well, but providing answers to the seemingly 'what' question or the normative form, as follows:

- training needs are identified at school level;
- the identified person are the ones selected for training;
- the training forms part of a coherent programme;
- the training is targeted to the identified participant needs;
- the training is sufficiently differentiated according to their varying levels of expertise;
- the range of provisions includes on and off-site courses, guided reading and workshops;
- dissemination strategies are built into the course;
- training is followed up by support in the school.

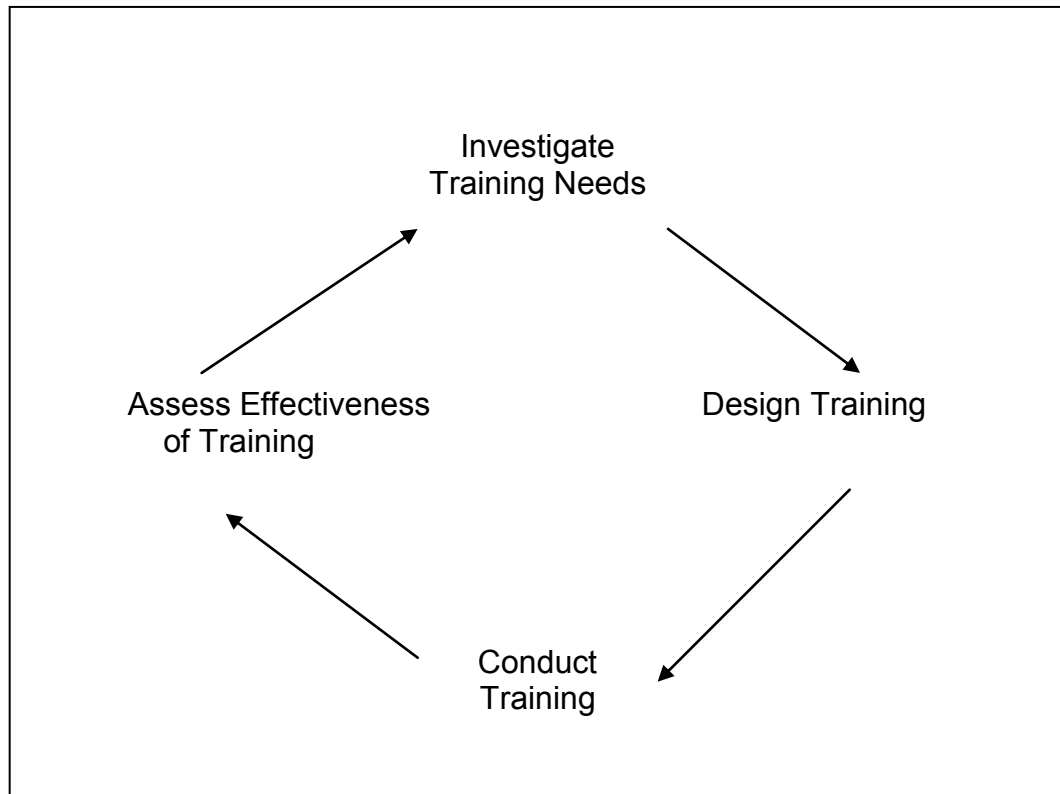
In a similar vein, MacBeath (2006) in his discussion about the talent enigma indicated that the ability or talent of a leader does not stand alone to achieve success in leadership as there are contextual factors to be taken into account. He also seems to agree with the contention that top performers in a particular organisation may not perform as well in another context. The point put forward by MacBeath (2006) about context is relevant as another factor to be added to the preceding list in ensuring the effectiveness of training.

In the context of the current research, it is assumed that a consideration of some of the proposed factors in ensuring training effectiveness can contribute to the effectiveness of NPQH training in Malaysia. However, not all of the factors might be practical with regards to the NPQH training. For instance, as the participants who join the NPQH training programme have different lengths of service and experience prior to the course, it would be definitely desirable to focus on meeting their different needs in the programme but it would be impractical and resourcefully inadequate to do so (Aziz, 2003). The NPQH programme is therefore designed in a generic way to cover all the seemingly important aspects of headship.

Kirkpatrick (2005) proposed that the following factors be carefully considered when planning and implementing an effective training programme:

1. determining needs;
2. setting objectives;
3. determining subject content;
4. selecting participants;
5. determining the best schedule;
6. selecting appropriate facilities;
7. selecting appropriate instructors;
8. selecting and preparing audiovisual aids;
9. coordinating the program;
10. evaluating the program.

Evaluating the programme, or assessing the effectiveness of training is also entailed in Buckley and Caple's (2000) proposal for a basic model of a systematic approach to training, as illustrated in Figure 3.4.



**Figure 3.4: A basic model of a systematic approach to training  
(Adapted from Buckley & Caple, 2000)**

Buckley and Caple (2000) divided the evaluation part into two processes – internal validation and external validation. They explain that internal validation is the process of measuring trainee’s performance to see if they have achieved the objectives of the training. External validation is the assessment of whether the objectives of the training have met the needs of the participants in order to enable them to perform specific tasks, or the total job, to the accepted standards. They also propose that a follow-up study should be done in the job environment to establish whether the training was designed with the job requirements clearly in mind. Thus, evaluation to them is the total value of the training.

Heck (2003) forwards his examination on the impact of preparation of beginning school administrators using the twin concepts of professional and organisational socialisation. Professional socialisation involves formal preparation or training, where it occurs, and the early phases of professional practice. This evolves into organisational socialisation which involves the process of becoming familiar with the specific context of the place where leadership is practised. In the same vein, an influential first study on the transition to headship in the USA by Browne-Ferrigno (2003) revealed key elements of the transformation process as following;

- role conceptualisation – participants understanding about the roles and responsibilities of a school head;
- initial socialisation – understanding the need for changed professional behaviour;
- role-identity transformation – the mind-set shift of participants to that of an educational leader;
- purposeful engagement – indicated by a desire to gain knowledge, confidence, support and skills set required for the leader role.

In the proposed NPQH evaluative case study, perceptions will be sought of the graduates on the relevance of their training to their role as heads. This will give an account of whether what is encompassed in the training gives utility and credence in the final intended product, the headship. It will also point to gaps, if any, between what is learned and what is actually required in the job.

The next section will present the literature on evaluation and the different models or approaches used in evaluating training programmes.

### **3.6 Training Evaluation**

This section presents the various models or forms of evaluative research and this study will be adopting a selection of items that fit the purpose of this project. Scriven (2003) synthesizes the definition of evaluation as the process of determining the merit, worth or significance of things. Owen (1999) classified the categories for objects (or things) for an evaluation as following:

- programs;
- policies;
- organisations;
- products; and
- individuals.

Even though the objects appear to be classified into different categories, much of the evaluation effort could involve these categories in an inter-connected or overlapping way. Similarly, this study will invariably involve all the aforementioned objects, whether directly or indirectly. Smith (1989) defines program as set of planned activities directed towards bringing about specified change(s) in an identified and

identifiable audience. The NPQH training is a set of planned activities aimed at providing changes in the aspiring headteachers in Malaysia and thus is considered as a programme.

Kirkpatrick (2005) suggests that evaluation is an important factor to be considered when planning and implementing an effective training program. Stufflebeam (1986) asserted that evaluation is vital for it is a concomitant of improvement, as “we cannot make our programmes better unless we know where they are weak and strong and unless we become aware of better means” (p. 140).

There are various definitions of evaluation but they invariably point towards the worth or effectiveness of an intervention. For instance, training evaluation is defined as ‘the process of measuring the progress towards a target, analysing reasons for outcomes of activities or progress or appraising the performance or outcomes of a programme’ (USAID Evaluation Handbook, 1976, p. 3). Another handbook, Gower Handbook of Training and Development (Landale, 1991) defines evaluation as the assessment of the total value of a training programme. The proponents of models or methods of training evaluation also have definitions to offer, expectedly aligned to their approaches. Kirkpatrick (1987), for example, defines training evaluation as ‘the systematic process of collecting and analysing information in order to describe and judge the merit or worth of the programme’. Patton (2002) defines programme evaluation as ‘the systematic collection of information about the activities,

characteristics, and outcomes of programmes to make judgements about the programme, and/or inform decisions about future programming.’

Before looking at the various models in evaluation, it is worthwhile looking at the discussion on theories of evaluation. Scriven (2003), one of the leading and best-known evaluation theorists, explains that an evaluation theory (or theory of evaluation) is either one of two types – normative or descriptive. Normative theories are about what evaluation should do or be while descriptive theories are about what evaluations types there are (classificatory theories) or why and how they do what they do (explanatory theories). In the *International Handbook of Educational Evaluation* (2003), Scriven contributed a meta-theoretical chapter which is a commentary on the various evaluation theories. He presented the theories, or rather models as he caveats his discussion ‘in order to bypass complaints that they are mostly lacking in the detailed apparatus of a theory’ (p. 19), in the chronological order of their historical development. Scriven started the analysis of theories by presenting the *quasi-evaluation* which was the early model of evaluation. This model involves investigation on programmes simply in terms of ‘being on time, on target, and on budget’. Scriven likened this evaluation more to monitoring rather than evaluating because it did not assess the value of the programme or intervention. This led to a model which can be referred to as the *goal-achievement evaluation*. Prokus (1971) called this model “discrepancy evaluation” because its aim was to find the discrepancy between the goals of a programme and the actual achievements. Scriven commented that this model’s shortcoming is in bypassing entirely whatever the client’s values were. An



alternative model is *outcome-based evaluation* which is also known as the result-oriented evaluation. The seemingly missing link in this approach is the process consideration which Scriven asserts should be covered in almost any serious programme evaluation.

Another model is consumer-oriented evaluation which regards the evaluation effort as a consumer service. The weakness of this model is the importance of consumers' needs and the neglect of management goals of the programme. The focus of this evaluation is in the summative aspect of programmes, i.e. the end results for the customers. Yet another alternative model went on the opposite pole from this model and is called the formative-only model. The proponents of this model, the Cronbach group held that there was no such thing as summative evaluation (Cronbach, 1963, 1982) in the real world. The critique of this model is that there are some programmes that warrant summative evaluation that precede the termination of the programmes due to factors such as constraint in funds. Another model scrutinised by Scriven is called the participatory or role-mixing approaches which is very much shared by the 'fourth-generation evaluation'. This model advocates participation of the evaluatees or customers in an active role within the evaluation. In fact, this model has a version called empowerment evaluation where the evaluatees are the sole authors and the evaluator is just a coach. Apart from the merit of this approach, Scriven opined that involving the evaluatees in such an active role could cost the evaluation practice its validity.

From the discussion put forth by Scriven, it seems like the theorists of evaluation have their distinctive preference on how the position of value should be. Despite the variation in the models discussed, it appears that the end result of this evaluative exercise is to find the worth of the programme – be it for management, stakeholders, customers or the public at large.

The succeeding section of this chapter will dwell with another analysis of the evaluation models, a ‘meta-model’ attempt by Owen (1999) consisting of five evaluation forms, which provides guidance for the planning and conduct of investigations. Owen classifies evaluation conceptually into five categories, or ‘forms’, as following:

- proactive;
- clarificative;
- interactive;
- monitoring; and
- impact.

The proactive evaluation form takes place before a programme is designed. It is for the planners to decide what type of programme is needed. Approaches consistent with this form are *needs assessment* or *needs analysis*; *research review*; and *review of best practices* or *creation of benchmarks*.

The clarificative form concentrates on clarifying the internal structure and functioning of a programme – described as the theory or logic of a programme. The approach consistent with this form is *logic development* or *evaluability assessment* and *accreditation*. The interactive evaluation provides information about delivery or implementation of a programme or about selected component elements or activities within the programme. The approaches consistent with this form include *responsive evaluation*; *action research*; *quality review*; *developmental evaluation*; and *empowerment evaluation*.

The monitoring form is appropriate when a programme is well established and ongoing. It involves a system of regular monitoring of the progress of the programme and evaluators are likely to be internally located. Approaches consistent with this approach include *component analysis*; *devolved performance assessment*; and *system analysis*.

The impact evaluation is used to assess the impact of settled programmes. It typically includes study on the extent and level of attainment of specified objectives, determination of the level of performance on outcome indicators, or examining both intended and unintended outcomes. The major approaches consistent with this form include *objectives-based evaluation*; *process-outcomes studies*; *needs-based evaluation*; *goal-free evaluation*; and *performance audit*.

The different forms of evaluation presented from the literature thus far inform this study on the appropriate model or approach to be engaged in studying the perceptions of effectiveness of the NPQH programme in Malaysia. However the selection of any single model or approach might pose a problem for there might be gaps in the model that will restrict the aim of the study. Therefore, I propose a mixed approach suited to the objectives of the study. Following Scriven (2003), as discussed earlier, the model which seems to be most suitable for this study is the outcome-based evaluation. However, Shrivien pointed towards the weakness of this model in that it does not take into consideration the process of the programme. In this study, the process of the training programme will also be considered through the perceptions of the participants as all other aspects which might be articulated by the participants. The goal-achievement model described by Shrivien is also relevant for this study as it intends to find the discrepancy between what was intended by the goals of the programme and the actual achievement. The study also adopts the approach suggested by the formative model as it intends to find ways of improving the NPQH programme which is still on-going. It also relates to the summative evaluation because it will research on the NPQH programme which has completed, for the heads in the study attended the first few cohorts of the NPQH training.

The approach adopted in this evaluative study is also closely related to impact evaluation form as described by Owen (1999). Key elements from a number of approaches within the impact evaluation form are adopted and adapted in order to achieve a best fit to intended purpose - objectives-based evaluation in that it will

examine the attainment of the objectives of the NPQH programme; process-outcomes evaluation approach because it will endeavour to find the perceptions on the process of the programme as well as the outcome of the relevance of the programme to its' intended headship practices; and goal-free evaluation because it will also accept the participants' views on unintended outcome, if any, in the training programme.

Overall, this study utilises the relevant key elements of various evaluation models and approaches. The ideas are selected, adopted and adapted to create the best possible fit and approach for the aims and objectives of this study.

The following section will discuss and present some findings from evaluative research done on headship preparatory programmes in Malaysia and the United Kingdom (England and Scotland).

### **3.7 Evaluation of Headship Preparatory Programmes in Malaysia and United Kingdom**

#### **3.7.1 Introduction**

This section will discuss the background and research done on the headship preparatory programmes in Malaysia and the United Kingdom. The headship preparatory programme in Malaysia is known as NPQH, emulated from the NPQH

programme in England. In Scotland, the headship preparatory programme is known as the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH). The discussion will provide some information on the effectiveness of these programmes in their respective contexts.

### ***3.7.2 NPQH in England***

In England, a key gateway qualification into headship is the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) (Higham et al., 2007). NPQH was introduced in 1997 and it was centrally controlled but regionally delivered with an allied but separate system of assessment (Brundrett, 2001). The NPQH programme in England was revised in 2001 and is currently under further review due to request from the Secretary of State to do so (Kelly, 2004). The NPQH is underpinned by the National Standards for Headteachers which have been revised in 2004 (DfES, 2004).

Since April 2004, it has been mandatory for all first-time headteachers appointed to a post in the maintained sector school (or a non-maintained special school) to hold or be 'working towards' NPQH (Higham et al., 2007). From 2009, new headteachers to be appointed must have completed the NPQH. This proposal for the mandatory status has not been wholly welcomed (Hingham et al., 2007, referring to The National Union of Teachers, 2003 and Gronn, 2003). However, a more recent stance seems to be supportive of the proposal, as claimed by Smithers and Robinson (2007) where they reported that 83% of existing primary and 67% of secondary heads agree that NPQH should be mandatory.

Dependent on relevant experience and achievement, applicants follow one of two routes through NPQH as depicted in Table 3.3.

Application and assessment of eligibility	
Standard route	Accelerated route
Development stage (with training)	Developmental stage (without training)
Pre-induction activities	Pre-induction activities
Induction sessions	Induction sessions
Contract visit	Contract visit
Training and development activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• face-to-face events</li> <li>• visits to other schools</li> <li>• online learning</li> </ul>	School-based assessment
School-based assessment	
Final stage 48-hour residential programme Final skills assessment Award of NPQH	
Approximately 15 months	Approximately 6 months

**Table 3.3: NPQH Programme Structure (NCSL, 2007a)**

The NPQH programme fee for all the candidates in the maintained sector as well as those working for a LA is 80% subsidized by NCSL. The remaining 20% of the fee is paid by the participant's school or LA. There are also participants who are totally subsidized – those from small schools with 100 or fewer pupils of statutory school age. The course is delivered through nine regional providers (NCSL, 2007a).

The NPQH structure was redesigned in 2008 (NCSL, 2008) to facilitate personalisation and flexibility. The revisions aim to make three main contributions:

- to improve the quality of applicants to headship;
- to move graduates rapidly to headship;
- to improve conversion rates to headship.

(refer to Appendix 7 – NPQH revised structure)

#### *3.7.2.1 Evaluation of NPQH in England*

The features and impact of NPQH course in England have been evaluated in a few studies. In 2005, 79% of NPQH candidates reportedly felt well prepared prior to taking up the role of headteacher whilst 77% felt well prepared on taking up the post (Hingham et al., 2007). Male's (2001) national survey of headteachers suggests that NPQH graduates consider themselves to be better prepared than other headteachers in the following nine skills:

- putting vision into words;
- ensuring that all people with an interest in the school are involved in the school mission;
- working with under-performing teachers;



- using student performance data to plan the curriculum;
- conducting a meeting;
- forming and working with teams;
- assuming responsibility for school management;
- organising school administration;
- using information technology and other tools in the management process.

A recent study showed that under half (44%) of the candidates had found it useful but also reported a lack of programme flexibility, personalisation and quality assurance (PwC, 2007). Brundrett (2006) found that some participants, while welcoming the practical orientation of the programme, felt that it was lacking in intellectual rigour compared to their academic studies. Smithers and Robinson (2007) assert that participants felt the course was too paper-based rather than practically applied although they acknowledged the usefulness of aspects such as reflection and mentoring.

The NCSL (2007b) summarized the programme's strengths, amongst others, in its link to schools and focus on improvement priorities; the final stage residential and face-to-face days; the programme's up-to-date materials with national policy initiatives; the assessment activities which reflect the role of headteacher; and networking through learning circles, tutor groups, face-to-face and online. On the other hand, improvement is sought in areas such as the application stage which needs more rigour to take better account of prior learning and motivation to headship;

the individual's personal and professional development needs; opportunities to explore diverse school contexts; and the signal of immediate readiness to headship upon graduation from NPQH.

A more recent study by Rhodes et al. (2009) on NPQH and the transition to headship in the English East Midlands involving 156 successful NPQH graduates revealed that the respondents indicated a good level of preparedness through the taught element of the programme and an increase of their confidence. However, the study found that respondents recorded their disagreement with the notion that they had been well prepared with respect to the facet 'financial management'. A majority of the respondents also attributed support from their heads and experience of leadership as influential factors in preparation for headship.

Literature on NPQH in England, however, revealed that many NPQH graduates do not seek a transition to headship (Rhodes et al., 2009). Bush (2008b) informed that only 43 per cent of NPQH graduates actually make the transition to headship. This seems to be a contemporary issue, much related to the succession of school heads in England. Related closely with this issue is the importance of career planning which is viewed as vital by many aspirant leaders (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006; Rhodes et al., 2008).

### **3.7.3 SQH in Scotland**

The Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH) was developed in Scotland as a 'benchmark qualification' designed to enable participants develop the competencies needed to meet an identified standard (Cowie, 2008). The standard referred to here is the Standard for Headship (SfH) which was published in 1998 (SOEID, 1998). Apart from providing the framework for describing the practice of headship, it also provided a framework for developing aspiring headteachers.

The SQH was designed specifically to enable aspiring headteachers to meet the requirements of the SfH before their application for the headship post but its introduction was also critical in the subsequent emergence of a framework of professional development for school leaders (Cowie, 2008; SEED, 2003). SQH participants are selected and sponsored by their education authorities. They must be fully registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland and have at least five years' teaching experience (Cowie, 2008). The participants are also required to demonstrate their potential for school leadership by having established a basic understanding of management principles and having successfully undertaken leadership and management tasks in school at either project leadership or team leadership level (Cowie, 2008; SEED, 2002, 2003).

The SQH programme was fully operational in 2000, following the granting of licence by the Scottish Executive to three regional consortia (Cowie, 2008). Hence, the SQH

involves collaboration between universities and partner-employing authorities in providing a programme that combines academic coursework with work-based learning demonstrated via a portfolio and supported by a colleague (usually the head) within the participant's school.

### *3.7.3.1 Evaluation of SQH in Scotland*

As in the NPQH in England, several studies on SQH have been published. Cowie (2008) asserts that the work has contributed to the development of a grounded evidence base for use in decision making, both at policy level as well as operational level. However, despite the general recognition of the need for decision making based on evidence and a need for effective evaluations to enable this (Levacic and Glatter, 2003), Cowie (2008) argues that the outcomes of these evaluations have been ignored or poorly utilized.

Work done by Simpson and her colleagues (Simpson et al., 2000) focused on the role of the supporter and found that a participant's involvement in the SQH has a positive effect on the school. Based on a survey of 32 local authorities and interviews with local coordinators, Murphy et al. (2002) report that the SQH was deemed successful in terms of its impact on professional learning and on schools. More than 80% of those surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that this work-based programme had moved management and leadership forward and that they could see an impact on schools. An evaluation research commissioned by SEED was undertaken by Menter

and his colleagues in 2003 (Menter et al., 2005). The study, which was a national survey, covered 451 questionnaires from various people - the SQH candidates, their head teachers, directors of education and chairpersons of school boards. The researchers went on further to do nine case studies, with each bearing an average of six or seven interviews. The study reinforced the positive findings of earlier studies and confirmed “the significance of the SQH programme for the future of Scotland’s schools” (p. 84) They further asserted that “both geographically and professionally, the programme is reaching out effectively, to areas where other programmes have been less successful” (Menter et al., 2005: p. 20).

The studies done on the effectiveness of the SQH in Scotland identified significant strengths and found that work-based learning model, with concurrent reflection on practice, and the requirement to work productively in teams to take forward whole school projects had a positive effect, not only on individual programme participants, but also on the culture of the school as a whole (Cowie, 2008).

Although there seem to be generally positive effect of the SQH programme, there have also been some concerns regarding workload pressure and variability in context and culture. Simpson et al. (2000) found that the programme exerts considerable workload pressures on participants and headteacher supporters, a factor which might undermine the benefits of the programme. Cowie (2008) reiterated that his own work done in 2005 (Cowie, 2005) raised concerns about workload and equity among

participants who failed to complete the programme. Unexpectedly, though, most respondents valued the programme and regarded their involvement as worthwhile.

#### **3.7.4 Evaluation of NPQH in Malaysia**

The NPQH programme in Malaysia started in 1999 and is fully financed by the Ministry of Education. The participants are fully funded and they follow the programme full time for a year. Much of the background of the programme has been presented in the previous chapter (see Chapter 2). Even though the NPQH training programme started with its first cohort of participants in 1999 and has evolved for ten years thus far, little has been done with regards to research on this sole headship preparatory programme in Malaysia. In this section, three known studies done on NPQH in Malaysia and their findings will be discussed.

The first study is done by Aziz (2003) and it aimed at examining the effectiveness of the NPQH training based on the participants' perceptions of the training they received in three areas – knowledge and skills, dispositions, and performance. This study involved 214 participants of three first cohorts of the programme, of which 148 were graduates and 66 were still undergoing training. The study also involved 46 primary headteachers of the schools where the graduates were posted to. This groups were surveyed using questionnaire and some of the participants were interviewed in the second phase of the research. The interviews involved 10 NPQH graduates and 3 headteachers, apart from 3 NPQH trainers. This study found that the graduates and

trainees perceived they had improved significantly in the respective areas – knowledge/skills, dispositions and performance, due to the training they received.

The greatest improvement in knowledge and skills was reported in the following areas:

- principles in developing and implementing strategic planning;
- leadership theories and leadership styles;
- legal issues impacting schools operation;
- school financial management and office administration (Aziz, 2003: p. 98)

In the difference of graduates' dispositions between before and after the training, the following showed marked improvement:

- the inclusion of all members of the school community in vision-building;
- a school vision of high standards of learning;
- continuous school improvement.

The greatest improvement in performance is reported as following:

- the communication of school vision and mission to staff, parents, pupils and community members;
- using appropriate leadership styles in different situations;
- maximizing staff's contribution to improve the quality of education.

The headteachers where the graduates were serving also perceived that these graduates had improved in performance. From the 10 graduates interviewed, 3 had assumed the post of headteacher. The evidence adduced from the study concluded that these graduate headteachers had benefited from the training and they generally valued the training. The study also found that despite their perception that the training had been effective, the graduates were frustrated because they could not get headship posts. Dissatisfaction with the conduct of a few trainers was also a key issue derived from this study. Graduates felt that although the trainers were well trained, some of them were unskilful in adult learning and possibly lacking in understanding of adult needs. The study further suggests that there was an apparent wastage in resources because most of the graduates were not given headship post after a year or two of graduating from the course which prepared them to be heads.

However, this study was conducted only on primary school NPQH graduates and Aziz (2003) clarifies that its findings are generally restricted to NPQH training involving aspiring heads from primary schools. Furthermore, only 3 NPQH graduates in the study had assumed headship.

The second study was conducted by the Educational Policy and Research Division (EPRD), Ministry of Education Malaysia. The study was conducted from 2003 and the findings presented in 2006 (EPRD, 2006). It aimed at researching the effectiveness of the NPQH graduates at the management level in schools and was designed using the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model by Stufflebeam



(1986). It also sought to find the extent of support accorded to the graduates by education authorities and suggestions to further improve the graduates effectiveness in the NPQH programme. This study involved 150 NPQH graduates who have been appointed to management posts in school (Head, Senior Assistant, Subject leader). It also involved 115 graduates who had not been appointed yet to any management post and were assuming the role of ordinary teachers. Apart from the NPQH graduates, this study sought information from the 600 administrators and teachers in schools where the graduates were posted. The study employed a mixed methodology and all 1400 samples were given questionnaire administered through post. For the qualitative phase of the study, interviews were conducted with 8 NPQH graduates at the management level (4 each from secondary and primary schools) and 8 graduates who were ordinary teachers (4 each from secondary and primary schools). All these 16 schools were chosen from four different zones in Malaysia and in addition, 16 non-NPQH teachers from these schools were also interviewed. This study is the biggest study done on NPQH as it involved a large number of respondents chosen from around the whole country, by means of division into four zones – north, south, east and west.

The study found that the NPQH graduates demonstrated high ability in applying knowledge and skills acquired from the training. The administrators and teachers in schools where the graduates were posted to also resoundingly approved of the effectiveness of these graduates in terms of personal quality and leadership abilities. The study also discovered that the support received from colleagues of these

graduates and from higher authorities in education (State Education Department) was high with respect to resources and morale support but expertise support in managing schools from the higher authorities could have been better. Nonetheless, the study found some areas of concern, amongst which are the following:

- the graduates viewed that there was no clear policy and planning on their placement after the training;
- the input for certain areas in the training curriculum should be enhanced – especially for financial management and legal aspect;
- lack of experience amongst the lecturers on aspects of leading and managing schools.

Although this study has been a large study on NPQH but it was restricted to evaluating the effectiveness of the graduates and not the NPQH programme (EPRD, 2006: p. 11).

The third study in Malaysia was done in IAB (the training provider) and reported by Ruhaya et al. (2006). It reported on the findings of the evaluation at the end of the 6-month theoretical phase of the course by 202 NPQH participants. The study employed the internal tools of IAB for evaluating end of course reactions of participants (Lecturer Evaluation Form 'BK-9' and Program Evaluation Form 'BK-10'). The questionnaire contained in these forms use close-ended and open-ended items,

administered as soon as the programme ends. This evaluation found that 76 percent of the participants responded that the course objectives were fully achieved; 72 percent agreed that the course was very useful in discharging their formal duties; 98 percent agreed that the course content was suitable in relation to the topics, sequence and official duties; 77.4 percent approved of the adequacy of duration of the course; 97.8 percent were satisfied with the teaching and 90 percent perceived the programme as good and excellent. Even though the findings were mainly very positive, they were limited to the reaction of the particular cohort participants for the theoretical phase of the course only and did not involve the preceding 6-month attachment phase in school. Application of the knowledge and skills acquired from this phase in the real job was also not possible to measure as the participants were just mid-way through their course and have not had the opportunity to apply what they learned in the leadership or senior management posts in school.

In summary, it appears from the limited number of studies in Malaysia that NPQH programme has been given positive reactions by the participants and graduates, as well as others significant to the effect of the learning acquired by the graduates. However, there have been some limitations and weaknesses reported through the studies that point towards the need to further improve the programme. It is also apparent from the review that none of the studies focused particularly on graduates of the NPQH who have assumed headship. This study intends to fill the gap of the limited studies done thus far on NPQH in Malaysia and aims at providing a richer perspective on the perceived relevance of the programme to the role of headteacher.

All these findings from the different headship preparatory programmes will inform this study as perceptions and views are sought from the graduates who are now in the headship post. The findings of this study will be analysed to find similarities and differences with the preceding studies so as to enrich the understanding of the overall effectiveness of the NPQH training programme. Whilst the study will be used to compare some aspects from previous studies done in Malaysia, it will also consider potential comparison on relevant issues to England and Scotland as the headship preparation is not only isolated to Malaysia but is a global educational endeavour which might have some similar implications, albeit in different contexts. This will provide a better understanding of the programmes in a wider perspective.

### **3.8 Conceptual Framework**

This study is built on the premise that effective training should yield the desired outcomes. The participants should benefit fully from the training with regards to their incumbent post, the headship, for which they have been trained.

This chapter has reviewed briefly the relevant literature on leadership and school leadership, school effectiveness and improvement, management and leadership training, leadership development and learning, effective training programme and training evaluation . It has also drawn on studies done in Malaysia as well as abroad pertaining to the effectiveness of NPQH programmes in their particular context.

The literature on leadership as a general concept and school leadership in particular points towards the dynamism of the term and what it entails. From one particular theory or style the trend in recent years seem to be on the combination of several styles depending on the context or situation the leader is in. The NPQH participants in Malaysia have been exposed to the knowledge on leadership in their training and this study will attempt to identify whether the heads are consciously aware of the leadership styles, if any, that they observe or practise in their own contexts. This will be ascertained through their responses to the interview.

Drawing from the literature on school effectiveness and improvement it is pointed that school leadership (i.e. of the headteacher) plays an important part with regards to educational outcomes. This is true regardless of the context and perspective – whether west or elsewhere. The literature also highlighted special qualities that are expected of the heads in moving their schools towards excellence. It can be argued that aspiring heads need to be exposed to the knowledge, skills and dispositions expected of them through well planned, prepared and executed development and learning opportunities. Training is such an opportunity. The study is intended to provide answer and evidence as to whether the training provided to the NPQH heads is driving them to lead the schools towards higher level of effectiveness and improvement as envisaged in the NPQH programme.

A review of literature on management and leadership training seems to assert the notion that training is an important element which is specific to the job context but

relates to education in the broader sense and enhances learning and development. The review of literature on leadership learning and development illustrated that leaders as adult learners learn differently from young learners. The ability to provide the appropriate and conducive environment and sound support for their learning seems essential to enable them to reap the maximum benefit - thus maximizing their potential to learn. An effective training programme could possibly expedite the acquisition of the job-related knowledge, skills and attitudes, which will educate the aspiring leaders to lead their organizations effectively. Planned experiences could also be another important element derived through training and could add in the culmination towards effective learning and development of leaders. The literature reviewed also revealed that the transfer of what is learned in the training is vital and this is tied to the relevance of the activities and conditions of the training to the intended user afterwards.

Factors that make training initiatives effective were also highlighted in the review and this will be considered in data analysis to ascertain whether the NPQH training programme is perceived as effective. Related close to this is the role preparation of the headship post and the transition into the role by the aspiring heads which will be sought from the perceptions of the respondents.

The literature on evaluation has yielded various approaches or models that inform the approach used in this study. A mixed approach is used combining key elements

from some of the reviewed models as to fit the intended purpose of this study. The major approaches and models used are depicted in Table 3.4.

<b>Evaluation approach</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Type</b>
Outcome-based model	Find the perceived results of the programme	Formative & Summative
Goal-achievement model	Find discrepancy between what was intended by the goals of the programme and the perceived actual achievement	
Impact Evaluation:		
<i>Objectives-based</i>	Examine the attainment of objectives;	
<i>Process-outcomes</i>	Find the perceptions on the process of the programme and the outcome of the relevance of the programme;	
<i>Needs-based</i>	Seek the views on how much the programme fulfilled the participants' needs;	
<i>Goal-free</i>	Find intended as well as unintended outcome	

**Table 3.4: Combination of evaluation approaches adopted in the study**

The review of literature pertaining to research and findings of studies done on the NPQH programme in Malaysia will provide a platform to compare the findings of this study and this will either confirm the earlier findings or suggest a different stance. Even though the studies done thus far did not cover the extent of examining the perceptions of the NPQH heads as much as it will be done in this study, the findings

nevertheless will be relevant in examining some common issues. In the same vein, the literature on NPQH programme in England and SQH programme in Scotland will provide a comparison of perceptions which might raise some similar issues pertaining to headship preparation in a global perspective.

All the reviewed literature informs the study in terms of conceptual framework and the choice of methodology. The review of literature did not point towards any modification or addition to the original research questions proposed for this study.

The following chapter discusses the design of this research.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

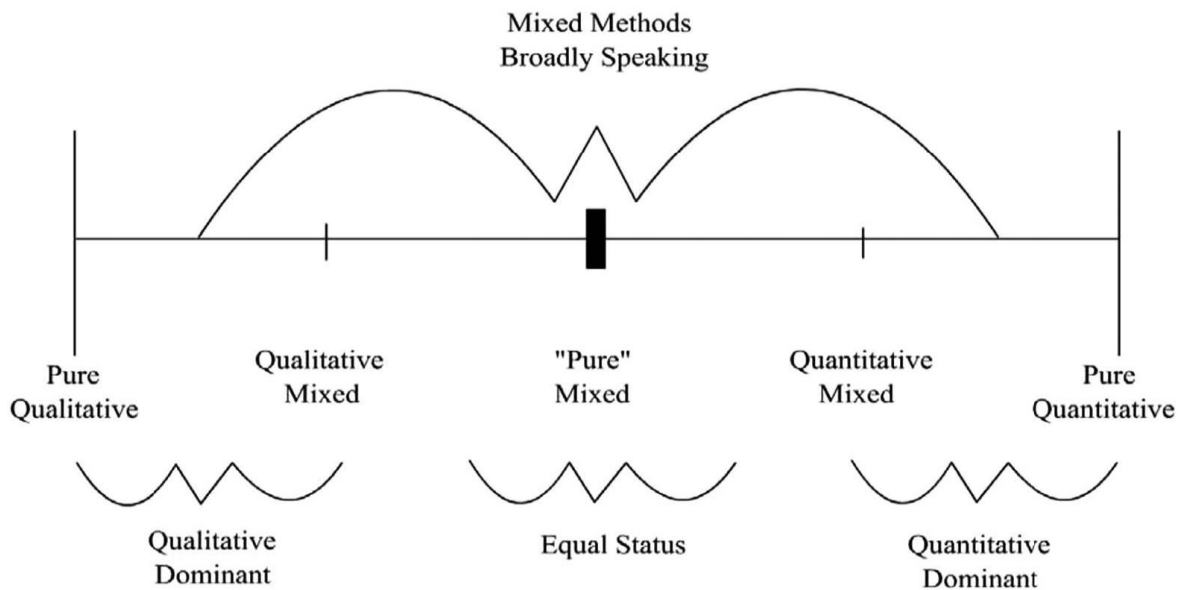
#### **4.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, the research design which underpins this study will be critically evaluated and justified. Firstly, the research will be located within a wider framework and then my own philosophical approach will be clarified within an ontological and epistemological stance. This will lead to the research strategy employed in this study and the justification of choosing the strategy. Finally, the research methodology and research methods will be explained before I clarify the management of this project taking into account issues such as access, sampling, validity and ethics.

This study is an evaluative case study of the NPQH training programme in Malaysia and was aimed at seeking perceptions of effectiveness of the training to participants who were now in their headship. Case study and evaluation were adopted as the research strategies in this study as these were deemed appropriate for the research questions posed and the information sought. Even though some researchers suggest that evaluation is not a scientific inquiry or research (Payne, 1994), Cohen et al. (2007) argue that to differentiate evaluation and research is not easy because not only do they share the same methodological characteristics but also one branch of research is called evaluative research. They further echoed the view of Norris (1990)

that evaluation can be viewed as an extension of research because evaluators and researchers possess similar skills in conducting investigations.

Johnson et al. (2007) suggested that there are three major research paradigms – qualitative, mixed and quantitative. However, they expanded their classification by suggesting that there are subtypes of mixed methods research, as illustrated in Figure 4.1.



**Figure 4.1: Graphic of the Three Major Research Paradigms, Including Subtypes of Mixed Methods Research (Adapted from Johnson et al., 2007, p. 124)**

Following their classification, this study could be labeled ‘qualitative dominant mixed methods’ research. They assert that this area on the continuum “would fit qualitative or mixed methods researchers who believe it is important to include quantitative data and approaches into their otherwise qualitative research projects” (p. 124). However,

Mason (2002) cautioned researchers against such a generalisation because she argues that usage of a little element of quantitative method does not necessarily turn a study into a mixed method research. This study therefore is an overall qualitative research which also used a quantitative method to pursue a better understanding of a certain aspect of the phenomenon being studied.

#### **4.1 Wider Frameworks**

This research could be placed in the typology of the 'five knowledge domains' conceptualised by Ribbins and Gunter (2002). The typology is summarised in the following Table 4.1.

<b>Knowledge domain</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Conceptual	Concerned with issues of ontology and epistemology and with conceptual clarification.
Humanistic	Seeks to gather and theorise from experiences and biographies.
Critical	Concerned to reveal and emancipate practitioners from the various forms of social injustice.
Evaluative	Seeks to abstract and measure impact at micro, macro and meso levels of social interaction.
Instrumental	Provides effective strategies and tactics to deliver organisational goals.

**Table 4.1: The Five Knowledge Domains**  
(Adapted from Ribbins and Gunter, 2002, p. 378)

Even though this research is an evaluative case study of a programme, it could lend itself to the second and fourth ‘knowledge domain’ as depicted in Table 4.1. The humanistic domain seems fit for this inquiry because it draws on perceptions and accounts of the headteachers’ learning and experiences in the programme which they undertook to enable them to be effective heads. On the other hand, the evaluative domain is relevant for the purpose of this inquiry is to evaluate the effectiveness of the NPQH programme. However, it is not the main intention of this study to measure the effectiveness of the headteachers’ leadership in schools. The understanding of

the effectiveness of the NPQH programme is sought and this could result in this research being considered as an “intellectual project” and used as a basis to enable “knowledge-for-action” (Wallace, 2003, p. 18).

## **4.2 Philosophical Approach**

As a researcher, it is essential to address the question of ontology and epistemology. These are philosophical issues which are integral to the research process for they constitute what researchers ‘silently think’ about research (Scott and Usher, 1999). Therefore, the following explanation of my ontological and epistemological position in this study will clarify my philosophical approach.

Ontological assumptions are concerned with the essence of realities, either those which are external to individuals or the realities produced by individual consciousness (Cohen et al., 2007). As Mason (2002) points out, the best way to grasp the ontological position and to work out its implications for the research is by recognising what are the alternatives that constitute reality. The two opposing positions are the realist position which holds that reality is external to the individual and the nominalist position that asserts that reality is the individual’s own making (Cohen et al., 2007). This is also regarded as the objective and subjective divide and a researcher may choose a position either at the extreme ends of this continuum or somewhere in the middle. I believe, for this research, that the reality is as the individuals (headteachers) perceive it and as they interpret it using the background of their

social, cultural and educational experiences. This is particularly important because the individuals in this study are asked to give their personal account of the worth of the training programme which they undertook to get into headship position. This research, therefore, subscribes to the subjectivist approach and my ontological position is of the nominalist nature.

To be able to study the nature of this 'reality' which is derived from 'multiple realities' of the researched, the researcher will have to ask an epistemological question on what might represent knowledge or evidence of this 'reality'. Epistemology which is the nature and grounds of knowledge invariably depends on the ontological view. As is the case with ontology, epistemological views are also divided into two poles. On the one hand is the notion that knowledge is hard, real and capable of being transmitted in a tangible form (Trochim, 2002) whilst the other extreme asserts that knowledge is subjective and is based on experience and insight (Denscombe, 2003). The former position is known as positivism while the latter is called interpretivism.

Positivism, the epistemological position that views the world as objective, measurable, value free, generalisable and replicable has been criticised by many (Scott and Usher, 1999; Inman, 2007) as not suitable in educational context. This is because positivism is not able to capture the multiplicity and complexity of the 'life world' of individuals in entirety. The interpretive view is opposite of positivist view in that it accepts that the observer makes a difference to the observed and that reality is a human construct.

With the belief that knowledge is subjective, this research will be aligned with the interpretive theoretical commitments which give meaning and value to observations of and perceptions by people (Schwandt, 1993). The data gathered will be the perceptions and views of the sample, the headteachers, which will constitute the reality, interpreted by the researcher. The interpretations will then be structured in themes and this will lead to judgments about the NPQH programme in Malaysia.

#### **4.3 Research Design and Strategy**

This section discusses the overarching approach chosen for this study. This study adopts a fixed design whereby 'the design of the study is fixed before the main stage of data collection takes place' (Robson, 2002: 99). Although fixed design is normally associated with quantitative method, Oakley (2000) asserts that 'there is nothing intrinsic to such designs which rules out qualitative methods or data' (p. 306). Hence, this study is a fixed design with mainly qualitative method. The methodological strategy, according to Mason (2002), is 'the logic by which you go about answering your research question...it is the logic which underpins the way you design your research project as a potential answer to your research questions...' (p. 30). The research strategies chosen for this study were case study and evaluation. Robson (2002) explains case study as following:

“Case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence” (p. 178).

In this study, the contemporary phenomenon being investigated is the NPQH programme and the views of headteachers are sought as they are the real life actors in their real life context who would be able to assess through their perceptions the effectiveness of the programme that prepared them for their roles.

Patton (2002) defines programme evaluation as the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programmes to make judgements about the programme, and/or inform decisions about future programmes. This approach was adopted for it will help the researcher find answers to the research questions, and will lead to the NPQH programme being evaluated for its perceived effectiveness in providing the school heads with their knowledge and skills in their current practices. Of course, programme evaluation is sometimes seen by some researchers as a practice which is not research. Payne (1994) when discussing this issue put forth the argument by some scientists that the primary concern of research should be the production of new knowledge through the application of the “scientific method”. The conclusions from such an inquiry will be added to the knowledge of a particular phenomenon or theory. Evaluation, on the other hand, are generally undertaken to solve some specific practical problems and yield decisions, usually at a local level. However, Patton (2002) argues that ‘when this examination of effectiveness is conducted systematically and empirically through



careful data collection and thoughtful analysis, one is engaged in evaluation *research*' (p. 10, emphasis in original). It could be concluded therefore that an evaluation is a research if it is carried out with rigour and systematic procedure.

This study uses a combination of key elements adopted from a few evaluation approaches, i.e. outcome-based model, goal-achievement model and various models within the impact evaluation approach such as the objective-based, process-outcomes, needs-based and goal-free models. Evaluative research done through this qualitative subjective or interpretive inquiry is intended to provide rich data on the experiences of the respondents and their perceptions of the effectiveness of the training they received, leading to a deeper understanding of key issues and themes. The trade-off involved in this study was the classic issue of breadth versus depth. If this study was to produce a conclusion based on a much bigger sample, which will represent in turn a bigger population, then a quantitative methodology would have been appropriate. Nevertheless, a short questionnaire was administered to all the respondents to seek their response to the levels of satisfaction with each of the main study areas in the NPQH programme as a supplement to the qualitative inquiry.

#### **4.4 Research Method**

The interview method is one of the popular methods in qualitative methodology. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) asserted that the interview is 'active' in the sense 'that all interviews are reality-constructing, meaning-making occasions, whether

recognized or not' (p. 4). Denscombe (2003) suggests that interviews are appropriate for research when the desired data is depth rather than breadth for a particular issue. He further asserts that justification for choosing the interview method is likely to reference to, amongst others, data based on experiences, perceptions, feelings and data based on privileged information. In this research, data was derived from respondents on their feelings and experiences of knowledge and skills they obtained from the NPQH programme and they were regarded as privileged information for they were the practicing secondary school heads, the 'knower' of the phenomenon being investigated.

Interviews aim to capture the perspectives of programme participants on the programme being evaluated (Patton, 2002). Rubin and Rubin (1995), when describing interviews as "wonderfully unpredictable" (p. 7), caution the researchers of some unpredictable issues that may arise. For instance, the interviewees may take control of the interview and change the subject or become emotionally volatile. Sands and Krumer-Nevo (2006) discuss similar issues which they call 'interview shocks and shockwaves'.

Patton (2002) proposes use of the open-ended response approach in qualitative evaluation study to best capture the understandings of the respondents. In the same vein, this study used the open-ended responses approach through the semi-structured interview for it provided a better understanding of the respondents'

perceptions regarding their experience with the NPQH programme and how much it was congruent to their current practices.

This study also used a questionnaire to obtain the perceptions of the respondents of the extent to which the areas of study in the NPQH programme prepared the participants for headship. Specifically, the questionnaire was used to answer the first research question:

To what extent did NPQH training programme and each of its 27 units of study prepare the participants for headship?

The use of interviews as a qualitative method and the use of a questionnaire as a quantitative method lend this study to be labeled as a qualitative dominant mixed methods research (Johnson et al., 2007).

#### **4.5 Interview Instrument**

The semi-structured interview method was used for this research. The justification for this method was the structure it provided to the topics and issues being investigated whilst allowing for flexibility in the course of the interview itself. The method allowed some comparison and identification of themes between respondents but maintained the open interview as fairly conversational. The questions were open-ended so as to capture the unique and personalised information in order to see how the

headteachers in the study perceived the NPQH training they received (refer to Appendix 4). This study adopted the self-reported evidence approach which was successfully used by Naylor et al. (2006) in their initial study of the impact of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) 'Leading from the Middle' programme. A similar approach has been used by Reeves et al. (2001) in conducting three small-scale evaluations of the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH) programme.

The researcher employs the 'interview guide approach' (Patton, 2002) to put in order the interview questions for ease of analysis. An interview guide lists the questions or issues that the researcher aims to explore in the course of the interview. Patton (2002) asserts that the advantage of an interview guide is that the decision by the researcher to best use the limited time available in an interview situation is ensured. Furthermore, the guide makes the interviewing process more systematic and comprehensive by delimiting in advance the issues to be explored. This also allows the interviewees to develop ideas and "speak more widely on issues raised by the interviewer" (Denscombe, 2003, p. 167). Even though this approach offers flexibility as its strength but it could become a weakness whereby the flexibility can result in substantially different responses and different emphasis placed on different topics discussed resulting in a more challenging analysis to determine comparability of responses.

The interview questions were based on issues identified from the literature and the NPQH programme curriculum. They were formulated around the following:

- How, overall, do the headteachers perceive the NPQH training programme?
- How much do they perceive that the NPQH programme, and its six main areas, has prepared them for headship?
- What do they perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of the NPQH programme with regards to its six areas of training?
- How much does the school context they are in influence how they perceive about the NPQH programme?
- How long did it take them to assume the post of headship after they graduated from the training and what leadership learning have they obtained in that period?
- What have they learned about leadership between the period of graduation from NPQH and now – at school, outside of school and outside of their professional context?
- What kind of support will enable them to be effective heads, with regards to professional sources and non-professional sources?

A copy of the proposed full interview schedule or guide is appended in this thesis (Appendix 4). The interview instrument was piloted with 3 primary school headteachers who are graduates of NPQH and verification of the instrument was also

sought from 2 senior lecturers who are involved with the programme in the organizing institution, Institut Aminuddin Baki (IAB). There were no changes required to the proposed instrument.

#### **4.6 Conducting the Interviews**

The interviews in this study were conducted on one-to-one basis and were carried out at the schools where the respondents were headteachers. Since the respondents were located at different places in Malaysia, it was logistically more viable for me to travel to their schools rather than getting them together as a group. It was deemed as more comfortable for the respondents because they were in their own 'domains' and that provided a 'safe' environment for them. Furthermore, the ease with which they were to share their ideas openly on the topics discussed could have been affected if they were to share them in a group setting. Anonymity was assured to them in these individual meetings. The visit to these headteachers' schools also provided the opportunity to see firsthand the context they were in. Similarly, it was easier for them to explain their context of work with regards to the research questions.

The semi-structured interviews method was adopted to gain optimum data from the respondents, linked directly to the interview questions derived from the research questions. The interview was audio recorded using a digital voice recorder and was backed up with field notes. Audio recording was vital for memory alone is unreliable, prone to partial recall, potentially bias and could contain error (Denscombe, 2003).

However, as much as audio recording offers a permanent record, it could still be inadequate because of its inability to register non-verbal communication. This gap was filled with the use of field notes to document contextual factors.

#### **4.7 Questionnaire Instrument**

A questionnaire was formulated for this study to gain information from the respondents to answer the first research question (refer to Appendix 5). The items in the questionnaire were categorised into two main parts, namely:

- Respondents' demographic data and background information (8 questions);
- Items on the areas of study in the NPQH programme (27 items).

All the questions were close-ended questions. Part One dealt with the background of the respondents and this provided information on certain aspects such as length of service, the cohort and year of their undertaking the NPQH training and some information of the context of school they were in. Part Two was about their perception on the extent of each of the twenty seven units of study in the NPQH programme towards preparing them for their headship. This required the respondents to reflect on each of the areas of study and how much they have benefitted from these in their current position as headteachers. The questions were

devised bearing in mind some specific things such as to avoid the use of ‘leading questions, avoid asking the same questions twice in a different fashion, keeping the questions short and straightforward and not making any unwarranted presumptions in the questions (Denscombe, 2003). I administered the questionnaire personally to all the eighteen respondents in this study.

#### **4.8 Characteristics of the Sample**

Sampling is an important element of a research. The sample size is determined by the researcher and it must be carefully selected to be representative of the population (Denscombe, 2003). There are basically two kinds of sampling techniques that can be used by the social researcher – either ‘probability’ or ‘non-probability’ sampling (Denscombe, 2003). The probability sampling is based on the notion that the sample will be a representative of people in the whole population being studied. Non-probability sampling is not necessarily representative of the overall population. Describing it further, Patton (2002) attaches the purpose of ‘generalisation’ to the logic and power of probability sampling while attaching ‘in-depth understanding’ to non-probability sampling (p. 46). This study utilized purposive sampling as a non-probability form of sampling. Bryman (2008) informs that the goal of purposive sampling is to sample participants in a strategic way so that those sampled are relevant to the questions being posed. Furthermore, this sampling was used so that sample members could provide a good deal of variety and they were able to represent the key characteristics sought in the participants.



In this study, the sample was eighteen secondary school heads who were appointed to the post after they have attended the NPQH programme, though the gap between completion of the programme and the point of appointment varied. These respondents were considered to be information-rich cases which will provide in-depth information on the effectiveness of the programme to their current practices as secondary school heads. Patton (2002) argues that:

“There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (p. 244).

Taking all these into consideration, it was deemed appropriate to maintain eighteen respondents for this study.

The method of selection was to identify graduates of NPQH programme who were in the Masters degree group – those who had their Masters degree prior to joining the programme and were now secondary school heads. A list of 48 headteachers was compiled from information obtained from IAB and State Education Departments (SED). From this list of 48 headteachers, 18 (37.5%) were chosen to be the sample of this study. The criteria used for selecting the respondents were gender, years in service, period between graduation and appointment into headship, and immediate context and geographical location of the sample schools.

The resulting respondents comprised of 5 female headteachers and 13 male headteachers, a reflection of the higher number of male headteachers from the NPQH programme compared to women. All the headteachers in the study were Malays and this was due to the scarce number of other ethnic origin headteachers in this group. The headteachers, aged between 44 years and 54 years, also varied in the years they have served before joining the NPQH programme – ranging from 9 years to 22 years. They also varied in the length of time they assumed headship from the time they graduated. The respondents also have different experiences of headship – some in their first headship post whilst others ranging from second to fourth headship. Detailed information on the respondents is tabulated and appended (refer to Appendix 8).

All the selected participants were contacted and a covering letter was sent to them, detailing the purpose of the research. An outline of the themes to be covered in the interview was also sent to the headteachers as to prepare them mentally for the interview (refer to Interview Information - Appendix 3). The interviews were conducted from February 2008 to April 2008.

#### **4.9 Access**

The respondents identified for the interview were contacted and appropriate dates were sought from them for the one-to-one interview to be held in their schools.

Arrangements were made to travel to their schools and the interviews were conducted there. The one issue about the access to the headteachers was the change of address of some headteachers from the list received from the education authorities. However, the whereabouts of the headteachers were alternatively traced from their colleagues in the area they served and also from their previous school.

#### **4.10 Ethics**

Ethics is an important aspect of research. It is akin to a vein which runs through the whole body of research. Its application begins at the conception of the research idea and its implications remain even after the research is complete. Taking the severity of the ethical considerations in mind, this study was done with highest importance placed on ethics. The guidelines from BERA (2004) assert that the confidentiality and anonymous treatment of participant's data should be considered the norm when conducting research. Participants were assured of their entitlement to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity unless they decided to wave this right. It was necessary at the outset to obtain a written informed consent from the participants (Appendix 2). The prospective interviewees were duly explained about the nature of this research and what was expected of them. They were also given the interview outline as to prepare them for the interview and were provided the right to withdraw if they were not comfortable to part with their views on the topic researched.

#### **4.11 Role of the Researcher**

In a qualitative study like this, the role and close distance between the researcher and the participants have implications for bias (Creswell, 1998). The use of semi-structured interview method compounds this as it inevitably creates a closer relationship than those employed by quantitative studies. Since the data collected is potentially “affected by the personal identity of the researcher” (Denscombe, 2003), it is imperative to declare this relationship and for the researcher and the reader to acknowledge this when analysing and making conclusions from the data. As I have declared earlier, my position as a former staff member of IAB, the institution that conducts NPQH training programme is inevitably known to some of the headteachers. This however makes it even more important for me to assure the participants that my involvement in this research is as an independent researcher and that their views were treated with utmost confidentiality and respect.

#### **4.12 Validity and Reliability**

Research is judged methodologically and by the contribution it makes to the field while evaluations are judged by the criteria of utility and credibility (Cohen et al., 2007; Norris, 1990; Smith & Glass, 1987; Glass and Worthen, 1971). Following this notion, this study being an evaluative case study using mainly qualitative methodology should therefore be judged on how useful and credible it would be. It has been iterated that this study is intended to create a deeper understanding of the

NPQH programme and that it will be conducted in a rigorous way using appropriate procedures and methodology to answer its research questions. This brings about the question of authenticity which Maxwell (1992) and Cohen et al. (2007) argue should replace the question of validity in a qualitative research. They believe that it is the meaning that subjects give to data and inferences drawn from the data that are important. In fact, they further suggest that 'understanding' is a more suitable term than 'validity' in a qualitative inquiry. So, although this research might not be a generalisation to all the different types of NPQH graduates, trends and issues will emerge to inform and answer my research questions and contribute to the ongoing research agenda. The common themes will add to the understanding of the NPQH programme and its effectiveness to secondary schools headteachers while providing some judgements on the programme itself. The judgments constitute 'evaluative validity' – a tenet of validity in qualitative methods that explore the notion of 'understanding' (Cohen et al., 2007; Maxwell, 1992).

Reliability is whether the research instruments are neutral in their effect, and would measure the same result when used on other occasions, with the same 'objects'. (Denscombe, 2003) In the case of qualitative research, which has as its integral part the researcher's self, the question begging to be answered will be the arrival of the same results and conclusions had other researcher conducted the research or the same researcher at another time. This, according to Denscombe, could be dealt with if the aims of the research and its basic premises, the conduct of the research, and the reasoning behind key decisions made are provided explicitly in the study.

Reliability of interviews can be enhanced by careful piloting the interview schedule (Silverman, 1993). In this study, the interview schedule and the questionnaire was piloted on three NPQH graduates who were headteachers as well.

#### **4.13 Triangulation**

Triangulation is defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection (multiple methods) in the study of some aspect of human behaviour (Cohen et al., 2007). In this study, the semi-structured interview method was employed to gain information from the respondents but a questionnaire was used as well, albeit for a part of the research questions. This methodological triangulation will aid in the cross-checking of responses from the respondents and provide a balanced interpretation of issues surrounding the training programme. Respondent triangulation was also used whereby different respondents were used to answer the same questions. The responses given were analysed and common or recurrent themes will constitute views by different people on a particular phenomenon and this will be used to judge the programme.

#### **4.14 Analysing the Responses**

The quantitative data in this study was analysed using the SPSS computer package. The data from the questionnaire was fed into the computer to derive descriptive statistics such as mean, percentage and frequency.

As for the qualitative data, they were collected and transcribed from the semi-structured interviews. This included the field notes which were meant to annotate the transcriptions in order to give a richer meaning to the spoken words by the respondents. An example of one of the 18 transcripts of the interviews is provided as an appendix (refer to Appendix 9 – Interview Transcript H16).

Miles and Huberman (1994) define qualitative data analysis as “three concurrent flow of activity” (p. 10). These are *data reduction; data display; conclusion drawing and verification*. In this study, the interview data was systematically analysed, question by question, as to allow all responses to be considered equally and fairly treated. Recurring patterns emerging from the interview enabled themes to be identified. I used a matrix which placed interviews at the top and themes/issues on the left hand side in order to place the many separate pieces of data from the interview. This analysis was done manually, similar to assertion by Field (2000) in his study, on grounds of convenience. The matrix method facilitated the emergent of patterns and allowed selection of appropriate quotations to illustrate these patterns. This constituted *data reduction*. It also enabled the identification of consensus over certain areas explored whilst allowing disconfirming evidence to emerge whenever it appeared. A compromise with this method would have meant that commonality could have taken precedence over different accounts and render the exercise unjust for the eighteen different conversations (Miles and Huberman, 1994)

The matrix, when completed, acted as a *data display* tool which then enabled *conclusion drawing* to answer the research questions. The findings of the study were then fed back to the respondents for *verification* purpose and were accepted without any changes. Following the assertion by Miles and Huberman (1994), verification on the plausibility and confirmability of the meanings emerging from the data was also sought from two senior lecturers in the organising institute, IAB.

#### **4.15 Limitations of the Research**

In this evaluative case study, I have endeavored to evaluate the NPQH programme using the perspectives of secondary school headteachers from the Masters degree group. This provided the data sought to answer the research questions but is limited to only this particular group – the Masters degree group. However, the study could provide an understanding of the NPQH programme and potentially pave the way for future studies involving other groups in NPQH.

I did my best to conduct this study in the most rigorous way and in a most objective manner. Even being a trainer for some of the respondents during their training days, I made it clear to them at the outset that they are most encouraged to state their views and thoughts freely without any apprehension for all the data will be treated with utmost confidentiality and anonymity.



#### **4.16 Summary**

This chapter has provided an overview of the research approach in this study. It has been put into context with the explanation and justification of my ontological, epistemological and methodological position. I have explained the research strategy and the methodology with clarification of the methods chosen. Sampling and the research instrument has also been explained before discussing the issues of my 'self' in the research, validity, reliability and triangulation and the overall chapter has aimed to show the potential of the chosen methodology for research into the effectiveness of the NPQH programme.

The next chapter presents the findings of this study which is done systematically according to each research question.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings in this study. The study aims to answer the research questions through data sought from NPQH headteachers to determine the perceptions of effectiveness of the programme in preparing them for headship.

In this chapter, each of the 7 research questions will be presented in turn. Research question 1 will be presented with the findings derived using the mixed quantitative and qualitative data collecting methods whilst all the findings from the other research questions presented from the qualitative method employed in gathering the data. Hence, the findings for Research question 1 will be presented in two sections: the statistical findings for each of the 27 items in a questionnaire (refer to Questionnaire in Appendix 5) and the findings from the semi-structured interview question (refer to Interview Schedule in Appendix 4). The findings for all the other research questions, derived from the semi-structured interviews, will be presented thematically using emergent themes which will be individually dealt with in turn using relevant quotes from the respondents. To maintain anonymity of the respondents, they will not be referred to using their real names but will be assigned an alpha-numerical reference each, i.e. from H1 to H18.

A summary follows the findings of each research question and the chapter concludes with an overall summary.

## **5.1 Research Question 1: To what extent did the NPQH training programme and each of its 27 units of study prepare the participants for headship?**

### ***5.1.1 Introduction***

The first research question shown above draws perceptions from the NPQH trained headteachers on how they regard the overall effectiveness of the programme and each of its 27 units of study in preparing them for their headship. To be able to extract data to answer this research question, two different forms of data was collected – quantitative and qualitative. Methods of data collection employed were also formulated to suit each form. The quantitative data was derived using a questionnaire in the form of a checklist (refer to Questionnaire in Appendix 5) whilst qualitative data was collected from semi-structured interviews. The first question in the interview schedule (refer to Interview Schedule in Appendix 4) was used to this end, as following:

Interview question 1: How would you regard the overall NPQH programme with regards to preparing you for headship?

This is the only research question in the study to use the quantitative and qualitative approach while all the other research questions were investigated using qualitative approach in the form of semi-structured interviews.

### **5.1.2 Quantitative Data**

This section contains analyses on the NPQH headteachers perception on how well each of the 27 units of NPQH programme prepared them for headship. The respondents were given a check list and were asked to record their agreement, neutrality or disagreement with respect to how well they perceived themselves to be prepared for headship by NPQH in relation to the 27 units of study. The 27 units covered in the questionnaire are taken altogether from the six main areas of NPQH programme (refer to Appendix 1).

A 5-point Likert scale was employed to record responses and descriptive statistics in the form of percentage and standard deviation were used to analyze responses to each unit. The following table (Table 5.1) illustrates the interpretation of the level of agreement according to mean score.

Mean score	Interpretation – Level of agreement
1.00 – 1.80	Strongly Disagree
1.81 – 2.60	Disagree
2.61 – 3.40	Neutral
3.41 – 4.20	Agree
4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Agree

**Table 5.1: Mean Score Interpretation**

#### *5.1.2.1 Findings*

This sub-section presents the analyses of respondents' perception on each of the 27 units of study.

#### ***Introduction to public policy in Malaysia***

Majority of the respondents agreed that this unit offered good preparation for their headship. 44.4% (n=8) of the respondents strongly agree that the unit was relevant in their preparation while another 44.4% (n=8) agreed. Only 2 respondents (11.1%) disagreed that the unit prepared them well for their post. The mean of 4.22 suggests that overall the respondents strongly agree that this unit has prepared them well.

### ***History of Education in Malaysia***

The respondents generally strongly agree that this unit prepared them well for their headship (mean= 4.22). 8 (44.4%) of the headteachers showed their agreement while 7 (38.9%) others strongly agree that this unit was helpful. However, 3 (16.7%) of the respondents remained neutral in their response.

### ***Education Act***

88.9% (n=16) of the respondents showed a positive reaction to this unit's contribution to their preparedness to headship. From this, 5 of them agree (25.9%) whilst the other 11 (61.1%) strongly agree. However, 1 (5.6%) respondent disagree with the statement and another 1 (5.6%) remained neutral. The mean score of 4.44 suggests that the respondents strongly agree to the relevance of this unit in helping their headship.

### ***Functions of headship in Education***

The responses for this unit were either agreement or strong agreement. 4 (22.2%) of the respondents agree that this unit prepared them well for the headship whilst 14 (77.8%) others strongly agree on the same notion. The high mean of 4.78 suggests that the overall perception of the respondents is that they strongly agree on the contribution of this unit in preparing them for the post of headteacher.

### ***Legal aspects in school management***

This unit recorded the lowest mean score in the study. The mean of 3.56, even though considered a positive response, is relatively low compared to all other units. The respondents agree overall that this unit offered good preparation for their headship but the views seem to differ between individual respondents with the standard deviation of 1.110. Individual analysis of responses showed that while 6 (33.3%) respondents agree and another 5 (27.8%) strongly agree that this unit is helpful, there are 6 (33.3%) respondents who disagree and 1 (5.6%) who remains neutral.

### ***Organisational Management***

The respondents are generally in strong agreement (mean= 4.83) that this unit prepared them well for their headship. The responses are all in the positive with agreement from 3 (16.7%) respondents and strong agreement from the other 15 (83.3%).

### ***Organisational Communication***

This unit recorded a mean score of 4.61 which indicates that the respondents are generally in strong agreement with the good preparation offered by this unit for their headship. 5 (27.8%) of the 18 respondents agree and 12 (66.7%) strongly agree whilst the neutral position was taken by 1 (5.65) respondent.

### ***Curriculum Management***

6 (33.3%) respondents agree that this unit offered good preparation for their headship post and all the other 12 (66.7%) respondents strongly agree with the statement. The overall strong agreement by the respondents is represented by the mean of 4.67 scored for this unit.

### ***Student affairs management***

From the 18 headteachers that responded to this study, 5 (27.8%) agree and 12 (66.7%) strongly agree to the statement that this unit offered good preparation for headship. 1 (5.6%) respondent remained neutral. The overall mean is 4.61 which suggest that the respondents generally agree strongly with the statement.

### ***Health and safety in schools***

This unit was generally perceived as good in preparing the respondents for their headship with the overall mean of 3.67 interpreted as an agreement. Nevertheless, the mean score is relatively lower than most of the other units in NPQH. 8 (44.4%) respondents agree to the statement and 3 (16.7%) strongly agree. However, 2 (11.1%) respondents disagree with the statement whilst 5 (27.8%) remain neutral.

### ***Human Resource Management***

The mean score of 4.50 for this unit indicates that the respondents strongly agree in general to the good preparation offered by this unit for headship. Whilst 6 (33.3%) of



the respondents agree with the statement, 11 (61.1%) others strongly agree. Only 1 (5.6%) respondent disagree that the unit offered good preparation for headship.

### ***Financial Management***

This unit scored a mean of 4.11 which means that generally respondents agree that it was good preparation for their headship and the standard deviation is 1.079. Even though 4 (22.2%) respondents confirmed their agreement and 9 (50%) stated their strong agreement, 2 (11.1%) respondents disagree while another 3 (16.7%) remain neutral.

### ***Benchmark in schools (3 weeks)***

This unit of study, which constitutes a phase of 3 weeks practical observation at a school, is agreed by 11 (61.1%) respondents and strongly agreed by 6 (33.3%) respondents to be good preparation for the headship post. 1 (5.6%) respondent disagrees with the notion but the overall impression is strong agreement as indicated by the mean score of 4.22.

### ***Leadership in Organisation***

The respondents perceive that this unit offered good preparation for their headship. This is evident from the mean of 4.78 which is interpreted as strong agreement. Only two responses were recorded; agreement by 4 (22.2%) respondents and strong agreement by all the other 14 (77.8%) respondents.

### ***ICT Management***

This is another unit in the study that recorded a relatively lower mean of 3.94 compared to most other units. Even though this mean score indicates that generally the respondents agree that this unit offered good preparation for their headship, this is the only unit of study that receives a response in every category. Whilst the positive responses are made up of 8 (44.4%) respondents agreeing and 6 (33.3%) respondents strongly agreeing, 2 respondents scored into the negative with 1 (5.6%) respondent disagreeing and another 1 (5.6%) showing strong disagreement. 2 (11.1%) of the total 18 respondents remain neutral.

### ***Curriculum & Co-Curriculum Leadership***

This unit returned a mean score of 4.17 for the responses given indicating that generally the respondents agree that it was good in preparing them for their headship. 10 (55.6%) respondents agree and 6 (33.3%) strongly agree while 1 (5.6%) respondent disagree and another 1 (5.6%) remains neutral.

### ***Quality Management in Education***

Generally, the respondents in this study strongly agree that this unit offered them good preparation for headship. This is derived from the mean score of 4.39 for the responses received from the 18 respondents. Nevertheless, not all of the respondents showed their affirmation with the statement. Although 6 (33.3%) respondents agree and 10 (55.6%) strongly agree, 1 (5.6%) respondent showed disagreement and another 1 (5.6%) remained neutral.

### ***School & Community Relations Management***

7 (38.9%) respondents agree and 8 (44.4%) respondents strongly agree that this unit offered good preparation for their eventual headship, with the mean score of 4.28 interpreted as a strong agreement. On the other hand, 3 (16.7%) respondents chose to remain neutral on this matter.

### ***Learning Assessment***

This unit received responses that scored a mean of 4.39 which indicates that the respondents on the overall strongly agree with the good preparation offered to their headship by this unit. 9 (50%) respondents showed agreement and 8 (44.4%) others showed strong agreement while 1 (5.6%) remaining respondent selecting a neutral stance.

### ***Learning Development***

This unit received a mean score of 4.28 indicating that the respondents on the whole strongly agree with the notion that it prepared them well for their headship. 8 (44.4%) of the heads chose to agree and an equal number of another 8 (44.4%) responded with strong agreement. 1 (5.6%) respondent perceived this unit as not offering good preparation with a response of disagreement while 1 (5.6%) of the heads taking the neutral position.

### ***Performance Management***

For this unit, all the respondents answered in the affirmative that the unit was helpful in their headship preparation. The mean of 4.50 indicates strong agreement. Half of the 18 respondents selected agreement and another half chose strong agreement in their responses.

### ***Research in Education***

This unit is the fourth unit receiving a relatively lower score than all the other units. Mean score for this unit which is 3.94 indicates an agreement that this unit offered a good preparation for the headship. However, not every respondent gave their response in the affirmative as 1 (5.6%) respondent disagreed and 3 (16.7%) respondents remained neutral. The majority did respond in the affirmative with 10 (56%) showing agreement and 4 (22.2%) choosing to strongly agree.

### ***Protocol & Etiquette***

This unit is generally perceived to be good in preparing the respondents for their headship. The mean score of 4.67 indicates a strong agreement with the statement. 4 (22.2%) respondents agree while 13 (72.2%) stated strong agreement. Only 1 (5.6%) respondent took a neutral stand.

### ***Career and Counseling Management***

Half of the respondents (n=9) agreed that this unit has offered them good preparation for the headship post and another 7 (38.9%) have strongly agreed. 2 (11.1%)

respondents chose to be neutral in their response. Overall, the mean score of this unit is 4.28 suggesting that the respondents strongly agree with the statement.

### ***Strategic Management for schools***

This unit has a mean score of 4.61 indicating that generally the respondents strongly agree that it was good in preparing them for their eventual headship. Most of the respondents answered in the affirmative with 5 (27.8%) agreeing and 12 (66.7%) stating strong agreement. Only 1 (5.6%) respondent remained neutral in response.

### ***Self-development of leaders***

All the respondents in this study are positive about the good preparation offered by this unit. 5 (27.8%) respondents chose agreement while the rest 13 (72.2%) agreed strongly. The mean score of 4.72 indicated strong agreement.

### ***School Attachment (6 months)***

This unit of study is a phase of 6 months after the participants of NPQH undergo the theoretical aspect of the programme. This unit receives a mean score of 4.83, the highest in this study. The mean indicates a strong agreement with the statement that this unit offered good preparation for headship. 3 (16.7%) respondents showed their agreement while a majority of 15 (83.3%) stated their strong agreement.

### 5.1.2.2 Summary

The overall perception of the headteachers to all the 27 units of study offered in the NPQH programme has been positive. This is evident in the high mean scores achieved by each of the units. Following is the table of each unit of study and its mean score, placed in a descending order (Table 5.2).

<b>Unit of Study</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Mean Score Interpretation</b>
Organizational Management	18	4.83	Strongly agree
School Attachment (6 months)	18	4.83	Strongly agree
Leadership in Organization	18	4.78	Strongly agree
Functions of headship in Education	18	4.78	Strongly agree
Self-development of leaders	18	4.72	Strongly agree
Curriculum Management	18	4.67	Strongly agree
Protocol & Etiquette	18	4.67	Strongly agree
Organisational Communication	18	4.61	Strongly agree
Strategic Management for schools	18	4.61	Strongly agree
Student Affairs management	18	4.61	Strongly agree
Human Resource Management	18	4.50	Strongly agree
Performance Management	18	4.50	Strongly agree
Education Act	18	4.44	Strongly agree

Quality management in education	18	4.39	Strongly agree
Learning Assessment	18	4.39	Strongly agree
School & Community Relations Management	18	4.28	Strongly agree
Learning Development	18	4.28	Strongly agree
Career and counseling management	18	4.28	Strongly agree
Introduction to Public Policy In Malaysia	18	4.22	Strongly agree
History of Education in Malaysia	18	4.22	Strongly agree
Benchmark in schools (3 weeks)	18	4.22	Strongly agree
Curriculum & Co-curriculum leadership	18	4.17	Agree
Financial Management	18	4.11	Agree
ICT Management	18	3.94	Agree
Research in Education	18	3.94	Agree
Health & Safety in schools	18	3.67	Agree
Legal aspects in school management	18	3.56	Agree

**Table 5.2: Mean score of 27 units of study in NPQH**

Even though the headteachers generally regard the units of study as having provided good preparation for their headship, there seems to be some units which relatively were scored lower than the rest. Referring to Table 5.1, 21 of the 27 units were given strong agreement in their mean scores compared to another 6 units which were only

given agreement by the headteachers. The 6 units are curriculum and co-curriculum leadership, financial management, ICT management, research in education, health and safety in schools and legal aspects in school management. Whilst it can be argued that these 6 units of study with the lower means score were still regarded as helpful for their headship but the lower scores could also be seen as an indication to the shortcomings in these units. This warrants further investigation and some evidence from the qualitative data findings which ensues this section, in this research question or the others, will be used to understand the phenomenon better.

### **5.1.3 Qualitative Data**

#### **5.1.3.1 Findings**

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with all the 18 respondents to complement the quantitative data to answer the first research question. The question posed was on how the respondents regard the overall NPQH programme (refer to page 124 – interview question 1). All 18 respondents were unanimous in saying that the programme was beneficial, relevant and useful.

Following are some of the responses:

“It is a very helpful course which provided invaluable knowledge and skills that were very useful during my headship.” (H17)



“I will say it is a very helpful programme for me. Whatever I gained through the programme really benefited me in my headship.” (H9)

The respondents also approved of the programme as an appropriate channel that is useful for headship preparation as evident in the following responses:

“It is the appropriate channel for those aspiring to be educational leaders. Overall I think it is very useful.” (H7)

“It was a very useful programme in preparing me for management post in school and eventually into headship.” (H14)

The programme is also deemed as one providing the basics of headship.

“It really helped me to provide the basics in headship theories and how we could use them.” (H3)

“Overall I think it is good. It prepared me adequately for the basics.” (H2)

It was also regarded as a good developmental course for school leaders, as evident from the response below:

“It is a very good programme because it develops the qualities of a school leader.” (H15)

“To my opinion NPQH is a very relevant course for the preparation of headship.” (H18)

#### *5.1.3.2 Summary*

The responses received from the headteachers on how they regarded the overall NPQH programme point towards a positive perception and they unanimously seem to

approve of the programme. The programme was perceived to be “useful” and regarded as an “appropriate” programme which provided “basics” in preparing the future headteachers of schools. These findings seem to set the tone for this study as the pursuing research question attempts to probe further and dwell deeper into the perceptions of the particular strengths and weaknesses attributed to the NPQH programme by the headteachers.

## **5.2 Research Question 2: What were perceived as the particular strengths of the NPQH programme with regards to the 27 units of study in the training? Why these are perceived so?**

### **5.2.1 Introduction**

The second research question shown above was formulated to find out the particular strengths of the NPQH programme as perceived by the respondents. In order to gain the information, the respondents were asked the following question in the semi-structured interview.

Interview Question 2:       What do you perceive as the strength of the NPQH programme?  
  
  What about the particular areas of study? Why do you perceive so?

(Refer to Interview Schedule in Appendix 4)

### **5.2.2 Findings**

All the 18 respondents gave their views on the strengths of the NPQH programme. The responses were then analyzed to find similarities which could group the responses according to emergent themes while any contrasting view was also sought. The interviews on this aspect of the NPQH programme found three apparent themes - the theoretical knowledge provided in the programme, the confidence it provided to the participants and the well planned structure of the programme. The ensuing discussion on the findings will be segmented into these three themes and the corresponding quotations from the respondents within each of the themes.

#### **Theoretical knowledge**

14 headteachers (78%) attributed good theoretical input and knowledge as strength of the programme. They asserted that the input given formed the foundation on which they built up on their abilities to be heads.

Typical responses were as following:

“In our case, we have been equipped with some basic theories and procedures to give us a good foundation.” (H3)

“The theories given to us were the strength of the programme.” (H17)

The responses from the headteachers seem to show their acknowledgement that theoretical underpinning is vital for the headship. The basic theories form the foundation in their quest to school leadership and prepare them better for the

### **Confidence level**

11 respondents (61%) mentioned that their confidence level to run a school was elevated by the programme. One headteacher stressed that the confidence enhanced his self-esteem whilst another pointed out that the confidence provided a clear path ahead of her to hold a headship post.

“It is the knowledge we acquired which in turn enhanced our self esteem and gave us a lot of confidence. It gave me more credibility to eventually become a head.” (H15)

“I was confident that I could run the school. The path in front of me was quite clear.” (H2)

The confidence they perceived developing in them through the course have also made some heads realise that they were in a much better position going into headship compared to the heads who did not get the similar exposure through NPQH. One respondent offered the following when comparing the NPQH headteachers with the ones who have been promoted in the traditional way, i.e. using seniority as the main yardstick.

“It is quite clear that those heads who graduated from NPQH are more aware of aspects of school management and leadership compared to the traditional heads who mostly use their own experiences to do the job.” (H12)

### **Well structured**

3 of the respondents in this study also perceived that the strength of the NPQH programme was in its structure which they said was well planned.

“It definitely provides us with adequate theories and lots of knowledge on headship. It is the only programme we have in the nation that is structured and focused on preparing the aspiring heads and giving them the head start into their journey of headship.” (H18)

“Generally it is a good plan by the MOE towards preparing school heads. It is a structured programme and the right thing in the right direction.” (H1)

### **5.2.3 Summary**

The responses received from respondents with regards to the strengths of the NPQH programme suggest that all of them acknowledge that the programme has its strengths and these are the aspects which have helped them in the journey to headship and the eventual incumbency of the post. The three themes summarised from the responses are the theoretical knowledge provided by the programme, the increase in confidence felt by the graduates and the well planned structure of the programme itself as it was hailed as the only such programme in the nation which prepares aspiring teachers to be future heads.

### **5.3 Research Question 3: What were perceived as the shortcomings of the programme? Why these are perceived so?**

#### **5.3.1 Introduction**

This study is an evaluative case-study of the NPQH programme and its main aim is to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of the programme in helping the graduates assume the headship post. As important as it was to find out the strengths of the programme through the previous research question, it was just as important if not more to also investigate its weaknesses or shortcomings so that further improvements could potentially be suggested to the organisers. Thus, the third research question shown above intends to find out about that aspect of the programme. Respondents were asked the following question in the semi-structured interview in order to gain their views and perceptions on this matter.

Interview Question 3:       What do you perceive as the weakness of the NPQH training programme? Any particular area of study? Why do you perceive so?

#### **5.3.2 Findings**

All of the 18 respondents gave their responses and eight themes emerged, as following:

- over-emphasis on theoretical aspect;
- lack of hands-on;
- lack of experience and competency in trainers;
- too exam-oriented;
- lack of depth in subjects;
- lack of experience sharing by Senior Heads;
- lack of implementation;
- lack of follow up.

The following sub-sections will be the themes which are dealt with in turn containing the relevant quotes from the responses received from the respondents.

### **Over-emphasis on theoretical aspect**

All 18 respondents seem to unanimously agree that one of the weaknesses of the programme is the over-emphasis on the theoretical aspect of the knowledge being delivered. This was one of the main themes emerging from the question of weakness of the programme. Following are some of the responses:

“The weakness of the programme is perhaps too much emphasis on the theories.” (H5)

“The theory part or rather the content was very packed. We concentrated a big deal on the theories and a less on group work, group discussions and presentations.” (H2)

Even though the richness of the theoretical input was regarded as strength of the NPQH programme as reported through the findings of the first research question, one head went on to further explain why having too much emphasis on theories could turn into a weakness. He stated the following:

“The input we received in NPQH was more on theories and delivered via lectures. The problem will arise when these participants who have learned so much theory try to implement the theories in the real school world.” (H9)

Another respondent admitted that the theories learned seemed attractive but offered a reality check when he experienced the real world of school leadership.

“The many theories we learned during the course all seem so fitting but we only realized the reality is different when we come to the real world of schooling.” (H10)

### **Lack of hands-on**

The over-emphasis on the theoretical aspect was related to the lack of hands-on experience during the course. All the heads interviewed indicated that there was a lack in hands-on opportunity for the theories to be embedded in practical situation.

Some typical responses are as following:

“I think it should have been theoretical input alternated with practical session. For instance, after having learned financial management, there should be a 2 weeks hands-on done in a practical session in school.” (H8)

“There was clearly a lack of hands-on experience for us in the course.” (H7)



The lack of hands-on experience led one of the heads to admit that some of the participants were 'quite junior' and needed the exposure, when he iterated the following:

“Some hands on experience in real schools would also have been useful because some of us were quite junior and did not have the real experience of holding a senior post in school.” (H4)

### **Lack of experience and competency in trainers**

Another weakness perceived by more than half of the heads (11 out of 18 heads) was the lack of experience and competency in some of the lecturers who delivered the course. This led to the problem of having too many theories to deliver but without much emphasis on real life examples to utilise the theories learnt. Typical views expressed by the respondents were as following:

“Maybe some of the lecturers lack experiences themselves, especially as headteachers. Although they were good in delivering the theories, some failed to relate the theories to the real world of schooling or headship.” (H5)

“Many lecturers were themselves not exposed or experienced in the senior management post in schools and were only talking about the theories per se.” (H17)

Some (n=7) headteachers also felt that there were lecturers who did not give much encouragement for the participants to think broadly and challenge the applicability of the theories or ideas put forth by them. One headteacher lamented that some lecturers were not open-minded, as he expressed the following:

“Some of the lecturers were not competent and even open-minded. By that I mean that they were uncomfortable when the participants put forth their ideas on certain issues” (H12).

### **Too exam-oriented**

In all, 4 out of the 18 respondents viewed that the course was too exam oriented and the exams were not suitably balanced in that they were all objective-based exams. The objective exams offered only multiple-choice questions and there was no essay-type subjective question in the exams at all.

Following is a typical response:

“It was too exam oriented. On top of that, the questions were all objective based. There should have been a balance between objective and subjective based questions to give us a richer flavour of the course” (H7).

The justification for a more balanced type of exam between objective and subjective was succinctly put forth by one of the heads, as following:

“The exams should be a mix of objective and subjective based questions. The objective questions are more suited to test the theories we learn whilst the subjective questions should gauge our understanding in applying what we have learned” (H8).

### **Lack of depth in subjects**

Half of the heads interviewed (9 out of 18) touched on the curriculum aspect of the course and they opined that there was a lack of depth in some of the subjects taught. All 9 of these heads perceived a lack of depth in the financial management subject. Since many of the respondents have not had managerial positions before joining the

course, they seem to feel the lack of depth in this unit especially when they went on to the managerial positions and eventual headship.

Following are two of their statements:

“There should have been more exposure to financial management” (H12)

“There was a lack of depth in Financial Management. We did not learn thoroughly in the course on the different funds made available or created in school.” (H9)

Realising the importance of having practical feel of the theories or procedures learnt in the financial management unit, 3 of these 9 heads were of the opinion that the financial management subject lacked the hands-on element, as depicted in one of their responses below;

“For financial management, we thought that a few hours of real experience would have helped us further understand the concepts taught.” (H16).

6 of these 9 heads who perceived that there was a lack of depth in the course content quoted the subject of Legal aspects in school as one that should have been covered more extensively. A typical quote was as following:

“Legal aspects of school management was definitely lacking in its depth in NPQH” (H1).

4 heads from this group of 9 heads also viewed that there was a lack in other subjects, such as Student affairs management (2 heads) and Health and Safety (2

heads). One of the heads also named Research and Development as another subject that lacked depth, as evident in her quote below:

“There were certain subjects which were not given much depth. For instance, R&D is a very important subject especially with the rapid development in the education and schooling world today.” (H15)

### **Lack of experience sharing by Senior Heads**

Sharing of experience by senior heads was another weakness identified by 4 out of the 18 heads interviewed. One of these heads regarded the sharing of experience as the biggest weakness of the programme, when he typically said the following:

“The biggest weakness of the programme I think is the lack of sharing of experiences by senior heads during the course.” (H4).

### **Lack of implementation**

3 heads in this study opined that the initiative for preparing the aspiring heads was not taken seriously, posing yet another weakness to the programme. One head said that the implementation of the headship preparation initiative was ‘not very clear’ (H4); another said that the rationale behind the course was to prepare schools heads but many graduates ended up elsewhere, as he informed in the following:

“The very rationale of the course was to prepare school heads but many graduates of NPQH ended up being officers in the State Education Departments, the Education Ministry, some became lecturers and some even ended up being education attaches at Malaysian Student Departments abroad.” (H13)

### **Lack of follow up**

Some (n=3) headteachers felt that the input they obtain from the NPQH course should not end with their graduation. One headteacher made an observation that there is no follow up done with the graduates once they complete the course:

“Another important aspect which is completely absent from the whole NPQH structure is follow up with the graduates, especially those who have become school heads.”(H6)

This was also echoed by another headteacher who seemingly perceive that the lack of this aspect was a result of it being over-looked in the planning of the programme.

He commented:

“So, a topping up course from time to time is important and I suppose this was not planned by the organisers.” (H18)

### **5.3.3 Summary**

The question on the shortcomings of the NPQH programme brought about more responses than the question on the strengths of the programme. There were 8 apparent themes in this question compared to the three themes in the earlier research question. Generally all the respondents gave their views on the weaknesses of the programme, with some of them stating more weaknesses than others in their response. The two themes which received overwhelming response from all the respondents were over-emphasis on theoretical aspect of the NPQH programme and

the lack of hands-on in the programme. It is interesting to note that the depth of theoretical input was earlier a theme which constituted the strength of the NPQH programme but it was also later observed as the main weakness of the programme.

More than half of the respondents also contributed to the emerging of two more themes; lack of experience and competency in trainers of the programme and lack of depth in some of the subjects taught in the programme.

#### **5.4 Research Question 4: To what extent is the present school context influential in determining the effectiveness of NPQH programme?**

##### ***5.4.1 Introduction***

The fourth research question above aimed at finding out the influence of school context and its extent in determining the effectiveness of the programme. The 18 headteachers in this study were asked the following question in the interview:

Interview Question 4:       How does the training relate to specific contextual factors associated to your school?

(Refer to Interview Schedule in Appendix 4)

### **5.4.2 Findings**

This interview question was posed to all the respondents and the headteachers unanimously responded that they were not directly prepared by the course for different school contexts. Hence, the theme that emerged is that the programme did not cater for different school contexts.

Two of the headteachers expressed this in a seemingly strong tone, as following:

“The course did not theoretically prepare me for this contextual shock, I mean about heading a very rural school. There probably was theory but there was no hand on experience that I could use to back me up then.” (H2)

“Certainly not. We were trained to go straight away and lead a running school. There was no specific input on how to open a new school, not even input on how to operate in a temporary site or another school.” (H3)

Even though all of the headteachers seem to point that the course did not prepare them for specific contextual factors in different schools, 3 of the heads nevertheless seem to accept that they were expected to adjust to whatever contexts in order to be a good head. A typical response is as follows:

“NPQH did not provide us specific input with regards to the different context of schools. However, a good headteacher is expected to adjust and adapt to the different contexts faced.” (H9)

However 6 of the heads felt that some exposure to the different contexts of schools would have been helpful for their headship. Some of their responses are quoted below:

“We were not given any specific input pertaining to differences in schools. Some information on the different school contexts would have helped many of the participants who later went on to be heads of the type of schools they were not familiar with before.” (H18)

### **5.4.3 Summary**

All the respondents in this study acknowledged the fact that they were not given training on specific context of school which they could potentially lead after graduating. While some seem to accept the notion that good heads were expected to adjust to the specific context of the school they were heading, others expressed the importance and relevance in having had some exposure to the different contexts of school in the training programme so that they were better prepared as they embarked on the school leadership post.



**5.5 Research Question 5: What leadership learning has taken place between the graduation of these participants and now, in the following contexts?**

- (i) Professional learning in school;**
- (ii) Professional learning outside of school;**
- (iii) Learning outside of the professional context.**

### ***5.5.1 Introduction***

As the graduates of NPQH did not normally get appointed to headship immediately after the NPQH programme or at the same time with each other, there was a need to find out what leadership learning they would have acquired from the time they graduated to the time they assumed office as headteachers. Hence, the respondents in this study were asked about the leadership learning they had acquired from the time they graduated to the time of assuming headship. They were asked about their leadership learning in the professional setting at school, professional setting outside school as well as leadership learning outside the professional setting. The following interview question was used to extract perceptions from the headteachers in order to answer this research question.

Interview Question 5: What have you learned about leadership since the time you graduated from NPQH to the time you assumed this headship?

- a. In the professional setting in school;
- b. In the professional setting outside of school;
- c. Outside the professional setting.

From the 18 respondents in this study, 8 had assumed office as headteacher right after graduating while 10 others were in various management posts before becoming headteachers. Therefore, only 10 of the respondents answered this interview question as it was relevant to their journey to headship.

### **5.5.2 Findings**

The findings of this research question will be presented in the following three different sub-sections with the relevant quotations from the responses added within.

#### *5.5.2.1 Leadership learning in the professional setting in school*

Asked about the leadership learning in professional setting at school, all 10 heads who were not appointed straight to headship admitted that they learned a great deal. The emergent theme is leadership learning from heads. Some learned by emulating what their leaders were doing while others learned from the bad examples they

observed and experienced in their leaders. A typical response from a head that learned from his leaders in a positive way is as following:

“I did get some lessons on leadership. I did learn from the head and the leading style was good. The head was using a good combination of different styles, like the democratic style and participative style and this was an interesting lesson for me.” (H10)

However, three of the headteachers said that their learning was by observing the negatives in their leaders. This constitutes learning as the respondents reflected on the negatives and tried avoiding it in their own leadership as heads. A typical response from a female head, who was herself working under a female head before she became a headteacher, is as follows:

“I did learn from her, whether in a positive way or a negative way. She had an autocratic style which was alright at times but was not too good at other times.” (H3)

One headteacher shared his experience of learning from two of his heads and he compared them in the following response:

“I was a senior assistant to two different heads in two different schools. The first one taught me so much about how to handle the staff and create a good rapport with them. The second headteacher was one who just bulldozed through whatever needed doing in the school. It was so mechanistic and lacking the humanistic touch.” (H6)

#### *5.5.2.2 Leadership learning in the professional setting outside of school*

The question on leadership learning in a professional setting outside the school received a response from 8 headteachers which raised the theme of learning through involvement with various bodies or associations. 3 headteachers related that they learned a great deal from their involvement in the Senior Assistants association, which is an association of school senior assistants both at the state level as well as the national level. One of the three heads stated:

“I was also involved in the Senior Assistants association in my state. I had a leadership role to play there and learned a lot on how to lead colleagues on the same level.” (H16)

Another headteacher shared his experience of learning through his involvement in the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) and he related it as following:

“I learned a lot from my involvement in the school PTA. As a Senior Assistant in my previous school, I had a lot of support from the PTA and they often look up for me to discuss programmes with them and suggest ways for the parents to get involved.” (H14)

#### *5.5.2.3 Leadership learning outside of professional setting*

Apart from investigating the leadership learning acquired by the respondents in professional setting in the school and outside of school, question was also posed to them about leadership learning outside of their professional setting.

The question on leadership learning outside of professional setting attracted responses from 7 headteachers in this study. They were involved with youth organisations (H3, H4 and H8), local housing and neighbourhood associations (H10, H13 and H15), and non-government organisation (NGO) (H16). However, all but one of them admitted that their involvement outside the professional setting was limited by the fact that they were already busy with their professional work and could not devote any more time than they already had. Two such responses are quoted below:

“Outside of the professional context, I joined the local housing association. I am not so active in the association though for I am already active in school and other professional bodies.” (H15)

“Yes, to a certain extent but we are so busy in school that we cannot spend much time in these associations outside of the profession.” (H13)

The one exception to the group was a headteacher who was actively involved in a non-government organisation, and she shared her experience in the following:

“I was actively involved in an NGO and assumed the role of a leader. I learned a lot in my capacity as a leader in that NGO as I had to lead people from all walks of society.” (H16)

### **5.5.3 Summary**

This research question was designed to find out about leadership learning by the headteachers in three different settings. As expected, all 10 of the respondents who found this question relevant to their journey of headship informed that they learned a

great deal in the professional setting in school. Having assumed the management post, they learned from their own headteachers and reflected about the way their heads led. Some learned directly by observing the perceived good practices of their super-ordinates while others reflected and learned to avoid the perceived ill-practices that they thought hindered the effectiveness of being a head.

Even though all the 10 respondents viewed leadership learning happening at the professional setting in school, only 8 of them responded to the question on leadership learning in the professional setting outside of school. They mainly learned through their involvement in professional associations related to their post as senior assistants.

While the respondents learned actively in the professional setting, there was less learning reported outside of professional setting. This was mainly due to the limited involvement by these headteachers outside of school as they were already spending most of their time in the professional setting.

**5.6 Research Question 6: What additional support to enable effective headship would be helpful with regards to the following?**

- (i) Professional sources ;**
- (ii) Non-professional sources.**

**5.6.1 Introduction**

This study also aimed at identifying the additional support that was perceived as important by the headteachers in their headship. The question (see above) on this aspect was divided into two sections – one on additional support through professional source and the other on support through non-professional source. The 18 respondents were asked the following question in the semi-structured interview.

Interview Question 6:       What additional support have you received or you think is useful for your headship, with regards to the following:

- a. Through the professional sources;
- b. Through the non-professional sources.

Through the interview question, respondents were expected to deliver their views on the support that they have received and also their perceptions on the additional support which they could have received to enhance the effectiveness of their headship.

## **5.6.2 Findings**

The discussion on the findings of this research question will be done in two sub-sections with the emergent themes within each sub-section presented with relevant quotes from the responses received from the interviews.

### *5.6.2.1 Additional support through professional sources*

The responses received from all the respondents in this study with regards to additional support through professional sources which they perceived as helpful to their headship were collated into 4 emergent themes:

- State Education Department (SED) and District Education Office (DEO);
- Senior Assistants and teachers;
- organisers of NPQH;
- networking with fellow NPQH heads.

The themes will be presented below and discussed using the quotations from the respondents.

#### **State Education Department (SED) and District Education Office (DEO)**

The support through professional sources regarded as important by all the 18 headteachers was foremost from the State Education Department (SED) and the District Education Office (DEO). As headteachers, they are directly answerable to the DEO and SED and they perceived the support from these stakeholders as vital and



critical for their headship. All the headteachers seem to be attributing their success in running their schools to the support they have been getting from their SEDs and DEOs, respectively.

“I think the most important support is from the authorities whom we are answerable to. This will be the SED and DEO. I have been getting good support from them thus far.” (H12)

“I had a lot of support from the District Education Office and it is important. Support from the State Education Department is also vital for they could help us in so many ways to realize whatever we have planned for the school.” (H14)

The support from the SED seems to be summed up by one of the headteachers as he mentioned the following:

“The SED’s support is something we just cannot live without”. (H6)

Considering the importance of the support from the SED and DEO and the high expectation of this support, one headteacher seemed to express his dismay when he said that there was a lot of support from the SED in the beginning of his headship but it was getting less as his headship progressed. He expressed his views as following:

“The SED will focus on you seriously for the first few years of headship. That is the time we received a lot of courses and support to start us off. It appears sometimes as if it is so difficult for the bosses in the SED to come down to our schools. This goes the same for the DEO. They should monitor us more and keep constantly in touch with us.” (H1)

### **Senior Assistants and Teachers**

Some of the headteachers interviewed (5 out of 18 heads) regarded the support from their senior assistants and teachers as important for their headship. They typically gave responses as the following:

“My teachers and senior assistants are a great support to me. I have a weekly management meeting with my senior staff and this is the platform for us to discuss various things about our school.” (H15)

As some of these headteachers were appointed straight to headship after graduating from the NPQH programme, they inevitably found their senior assistants as very senior people as far as service is concerned. Not surprisingly, one headteacher admitted that good support from the senior assistants is vital for the wealth of experience they possess. He responded in the following:

“It is important to get good support from your senior assistants and staff. Sometimes we have to get some advice from our senior assistants because they are much more experienced than us due to being on the ground for a long time.” (H6)

### **Organisers of NPQH**

Apart from sharing their views on support that they have received which they perceived as important for their headship, some of the headteachers (n=5) put forth their view on the support that they could receive in order to execute their duties more effectively. These 5 headteachers seem to place importance on the support which could be accorded to them by the organisers of the NPQH programme. They all seem

to suggest that a follow-up should be done by the organisers to gauge the current needs of the heads and that topping up of knowledge and skills should ensue.

Following is a typical response:

“Support is also important to the NPQH heads by IAB, the organiser of the programme. We should be kept updated in a good database so that all the graduates are easily traced and followed on with the latest development or topping up of the knowledge or skills that suit our current position.” (H1)

### **Networking with fellow NPQH heads**

There were also responses from 3 headteachers in this study that regarded networking and support from fellow NPQH heads as an important support. In fact, one head considered it as a prime support, as following:

“My networking with my fellow NPQH headteachers is a very important support.” (H1)

#### **5.6.2.2 *Additional support through non professional sources***

The question on additional support through non professional sources attracted responses which culminated into two emergent themes; the support from Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and the support from local agencies and community. The following discussion will be done with each of the themes presented with the relevant quotes extracted from the responses from all the 18 headteachers.

## **Parent Teacher Association (PTA)**

All 18 headteachers acknowledged the importance of their PTA support in their headship. This was regarded as the most important support the respondents received from non professional sources in helping them with their headship. One of the headteachers explained the support from PTA as follows:

“Having a good PTA ensures that the relationship between school and parents remains well and whatever dispute is settled in an amicable way.” (H17)

Although they received support from their respective PTAs, the type and degree of support received seem to be varied. 6 of the 18 heads quoted financial support that they receive from their PTA as being helpful. One of the headteachers said the following:

“My PTA is very supportive and it is very important. They give me the financial and moral support that I need for the school.” (H2)

Three other headteachers acknowledged the importance of financial support by the PTA in school but seem not to be getting it enough, as evident in the following typical response:

“Financial support from PTA and outside community is also vital. My PTA support is good but not so much financially.”(H3)

Apart from financial support, the interviews found other form of support received from the PTAs, such as moral support (H2), time (H1), ideas and projects (H16) and link to influential politicians (H6).

Even though all the respondent headteachers in this study acknowledged the importance of the PTA and also said that they received support from their respective school PTA, there seems to be a varying degree of involvement by the PTAs. Some PTAs were reportedly active whilst some other heads wished theirs were more active. In particular, 2 of the heads responded that their PTAs were not so active, as quoted below:

“But in my school the parents are not so active, both in financial term as well as physically doing projects. Anyhow, they are very supportive in whatever the school organises” (H5)

“PTA is also an important element in supporting the school. In my school, the PTA is not as active as I would have wished.” (H10)

In fact, one of the headteachers even threw a word of caution with regards to the PTA being very active in school, as following:

“An active PTA is perhaps important but that also depends on how much the head can control it. The last thing we need is an active PTA who would tell the head how to run the school.” (H5)

### **Local agencies and community**

Half of the headteachers (9 out of 18) interviewed mentioned support from local agencies and community as helpful for their headship. A typical response is as following:

“I also deem the support from the community around the school as important. We have good support from agencies like police and this is very helpful. The town council is always there to lend us support.” (H17)

Support from the local politician or Member of Parliament (MP) was also regarded as important by some of the headteachers (5 out of 18). One of the heads put it in a neutral way, as follows:

“The local MP has also been very helpful but he has been ousted in the recent elections. We hope the new MP will also support us.” (H3)

#### **5.6.3 Summary**

It is evident from the responses received from the headteachers that the post assumed will be more effective when there is additional support from all the relevant parties perceived as important by them. The responses received on the question of additional support from professional sources mainly translated into four themes whereby the most helpful support was unanimously perceived from the SED and DEO, followed by support from senior assistants and teachers at the schools these headteachers were leading and the support from the organisers of the programme,

and support from other NPQH heads. The responses from these headteachers not only revealed the support which they were already getting or experiencing but also something that they thought should be accorded to them, i.e. the support from the programme organisers which they were not getting yet. The respondents also unanimously opined that support from PTAs was the most important form of support from the non professional sources while support from local agencies and community was also found to be helpful by some headteachers.

## **5.7 Research Question 7: How could the programme be improved with regards to preparing the participants for headship?**

### ***5.7.1 Introduction***

As this evaluative case study intends to investigate the effectiveness of the NPQH programme, one of the main purposes of the findings is to be able to provide information to the organizers to further improve the programme. Therefore, the last research question as shown above was focused on this aspect. The headteachers were asked on how they could suggest for the improvement of the programme using the following interview question:

Interview Question 7:       How would you like to see the programme improved with regards to preparing the participants for headship?

(Refer to Interview Schedule in Appendix 4)

### **5.7.2 Findings**

The recommendations forwarded by all the 18 headteachers through their responses were analysed and then categorised into 13 themes, as follows:

- extension of support from NPQH organiser;
- utilising experiences of NPQH headteachers;
- practical or hands-on opportunities;
- supportive policy for headship;
- selection of NPQH participants;
- documenting the experiences of NPQH heads;
- upgrading the lecturers;
- training for different contexts;
- NPQH heads in training division;
- incentives for upgrading;
- reinstating of certain assessment in selection;
- involvement of non-NPQH senior headteachers;
- assessment format.

The following discussion on each of the themes will be supplemented with the relevant quotes from the responses.



### **Extension of support from NPQH organiser**

12 of the 18 headteachers recommended that support should be extended to the NPQH graduates even though they have graduated from the NPQH course. They said that this programme was started to ensure effective future headteachers are prepared for the schools but the period of appointment to the headship position varies. Thus, they have suggested that follow-up should be done to support the graduates in their current positions with the view of continuously updating the knowledge and skills of the graduates to the latest developments. These headteachers also suggest that in order to trace the position of the graduates, the organisers have to maintain a good database and keep it current. The suggestion put forth by the headteachers are demonstrated in the following quote which was typical of all the heads:

“There should be a good database of NPQH graduates so that we do not waste this important resource that we have worked hard to create and build. I was some sort lucky because I was appointed a head soon after leaving the course but that is not the norm for others. The graduates should not be left alone to find their way up to headship but ought to be supported in a way that they can eventually be headteachers.” (H9)

One of the headteachers who has suggested that follow-up should be done with the graduates seems to believe that the effort to do the follow-up with the graduates as not an arduous exercise given his assumption that there were not many NPQH headteachers, when he said:

“There should be an effort to have the graduates come in and receive training from time to time. This is not difficult at all because we do not have many heads from the NPQH graduates.” (H18)

### **Utilising experiences of NPQH headteachers**

Another suggestion which came from two thirds (12 out of 18 heads) of the heads interviewed was the involvement of NPQH heads in the NPQH programme. They asserted that the experience of the graduates who have assumed headship is a vast resource which has not been utilised by the organisers. Their views were typically as following:

“It will be good for the NPQH graduates who are heads now be called back from time to time to IAB to share their experiences in blending the knowledge they acquired with the real situation they faced. This is an important rich resource which seems to be neglected and not utilised by the organisers of NPQH course.” (H10)

The responses received from some of the heads (3 heads) also suggested that they were willing to share their experiences with the NPQH participants but they had not been invited even after offering their services to the organisers. They however seem to make modest assumption, or rather cynical ones, that they might not be good enough heads worthy of invitation to share their headship experiences. One of the three responses is presented below:

“I have always offered to help in whatever programme conducted by IAB, including NPQH but I have not been given a chance so far. Maybe I am not good enough but again it is a shame because I have all these experience to share with especially the NPQH participants...But I am ever willing to share should I get an invitation to do so.” (H2)

### **Practical or hands-on opportunities**

All the headteachers interviewed in this study seem to agree to the great benefit they received from attending this programme for their eventual headship. Many nevertheless opined that the hands-on experience derived from the course was limited. Hence, the suggestion from 10 of the NPQH headteacher respondents that there should be more hands-on and practical aspect to compliment what they learned in theories. They suggested both in-house practical hands-on input and visit to other schools to attain the best practices in these successful schools. Some of their responses are presented below:

“Well, more of real life training about how to implement what we learned. We could have gone out to observe best practices in chosen schools and come back to write reports and discuss the issues.” (H2)

“The first thing I would recommend is to provide hands-on experience wherever possible for the participants, for instance in the financial management module.” (H17)

3 of the heads gave their views with regards to the practical element of the programme itself - the 6 months attachment phase. Two of them suggested that the NPQH participants should not be confined to do the attachment phase in their own schools, i.e. the schools they were serving in before joining the programme. In fact, they asserted, the practical phase will yield more benefits if done in another school. One of the responses is as following:

“I will also think that the six months attachment programme within the NPQH course should be done not in the participants’ own schools but in different schools. There could be a group of schools assigned for this purpose in each state. This could give them a more challenging situation and not one that revolves around familiarity as is the case now.” (H14)

However, another headteacher who suggested a similar stance did not totally reject the practice of attachment phase in the participant’s own school. He said the following to explain his view:

“For the attachment programme, I think it is important that the participants be sent to schools where they will learn optimally. They need not be sent to their own schools unless their own schools are exceptional schools that will make them learn a lot in the six months period of attachment.” (H17)

### **Supportive policy for headship**

Another theme which emerged in the recommendation for the improvement of the NPQH programme by the respondents is a call for a supportive policy for headship. Half of the headteachers (n=9) interviewed gave their views on the policy of preparing aspiring headteachers through NPQH and they all seemed to agree to the point that the policy which gave birth to NPQH itself was not properly executed. They argued that the policy was not being followed and respected by all the sections/sectors in the Ministry of Education and this had given rise to some problems which has affected the appointment of NPQH graduates to senior management posts and headship. One of the headteachers put it as following:

“The NPQH programme is good but there should be an overall supportive policy that helps those from the course follow a career path which will eventually lead to headship. It is quite difficult when one section of the Ministry

is trying to create these new succession leaders but it is not supported by other sections, such as the State Education Departments.” (H3)

Communication of the policy for preparing aspiring heads is also identified by one headteacher who related it to the frustration amongst many an NPQH graduate who were too hopeful for the post of headship by acquiring the NPQH qualification. He explained it as following:

“NPQH was not very clear. Many of the participants then thought that NPQH is their licence to directly hold a headship post. They were overzealous and later many were disappointed in learning that what they had heard and hoped for is far from reality. It was the policy and the communication aspect which gave rise to all these misunderstandings. This has to be rectified and improved.” (H4)

The call to improve the understanding and application of the policy was explained by 2 headteachers who revealed that many NPQH graduates were disappointed by the conventional seniority based promotion to headship policy which they claimed was very much in practice even in the present.

“Many were quite frustrated after graduating when they found that the conventional system of seniority was still very much alive and in practice. Many went into the talent pool hoping to get a management place soon but many did drown in the same pool after waiting endlessly to this big hope that was given when they joined the course. It just did not come to many of them.” (H13)

In fact, one of the headteachers revealed that the implementation of the initiative is sometimes ironical because some of the NPQH participants who came with prior

management posts actually lost them after completing the course. He offered the following:

“One important aspect that should be looked into is the organisers of the course having a good link with the Human Resource Department in the Ministry so as to plan the succession of heads using the NPQH graduates in a more systematic way. It cannot be denied that many of the senior teachers who joined NPQH lose their positions and become junior in post after completing the course because their senior posts were filled in by other teachers.” (H13)

Commenting on the initiative, 4 headteachers put forth their recommendation that the NPQH graduates should be accorded senior management posts until they were deemed ready for headship. One of the typical responses is quoted below:

“This must be done seriously in the sense that the policy should be clear and should explicitly mention that the graduates of NPQH be given priority in management posts so that the succession planning of heads could be carried out effectively.” (H18)

One of these 4 headteachers even suggested that the NPQH graduates who were junior in service and have had no management experience go through senior posts before given a headship post, as quoted below:

“I also think that a policy should be put in place to ensure the NPQH graduates who have no prior management experience go through the relevant senior posts, i.e. Senior Assistant Co-curriculum, Senior Assistant Students Affairs and Senior Assistant 1 before taking up headship.” (H14)

Another response from a head which seems to echo the same assertion was done with the view of vast experiences possessed by senior assistants in school. He cautioned against the enthusiasm of promoting junior teachers straight to headship.

“Maybe the ones who joined the NPQH programme having had some management experience could be considered to become heads sooner than those who joined the course from the level of classroom teaching. If a graduate from NPQH is appointed straight to the post of headship without any prior experience except the course itself, do not be surprised if the biggest reluctance in carrying out any project or initiative in school coming from the senior staff who have been there for some time. These are the people who have more experience and they know much more than the inexperienced NPQH graduate.” (H11)

### **Selection of NPQH participants**

Half of all the headteachers (9 heads) interviewed made recommendations regarding the selection of NPQH participants. All of them seem to suggest that the participants selected for the NPQH programme should be senior teachers so that they could be promoted to headship soon after they graduate from the course and not as some of the younger graduates now who have to wait too long in the talent pool. One of the typical responses was as following:

“Of course, I would think that those capable ones who are already in the senior management posts will be the ideal candidates as they are senior enough to get the appointment soon after the course.” (H16)

One of the headteachers justified selecting the more senior teachers into the programme when he shared his own experience, as follows:

“For me, the selection of participants is important. Those in the promotion zone and senior enough to go into headship should be given priority to join the course. In my batch there were so many young participants and the policy did not support their becoming heads at an early age.” (H8)

Recommendation from a candidate’s head is an important factor in selecting the right participant for the programme. This was suggested by one respondent who also asserted that she will look into the potential of the person she would like to recommend and the overall attitude to leadership. She offered the following view.

“I think we have to be careful with the selection of participants to the programme. There should be a more thorough search into their background and potential in becoming a school head. By this I mean their attitude towards leadership and the recommendation by their own heads. As a head myself, I do not even mind pushing my active teachers who have the good potential of becoming heads over the senior assistants who are obviously weak in their leadership capabilities.” (H16)

This head further suggested that mechanism to select the participants should be good and specific. She gave the example of the evaluation form which is being used in the current practice.

“We have to come up with a good mechanism to select our participants. For instance, there should be a special form for evaluation of the applicants solely for this purpose by the heads. Using their general annual work performance evaluation is not sufficient as that is meant for the annual remuneration.” (H16)



### **Documenting the experiences of NPQH heads**

Apart from all the recommendations discussed earlier, there were also a few other recommendations given by some of the interviewees. One head suggested that the NPQH headteachers should be invited to IAB (organisers) to share their experiences by putting ink to paper. He suggested that this will help other participants learn from the vast experience of the heads.

“We, the heads, could also be asked to come in by IAB to put our experiences on paper so that some of the best practices could be documented for the benefit of other participants who will be heads in the future. The experience will also give the participants some idea on what to expect in schools with different contexts.”(H1)

### **Upgrading the lecturers**

There were also suggestions that the lecturers conducting the NPQH course should be upgraded and they should have some experience of school management. One of the heads who gave the suggestion that many lecturers who seem to have knowledge but lack leadership experience should be upgraded also suggested that senior heads should be brought in to teach the course, as he mentions the following:

“The lecturers of NPQH should be upgraded. They have the knowledge but they definitely lack the leadership experience. Why not also have an MOU with the senior heads and bring them in as adjunct lecturers to share their experiences.” (H7)

### **Training for different contexts**

Half of the respondents suggested that participants should be identified and streamlined to lead schools in different contexts. One head related the idea to succession planning by the Ministry of Education whereby heads will be fully trained and made aware of all aspects pertaining to their school context.

“I am also strongly of the view that the participants of NPQH should be carefully streamlined to the context of school they will be leading. We have various kinds of schools now and it will be great if the Ministry can identify the succession of leadership in all these different school types. We can then have experts from the various contexts sharing and molding the participants to benefit fully from the course.”(H8)

Yet another head suggested that participants should be exposed to various contextual factors relating to school leadership. He asserted that exposure to different contexts is beneficial given the fact that there exist schools with contextual differences and the demand of leadership is different in each.

“Participants should be given a chance to adapt to different contextual factors in different schools. As a head, we are not static. We tend to get transferred to different schools which in turn are different contextually. I myself have been to three different schools as a head and they are really different from what I have thought earlier.”(H17)

### **NPQH heads in training division**

In fact, another head suggested that one of the senior heads from the NPQH graduates should be given a post in the training division of each State Education Department to ensure the smooth succession of NPQH graduates into headship.

“I will also suggest that there should be a senior NPQH headteacher in each state who is placed in the training division of the State Education Department. This is the person who will keep a tab on the latest development and help the proper succession of the NPQH graduates.”(H14)

### **Incentives for upgrading**

Incentives ought to be accorded to teachers who upgrade themselves academically was the call made by another head. She suggested that the graduates of professional courses such as NPQH should be given a salary increment.

“To be able to bring some value to the programme itself, there should be special incentive in the form of salary increment which should be accorded to the graduates.”(H13)

### **Reinstating of certain assessment in selection**

One of the heads also put forward a suggestion which actually asked for the inclusion of some parts of the NPQH assessment which were apparently done away with. The parts in the selection which he referred to were the psychology test and the physical test which the earlier cohorts had to go through but were excluded for the later cohorts. He justified his views as following:

“I also learnt that the physical health assessment and the psychology assessment have been done away with in the recent selection of candidates. I will definitely say that this is not a wise move as physical fitness is of utmost importance to a head. We face all kinds of pressure and if one is not physically healthy, then the detrimental effect is inevitably there. The psychology test is also important to find out about one’s perception and attitude towards the leadership job. The physical and mental health is important for the selection of candidates. Therefore, that should not be scrapped in the selection process.” (H16)

### **Involvement of non-NPQH senior headteachers**

Another recommendation which surfaced in this study is the need for the course organisers to involve senior headteachers to share their experiences with the NPQH participants. This recommendation was proposed by 5 of the 18 headteachers interviewed. A typical response from these headteachers is as following:

“We also have many experienced headteachers and their invaluable experiences should be utilised and shared with the NPQH participants.” (H9)

One of these headteachers suggested that successful headteachers from challenging schools should be invited to share their success stories with the participants. He said the following:

“There should be more sharing with successful headteachers from challenging schools and the schools in adversity. The participants should know how the head handles the situation and turns the school around.” (H6)

### **Assessment format**

Some of the heads (n=5) also gave recommendations regarding the assessment format of the course. They felt that that the objective questions format at the end of their learning phases were difficult and did not cover a wide array of understanding of the course content. They suggested a mix format of questions so that the extent of application of the theories learnt could also be gauged. A typical quote is as following:

“The exams should also be mixed. There should not only be objective based questions but rather more application based subjective questions. There could be a mix of objective and subjective but not only all objective questions. The application to the real situation is vital.” (H10)

### **5.7.3 Summary**

All the 18 headteachers offered their response to the question on how they would like to see the NPQH programme improved for the benefit of future participants. As graduates of the programme who are now in the headship post, they reflected and gave their suggestions as to further improve the programme. In all, 13 themes emerged from the responses and were presented with the relevant quotes from the headteachers. The respondents recommended that support should be extended to the NPQH graduates by the programme organizers (IAB) and the experiences from the NPQH heads ought to be utilized by the organizers. They also called for more practical or hands-on opportunities in the learning. The policy of engaging aspiring teachers into the NPQH programme and preparing them to succeed the top post in schools was also on the recommendation list whereby the respondents wanted to see this policy implemented in a more supportive way. There was also suggestion for the improvement of the selection criteria to include more senior teachers whom the respondents thought would be appointed sooner to headship than the younger graduates. Upgrading and updating the lecturers who are involved in the NPQH was seen by some respondents as a way of improving the delivery of the programme

apart from the involvement of non-NPQH senior headteachers who were perceived to be in possession of a valuable wealth of experience which could be shared with the participants. Importance was also placed on the different contexts of school when some respondents suggested that the NPQH training should cater for these differences. Other themes that emerged were on the examination format in the assessment of NPQH; the documentation of experiences of NPQH heads; the reinstatement of certain criteria in the selection process; 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.

## **5.8 Overall summary**

Overall, the 18 respondents in this study have expressed that the NPQH programme they went through has been helpful in their headship. In the first research question, responses from the headteachers to the questionnaire which featured all the 27 units of study returned high means and indicated that the units were perceived as having provided good preparation for the headship. However, some units, i.e. financial management, legal aspects in school management, health and safety in schools and ICT management were relatively lower in mean scores compared to the rest of the study units. In the semi-structured interview under the same research question, all the respondents stated their approval of the NPQH programme as a helpful and relevant course for their headship.

The second research question on the strengths of the NPQH programme found three themes from the responses of all the 18 headteachers. The respondents perceived that the strength in the NPQH course was particularly in providing them higher confidence level to undertake the tasks in managing school, good theoretical knowledge which they deemed as a strong foundation towards their headship and it was a well planned and structured programme fit for the purpose of which it came to be. The following Table 5.3 briefly depicts the themes and the corresponding number of respondents whose views contributed towards each theme.

<b>Strengths of the NPQH programme</b>		
	Emergent themes	Respondents (N=18)
1.	Confidence level	11
2.	Theoretical knowledge	14
3.	Well structured	3

**Table 5.3: Emergent themes of Research Question 2**

However, there were also a number of shortcomings of the course perceived by the respondents. This came to light from the findings of the third research question aimed at gathering the perceptions of the headteachers on the weaknesses they perceived in the programme. The emergent themes in the findings for this research question are presented briefly in Table 5.4 below, alongside the number of respondents whose perceptions contributed in each theme.

<b>Shortcomings of the NPQH programme</b>		
	<b>Emergent themes</b>	<b>Respondents (N=18)</b>
1.	Over-emphasis on theoretical aspect	18
2.	Lack of hands-on	18
3.	Lack of experience and competency in trainers	11
4.	Too exam-oriented	4
5.	Lack of depth in subjects	9
6.	Lack of experience sharing by Senior Heads	4
7.	Discrepancies in Policy	3
8.	Lack of follow up	3

**Table 5.4: Emergent themes of Research Question 3**

The fourth research question was directed towards finding out the extent of influence contextual factors in school had on the effectiveness of the NPQH programme. The findings from all the respondents showed that the programme did not expose them specifically to the different contexts in schools but some asserted that they were expected to adjust to their context in order to excel as a headteacher. Yet, some respondents viewed that some exposure to the contextual factors in different schools would have been helpful.



The fifth research question focused on the leadership learning acquired by the respondents from the time they graduated from the NPQH programme until they assumed headship. Only 10 respondents were engaged in this question for the rest of the respondents assumed office immediately after graduating from NPQH. On leadership learning from the time they graduated from NPQH to the time they assumed office as headteachers, respondents informed that they learned a great deal; whether in a positive way or a negative way. However more learning was recorded in the professional setting than learning outside of professional context, with time constraint cited as the main reason for the lack of the latter.

This study also intended to find out about what additional support, both from professional sources as well as non-professional sources, the respondents regarded as important in the effectiveness of their post. Hence, the sixth research question dealt with this aspect and the findings are grouped into emergent themes which are shown in the following Table 5.5.

<b>Additional support through professional sources</b>		
	Emergent themes	Respondents (N=18)
1.	State Education Department (SED) and District Education Office (DEO)	18
2.	Senior Assistants and Teachers	5
3.	Organisers of NPQH	5
4.	Networking with fellow NPQH heads	3
<b>Through non professional sources</b>		
	Emergent themes	Respondents (N=18)
1.	Parent Teacher Association (PTA)	18
2.	Local agencies and community	9

**Table 5.5: Emergent themes of Research Question 6**

The last research question in this study was aimed at gathering the views of the respondents on how to further improve the NPQH programme. From the responses received through the semi-structured interviews from all the 18 respondents, 13 emerging themes were identified. Some of the recommendations correlated with the shortcomings of the programme as perceived by the respondents and found in the third research question. The themes which emerged from the most number of responses were the suggestion on support to be extended to the NPQH graduates

from the organizers of the programme and a call for the organizers to utilize the experiences of NPQH headteachers to be shared with the participants of NPQH. The respondents also rallied for more hands-on or practical opportunities in NPQH learning and also expressed their eagerness to see the policy for headship supporting the NPQH graduates for the headship post and cautioned the organizers on the selection of the participants for NPQH. The overall brief summary of the emergent themes and the corresponding number of respondents contributing their responses towards those themes are shown in the following Table 5.6. Indication is also given in the table on themes which correspond with the themes on shortcomings of the programme.

<b>Recommendations to improve the NPQH programme</b>		
	Emergent themes	Respondents (N=18)
1.	Extension of support from NPQH organisers*	12
2.	Utilising experiences of NPQH headteachers	12
3.	Practical or hands-on opportunities*	10
4.	Supportive policy for headship*	9
5.	Selection of NPQH participants	9
6.	Documenting the experiences of NPQH heads	1
7.	Upgrading the lecturers*	4
8.	Training for different contexts*	4
9.	NPQH heads in training division	1

10.	Incentives for upgrading	1
11.	Reinstating of certain assessment in selection	1
12.	Involvement of non-NPQH senior headteachers*	4
13.	Course assessment format	4

**Table 5.6: Emergent themes of Research Question 7**

(Note: \* Themes which correspond with the emergent themes in Research Question 3)

The themes in all of the research questions in this chapter will form the basis for discussion in the following chapter. The following chapter will address each research question in turn and discuss the findings with reference to the literature review that informs this study.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

#### 6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the findings in this study. The discussion will be presented by addressing the research questions in turn. The findings derived from the study related to each research question will be analysed against the background set by the literature review.

#### 6.1 **Research Question 1: To what extent did the NPQH training programme and each of its 27 units of study prepare the participants for headship?**

This research question was investigated using a mix of quantitative method and qualitative method. The findings from the questionnaire point towards a positive reaction from all the respondents with regards to the preparation offered by the NPQH programme towards their headship. The respondents strongly agreed that 21 of the 27 units of study prepared them well for their headship whilst 6 other units of study were given an agreement. The 6 units which were scored relatively lower by the respondents are curriculum and co-curriculum leadership, financial management, ICT management, research in education, health and safety in schools and legal aspects in school management. The qualitative findings confirmed the positive perception of the

respondents towards the NPQH programme. They regarded the programme as useful, relevant and appropriate to their headship. The usefulness of the NPQH programme seem to fit into the description of an effective training programme by Wallace (1988) who stressed that the course experience should be relevant in relation to performance and it should relate closely to participants' practice and provide support to them in the real situation.

As the respondents were a mixed group of graduates who had a varied number of years in service before joining the NPQH programme and also before appointed to headship, they apparently had different levels of school management experience. Some of them had the opportunity to hold office as senior assistant before joining the NPQH programme and some others held the senior post after graduating. Nonetheless, some of these graduates were appointed straight into headship as they successfully completed the NPQH programme. Even with the knowledge and skills provided by the programme, it is assumed that the younger headteachers who had not experienced many years in service and more so in management post would have found the headship post a demanding one with regards to areas like curriculum and co-curricular leadership and financial management. The curriculum leadership in school is normally assumed by the Senior Assistant I whilst the co-curriculum aspect falls under the responsibility of Senior Assistant Co-curriculum or the Senior Assistant Student Affairs. If the graduates have not had any experience of senior management post before assuming headship, one would argue that they might find that these areas are very important and it takes some practical experience to get around the job.

This finding has an implication to the transition of the graduates into the role of headteacher and there seems to be a concern with initial socialisation and role identity-transformation as forwarded by Browne-Ferrigno (2003).

Financial management is a technical task and many a headteacher who have had senior assistant experience before would also find it challenging if they have not had done the task in their previous senior management post. Many of the respondents perceived this area as helpful for their preparation but it was scored lower than most other areas of study. In fact, the qualitative data in this study revealed that many respondents thought that the financial management subject lacked hands-on input.

The concern for the preparedness in the financial management concurs with the same perceptions in a study on NPQH graduates in the English East Midlands by Rhodes et al. (2009). This is further discussed in the preceding discussion on the shortcomings of the programme.

The respondents in this study also scored relatively lower in the study units of ICT management and research in education. ICT is increasingly used in education today and schools are also experiencing the introduction of various ICT related technologies. This gives rise to the importance of being competent in ICT and managing the technology by headteachers. The lower score of ICT management by the respondents seem to be pointing to a potential problem if this is not checked in the NPQH delivery. The respondents who are now headteachers seem to realise that they have to have the ability to manage ICT in their schools as it is not a technology

which is privileged to certain schools but is a feature of all schools in the country. In fact, this was already acknowledged in the Effective Principal Movement in Malaysia back in 1998 (EPRD, 2006) when it was asserted that an effective school leader should be skillful in ICT, amongst others.

In the same vein, research in education is also being regarded as an important element and headteachers are expected to undertake some form of research, i.e. action research to better inform the school of its effectiveness in the learning process at school. Through research in education, in this case at school, headteachers would be able to benefit from good problem solving, making informed decisions, managing change and all other relevant competencies from the 27 competencies identified by IAB in its High Impact School Leadership (HISL) model (Amin, 2008).

As related by some respondents in their interview, the health and safety subject in NPQH could have provided them more as this is perceived as a very important aspect of school management. This is related to the subject of legal aspects in school management. As gathered from the respondents, safety and health might not have been regarded as important a few years ago as it was recently. This is following some cases of accidents in schools which gave the implication of negligence on the school's part. Similarly it was related by respondents that the parents in general are more aware of legal aspects in school now than ever before. This is more evident in schools which are built and which serve the areas of middle class and high class affluent societies. The awareness of the rights by many parents of their children in



schools have increasingly put the headteachers in these school in a more alert position per their liabilities as heads of school should something go wrong. This seems to posit well into the point made by Bush (2008) about role expansion of the school head whereby accountability pressures are increasing due to a great deal of expectation placed on the head by various parties, including parents. Although it seems like there is more pressure of this kind in the urban schools at the moment, one could expect this to expand further in the future as the effects of economic developments influence the urbanization of the current rural areas. Hence, the importance of health and safety as well as legal aspects should be highlighted in the NPQH and potential headteachers should be made aware of this aspect as their whole career could be jeopardized in case they neglect this area.

From the findings of the reaction given by the respondents to the usefulness of each study unit, it seems like the units of study which raised their concern were mainly contained in one particular domain from the 6 domains identified in the High Impact School Leadership model by IAB (Amin, 2008). The Resources and Operation domain in the model includes areas such as financial management, physical development and ICT management. This model is said to be relevant to the leadership of schools in Malaysia. Although all the relevant areas of study discussed did receive a positive score from the respondents, it is nevertheless a signal for the organizers to look into enhancing and improving this domain in the future especially in the context of preparing future school leaders in Malaysia. Overall, it could be inferred

from the findings that the NPQH programme was designed with the headship job requirements clearly in mind.

The positive perception of this programme by the headteachers in this study seem to confirm the findings by Aziz (2003) who found that graduates of NPQH who were then appointed headteachers found the programme to be valuable and beneficial. However, the study by Aziz involved only 3 practicing heads of the primary school whilst this study sought perceptions of eighteen secondary school heads. Aziz's study called for a further investigation into the perceived effectiveness of the NPQH programme involving secondary school heads and this study have filled the gap whilst adding to the repertoire of understanding the NPQH programme in Malaysia.

The findings on the preparation offered by the NPQH programme for headship also seem to concur with some findings in England and Scotland. Higham et al. (2007) reported that more than three quarter of the NPQH graduates surveyed in England in 2005 felt well prepared prior to taking up the role of headteacher. In Scotland, Murphy et al. (2002), Menter et al. (2003) and Cowie (2008) reported on the positive findings of SQH in terms of its impact on professional learning and on schools. The similarity of findings in the NPQH, both in Malaysia and England, as well as the SQH indicates that the headship preparatory programme seem to be a sound step forward in ensuring better headship practices in the future. It also confirms the utility of according such a programme the status of a mandatory national qualification for

headship by many countries around the world today, as presented by Bush (2008b) and Brundrett and Crawford (2008).

This study is in tandem with Buckley and Caple (2000) who proposed that a follow-up study or external validation should be carried out as an evaluation initiative to assess whether the objectives of the training have met the needs of the participants in order to enable them to perform task or job to the accepted standards. This study, in this case, has been an external validation for the effectiveness of the NPQH training programme involving the respondents.

## **Summary**

Although the respondents found the NPQH useful and all the units of study helpful in offering preparation for their headship, the relatively lower scores in certain units warranted some further discussion. The concern over these units of study could be attributed to some of the respondents not having experienced a more senior position in school before joining the NPQH where they could have attained more experience in areas such as curriculum and co-curricular leadership. The concern over financial management was raised as there was an apparent lack of hands-on opportunity to internalize this technical aspect of school management. The concern raised over the ICT management unit could have been related with the global trend of a rapid development in ICT. On the other hand, respondents who raised a concern over the 'research in education' unit of study could have perceived the increasing need of

engaging in school based research to derive more informed decisions in tackling their unique school issues. The expansion of the role of a school headteacher and the accountability pressures which come with it seem to have prompted the call for a more and deeper coverage of the health and safety subject as well as the legal aspects unit of study in NPQH. It could be inferred from these findings that preparation for school leadership should take into account what exposure the trainees have had in order to better suit the content and delivery to their needs.

**6.2 Research Question 2: What were perceived as the particular strengths of the NPQH programme with regards to the 27 units of study in the six main areas of training? Why these are perceived so?**

The second research question intended to gather information on the strengths of the NPQH programme as perceived by the headteacher respondents. All 18 headteachers in this study were interviewed and the responses received from the interviewees raised three emergent themes, namely; good theoretical knowledge, increase in confidence level and well structured programme. These three themes will be discussed in turn in the ensuing part of this section.

Many respondents (n=14) felt that there was adequate theoretical knowledge provided in the programme and the acquiring of the theoretical knowledge has helped them in their eventual headship. They asserted that the theoretical knowledge gained formed a good foundation for headship. The findings point towards the

acknowledgment by the respondents that theoretical knowledge is vital in performing their headship role. As suggested by Grint (2007), who used Aristotle to explain leadership teaching, knowledge (Aristotle's *episteme*) is one of the three important elements of leadership development. This seems to be echoed by the findings of this study. However Grint argued that knowledge itself is not enough as it has to be combined with skills (Aristotle's *techne*) and wisdom (Aristotle's *phronesis*). The respondents in this study acknowledged that knowledge received in this programme was sufficient and helped them build a good foundation for their headship. Nonetheless they did raise the concern for the other elements and this will be dealt with in the ensuing discussion in this chapter under the relevant research question.

The respondents also seem to realize that their other headteacher colleagues who were appointed to the post by virtue of seniority somewhat lacked these theoretical knowledge as the training they received only came after having assumed the post and not before that. That is the norm of training headteachers in Malaysia whereby the headteachers who assumed the post were called in for training from time to time by the Ministry of Education. As much as it is intended for all the appointed new headteachers to receive training in leadership and management as soon as they take up office it is still not achieved fully as there are many schools and the headteachers have to take turn to come in for the limited places offered in training which is mainly provided by IAB, which also provides the NPQH programme. The realization of being different in the sense of receiving training pre-appointment to headship also indicates that the NPQH programme is perceived as a departure from the normal practice of

providing training to headteachers. The findings also seem to echo Male's (2001) findings from a national survey of headteachers in UK which suggests that NPQH graduates consider themselves to be better prepared than other headteachers, albeit in nine specific skills.

This study also found that the NPQH programme elevated the confidence level of the participants and prepared them better for headship. More than half of the respondents (n=11) viewed that their confidence level increased as a result of following the NPQH programme and they felt better prepared for the headship post. As many of the participants in the earlier NPQH cohorts were young and did not have much experience in the management post in schools, the theoretical input of management and leadership proved to be very essential. It can be assumed that the respondents, who were from the earlier cohorts, did not get much exposure to the management and leadership knowledge prior to joining the NPQH programme. This was due to the position they were in, for example, as class teachers teaching certain subjects in schools. They were presumably good in their own subject areas but perhaps not in school management and leadership as the need was not there if they were not holding any management post then. Having been exposed to the management and leadership theories and all the other relevant fields in the leadership of schools, and realizing that these were important to the headship post, the trainees turned headteachers appreciated the confidence these provided them. This seems to be aligned to the role-identity transformation as forwarded by Browne-Ferrigno (2006) where professional growth is indicated by the mind-set shift of these

participants to that of an educational leader. This could also be true for some of the more senior participants who have had some management experience before joining the NPQH. They could have found the answers to some of the issues they have had in their management experience in the course of the programme. These findings seem to concur with the claim made by Holden (2001) that appropriate management training could help school leaders face the demands placed upon their positions. With the perception of being more confident in carrying out their duties, it can be assumed that the respondents were in a good position to face the demands of the headship post insofar as the theoretical knowledge is concerned.

A small number of the respondents (n=3) in this study raised the theme of NPQH as a well structured programme. However, the theme is worthy of further consideration as the NPQH programme is the only headship preparatory programme in the whole nation. The conventional practice of training school headteachers is calling them in for a one-month basic school leadership and management course when they assume the headship post. While this is considered the basic and main course to be undertaken by the new headteachers, they also do get called up from time to time to attend other courses provided by IAB and their respective State Education Departments. The courses they attend are varied and not structured in a certain order. In contrast, the NPQH programme is structured and it contains all the relevant input pertaining to headship. Participants come in for a year and undergo the programme on a full time basis. The wholeness of the NPQH programme therefore is perceived as a well structured and planned initiative compared to the piece meal

nature of the conventional delivery of in-service courses for appointed headteachers. It seems to fit into the definition of training which is defined as a systematic and planned activity to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes of participants through learning experiences to enhance performance (Schmidt et al., 1992; Buckley and Caple, 2000). The findings seem to give credence to the NPQH programme as a leadership preparatory initiative but it would be imperative to gauge the perceptions of other aspects of the programme in order to judge the value of it.

## **Summary**

As the NPQH programme was created as an initiative to train future school leaders, it has been acknowledged as a well structured programme that raised the confidence level of the participants. The theoretical knowledge provided by the programme could have proven to be valuable to many a participant who had no prior exposure to the knowledge which focused directly into the headship role as they had not assumed any management post in their jobs before joining the NPQH. Having received the theoretical knowledge pertaining to school leadership could also have prepared them mentally for the post resulting in the increase of their confidence to take up the leadership role in school. Therefore, it could be inferred that headship training provided to younger teachers might elevate their self confidence to hold school leadership post. This could also be true for the more senior teachers who have had some management experience prior to joining the programme.



### **6.3 Research Question 3: What were perceived as the shortcomings of the programme? Why these are perceived so?**

The third research question was designed to explore if there were any shortcomings in the NPQH programme as perceived by the respondents. The interviews conducted with all the 18 respondents raised 8 themes which pointed towards the particular shortcomings of the programme. All the 18 headteachers perceived that there was an over-emphasis on theoretical aspect in the programme. These findings seem to be contradictory in the sense that one of the strengths of the NPQH programme is attributed to the theoretical knowledge gained by the participants. However, the same theme emerged under the shortcomings of the programme. As much as it could seem as a contradiction, this situation is plausible if the theoretical knowledge is seen as strength on one hand but as a weakness when the theoretical knowledge dominates the whole delivery of the programme. As much as the respondents liked the theoretical knowledge as evident through their raising it as a strength, they also felt that there was too much emphasis on it resulting in the compromise of practical or hands on input. It could be argued that the respondents needed the theories to be put into action, so that their learning could directly be utilized when they assume leadership role in school. There was clearly a need to bridge what was being learned through theories and the practical use afterwards. This concurs with the claim made by Bush et al. (2007) that the most successful learning experiences occur when there is a bridge between the work situation and the learning situation. Similarly, this theme

on the over-emphasis on theoretical input is related very closely to the next emergent theme; lack of hands-on experience.

All the 18 respondents again unanimously responded on the theme of lack of hands-on opportunity which could have provided them some practical experience in the programme. This aspect of the programme was seen as a weakness because some of the participants who were quite junior in service and had not much experience in managing the school were hoping to gain as much practical experience as possible ahead of their expected early appointment into headship. As some of them did get into the headship post rather soon after graduating from the programme, they felt that they had missed the chance to practice what they have been taught in the programme. It was perhaps not the best of opportunities to practice what they learnt only when they assumed the headship post as they were expected to perform well and not create a trial and error situation in the school they were heading.

It could be argued that the respondents wanted a better transition into headship role by receiving the initial socialization (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003) in the form of practical experience in view of a need for professional behaviour appropriate to the role of headteacher. The literature reviewed on leadership also seems to have a further explanation for these perceptions by the respondents by way of relating knowledge, skills and practical experience in leadership learning. Grint (2007) asserted that whilst knowledge (Aristotle's episteme) can be taught in lectures, skills (Aristotle's techne) must be honed through practice. Even though the respondents seem to have

received enough theoretical knowledge which they attributed as strength of the NPQH programme, they nevertheless felt that the same over-emphasis of theoretical knowledge had cost them those skills and practical experience. In fact, the respondents had wanted exposure to the real school situation so that they could experience the application of what they learnt in the programme. Grint (2007) believes that knowledge and skills acquired through leadership development must be accompanied and supported by wisdom (Aristotle's *phronesis*) which can only be secured through experiencing leadership itself. This seem to be agreed upon by the respondents of this study who perceived the three elements; knowledge, skills and practical experience (wisdom) as important for their headship. The concern of having enough hands-on opportunity or practical experience seem to concur with Buckley and Caple (2000) who informed that planned experience is an equal partner of training and development in order to induce learning. It also agrees with the argument put forth by Rhodes and Brundrett (2006) that leadership training relying on content-driven courses may be less effective in developing leadership talent if they neglect the practical activities related to the learner's own professional context. This study points to the importance perceived of this planned experience or role related activities by the headteachers.

Many of the respondents (n=11) raised another theme in the shortcomings of the NPQH programme, lack of experience and competency in trainers, which could be linked to the preceding themes of over-emphasis on theoretical aspect and lack of hands-on opportunity in the programme. These respondents asserted that many of

the trainers who were involved in the delivery of the various subjects in the programme were themselves lacking experience in school management per se. They argued that many a lecturer or trainer was only good in delivery of theories but could not link the theories effectively to the real life situation in schools for the obvious reason that they had not been heads of schools before. Some of the respondents also perceived the lack of competency in some lecturers whom they regarded as close minded when it came to providing opportunity for the participants to discuss and tease out the practicality of the theories delivered to them. It seems like the participants were compelled to just accept whatever was offered to them without thinking too much on the use of the theories in real life situation.

The NPQH programme was also perceived as being too exam oriented by some respondents (n=4). There were two main concerns raised by the interviewees, i.e. the examination stress of the programme itself and the imbalance of the structure of exams administered to them. They thought that the solely objective-based exams were too demanding as they had to remember theories and other facts learned in the programme. Furthermore the respondents asserted that the objective-based exams were more suited to test their ability to remember the content learned whilst it would have been just equally important to test the application of the theories learned via subjective-based exams. It seems from the findings of this study that the planning of the assessment for a programme like the NPQH where the participants are not merely required to do rote learning should be done with care. Proper consideration

should be taken on the suitability of the type of assessment administered on the participants.

The concerns raised by the respondents on the incompetency of some lecturers and imbalance of the exam format warrants some insight into adult learning. In the literature reviewed, it was pointed that the adult learners are not the same as younger learners in that they have different learning needs. Knowles (1975) stressed the importance of andragogy, the art and science of helping adults learn, which encompasses learning that is relevant to personal or career interests and participatory in nature. Brookfield (1986) proposed some principles in helping adults learn which includes fostering of critical reflection. It seems from the findings that some lecturers in the NPQH programme did not take into account the importance of adult learning principles and that has raised some concern amongst the participants. The findings, whilst agreeing with the notion of adult learning principles, sends a signal to the organizers on the importance of andragogy knowledge amongst the lecturers who are involved in delivery of NPQH programme. The same concern was raised in a similar study by Aziz (2003), albeit in the primary school sector. Another study done in Malaysia by the Educational Policy and Research Division (EPRD, 2006) also found that there was a perceived lack of experience amongst the lecturers of NPQH on aspects of leading and managing schools. Those findings seem to be confirmed by the findings of this study. Hence, the selection of the trainers involved in the delivery of NPQH programme should be done with a balance of knowledge and experience in mind. Tusting and Barton (2006) inform that adults have their own

motivations to learn and the competency of trainers seems to be emerging as a motivation for the learners as evident from this study.

The findings of this study, with regards to perceptions that the programme was too exam oriented, seem to concur with the findings of Smithers and Robinson (2007) in England who found that participants felt that the NPQH course was too paper-based rather than practically applied. The similar sentiments by participants of NPQH across the globe in this aspect indicate that the NPQH, whether in England or Malaysia, needs a more flexible approach to its assessment of the participants throughout the course.

This study also found that some of the respondents (n=9) perceived the NPQH programme as lacking depth in certain subject areas. Financial management was mentioned as having lack of depth together with other subjects; legal aspects in school, students affairs, health and safety and research and development. These findings in the interviews concurred with the findings in the quantitative section of the first research question. Many of the headteachers who raised this theme perceived the lack of depth in these particular subjects as they got appointed into headship. Having faced the real life leadership situation in schools, the respondents iterated that much more could have been done in the delivery of these subjects with regards to the depth and practical experience that could have offered them better preparation for the post.

It is relevant at this point to note that Aziz (2003) in his study of NPQH reported that the greatest improvement in knowledge and skills reported by the participants were, amongst others, in the subject of legal issues impacting schools operation and school financial management. The importance placed by the participants in his study indicated the importance of those subjects because many of the participants were not experienced in school management and they found the new knowledge learnt relevant and greatly improving their existing knowledge on the subjects. However, this study which involved graduates of NPQH who were actually assuming headship found that these areas were helpful in preparing them for headship but they perceived lack of depth in the delivery of these in NPQH. Assumably this is due to the requirement for a deeper understanding of these subjects in the real practice as school heads. It can be assumed that graduates who are not in the headship post might find these areas providing them with great improvement in knowledge and skills but those who have taken up the post found that more is needed in delivery of the subjects. The findings in this study however confirm the findings by EPRD (2006) which found concern raised by the NPQH graduates on certain areas in the training curriculum, particularly in the financial management and legal aspect subjects.

Some of the headteachers (n=4) in this study also perceived that there was a lack of experience sharing by senior heads in the programme. The senior heads were regarded as experienced resource of the education field and the lack of their engagement in the programme was regarded as a missed opportunity for the participants to get first hand information on issues at school. This again reflected the

need for practical input and discourse by the respondents in addition to all the theories they learned. As forwarded by Heck (2003), professional socialisation involves formal training in order to prepare beginning school administrators for the early phases of their professional practice. One aspect of the preparation, as inferred from this study, should be experience sharing by senior practicing heads so that the aspiring heads could better prepare themselves for the role. It also seems to agree with Woodall and Winstanley (1998) who categorised learning from another person as one of the workplace learning. Even though they focused on the place of working, it seems from this study that the same is true even at the training level.

A small number of respondents (n=3) raised another theme in this study with regards to shortcomings of the NPQH programme. The respondents perceived that the NPQH programme as an initiative to prepare better equipped school heads was not taken seriously by the concerned parties. Hence, there was a perceived lack of implementation. Even though the number of respondents who raised this issue was relatively small, it is worthy of further consideration as these views seem to represent the many graduates who are still waiting to be appointed into senior posts in schools. It was noted through responses received in the interviews that many an aspiring head from the NPQH programme has ended up elsewhere apart from the school. However, due to lack of appointments to headship for these graduates many of them tend to move away from the path of being a headteacher to some other appointments, such as being lecturers, officers at the Ministry of Education and even as education attaches at the Malaysian Student Departments abroad. Perhaps this



concern is realised by the organisers as the name for the programme has been changed to NPQEL (National Professional Qualification for Educational Leaders) since 2007 (IAB, 2007). Even though the concern raised through this theme could be rendered academic now that the name has been changed, it is still difficult to absolve the high hopes for the headship post by those who are still waiting in the talent pool. It is also interesting to note that whilst it has been reported that England is experiencing a low transition rate of NPQH graduates into headship (Rhodes et al., 2008; Bush, 2008b), the same seems to be felt in Malaysia. However, the contrasting aspect of this comparison seems to be that many graduates in England are not seeking the headship role but in Malaysia, many are eagerly waiting but are not offered and appointed to the post.

The respondents, even though themselves having secured the headship post, felt for their fellow participants who were still waiting for the appointment into the school leadership post. Hence, their view that the policy of preparing the next echelon of heads was not heeded to and taken rather lightly by various sectors in the Ministry of Education. Similar findings were reported by Aziz (2003) and EPRD (2006) which reported the frustration and disappointment of NPQH graduates who were not given a chance to hold any management post following their successful completion of the programme. The delay faced by graduates of NPQH to be appointed into management posts could affect their effectiveness of applying what they learnt in the programme. This is based on the literature reviewed in which Buckley and Caple (2000) argued that retention of the skills and knowledge learned from the training is

vital and facilitated when they are fully used back on the job for which the training took place, in this case the headship. In addition, the very notion of transfer as proposed by Perkins and Salomon (1988) does not seem to materialize as the graduates are not given a chance to use the knowledge or skills acquired in the context of training into the role of school leadership. This finding, whilst indicating the loss of human potential and financial cost to provide the training, also implies that the Ministry of Education should look into succession management and career planning of NPQH graduates. The same assertion on career planning was evident in England (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006; Rhodes et al., 2008).

Half of the respondents (n=9) raised the theme of lack of follow up in the NPQH programme. Although it was not something that was stipulated in the programme structure, the respondents thought that the lack of it showed the inability of the planners of NPQH to look at the future needs of the graduates. The respondents wanted to see some follow up to their knowledge because of the need to equip themselves with the latest in the education leadership and management field. They had wanted the organizers to keep supporting the graduates after completing NPQH and right through the headship because of the different demands their post had on them from time to time. This also indicates recognition towards IAB as the body sought for to provide the updated knowledge and skills to the headteachers. It also points towards the importance of keeping up to date with the latest developments in the education world, in this case the leadership of education. Of course the headteachers do get a chance to attend courses organized by IAB once they

assumed headship but this is scarce for many of them. In fact some do not get called up because the officers in charge at their various education departments could well assume that these headteachers had obtained enough knowledge and skills through their one year stint in the NPQH programme.

These findings point to the need for the organisers to provide support to the graduates even when they have assumed headship. Following Joyce and Showers (1980), an effective training encompasses theory, modeling and demonstration, practice in simulated setting, feedback on job performance and on the job coaching. NPQH provides the first three elements but feedback and on the job coaching is presumably the role of respective SEDs and DEOs where the headteachers work, a fact which was also stressed by EPRD (2006). However it emerges from this study that the headteachers would like to receive updated knowledge from IAB and this could be another aspect to be explored by the organizers.

## **Summary**

The responses received from the respondents in this section point towards the need to improve the content and delivery of NPQH programme. As the programme prepares participants for the role of headteachers, it was perceived that the over emphasis on theoretical knowledge in the programme has compromised the need for practical hands-on experience. The role of trainers in NPQH has also emerged as an important factor as the participants are adults who have a distinct way or principle of

learning, i.e. andragogy. It is perhaps inadequate to have a rich content for a programme like this without having put in place a good way of delivery, by competent trainers who understand the needs of adult learners. In fact, the content should be deep enough to help the participants in their eventual role as headteacher. Subjects taught at a perceived surface level, whilst helping the participants to grasp the knowledge seem to have fallen short of utility of application in the real practice. Learning from experienced headteachers also emerged as an important factor for the respondents as they raised the feeling of what seems like a missed opportunity to gain some insights from the real practitioners. It was also evident from the responses that type or form of assessment in the programme also plays a part in their learning, with an indication that an objective based multiple choice form of assessment should be balanced with a subjective based form in the course exams. Being the sole national school leadership preparatory programme, NPQH is expected by the respondents to be regarded as an important ticket for headship. The delay in appointment to headship and other senior posts in school seem to have frustrated many participants and there is a perception of lackadaisical attitude and lack of seriousness by various quarters pertaining to the NPQH initiative. This indicates that an initiative such as the preparation of future school heads should not only be confined to ensuring that the training is carried out but should ensure that a proper system is put in place to facilitate the moving into headship of the graduates.

There is also a concern regarding continuous support for the graduates of NPQH until they attain their headship and thereafter. There seems to be a call for the

responsibility of training the aspiring headteachers, which ceases at the point of graduation from the programme, to be carried on with the provision of the latest knowledge and skills relevant to the post held by the graduates respectively.

#### **6.4 Research Question 4: To what extent is the present school context influential in determining the effectiveness of NPQH programme?**

The fourth research question was formulated to acquire the perceptions of the 18 interviewees in this study as to the influence of the present school context to the effectiveness of the NPQH programme. The study found that all the headteachers unanimously responded that they were neither theoretically nor practically prepared for different school contexts in the programme. Although all of them stated that there was no specific input regarding heading or leading different school types, some conceded to the assumption that a good head should be able to lead any school in whichever context. However the respondents in this study did indicate that some exposure to the different kinds of school context would have been beneficial in their eventual headship. As some of these headteachers graduated from the NPQH programme and were sent to lead schools in rural areas as well as schools which were yet to be opened, they felt that better preparation in relation to different school types would have helped a smoother transition into their headship. The NPQH programme caters generally for aspiring teachers from all kind of schools and does not take into account the different school contexts the participants were from.

Bush (2008) attributed the increasing complexity of school contexts as one of the reasons for the growing realization that headship is a specialist vocation that requires specific preparation. The perception of not taking this point into consideration in the NPQH programme has emerged as a missing part of the programme to many respondents (n=13) who eventually led schools which were different to the ones they were working in prior to the appointment or prior to joining the NPQH programme. The respondents did find heading a school different to their former schools a concern as the distinctive aspects of the schools could pose a challenge to their abilities. It seems like many of them eventually learned through experience on how to manage this peculiarity but opening a new school in one's first headship experience could have been a daunting experience. An inference could be made from the findings of this research question that prior knowledge and experience of the participants is important to ascertain their needs for the future. This confirms the proposal by Brookfield (1986) that adult learning is most effective if it takes into account their prior knowledge and experience.

As these findings point to the important influence placed by the present school context to determine the effectiveness of NPQH, it seems that the findings concurred with the report by NCSL (2007b) in England. One of the areas identified by NCSL which sought improvement was the opportunities to explore diverse school contexts. The similar perception by the NPQH graduates in England indicates that the concern for having a good grasp of the peculiarity of different contexts is a real issue that affects leaders in school. It seems to be true at least for the group of graduates in

England and another in Malaysia. It could well be similar in other places around the globe with similar programmes.

## **Summary**

The responses from all the interviewees in this research question seem to unanimously confirm the absence of contextual consideration in the NPQH programme. As much as it is believed that an effective head could be able to adapt to different contexts, there should be a conscious effort to include the different contexts apparent in the local schooling system. The view by the respondents that a wider exposure to the different contexts could have helped a smoother transition into their headship confirms the assertion that contextual consideration is vital in the preparation of school leaders. This concurs with the assertion by Bush (2008) on the complexity of contexts which was similarly forwarded earlier by MacBeath (2006) who indicated that talent may not easily be transferred from one context to another as he promoted the importance of context in school leadership.

**6.5 Research Question 5: What leadership learning has taken place between the graduation of these participants and now, in the following contexts?**

- (i) Professional learning in school;**
- (ii) Professional learning outside of school;**
- (iii) Learning outside of the professional context.**

The fifth research question probed the respondents on the leadership learning that took place between their graduation and their appointment into headship. The contexts of the leadership learning were divided into professional setting and outside of professional setting. The professional setting was further divided into professional learning at school and professional learning outside of school. This was followed by the leadership learning outside of the professional setting.

This research question was found only relevant to those headteachers who did not assume headship immediately after graduating from the NPQH. Since 8 of the respondents had assumed headship upon graduating from NPQH, only 10 headteachers contributed towards this question through their responses.

In the professional setting at school, all the 10 respondents perceived that they learned a great deal about leadership. The leadership learning primarily occurred through their experiencing and reflecting on the leadership of their superiors. However learning here does not denote only positive learning as some of these respondents learned through their observation and reflection on the perceived



negative style of leadership demonstrated by their superiors in the schools they served before assuming headship. Therefore, the leadership learning that occurred in the respondents was based on a set of leadership theories that they learned in the NPQH programme and observed in action at the schools they were in. In other words, the espoused theories were measured against the observation and reflection of the theories in use at the material time. In fact, some of the respondents (n=5) even had the opportunity to compare and contrast more than one head and could mentally classify the different styles of these leaders into positive and negative styles. In spite of this, both the situations constituted leadership learning. The findings of this study indicate that learning in the school is an important aspect in the development of a future leader. However, there is also an indication that learning to lead did not necessarily happen by directly emulating the practices of the superiors, i.e. the school heads, but followed the judgment of the respondents who reflected against the repertoire of knowledge they had about effective leadership. The ability of the respondents to reflect upon various leadership styles seems to give credence to the contingency principle (Leithwood et al, 1999; Fidler and Atton, 2004) in leadership practice at school. It also seems to concur with the assertion made by Bush and Glover (2003) that a contingency model requires leaders to be able to carry out effective situational analysis to adapt their approaches to specific context. Even though the contingency principle seems to be evident in the learning process of the aspiring heads, further study is needed to ascertain the extent of any particular leadership style or the contingency principle in the actual leadership of these heads in the schools they lead.

The leadership learning in the professional setting outside of school seems to be derived through experiencing a more active role by the respondents themselves. The respondents attributed their leadership learning to their active involvement in professional bodies such as the Senior Assistants association and other associations such as the parent teacher association (PTA). If the leadership learning in the school was attained through their observation and reflection on the styles demonstrated by their superiors, the tables turned outside the school as these respondents were mainly acting out the leadership roles themselves. Their active involvement in the professional bodies as well as associations gave them the opportunity to lead and learn directly from their own experiences. This leadership learning seems to be important to the would-be heads as it provided the platform for them to practice their own leadership styles. The opportunity to act out the leadership roles they were in not only allowed them to demonstrate their preferred leadership styles but also provided them experience to lead better in the eventual headship. This also implies that aspiring heads in the senior management posts should be encouraged to participate actively in the professional setting outside school as it potentially provides a platform for them to tease out various leadership styles.

This study also found that the respondents did not acquire much leadership learning outside the professional setting. This was mainly because they were reportedly not actively involved in many associations outside of their professional setting due to lack of time.

The findings related to this research question show that learning mainly occurred in the professional setting, be it inside the school or outside. The findings seem to confirm the notion that some of the most powerful leadership learning occurs on the job (Woodall and Winstanley, 1998; Rainbird et al., 2004; Raelin, 2008). It also shows agreement with Woodall and Winstanley (1998) who have included learning from another person and learning with others at the workplace as contributors to leadership learning. The findings also signify a similarity with the synthesis of work done on headship and leadership development in UK by Earley and Weindling (2004). They reported that school heads believed that most valuable 'on-the-job' learning activity was working with others, especially effective headteachers. In the case of this study, the respondents reported learning a great deal from their headteachers. The respondents were mainly in their senior management posts, as senior assistants, when they perceived learning from their superiors. The 'on-the-job' context by these researchers is similar to professional setting at school in this study. However, learning in this study was not only derived from the perceived positive styles of effective headteachers but also from the negative styles of other headteachers. The 'off-the-job' learning in the study of Earley and Weindling (2004) is similar to the professional setting outside the school in this study. The heads in England perceived learning from networking with other headteachers whilst the respondents in this study learned from their involvement with other senior assistants then. The English heads also perceived learning from having meetings or contacts with non-educationalists, a similarity with this study where the respondents perceived learning from parents through their involvement in the PTAs.

## **Summary**

This study found that leadership learning continued after training when the NPQH graduates were assuming senior management roles in schools before they took up the headship role. As leadership learning at school was based on observation and reflection on the leadership of their superiors, leadership learning outside school seems to have stemmed from their own leadership practice. This opportunity of being in a position of reflecting and judging the leadership styles of their own superiors on one end and practicing their own preferred leadership styles on the other seem to have provided a good balance for the headteacher aspirants on which styles work and which did not. It would be plausible to assume that the positive styles they observed at the schools were 'put to test' in their own leadership roles outside the school while the negative styles avoided. This was perhaps possible because the NPQH graduates were given the opportunity to hold the senior assistant post and their active involvement in activities that provided them leadership roles. Therefore, it could be inferred that giving the graduates an opportunity to hold a senior management post before their headship could provide a good opportunity for leadership learning. The benefit of leadership learning in the senior post is further complemented by the active involvement in leadership roles in other work based activities. The implication of these findings to the preparation of schools heads in Malaysia is the importance of appointing the graduates into senior management posts in schools so that they could continue their leadership learning in a practical setting to further assist them in their own transition into headship. Nevertheless, it could be

argued that some of the graduates may have experienced the senior management post prior to joining the NPQH and they could be accorded either a brief period of senior assistantship or appointed directly into headship.

**6.6 Research Question 6: What additional support to enable effective headship would be helpful with regards to the following?**

- (i) Professional sources ;**
- (ii) Non-professional sources.**

This study also sought the perceptions of the respondents to the kind of additional support they perceived as helpful to their role as a headteacher. Hence the sixth research question was directed to this end. The additional support was categorized into two different sources – professional and non-professional. All 18 headteachers responded to this question and their responses raised a few emergent themes.

As for the professional support, the 18 respondents were unanimous in stating that the most important support comes from the State Education Department (SED) and the District Education Department (DEO). High regards given to the SED and DEO support is perhaps to be expected as these are the two main organisations schools are answerable to. In fact, the line of authority ascends from school to DEO and then to SED. Therefore, a school is under the purview of the respective SED and the DEO in the state in which it is located. The findings of the study point towards the importance of this support and the appreciation by the respondents that they have

been given good support in ensuring their effectiveness in office. Nevertheless such an impressive and critical perception of these stakeholders could frustrate many a headteacher if they think and feel that they are not getting as much support as they would have liked to. It was perceived in this study that sometimes the SED and DEO officers took the schools for granted. The support from the authorities was considered an integral aspect of the winning formula for a successful school. Not only did these respondents expect financial support to realise their projects or plans for the school, they also expected support in the form of presence of the officers when they are needed in school. It is quite the norm to get someone from the DEO or the SED to officiate important functions in school. The presence of the District Education Officer or State Education Director in those functions is nothing short of revered by the school community. These findings seem to confirm the findings by EPRD (2006) which discovered that support from the higher authorities in education (State Education Department) was perceived as high with respect to resources and morale support. However, it was found that the expertise support in managing schools from the same authorities could be improved. The support of higher authorities, particularly the SED, was considered vital by the respondents of this study and they acknowledged receiving a lot of support. However it appears like many schools expect more support and close personal communication from the officers in the higher authorities. This finding, whilst indicating the vital support perceived from the SED and DEO, also points towards a need for a wider study on the support by SED and DEO towards schools and the expectations from the schools for their services.

Support from senior assistants and teachers in the school was also raised by some respondents (n=5) as an important support from professional sources. These heads regarded the support given by their subordinates as crucial in the day to day running of the school and in ensuring that effective learning takes place. The more junior heads in this study acknowledged the richness of experience possessed by their senior assistants which they perceived as essential in their role as leaders of the school. As it were some of the respondents were appointed to headship right after the NPQH programme and did not have much experience on the ground as a member of the management team prior to joining the NPQH. On the other hand, some of the senior assistants have been doing the management task for a longer period of time. They are arguably capable of holding the headship post if given an opportunity.

The regard for the support from subordinates by the respondents in this study points towards a participative leadership style. This concurs with the claim made by Fidler and Atton (2004) who regard the participative leadership style to be desirable in situations where consensus in decision-making is important. In their composite model of leadership in schools, these authors explain that leaders choose to act either in a participative style or a managerial style within the internal working level. The responses in this study seem to point towards the dominance of participative style amongst the headteachers, which Fidler and Atton (2004) consider as part of the contingency principle in school leadership. It is possible that the respondents knew

which style to choose from the repertoire of different styles of leadership which they acquired from the NPQH programme.

The findings of this study with regards to additional support perceived as helpful by the respondents did not only yield support that they have been receiving but also support which they wished to receive. One of the emerging themes, raised by half of the respondents (n=9), is support from the organiser of the NPQH programme. In this case it was Institut Aminuddin Baki (IAB) which they wanted the support from. The respondents wanted support from the organisers to be extended to them even after graduating from NPQH right through their appointment into headship and thereafter. In order to do that, they perceived traceability to be an important factor. It was asserted that IAB should maintain a good and updated database in order to access or communicate with the graduates. The support perceived as important from IAB is topping up of knowledge and skills in the graduates to suit the roles or positions they were in from time to time. Even though the respondents acknowledged receiving support from the SED and DEO, it seems that they regarded the expertise support from IAB as more useful. This could be attributed to the role that IAB plays as the only institute under the Ministry of Education Malaysia that provides educational management and leadership training as its core business. Arguably, IAB seem to be good at its core business prompting the respondents to ask for continuing support even after leaving the NPQH programme.



Another theme in this section on the perceived important and helpful professional support is through networking with fellow NPQH heads. A small number of respondents (n=3) perceived that this support is important and it could very well mean that they found comfort in getting help from each other as they have attended the same programme, albeit in different cohorts. The NPQH programme seems to have created this bond of collective memory amongst the graduates that they find support in other colleagues in a similar headship journey. It also seems to contribute to the claim made by the respondents that they were different from the conventional heads. They seem to belong to a new breed of headteachers who, after having received similar input prior to holding the post, speak the 'same language'. The finding is in agreement with the conclusion made by EPRD (2006) that found the NPQH graduates reporting the support they received from colleagues as being rich and useful. It also seem to concur with the findings of Earley and Weindling (2004) who reported that schools heads in UK regarded networking with fellow headteachers as one of the most useful learning activities. Thus, there is reason to believe that heads regarded networking with other heads as useful and supportive. This also seems to transcend context or location the school is in. In the light of the findings in this study and previous studies, it is recommended that networking between the NPQH headteachers should be formalised and it could potentially be an important source of experience sharing with participants in the NPQH programme.

Asked about the additional support through non-professional sources perceived as helpful by the respondents, two themes emerged. The respondents (N=18)

overwhelmingly perceived the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) as the most important support in this respect, followed by support received from local agencies and community. The PTA is seen as a body which plays an important role in mediation between parents and the school. Respondents affirmed that good PTAs help to ensure good relationship between schools and parents. Financial support was also regarded an important element of support extended by PTAs to school, alongside moral and time support. As much as the support of PTA was perceived as helpful, there was also a word of caution on the ability of the school head to control the movement lest it exceeded its powers and encroach into the school administration. There is a guideline drawn by the MOE as to the PTA scope of power and it mainly encourages financial support and the role of bridging the school and parents. The PTA is prohibited from getting involved or pressuring the school in administrative issues. The findings of this study seem to show an innate concern by school leaders of PTAs which flout the regulation and meddle with the school affairs. This is when the head is required to exercise powers bestowed to them as ex-officio or advisors to keep a check on the PTAs.

Another theme that emerged under the non-professional support, raised by half of the responses (n=9), is the support given by local agencies and community. The agencies such as town council and police are regarded as important in helping the school and so are the local communities who amongst others include the local politicians. The school is part of the local community and being isolated surely does not help because many of the school activities do involve outside bodies, whether

directly or indirectly. Hence, the importance placed on this support by the respondents.

In order to receive good support from organisations like PTA and the local agencies, the headteachers will have to demonstrate good communication skills. Hence, it can be induced from these findings that the heads have had good communicational skills to be able to garner support from the non-educationalists. This fits in well with definition of an effective headteacher, who amongst others, needs to have good interpersonal skills (EPRD, 2006; Zakaria, 1996).

## **Summary**

It is evident from the findings of this research question that additional support is important for the headteachers, whether received through professional sources or non professional sources. The strongest support perceived by the respondents through the professional sources was from SED and DEO, which directly govern the schools. There is also an acknowledgement to the importance of support from the senior assistants and teachers in the school led. The support from these subordinates should be utilized optimally using the appropriate leadership style. Hence, the importance of imparting knowledge about different leadership styles for different situations in the headship training. It was also found that continuous support from the provider of the NPQH training was sought by the headteachers. This is an important clue for IAB to enhance their support for the graduates of NPQH beyond

the completion of the one year programme. Since the graduates do not necessarily assume headship right after NPQH, there will need to be different form of support catered for different levels up the leadership ladder. Even so, there is a call for the support to continue beyond headship as new challenges are faced by headteachers from time to time. Networking with fellow headteachers is also found to be perceived as an important support and this sends a signal for the creation of a good networking system amongst the heads.

The most important support through non professional sources is perceived to be the PTA. This is a partnership between the school and parents which could potentially help in various ways to enhance the quality of the school. Adequate knowledge about the management of PTA and the legalities tied to it provided to NPQH trainees could potentially help them to use this source for the benefit of the school in their future headship. The same could be regarded true with the local agencies and community around the school.

#### **6.7 Research Question 7: How could the programme be improved with regards to preparing the participants for headship?**

All the 18 respondents of this study were asked on how they would like to see the NPQH programme improved. The aim of this research question was to gather perceptions from the NPQH graduates so as to provide some insight to the organizers towards improving the programme in the future. As a matter of fact, this research

question garnered enough responses to raise 13 themes; the most compared to the findings of other research questions. Some of the emerging themes corresponded with the emergent themes in research question 3, pertaining to the perceived shortcomings of the programme.

One of the themes raised by many of the respondents (n=12) was the extension of support from NPQH organizers to the NPQH graduates after they leave the programme. It seems that the graduates want updating of skills and knowledge and this service from the organizers is to address the positions they are in. As found in this study, not all of the graduates follow the career path of becoming a headteacher after the programme. This seems to be subject to opportunity and the suitability of the candidates from the perspective of their respective SEDs. Realising the probability of getting into the post after a time gap seems to be concerning the graduates on the application of their knowledge and skills which they would have gained during the NPQH programme. The perception of updating their skills and knowledge seems to also stem from the fact that the educational leadership field is a dynamic one which requires up-to-date abilities. Moreover the respondents in this study also admitted that they were not exposed to the different contexts of schools and they would have found it useful to get specific contextual knowledge and skills to match their dispositions to the demands of the job at hand. Nevertheless the study also found that the respondents were pointing towards maintaining a current and good database of all the graduates by the organizers in order for this recommendation to materialize.

The respondents in this study have conveyed their intention to get continuing support from IAB, the same institute that provided them with their NPQH programme. The updating of knowledge and skills sought is assumed with the belief that the training they might receive will enhance their capabilities of leading their schools. This corresponds with the proposal by Holden (2001) that appropriate management training can help school leaders face the demands placed upon their positions as there is a widespread belief positively linking training to organizational efficiency. It also corresponds to Aziz (2003) who iterated that it seemed logical to assume that trained or educated leaders to be more professional as the training generally focuses on equipping them with the necessary management and leadership tools.

The second emergent theme raised from the findings is the call for the organizers to utilize experiences of NPQH headteachers. Many respondents (n=12) seem to feel for the current participants as they asserted that not much was received from senior experienced headteachers during their own term in the programme. They perceived that the vast experience of senior heads would have been valuable to their own eventual headship had they obtained more of it in the programme. The perception of the importance of experience sharing by practicing heads with the participants seems to have motivated the emergence of this theme. There also seem to be some irony in the cynicism of these respondents when they conceded that they were not perceived as good enough to share their experiences with their juniors by the organizers. Some of them exclaimed that they have even offered their services to the organizers but

nothing was forthcoming. Their beliefs in the value of their experiences seem to permeate this recommendation put forth by them. Nonetheless it is the perceived loss of such valuable opportunity during their own participation in the programme which seems to compel them to bring it up. This recommendation sends a hint to the organizers that the expertise of the graduates who have eventually gained experience as headteachers should be capitalised. By engaging these NPQH heads, it would not only help the current participants to learn from these experiences but also check the shortcoming of having trainers without real experiences of leading schools.

The creation of more practical or hands on opportunities in the programme emerged as a theme in this research question. More than half (n=10) of the respondents perceived that there was a great concern in the application of their knowledge and skills in the actual situation in light of lack of opportunities to practice this mainly theoretical input in real school environment. The theories, they perceived, would have been more valuable to their headship had they practiced them out. There was a call for the organizers to integrate wherever possible the opportunities for the participants to tease out their learning beyond the confines of the classroom. Notwithstanding this, the 6-month attachment phase which formed the main practical component of the programme was perceived as more effective if the participants were not sent back to their own schools. The practice of sending back participants to their own schools, which they were attached to before joining the programme, was viewed as not so effective for the participants as there was an element of familiarity. The respondents asserted that the practice was sound if the former schools of the

participants were categorized as excellent school. Insofar as the other schools were concerned, it was perceived that participants could learn better to adapt to a new environment and utilize what they attained in the programme should the schools be different from theirs. In the same vein it was also suggested that each state could form a pool of excellent schools from which the participants could choose to spend their 6 month attachment phase.

The concerns and suggestions put forth by the respondents in the aspect of having more hands-on or practical opportunities in the programme seem to be agreeing with the proposal of Buckley and Caple (2000). They propagated that training should not overlook an important element which they call 'planned experience'. The planned experience is an opportunity for the trainees to test their knowledge and skills in the formal or real educational setting. Even though NPQH has a 6-month attachment phase as a practical segment of the programme but the respondents had wanted more practical opportunities to be provided in the earlier 6-month phase as they received their knowledge and skills. However, it could be gathered from this study that the 'planned experience' should be carefully organized as to avoid familiarity which is feared to impede the full learning impact of this exercise.

This study found that half of the headteachers (n=9) interviewed perceived a lack of support for the headship initiative. This theme on supportive policy for headship did not seem affecting the respondents in this study as much as it did to those graduates who have not made it into headship yet. The concern for appointments after the



NPQH programme was raised by respondents who felt that the initiative of producing well trained heads to succeed school leadership was lacking in its implementation. They asserted that there was a coordination gap between different sections of the Ministry of Education which are responsible to ensure that the graduates are given chance to hold management posts in school. The State Education Department (SED) were said to be not in full support of this policy which envisaged a new breed of headteachers for the future of schools in Malaysia. Hence, many an NPQH graduate was frustrated to find out that they were not deemed competent as yet to hold the senior posts in schools. They were left in the talent pool with the hope of being discovered by the authorities and given a chance to practice the knowledge and skills they have acquired in the NPQH. From the accounts of the respondents, it was found that they were not well informed about the initiative to prepare school headteachers right from the beginning. It was learnt that the participants harboured much hope to get the headship post soon after graduating partially because they were made to believe so by the authorities. Contrary to that belief, many were actually not appointed to any management post after completing the programme, let alone be appointed head. Some even lost their management post after attending the programme as they found their previous posts filled in by others as they went back to schools as merely ordinary teachers. That was akin to adding insult to injury. The harsh reality of the conventional seniority based promotion system seems to have knocked them and taken them by surprise. It was still the prevailing system many SEDs were adhering to. It was also regarded as a contradiction in that one part of the ministry was promoting younger and junior teachers to headship by selecting young

participants for NPQH programme whilst another part held steadfast to the conventional system of seniority based promotion.

The same respondents who made the call for a more supportive policy also suggested that graduates of NPQH should be accorded senior management post soon after completing the programme. This should be ensured with a clear and firm policy which is adhered to by every quarter of the ministry. The respondents perceived that the more junior graduates should be appointed into senior assistantship first before eventually given a headship. This came to light as it was noted that many a junior graduate will find it difficult to jump into the headship post before gaining enough experience as a senior assistant, with the biggest resistance perceived coming from the much experienced senior assistants in schools. The respondents seem to acknowledge that these vastly experienced senior assistants invariably know much more than the inexperienced NPQH graduates.

The call made by the respondents with regards to the policy and for the graduates to be appointed into senior management posts seem to dwell on the literature about retention of skills and knowledge from training. Buckley and Caple (2000) asserted that retention of knowledge and skills acquired in training is facilitated when they are fully used back on the job for which they were trained. They further cautioned that the retention is made difficult when there is little or no opportunity to practice what has been learned. There seem to be a similar anxiety amongst the graduates of NPQH when they are not appointed into any management post, let alone into headship, after

completing the programme. Similarly, Bush et al. (2007) inform that the most successful learning experiences occur when there is a bridge between the work situation and the learning situation. Hence, what is acquired by the participants in NPQH should be utilised in the work situation and this is only possible if they are accorded senior posts. The findings seem to point towards a formulation of policy for the graduates of NPQH to be put into action so as to utilize all the resources put through the efforts of preparing these aspiring heads.

Selection of NPQH participants emerged as another theme in this research question. Half of the respondents (n=9) stressed on the importance of a good selection process and the right choice of candidates for the programme. It was found that the lack of support for the headship initiative hindered the advancement of the more junior graduates and this raised the question of the selection process where many junior teachers were selected. The respondents argued that selection of NPQH should have given priority to the more senior teachers, preferably those already in the managerial positions in school. Not only it was perceived that these senior teachers would relate better to the programme but it was also backed by the perceived current practice of choosing seniority over qualification for headship post. Nonetheless the possibility of selecting younger good potential teachers was not totally discounted as the respondents suggested that proper evaluation mechanism should be put in place. Headteachers of the aspiring candidates should also be given wider opportunities to accurately report on the suitability of these candidates to join the NPQH. The

importance accorded by the respondents to the selection of participants seems to concur with the literature on effective training programme where Kirkpatrick (2005) proposed the selection of participants to be one of the important considerations. This recommendation seem to be a way forward for the organisers of NPQH to make amends to the perceived shortcoming of a lack of support for the graduates to be appointed to headship. If the current consideration of seniority is persistent, then more senior teachers who have had experience in the school management should be considered on priority to get the NPQH certification.

In what seems to be a corresponding response to one of the weaknesses highlighted earlier by the respondents, it was recommended by some respondents (n=4) that the lecturers or trainers involved in the NPQH be given an opportunity to update themselves. It was argued by the respondents that the lecturers seem to be well equipped in knowledge but lacked in practical experience. The respondents seem to suggest that the lecturers themselves should be sent out to gain some school management experience whilst senior headteachers should be roped in to strengthen the team that delivers this programme.

In the same vein, it was recommended that more sharing of experience by non-NPQH senior heads should also be incorporated into the programme delivery. Some of the respondents (n=5) saw great benefit in getting heads from schools with challenging circumstances and adversities to share their invaluable treasure of experience with the participants. This finding also corresponds with the factors of effective training by

Kirkpatrick (2005) who listed selection of appropriate instructors as an important aspect.

The need of training for different contexts was also highlighted in these findings. Half of the respondents (n=9) perceived that the programme should be catered for all the different contexts of school in the education mainstream where the graduates could potentially be posted. There was a suggestion for the organizers to streamline participants to the various different schools context so that these participants could succeed the leadership of those schools. On the other hand there was also a call for the incorporation of all different contexts with the view that headteachers were not statically placed in one school context and could be transferred to different schools during their tenure. The suggestion made by the respondents indicates the similarity of NPQH in Malaysia and England in this respect. NCSL (2007b) in its report on NPQH in England also emphasized the need of creating more opportunities to explore diverse school contexts. Bush (2008b), in his assertion that the headship post is a specialist role that requires specific preparation, included the increasing complexity of school contexts as one of the considerations. This global phenomenon has also affected the Malaysian schooling system as there are specific context schools, such as Fully Residential, Special Education, Special Model, and Sports and Arts schools. Thus, it may be a worthy effort for the NPQH programme to be streamlined into specific contexts or alternatively participants be exposed to all the different schools contexts.

The findings of this research question also raised a theme on course assessment format in the NPQH. Some of the respondents (n=5) explained that having solely objective-based questions which merely tested their understanding of theoretical knowledge was insufficient and could not gauge the real learning derived in the programme. Furthermore the more senior participants were perceived to have encountered more difficulties in trying to memorise and recall the facts and theories taught. Therefore it was perceived that a more balanced format should be adopted and that will reduce the examination stress of the participants whilst providing a wider range of assessment that covers the application of knowledge learnt. This suggestion by the respondents should pave the way for the organisers to understand that the adult learners, i.e. NPQH participants, seem uncomfortable with the way the assessment is done by using only one form of exam. As adult learners, the participants of NPQH should be given an opportunity to express themselves through written examination as well. Mortimore (1993) argues that an effective professional development programme is the one that delivers the acquisition of knowledge and the understanding of skills with economy of time and effort, in ways that foster assimilation, and accommodation with other learning. It could be further argued that in order to gauge this acquisition of knowledge and skills through learning, it seems imperative to include a variety of assessment methods that suit the ability of the learners as well as provide an opportunity for optimum expression on their part.

Four other themes were raised under this research question by 1 respondent each. The themes are; a suggestion to document the experiences of NPQH headteachers,

a place in the respective SEDs for a training officer from the NPQH heads, incentives to be paid to the NPQH graduates for upgrading themselves, and reinstatement of certain assessment in selection of NPQH candidates. For the reinstatement of assessment, there was a call for the original assessments, which included a physical test and psychology test, to be used again after the organisers dropped them in the latter cohorts. The suggestion was made due to the perceived need for the heads to be fit and healthy in their role which is stressful.

## **Summary**

Some of the recommendations given by the respondents seem to place importance on the programme meeting the participants' needs. There is a strong call for the organisers to involve more practical experience opportunities in the course and keep supporting the graduates even after they have assumed office as heads. The respondents seem to want different learning experiences and want to model valued behaviour through sharing of experiences by senior heads and NPQH heads. There was a lack of these factors in the programme as perceived by the respondents. The lack of these elements was highlighted by Levine et al. (1987) who claimed that the designing of professional development experiences for school leaders did not always honour these conditions; such as identifying and meeting participants' needs, of modeling valued behaviour and providing different learning experiences. The findings of this study seem to confirm the caution made by Levine et al. (1987). It also points

to the perceived importance of a training programme of this nature to keep supporting the graduates as they face new challenges in the roles which they were trained for.

## **6.8 Chapter Summary and Emergent Overarching Themes**

This study has provided data that have supported and concurred with many views expressed in the literature review. However, the study has also pointed towards some new findings that could contribute towards the knowledge on school leadership preparation. This section will present five broader themes that emerged from the preceding discussion, i.e. continuity, balance of theory and practice, leadership learning, policy and context. These broader themes or emergent overarching themes will encapsulate the findings across all the research questions.

### ***Continuity***

The first overarching theme is the element of continuity which seems to be important in developing school leaders. This study has found that providing training for a specific role in school, i.e. leadership role, should not be rendered complete after a specified period of organized intervention. There seems to be a strong call for opportunity for the trainees to keep learning as they face different roles on their journey to headship. This is not only vital because graduates of such a programme may assume different roles at different levels as they move upwards to headship but also regarded important to continue functioning as an effective head once they assume office. The ever changing nature of the leadership role coupled with the



challenges faced by the heads from time to time in term of accountability and various expectations from stakeholders could only render their existence relevant if they keep abreast with updating of relevant skills and knowledge. The continuity need to be supported by the authorities and done systematically, unlike sporadically as found in this study.

### ***Balance of theory and practice***

The second overarching theme is the balance of theory and practice in leadership development programmes. As much as it is important for the knowledge (Aristotle's *episteme*) to be imparted to the leadership learners, it is just as important to strike a balance for adequate skills (Aristotle's *techne*) to be developed as well. This should be carefully planned and carried out in order to allow the learners enough practical exposure, not only to hone the skills but also to generate wisdom (Aristotle's *phronesis*). It may be argued that wisdom may not come that easily during the formal intervention itself but the eventual journey to school leadership will give opportunity for the learners to attain it. The opportunity should present itself through concerted efforts to allow these learners or graduates to assume leadership roles in schools. Having trained the would-be leaders and not giving them the opportunity to climb the leadership ladder towards headship does not only impair the full potential to benefit from the knowledge and skills learned but also interferes in the attainment of wisdom. Graduates of such a leadership development programme should also be allowed to engage themselves in critical reflection as they embark on their journey to headship.

This could be attained with a structured framework that acknowledges and facilitates leadership learning for the aspirants.

### ***Leadership learning***

Leadership learning is the third overarching theme that links this study to its broader body of knowledge. Given the nature of leadership development programmes such as the NPQH in Malaysia which does not guarantee a direct ticket into headship, a formalized structure of leadership learning seems to be beneficial and worth considering. As it has been acknowledged that some of the most powerful leadership learning occurs on the job (Woodall and Winstanley, 1998; Raelin, 2008), the nature of the learning seems to be varied. This study found that leadership learning does occur while the aspiring heads move up the leadership ladder but it seems to materialize in two different forms, i.e. passive learning and active learning. Passive learning occurs when observation and reflection is done from the leadership of others whilst active learning occurs when the learners themselves engage in various leadership roles. This acts not only as a test-pad for the aspirants to act out their leadership skills but paves a good path for the acquiring of wisdom (*phronesis*). However, the leadership learning that occurs in the period of assuming management post such as deputy head or senior assistant should be formalized and structured. This study found that leadership learning occurs but it is left solely to the individual learner. A formalized approach where leadership learning should be consciously captured and documented by each aspiring head provides not only the appropriate

reflection of espoused theories and theories-in-use but also provide an opportunity to develop the career path of the aspirant to the headship.

### ***Policy***

The fourth overarching theme emerging from this study is policy of leadership development initiatives. A programme such as NPQH is planned and created to fulfil a certain agenda of the organizing authority. The purpose, amongst others, of the NPQH is to train a cadre of effective leaders for the succession of school headship. The clarity of purpose and potential benefits this programme may provide to its participants become a motivation for many to undertake it. However, the policy should be seen to be clear and also seen to be seriously implemented. An initiative such as NPQH is an expensive endeavour and with it lays the hope of many an aspiring head who so earnestly want to embrace the role he or she has been trained for. However, hopes seem to be shattered when the policy does not seem to be fully supported by all the significant sections of the sponsoring authority. Therefore, it is imperative that such an initiative receive a concerted and full support from all concerned so as to be deemed as a serious step towards achieving an important agenda, in this case ensuring the effective future of schooling.

### ***Context***

The fifth overarching theme emanating from this study is the importance of context in the preparation of future schools heads. The perceived importance of school context and the lack of this element found in this study does not only stress the need to

incorporate it in the training but also seem to concur with the same concern elsewhere, i.e. in England and Scotland. The belief that training for future heads could suffice with the generic skills for the learners to adjust themselves to the context is not only outmoded but also risky given the complexity of school contexts today. It follows that common curriculum areas in school leadership preparation around many countries in the world (Bush and Jackson, 2002) could well be a commonality but there seems to be an emergent of school context as another common element, at least in Malaysia, Scotland and England. It could very well be another important common aspect of the leadership preparation initiatives and should be given prominence insofar as adequate preparation is concerned.

The next chapter, Conclusions and Recommendations, will present the overall conclusions drawn from the findings of the study in relation to the main aims and the conceptual framework drawn from the literature review. It will also include the contribution to knowledge derived from this study and a tentative model on headship preparation in Malaysia.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **7.0 Introduction**

The respondents in this study have generally expressed their satisfaction with the relevance and the utility of the NPQH programme in their headship. However this study found some areas perceived as needing further improvement to enhance the quality of the NPQH programme. In this chapter, implications of this study will be discussed and recommendations will be made to allow further reflection on practices and perceptions of those practices potentially leading to improvement of the NPQH initiative in Malaysia. The potential contribution of this study to the knowledge on preparation of school leaders will also be forwarded. A tentative model for headship preparation in Malaysia for the Masters degree group, derived from the findings of this study, is also presented. Limitations of this study will be made explicit and areas for further research will also be explored in this chapter.

#### **7.1 Implications of the study and Recommendations**

The findings of this study indicate that the teaching of leadership should include all the three elements as proposed by Grint (2007): knowledge, skills and wisdom (practical experience). It was evident from this study that knowledge and skills

learned in the training seem incomplete if the element of practical experience is absent or lacking. Even though the practical element in NPQH programme is sought through the attachment phase of 6 months when the participants undertake some projects in their schools, much more is needed with regard to practical input during the first 6 months theoretical phase of the programme. It is strongly suggested that more hands-on or practical opportunity is provided to the participants when they are taught some particularly critical subjects like financial management. As for the 6 months attachment, the organisers could probably identify schools which are proven to be of high quality in each state and sent the trainees there for their practical phase. That could probably exert more credibility in the programme and allow the participants opportunity to acquire wisdom (Aristotle's *phronesis*) in a more effective way. In light of the findings of this study, it could be inferred that similar leadership preparation programmes should be structured with a good balance of theory and practice in mind. The job of school leadership is one which requires practical action from the knowledge and skills acquired and not one merely substantiated with theoretical understanding only.

This study agrees with Buckley and Caple (2000) who assert that training can immensely contribute to developing an organisation for it plays an integral part in enhancing human learning and potential. The training given through NPQH seems to have developed the respondents through their learning experience. However, understanding the principles of adult learning or andragogy (Knowles, 1975) is vital for the trainers in a programme such as the NPQH. The organisers of NPQH should

ensure that their lecturers or trainers are equipped with enough competencies and experiences in order to gain respect of their trainees. Training should be provided to the trainers to upgrade and update their own knowledge and skills so that they are able to share real life experiences with the participants. It is evident from this study that adults tend to learn best in a climate of mutuality and their prior knowledge and experiences should also be taken into account.

This study, apart from confirming the common curriculum areas in school leadership preparation (Bush and Jackson, 2002), also seems to indicate that there exists a commonality in how the NPQH or headship preparatory programme participants view the initiatives. Findings of this study concur with some of the perceptions of NPQH participants in England as well as SQH in Scotland, particularly with regard to their concern on different school contexts. There is a reason to believe that headship preparation programmes should take into account the different contexts prevalent in the respective school systems. This study found that the NPQH programme in Malaysia did not cater specifically for different contexts. As much as there seems to be a belief that an effective headteacher is one who adapts to different contexts, it is a contention of this study that such an assumption is outmoded or at best risky given the complexity of school contexts today (Bush, 2008b). In relation to this, the organisers of NPQH are recommended to utilise the rich experiences of senior school heads as well as heads in the varied contexts schools. There should also be an effort to bring in NPQH heads that are more than willing to share their experiences with the participants. This will provide an opportunity for the participants to learn about the

different experiences of NPQH heads so that they could get a better understanding of what lies ahead in their career paths.

A strong signal from this study, echoing other studies done in Malaysia, is for the policy of headship to be made clear and supportive. The respondents of this study brought the issue of many graduates not given senior management and headship posts even though they have graduated for a few years. The frustration in this matter seems to stem from the misunderstanding of the headship preparation initiative which is assumed to provide them senior management posts as soon as they graduate. From the responses received from this study, it is recommended to the organisers to bring up the matter with the higher authorities so that a clear policy could be drawn and concerted effort could be agreed upon to ensure that the resources used to get the teachers trained to be heads through NPQH is fully beneficial.

This study also proposes that there should be a developmental career path for the graduates of school leadership preparation initiative. The career plan for the graduates after the NPQH training should incorporate succession planning and this could be assigned to IAB as the organiser of NPQH as well as the Schools Division which is in-charge of the participants for their posting after the training and subsequent postings and promotions. In the Malaysian context, those having had senior management posts could be elevated to headship sooner than those who have yet to experience any management post. It seems sound to let the younger graduates experience senior management posts first as they climb the school



leadership ladder towards headship because there is evidence from this study of substantial leadership learning at this level. It is also argued that graduates should be given the management posts as soon as they graduate from NPQH so that they do not perceive their training to be in vain. That will also facilitate retention of skills and knowledge learned as they will be fully used back on the job for which the training took place, a notion proposed by Buckley and Caple (2000). This proposal is depicted as part of Figure 7.2 (see page 254).

As mentioned earlier, the study found that many an NPQH graduate who was given management posts after their course did engage in leadership learning. The leadership learning occurred more in the professional context, whether in the school of out of it. There was not much learning reported outside the professional context, for the mere reason that the respondents were constrained with time and were not able to devote any more time than they were already doing outside the professional context. The respondents reported that they reflected on the practices of their own heads and gained leadership learning in their active role in associations related to their posts, including PTAs. Whilst this study seem to confirm the notion that some of the most powerful leadership learning occurs on the job (Woodall and Winstanley, 1998; Rainbird et al., 2004; Raelin, 2008), it also exhibits that there are different forms of this learning. It is therefore proposed that leadership learning on the job happens passively and actively. *Passive learning* occurs when the learners observe and reflect directly from the leadership of others, especially their super ordinates, whilst *active learning* takes place when the learners act out leadership roles themselves. It

is also proposed that a more formalised structure be considered whereby the leadership learning is formally planned for the aspiring heads in senior management posts to ascertain optimum learning opportunities. The leadership learning should not be left to happen by chance and consideration should also be made to include this in the aspirant's appraisal of the proposed on-going career planning. This is also illustrated in Figure 7.2.

This study found that the respondents were effective in their headship roles. The support provided by IAB, the organisers of NPQH, goes as far as the completion of the programme is concerned. However, after leaving the one year programme the graduates are appointed into various posts by the School Division of the ministry and they then report to the various SEDs. This is true for most of the graduates who return to the school system after completing the NPQH. There are some exceptions for those posted to various divisions in the ministry. The respondents who became heads then received support from their respective SEDs and some of them still attended leadership and management courses by IAB. IAB does not administer or monitor any of these heads in a structured way after they leave the programme. Although that is the system that is followed in the administration of Ministry of Education in Malaysia but there is a strong call for some more support to be accorded to the heads and other graduates after they complete the NPQH. Although this has not been a convention in the training of aspiring heads in Malaysian context but there seems to be some agency in getting this proposal on board in a formalised structure.

Bush (2008b) regards the proper development of school leaders as 'moral obligation'. This study agrees with the notion and would propose an extension to that assertion whereby the organiser of the preparation programme should continue providing support to the aspiring heads to see them through their journey to headship. After that, the support should be accorded to the headteachers to ensure their headship role is properly carried out as this is regarded as a *social obligation*. This notion is proposed with the realisation that effectiveness of a head is not confined to the graduates being appointed into headship but goes beyond that because assumption of office does not necessarily guarantee an effective role by the graduates. This is indicated in the tentative model for headship preparation in Malaysia (see Figure 7.2). Furthermore the incumbent heads should be encouraged to foster leadership development in their staff.

This evaluative case study was intended to investigate and gauge the perceived worth or effectiveness of the NPQH programme in Malaysia. It has attempted to gather perceptions and information as to make judgments and to help inform decisions about future programmes; in adapting the purpose of training evaluation asserted by authors like Stufflebeam (1986), Kirkpatrick (1987) and Patton (2002). The study intends to provide information to the organizers of NPQH to help further improve the programme, as "we cannot make our programmes better unless we know where they are weak and strong and unless we become aware of better means" (Stufflebeam, 1986: 140). The mixed approach of key elements from various

evaluation models adopted and adapted in this study helped in gaining perceptions from the respondents that fitted in the purpose of this study.

This study seems to point towards a similarity in the requirements of aspiring headteachers, whether they are in Malaysia, England or Scotland. This could suggest that school leadership is a field that shares a lot of concerns and priorities, whilst bearing some differences which may be attributed to the different contexts and systems of education. There seems to be a real need for the training or preparation for future school heads as this stands out as one strong feature attributed by participants around the globe. The very notion of school leadership potentially influencing school outcomes has increasingly placed importance in well planned and structured approaches to preparation of future school leaders and it cannot be left to mere chance or a trial and error approach. There seems to be a concern for the aspiring heads to be as close as possible to required effective standards when discharging their duties. This study has also proved, alongside other studies, that the aspiring heads themselves want the training accorded to them to fulfill as much as possible the needs of their eventual headship role. The respondents in this study have shared their views and concern as to help further improve the programme so that future participants and graduates could benefit and have a smoother journey into headship and thereafter.

In view of the findings derived from this study, a tentative model of headship preparation in Malaysia is proposed for the Masters degree group in the following section and it is discussed alongside the prevalent model in Malaysia.

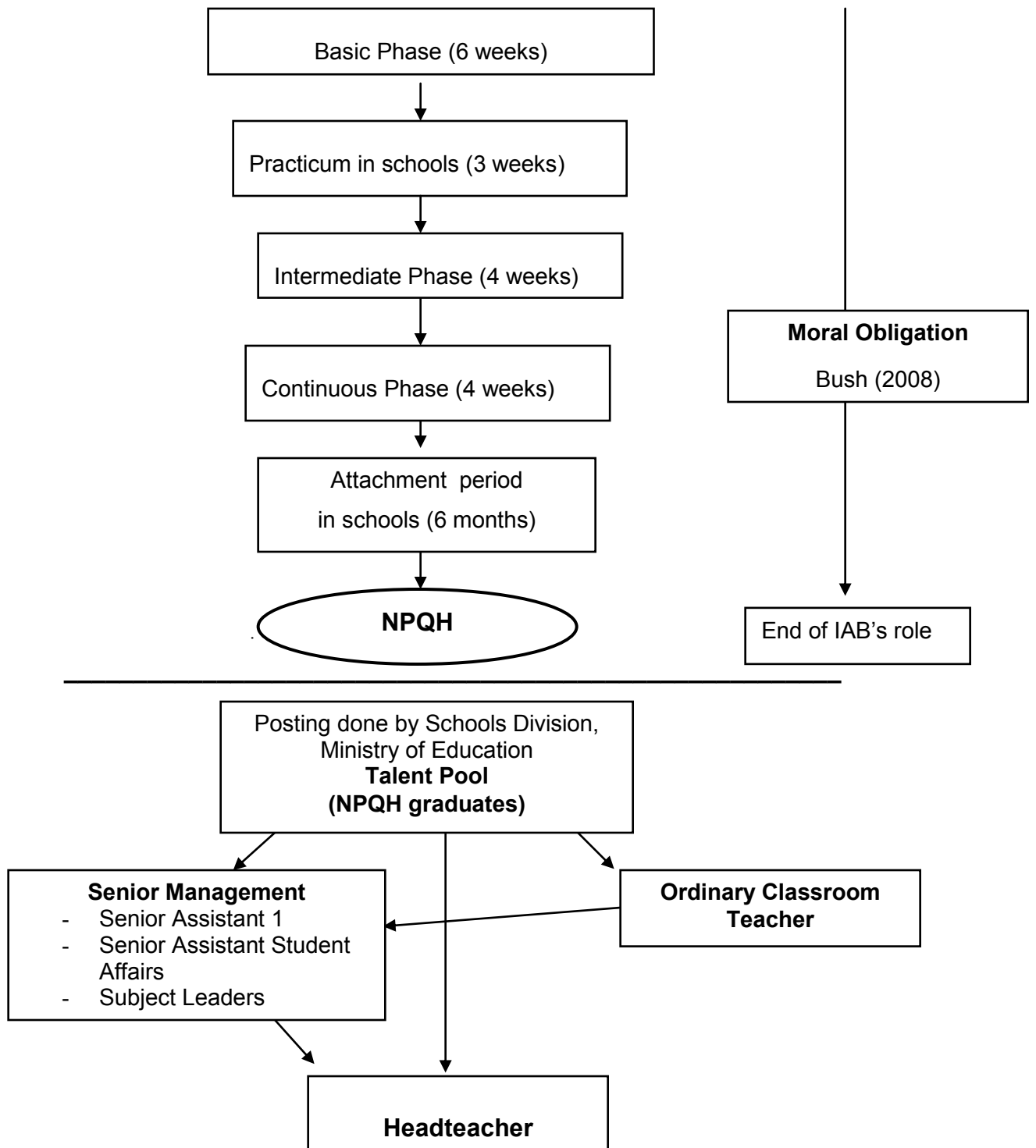
## **7.2 Headship Preparation – A tentative Malaysian model**

The current model of headship preparation in Malaysia is illustrated in Figure 7.1. It depicts the various phases of the NPQH programme and the possible route experienced by the graduates on their way to headship. A tentative model is proposed in Figure 7.2, which culminated from the findings of this study. This model is intended as a stepping stone which will enable reflection and which will point towards future research needed to understand the effectiveness of the programme.

As seen in Figure 7.1, the current graduates of NPQH get into the talent pool and move towards the headship through three different routes; as ordinary classroom teachers, senior assistants or straight into headship. This study proposes a clear policy to be formulated so that graduates either go into headship through some experience as senior assistants or move straight into headship, depending on their prior experience and position in school (see Figure 7.2). The ‘moral obligation’ asserted by Bush (2008), depicted both in Figure 7.1 and 7.2, is now proposed to be extended to include a continuous support for the graduates, which turns itself into ‘social obligation’ as the graduates assume headship and continues thereon (see Figure 7.2). The tentative model also proposes for the formalising of leadership

learning, be it active or passive, to enable the senior assistants optimum opportunities to learn on their journey to headship.

It is also proposed in the model (Figure 7.2) that an NPQH headteacher networking group be formalised as this study points towards the importance of this networking and heads working with other heads. In the same breath, the networking of these heads could be potentially capitalized as an important resource for the programme itself in that the heads could be included in sharing their experiences with the participants. That will help fill the gap found in this study of a lack of sharing by serving heads in the programme as well as providing a link between the theories learned and practical implementation of the theories in the real world of schooling. The engagement of serving heads will also complement the trainers who have not had any managerial experience in schools, who are perceived as theory laden but lack in school leadership experience.



**Figure 7.1: The Malaysian Headship Preparation (Current Model)**

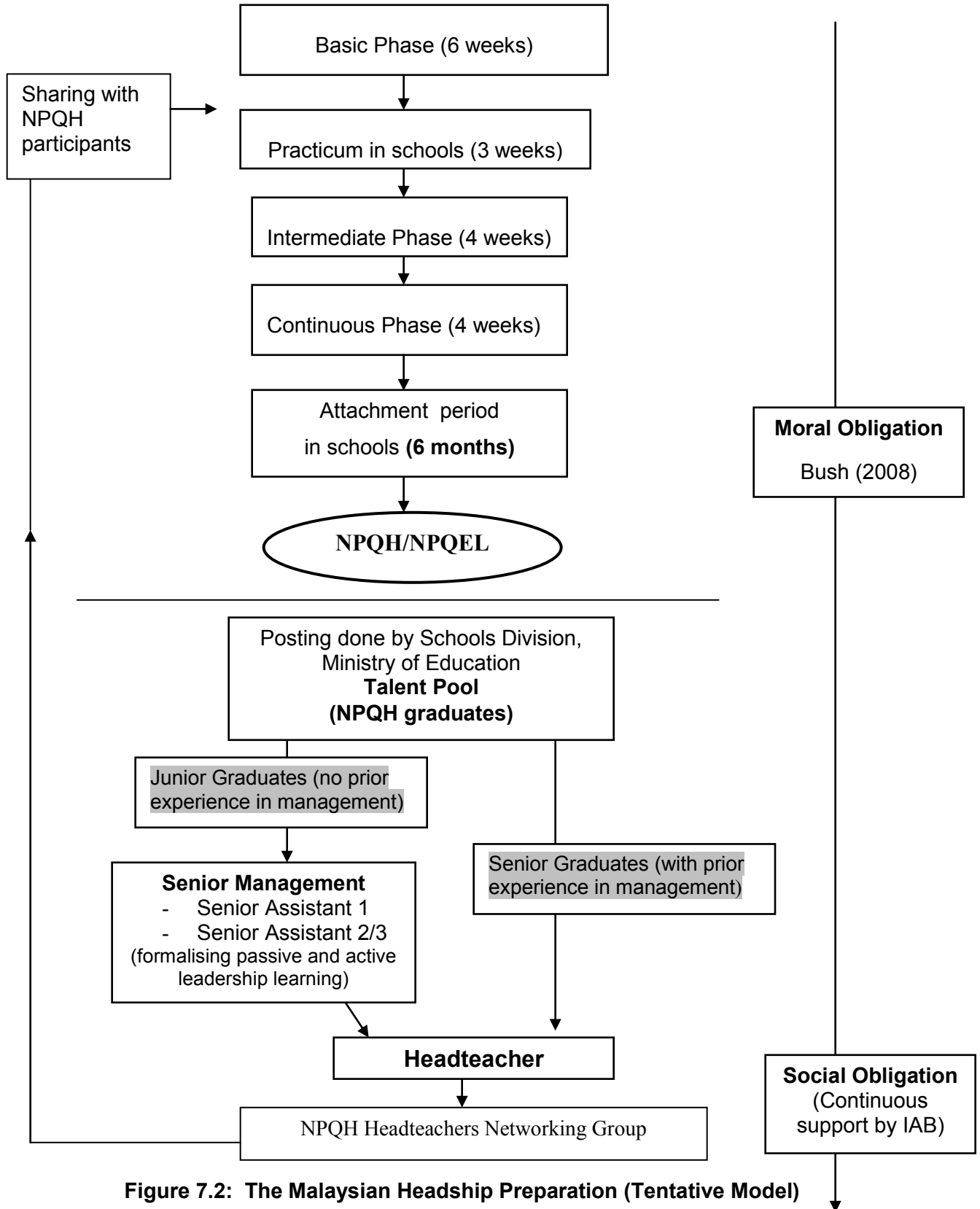


Figure 7.2: The Malaysian Headship Preparation (Tentative Model)



### **7.3 Areas for further research**

This study is an exploratory effort to gauge the effectiveness of the NPQH programme on secondary school headteachers. The group chosen for the study comprises of graduates of the NPQH programme who joined the programme having had their Masters degree qualification. A similar study could be carried out to gather perceptions from other graduates; both the secondary school headteachers from the first degree group and the non-degree primary school headteachers. A wider perspective from all these groups could provide a richer and broader data range so as to inform the effectiveness of the NPQH programme.

Apart from that, a study such as this could benefit further from a more extensive evaluation involving the higher authorities of the heads as well as their staff so that their achievement could be gauged and verified. That could also provide a stronger basis for evaluation of the programme as well as provide insights into the effectiveness of the NPQH headteachers in leading their school. Further studies could also investigate whether a national leadership preparatory programme such as NPQH makes better schools or better leaders.

This study, along with other studies done in Malaysia, also gained that many NPQH graduates seem to feel frustrated for the delay in their appointment to senior management positions and headship. Hence, it is proposed that a study should be

done to investigate further the disposition of those not appointed and the extent of their retention of the knowledge and skills received in NPQH programme.

The tentative model for headship preparation proposed in this study represents opportunities for further studies and the basis upon which to build improvement intended to further improve the headship preparation initiative in Malaysia.

#### **7.4 Limitations of the study**

As indicated in the research design chapter, a number of limitations relating to the study are acknowledged. However, I have endeavoured to carry out this study using the perceptions of secondary school headteachers who are graduates of NPQH from the Masters degree group with the awareness of the limitations.

This study utilized the self-reporting approach to gather its data. This approach was considered suitable for the aim of this study was to gather perceptions on how much the NPQH programme has prepared and helped the participants in their headship. Nonetheless the self reporting approach does pose a limitation to the study as more time and resources could have allowed verification of the headship practices sought from their staff and higher authorities. Nonetheless, it is suggested that further studies could be carried out by seeking the verification of all the concerned parties to gauge the extent of the effectiveness of the NPQH graduates in leading schools.

The researcher's 'self' also arguably posed a limitation as most participants knew the researcher who had taught in the programme since its inception in 1999. However, every effort was undertaken to ensure an objective stance from the researcher and the same was assured to the respondents.

## **7.5 Summary**

This study has provided some insights on the school leadership preparation initiative in Malaysia. It has added on to the repertoire of knowledge already created from around the globe on issues and concerns of such initiatives. The study also confirms the notion that any initiative taken, education or other fields, should be evaluated to gauge the achievement of its objectives and this could provide a trigger for further improvement. In the case of this study, recommendations will be forwarded to the Ministry of Education and IAB (organiser) so that necessary improvements could be considered to strengthen the programme. Overall, the NPQH programme was found to be an important tool in preparing the future school leaders and it should be continuously improved to fulfill the moral obligation as well as the social obligation of the government towards ensuring excellent schools with effective leadership.

## APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 - 6 areas of study (27 units of study)
- Appendix 2 - Interview Consent form
- Appendix 3 - Interview Information
- Appendix 4 - Interview Schedule
- Appendix 5 - Questionnaire
- Appendix 6 - HISL Leadership Model
- Appendix 7 - NPQH (Revised structure)
- Appendix 8 - Background of Survey Respondents
- Appendix 9 - Interview Transcript - Headteacher 16

**SIX AREAS OF STUDY IN THE NPQH TRAINING PROGRAMME**

**(27 units of study)**

**Area of study I: BASIC**

- Unit 1: Introduction to public policy in Malaysia
- Unit 2: History of Education in Malaysia
- Unit 3: Education Act
- Unit 4: Functions of headship in education
- Unit 5: Legal aspects in school management
- Unit 6: Organisational management
- Unit 7: Organisational communication
- Unit 8: Curriculum management
- Unit 9: Student affairs management
- Unit 10: Health and safety in schools
- Unit 11: Human Resource management
- Unit 12: Financial management

**Area of study II: (Unit 13) Benchmarking in schools (3 weeks)**

**Area of study III: INTERMEDIATE**

- Unit 14: Leadership in Organisation
- Unit 15: ICT management
- Unit 16: Curriculum & Co-curriculum Leadership
- Unit 17: Quality management in education
- Unit 18: School & community relations management

**Area of study IV: SPECIAL**

- Unit 19: Learning assessment
- Unit 20: Learning development
- Unit 21: Performance management
- Unit 22: Research in education

**Area of study V: ADVANCE**

- Unit 23: Protocol & Etiquette
- Unit 24: Career & Counselling management
- Unit 25: Strategic management in school
- Unit 26: Self-development of leaders

**Area of study IV: (Unit 27) School Attachment (6 months)**

**RESEARCH INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM**

**'The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) programme for secondary school headteachers in Malaysia: An evaluative case study'.**

Interviewer: **GURCHARAN SINGH**

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose of interview**

This interview is part of my research for the award of EdD at the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom.

**Confidentiality**

Research ethics will be observed at all times in the analysis and use to which the data may be put. The data from the interview will only be available to my supervisor for the EdD programme at the University of Birmingham and, possibly, to the Internal Examiner as well as the External Examiner for my thesis. Excerpts from the interview may be included as part of the final thesis, but your name will be excluded, and any identifying characteristics will be removed. The interview may also be used as part of written papers or books, but without your name and excluding any identifying characteristics, and subject to research ethics.

**Acknowledgement**

Please sign this form to show that we have agreed to its content.

Signed (Interviewer) \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (Interviewee) \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**INTERVIEW INFORMATION**

**'The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) programme for secondary school headteachers in Malaysia: An evaluative case study'.**

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of my research.

The aim of the interview is to evaluate the effectiveness of the NPQH programme towards preparing you for the headship post. Your contribution will be anonymous as it is similarities, themes and differences which shall be reported on in the thesis.

The interview will last approximately one hour and will generally consist of open ended questions around the following themes:

- Your overall view of the NPQH training programme in preparing you for headship.
- The strengths and weaknesses of the NPQH programme with reference to the main study areas.
- The relationship of the training to specific contextual factors associated with your school.
- Your leadership learning from the time you graduated to the time you assumed headship (professional setting in school and outside school & outside the professional setting).
- Useful additional support received or deemed useful for your headship (professional & non-professional sources).
- Your recommendations to further improve the NPQH programme.

Thank you.

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**'The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) programme for secondary school headteachers in Malaysia: An evaluative case study'.**

1. How would you regard the overall NPQH programme with regards to preparing you for headship?
2. What do you perceive as the strength of the NPQH programme?  
What about the particular areas of study? Why do you perceive so?
4. What do you perceive as the weakness of the NPQH training programme?  
Any particular area of study? Why do you perceive so?
5. How does the training relate to specific contextual factors associated to your school?
6. What have you learned about leadership since the time you graduated from NPQH to the time you assumed this headship?
  - In the professional setting in school;
  - In the professional setting outside of school;
  - Outside the professional setting.
7. What additional support have you received or you think is useful for your headship, with regards to the following:
  - Through the professional sources;
  - Through the non-professional sources.
8. What are your recommendations to further improve the NPQH programme?



## Questionnaire

**'The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) programme for secondary school headteachers in Malaysia: An evaluative case study'.**

The responses provided will not be attributed to any individual without first obtaining the permission of the respondent. The completed questionnaire will be held securely and used only for research purposes. Strict confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

**Section 1: Respondents Details**

Please tick or circle the answer you wish to give, or add numbers or texts as appropriate.

1. Gender
  1. Male
  2. Female
  
2. Ethnic origin
  1. Malay
  2. Chinese
  3. Indian
  4. Others
  
3. Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years
  
4. Length of service before joining NPQH programme: \_\_\_\_\_ years
  
5. Cohort and year of NPQH programme: Cohort \_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. Year appointed to headship: \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. Is this your first headship?
  1. Yes
  2. No, this is headship number \_\_\_\_\_
  
8. The school grade now:
  1. Grade A
  2. Grade B

## Section 2: NPQH areas of study

Below are 27 units related to the NPQH areas of study. Based on your perceptions since graduation, please confirm your agreement, disagreement or otherwise with how well these units of NPQH programme prepared you for your headship?

1. Strong disagreement
2. Disagreement
3. Neutral
4. Agreement
5. Strong Agreement

No.	This NPQH unit offered a good preparation with respect to my headship:	Scale				
		1	2	3	4	5
A1.	Introduction to public policy in Malaysia					
A2.	History of Education in Malaysia					
A3.	Education Act					
A4.	Functions of headship in education					
A5.	Legal aspects in school management					
A6.	Organisational management					
A7.	Organisational communication					
A8.	Curriculum management					
A9.	Student affairs management					
A10.	Health and safety in schools					
A11.	Human Resource management					
A12.	Financial management					
B13.	Benchmarking in schools (3 weeks)					
C14.	Leadership in Organisation					

C15.	ICT management					
C16.	Curriculum & Co-curriculum Leadership					
C17.	Quality management in education					
C18.	School & community relations management					
D19.	Learning assessment					
D20.	Learning development					
D21.	Performance management					
D22.	Research in education					
E23.	Protocol & Etiquette					
E24.	Career & Counselling management					
E25.	Strategic management for schools					
E26.	Self-development of leaders					
F27.	School Attachment (6 months)					

**High Impact School Leadership (HISL) model  
(Amin, 2008)**

- Policy and Direction:
  - Vision and Purpose
  - Quality Focus
  - Strategic Thinking
  - Proactive
  
- Instructional and Achievement
  - Achievement Orientation
  - Instructional Planning & development
  - Knowledge Sharing
  - Curriculum Focus
  - Supervision
  
- Change & Innovation
  - Problem Solving
  - Managing Change
  - Informed Decision Making
  - Managing School Improvement
  - Creativity and Innovation
  
- People & Relationship
  - Capacity Building
  - Communication
  - Relationship Building
  - Teamwork
  
- Resources & Operation
  - Finance Management
  - Physical Development
  - Performance Management
  - ICT Management
  
- Personal Effectiveness
  - Self Awareness
  - Self Management
  - Social Awareness
  - Social Management

## National Professional Qualification for Headship (Revised Structure)

### Pre-entry

Visit [www.ncsl.org.uk/npqh-prepare](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/npqh-prepare) and use the online activities and resources to help you decide whether you're ready to apply.



### Entry Stage

- Complete the application form with guidance and support from your headteacher/line manager.
  - Do the necessary online activities, including a 360° diagnostic.
- Attend a two-day Assessment and Development Event, to determine whether you're ready for headship and, if so, work out your development priorities.



### Development Stage (4–12 months)

- Go to your Regional Introductory Day to meet NCSL leaders and your fellow trainees.
- Work through your personal development plan, using online tools, peer learning and coaching to help you improve and progress.  
***What you'll do as part of NPQH:***
  - study and interact with a range of leadership/management materials
    - a placement in another context
    - go to NPQH seminars and master classes
      - look at the latest research and policies
      - online activities, such as 'live' seminars
    - local leadership development activities or courses



### Graduation Stage

Present your portfolio of evidence to a Graduation Board of three people who will assess your professional knowledge and understanding, effectiveness as a leader and readiness for headship.



### First headship

Take your professional development to the next level by accessing the tools and resources available from NCSL.

## Appendix 8

### BACKGROUND OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>H1</b>	<b>H2</b>	<b>H3</b>	<b>H4</b>	<b>H5</b>	<b>H6</b>	<b>H7</b>	<b>H8</b>	<b>H9</b>
Gender 1. Male 2. Female	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1
Ethnic origin 1. Malay 2. Chinese 3. Indian 4. Others	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Age	45	48	45	44	48	49	50	54	47
Length of service before joining NPQH	13	15	9	9	19	16	15	22	15
Cohort/ Year of NPQH	1/1999	1/1999	1/1999	1/1999	1/1999	1/1999	1/1999	1/1999	1/1999
Year appointed to headship	2000	2000	2000	2001	2000	2007	2000	2006	2000
Duration (years) to headship after completing NPQH	Less than 1	Less than 1	Less than 1	2	Less than 1	7	Less than 1	6	Less than 1
Number of headship/s	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1
School Grade	A	A	B	B	A	A	B	A	A

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>H10</b>	<b>H11</b>	<b>H12</b>	<b>H13</b>	<b>H14</b>	<b>H15</b>	<b>H16</b>	<b>H17</b>	<b>H18</b>
Gender 1. Male 2. Female	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
Ethnic origin 1. Malay 2. Chinese 3. Indian 4. Others	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Age	51	46	50	48	46	45	44	51	44
Length of service before joining NPQH	23	15	15	10	15	10	13	18	11
Cohort/ Year of NPQH	6/2002	1/1999	1/1999	1/1999	2/2000	1/1999	3/2000	1/1999	1/1999
Year appointed to headship	2004	2000	2000	2000	2001	2006	2005	2001	2000
Duration (years) to headship after completing NPQH	Less than 1	Less than 1	Less than 1	Less than 1	Less than 1	6	4	2	Less than 1
Number of headship/s	2	4	3	1	2	1	1	3	1
School Grade	A	A	B	A	A	A	B	A	A

**Interview Transcript - Headteacher 16**

**Q1: How would you regard the overall NPQH programme with regards to preparing you for headship?**

H16: Generally, it is very relevant. Before the course, I did not know exactly what the duties of the headteacher were. I was a subject leader for a year before joining the programme. I did not have any prior experience of a Senior Assistant. I came out of the course and became a SA. So, it was a good course that gave me a lot of confidence to take up senior management post in school.

**Q2: What do you perceive as the strength of the NPQH programme?  
What about the particular areas of study and why do you perceive so?**

H16: There were a lot of subjects taught in NPQH and they were all helpful. For me, because of my lack of experience, I found Financial Management as a very helpful topic. Those like me who did not have much management experience in school prior to joining the course were quite naïve when it came to financial management. We did get a lot of theoretical input pertaining to school leadership and management and all that was helpful.

The other great strength of NPQH is that it provided us with lots of confidence. We know what is involved as a head and it is not easy to get over-smarted by our teachers and especially clerical staff. We have some knowledge on matters in school and do not easily fall for what is presented by the staff. At least we know what relevant questions to ask pertaining to matters of administration, finance and so on. So, NPQH has helped raise our self-confidence and self-esteem.

Furthermore, we have obviously been fed with the relevant knowledge and skills of school leadership and management but the conventional heads learnt all that mostly from their own experiences, from trials and errors. It is a faster journey to



understanding headship for us whilst the journey is somewhat long and arduous for the senior conventional heads. We have kind of a short cut to all that. I also think that we are an advantageous group because we have some ready solutions to anticipated problems in school management. We gained all these from the course and that helped rather than looking for and thinking about the solutions only when faced with the problem or issue.

**Q3: What do you perceive as the weakness of the NPQH training programme? Any particular area of study, and why do you perceive so?**

H16: The first thing is the lack of hands-on following the subjects we learnt. For financial management, we thought that a few hours of real experience would have helped us further understand the concepts taught. We did not see the real cash book used in school. We did whatever little examples on pieces of paper and that was not the real thing that happens out there in schools.

There was also lack of depth in the subject of legal aspects in school management. It seemed like we were not told of so many issues that might happen in school and that might involve the head facing the authorities and parents. I did not realise how much liability we hold as a school head. Whatever done by our staff or pupils will be put to our responsibility. There also seems to be some gap in the policy of the ministry that seems to burden certain responsibility solely on the head and we are not adequately covered by the authorities. This is something which the ministry needs looking further into.

**Q4: How does the training relate to specific contextual factors associated to your school?**

H16: They did not give us many examples but held that we should be adaptable to any situation. For example, some of the heads were involved with totally new schools. We were not given any detail on how to start a school and that must be quite difficult for some of them I guess.

**Q5: Can you tell me your journey to headship after leaving the NPQH course?**

H16: I came out and was posted as an ordinary teacher for about 6 months. After that I was appointed a Senior Assistant I (SA 1) in another school. I was there for two and a half years and then got the post of headship in another school.

NPQH did give us some input on community matters but mostly good stuff. How to confront difficult parents and problematic pupils with problematic parents was not taught. We had very little sharing from experienced heads. We should have been exposed to more chats and discussions with experienced heads so that we knew what to expect in the real world of schooling. There were plenty of theories but that is probably only one side of the coin. There is more credibility if one speaks from experience, in this case the experienced heads. Well, whether what the heads did was successful or otherwise is another matter, the basic is for them to share their ideas and experiences so that we could learn from them. When we hear experiences we learn about different approaches used by heads in undertaking their job. Whether our style suits them or not is something for us to reflect and think about.

On this note, even we have not received any invitation from the NPQH organisers to share our experiences. Probably what we have been doing might not be right but again as I mentioned earlier, it is the line of thought and the way we did things which might give some insight into the real life of headship for the participants.

**Q6: What have you learned about leadership from the time you graduated from NPQH to the time you assumed this headship in the professional setting, both inside and outside of your school?**

H16: After the NPQH course, I privately analysed the way my headteacher was leading and reflected on how that style was compared to my previous heads. I could mentally categorise them into the different styles category. I normally reflected and picked up the best traits from these heads and use them in my headship now. There are undoubtedly some styles that I am unable to use, so I use as many good styles

that I perceived as practical in my own situation. When I was a SA 1, my headteacher then taught me a lot. I was trained to use the correct procedure in finance management and led the budget planning for the school and staff. Of course there was a great leadership lesson for me as the financial aspect can be touchy sometimes. I got myself updated with the circulars and procedures on financial management so that I could lead the staff better in the area. I was also leading the teachers and staff in administration. Curriculum management was not something new for me and that was not really a big challenge but the general administration and leadership was.

My head then seemed to be using a very relaxed laizze-faire style of leading but it seemed to work. The most important lesson from him was that as a head we need to go down to the ground together with everyone in the school. If you are perceived to be working together with the teachers and staff, no matter what style you use you will garner their support and respect. This head was good with his humanistic approach. That was a good leadership lesson and works very well. As a SA 1 in that school, I had a chance to demonstrate my own leadership. I was somewhat procedural and quite blunt at times. I believe in explaining to the teachers what to do and expect things to be done with the deadlines set. That was my style but I eventually changed it a bit after learning and reflecting on how my head was leading. The combination proved good for me and I do the same even in my school now.

In the professional setting outside the school, I was also involved in the Senior Assistant association in my state. I had a leadership role to play there and learn a lot on how to lead colleagues on the same level. This was a setting where all of us respected each other but I was entrusted with leading the group and I learnt to use the democratic style in this leadership setting.

**Q7: Any leadership lessons in your involvement in non-professional context during that period?**

H16: I was actively involved in a non-government organisation (NGO) and assumed the role of a leader. Leading there was different from leading in the school because I was the SA I in the school and had legitimate powers that came with the post. I learn a lot in my capacity as a leader in that NGO as I had to lead people from all walks of the society. Leading the teachers and pupils was something but this involved other senior government figures and people from the corporate world. It gave me good lessons as how to deal with people of different backgrounds and values. It was an enriching experience as far as leading was concerned.

**Q8: What support did you get as a head which you think is important or could be useful for your headship, both through the professional sources and the non-professional sources?**

H16: The most important support will definitely be from the State Education Department and the District Education Office. I have been getting good support from these authorities and it should be like that. The schools really need a lot of support from the higher ups to ensure that all the matters run smoothly. To me, the Director of State Education Department should know who the schools heads are in the state. I have also been fortunate to receive good support from my District Education Officer and his office that we have a good understanding of our responsibilities. They entrust me with a task and I give them the best result I could which in turn earned their respect that they do not have to breathe down my neck all the time. It is the trust and understanding which makes the work enjoyable for both parties.

I also have a good network and support from my fellow NPQH heads and other headteachers in the district and state. This is very useful as we share about the issues that we face in our schools and sometimes these issues seem familiar or have been faced by others before. This sharing is not only enriching but it serves as a good point of reference should we need any help or advice from our peers especially

those senior ones. My school's PTA is very supportive and helpful. The chairperson is an influential person and he has helped us on many an occasion when the school and parents are engaged in a certain problem or issue.

**Q9: What are your recommendations to further improve the NPQH programme?**

H16: I think we have to be careful with the selection of participants to the programme. There should be a more thorough search into their background and potential in becoming a school head. By this I mean their attitude towards leadership and the recommendation by their own heads. As a head myself, I do not even mind pushing my active teachers who have the good potential of becoming heads over the senior assistants who are obviously weak in their leadership capabilities. We have to come up with a good mechanism to select our participants. For instance, there should be a special form for evaluation of the applicants solely for this purpose by the heads. Using their general annual work performance evaluation is not sufficient as that is meant for the annual remuneration. Of course, I would think that those capable ones who are already in the senior management posts will be the ideal candidates as they are senior enough to get the appointment soon after the course.

I also learnt that the physical health assessment and the psychology assessment has been done away with in the recent selection of candidates. I will definitely say that this is not a wise move as physical fitness is of utmost importance to a head. We face all kinds of pressure and if one is not physically healthy, then the detrimental effect is inevitably there. The psychology test is also important to find out about one's perception and attitude towards the leadership job. The physical and mental health is important for the selection of candidates. Therefore, that should not be scrapped in the selection process.

I also think that there should be more hands-on experience coupled with the theories that we learn in the course. During the six months attachment, the participants should be sent to different schools and not their own schools. They should not be

sent to their own schools because the effect is not so real compared to doing the projects in another school. There should be a new environment for them to practice their knowledge and skills and that could give them a better hands-on feel of the job. Probably some schools could be identified in each district for the participants to gain maximum benefit from their attachment experience.

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