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## Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Succession Planning Program in Selected National Secondary Schools in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

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### Abstract

The systematic effort by organizations on succession planning and management programs are to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, developing and retaining intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and promoting individual career progress. An organization without a formal succession planning system in place will find trouble in various areas such as: key positions are not filled on time, key positions are filled by external candidates, high turnover at key positions, potential replacements are never ready and lack essential talent and skills, most qualified talent is not retained. Moreover, succession planning needs to be linked to other components such as transformational leadership style to be successful. Transformational leadership style consists of four domains such as individualized influence, inspiration motivation, idealized influence and intellectual stimulation were used. This study aims to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and succession planning subject heads in national secondary schools in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. It is conducted using quantitative cross-sectional survey questionnaire method. The instruments used were effective succession planning & management (SP&M) and adapted version of the multifactor leadership questionnaire. The obtained data was processed using SPSS program and were analysed on descriptive, correlational and regression. the findings show transformational leadership has significantly contributed to succession planning ( $\beta=.116$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Therefore, this indicated that transformational leadership contributed significantly towards succession planning at .05 level of significance as perceived by the subject heads in the organization of the studied population. Conclusively, the succession planning is influenced by leadership characteristic as perceived by followers. The implication of the study is that the school principals should be able to provide a great characteristic style and always ensure their high leadership performance is significantly related to succession planning.

**Keywords:** Succession Planning, Transformational Leadership Style, Secondary School, Leadership Practices

## Introduction

The succession planning concept have been a field of research in the private sector but not in the education system (Neefe, 2009). Succession planning is the process of looking for a suitable potential candidate for future leader and career development (Rothwell, 2014; Church & Rotolo, 2013). Therefore, the subordinate career path can be managed to meet the needs of the organization. A prominent scholar in this field, stressed that succession planning and management programs are clear and systematic effort by organizations to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retaining and developing intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and promoting individual career progress (Rothwell, 2014b).

Systematic succession planning happens when an organization adapts certain procedures to ensure identification, development, and retention of talented individuals. McCauley and Wakefield (2006) further identified succession planning and management is not solely limited to management positions. Indeed, effective succession planning and management efforts must also address the need for critical support and individual development in any category of employment. Hence, he argued succession planning should extend not only at management ranks, where decision-making is decentralized but also throughout the empowered workplace and workforce. In corporate organizations human resource managers chose to grow the talents themselves through their job satisfaction (Maan et al., 2020). It is the main focus on how to keep and develop them. This requires formal procedures for succession planning and developing talent. In this regard the organizations have taken necessary steps to create new job codes and develop competency models and initiate career planning for employees. This involves formal programmes to identify employees, who have the potential and the necessary capabilities to sustain the future competitive advantages of the organization (Lyubykh et al., 2022).

According to Garavan et al (2012) stated that succession planning focuses on the planning, selection and implementation of development strategies for the whole of talent pool to ensure that the organisation has both the current and future supply to meet the strategic objectives. After the identification process, the competencies of the talents are developed through individualized training programmes involving formal education and training as well as job rotation, coaching and mentoring arrangements designed to make talented employees take care of their own learning and self-development (Rothwell, 2005). The development activities are in line with organisational talent management processes (Garavan et al., 2012). Succession planning as a procedure to determine and direct talent management schemes as they develop the organization, and people for the future (McCauley & Wakefield, 2006). Rhodes & Brundrett, (2009) findings show that coordinated approach to leadership learning and development in individual schools, supported by existing senior leaders, is essential for succession planning to be effective and the supply of leaders entering the talent pool will be increased.

The formal process of succession planning in school will serve as input and facilitates for talent development which serves importance to school leaders in educational systems. Therefore, it can provide feedback to the principal to renew and enhance the talent within in the realization of the concept and importance of succession planning in school system. The combination of transformational leadership and succession planning would provide

researchers an insight to understand major variables that underlying from transformational leadership practices towards succession planning.

### **Problem Statement**

The success of a school is strongly influenced by the principals' effective leadership styles. Without leadership in the school organization, the targeted goal is quite difficult to achieve. Leadership for succession planning is a planned process managed in the organization to make sure a smooth changeover when leaders come and leave (Peters-Hawkins et al. 2018). Furthermore, succession planning has shown significant influence as a medium to help shape future leaders and workforce development (Rohana et al., 2017). The organization's success depends on leadership performance. Therefore, the leader is responsible for the development and implementation of strategic as well as succession planning in the organization. Leadership is an important determinant of organizational performance for any organizations including schools (Lyubykh et al., 2022; Barber et al., 2010). They emphasize that apart from teaching in the classroom, there is no other influence that improves school standards more than the quality of school leaders. A good school leader shares many common traits and approaches in a similar way to subordinates. Subordinates make the assumption that leaders are the best role models and motivators in the organizations.

According to Rothwell (2005; 2010) defined succession planning and management program (SP&M) is a systematic effort to ensure leadership continuity in key posts, maintain and build intellectual and knowledge capital for the future and boost individual development in the organization. In a study on higher educational organization emphasized, the establishment of the succession planning and relevant approaches help to strengthen and boost high performance of employees leadership within institutions (Zaini et al., 2009). Research in education has asserted that principals have a strong impact on school performance through their influence within school level which improves instructional quality and student learning (Lee, 2015; Louis et al., 2010; Hallinger and Murphy, 1985). Hence, leadership styles in schools moving a school forward and improving performance (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013; Tajasom and Ahmad 2011). Meanwhile, in a study conducted by Izham and Shuhaida (2017) among high performing schools indicated that schools have a mechanism to prepare teacher leadership skills for the succession process.

However, little is known about the role of transformational leadership styles namely idealized influence, motivational inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration in influencing succession planning program in national secondary school context. It is argued for more empirical enquiry to further strengthen the existing knowledge base on transformational leadership styles that enhance succession planning practices in the school system.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Transformational leadership and Succession Planning in School Organization**

The leader in school is responsible for the development of the organization and also implementation of organization strategic planning. Rothwell (2005) defined Succession Planning & Management (SP&M) program is a deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement. In addition,

succession planning and management should support strategic planning and provide an essential starting point for management and employee development programs (Rothwell, 2005). With that in mind, principal should incorporate a succession planning process that identifies and cultivates high-prospective individuals to ensure that there is a ready talent pool of candidates that can be called upon to fill up higher post when there is a vacant position in school organization. Rothwell (2005) further mentioned that an organization without a succession planning system in place will face challenges such as key positions are not filled on time, potential replacements are not ready and not equipped with required skills. These are some problem areas which educational organizations face and never realize.

Currently, school organizations using an informal approach to SP&M. In such situation in schools SP&M is handled informally or maybe not at all. Moreover, nobody is aware of the organization's existing practices. It is therefore clear evidence that there is no well-defined, well-planned, well-communicated and formal succession planning effort in schools. Moreover, there is no management and leadership development training and opportunities offered to the school leaders in school. They do not seem to truly understand where and who to look for in terms of upward or lateral movement and development. Furthermore, in schools seem that not any coordinated and planning efforts to track high performers to specific leadership positions within the schools. This lack of coordination and planning leads to speculation every time a senior leadership position opening occurs. This goes down to middle management and lower management positions too. The pool of candidates for senior leadership comes from these ranks, but there is no coordinated effort to develop lower-level employees to take up leadership roles in future. If this trend continues, the school will see decreased job satisfaction and may lose high potential talented individuals. For this reason, the impact on succession planning in school would be affected if a successor was suddenly required and none had been identified. Hence, Rothwell (2005) firmly emphasized that the continued survival of the organisation depends on having the right people in the right places at the right time. Zaini et al (2009) mentioned in their study on higher educational organization that the establishment of the succession planning and related models help to strengthen and boost high performance within institutions of higher education through a professional workforce. Therefore, to solve this problem, decision-makers must insist on formal ways to identify work requirements, develop leadership potentials, retain talents with skills and competencies and assessment for performance.

Rothwell (2011) further elaborated succession planning develops a pool of people to consider for promotion, or talent management, which focuses on attracting, developing, deploying, and retaining the best people. The incorporation of leadership learning and development opportunities associated with school succession planning strategies for talent pools has assisted in the implementation of concepts of "grow your own" leaders (Drew & Ehrich, 2010; Zepeda et al., 2012); home grown talent is a necessity (Martindale, Collins, & Abraham, 2007). This will enhance, encourage and boost the interests of potential teachers to demonstrate leadership competencies within school. According to Thompson (2010), leadership development should be part of a planned effort for leaders at all levels in the organisation. This is agreed upon by the fundamentals in succession planning that should address

leadership at all levels in organization, encourage the development of career and leadership development (Calareso, 2013).

Indeed, to address this problem, schools need to provide plans to prepare and develop qualified and capable staff to fill vacant positions within school. In this case, the potential successors need to be identified by school management. Succession planning is described as a variety of activities involving the planning for key transitions in leadership within organizations (Garman & Glawe, 2004). In addition, the succession planning program not only helps to ensure key management positions remain occupied in school, but also helps identify the critical training and development needs of both individual staff and organizational as a whole. Leadership is developed through leadership development process and is closely linked to succession planning and represents an organisation's efforts to attract, recruit and retain skilled and valuable employees in any organisation. Similarly, Lyubykh et al (2022), findings stated developing one's own employees for succession has been regularly practised in corporate and private sectors. Davies and Davies (2011) supported the need for talent development in education. Leadership can be learned through experiences and not a person's inborn characteristic.

Therefore, to ensure the succession planning is effective and having a systematic process, the organization must involve the whole employees from every level in the organization including Principal, Head of Department, subject head teachers and staff. Nevertheless, despite the importance of succession planning program for any organisation, it is considered less important by the school system. Perhaps the appropriate perception of transformational leadership may enhance the succession planning and management practice in national schools in Malaysia.

### **Succession Planning**

Literature reviews show that although the term succession planning is widely used today, there is still no universal definition of succession planning. Various definitions and terms have been used in literature to explain succession planning. A prominent figure defined succession planning as developing a pool of people to consider for promotion, which focuses on attracting, developing, deploying, and retaining the best people in the organization (Rothwell, 2011). McCarthy (2013) viewed succession planning as a study to build a structural leadership pipeline as main roles of the organisation and as a development approach, holding responsible for executive team through alignment of the succession planning with business strategy. Carnegie (2008) suggests "succession planning as a systematic way to ensure that employees in an organization are competent enough to develop and then replace strategic roles in organization ranking". He further elaborated it is necessary to spend more time and attention to planned training, on-the-job development, and other experiences designed to build competencies in the organization.

It is evident, succession planning not only limited to top management position but need successors for every job levels in the organization especially with more involvement of employees to the organization and distribution of decision making to empowered employees in the organizations. Rothwell (2010) mentioned that succession planning is the process of identifying talented individuals to be developed inside an organization. In general, succession planning process involves three steps: 1) identifying and reviewing key positions, 2) creating

and developing candidates and 3) assessing and selecting the right candidates to fill up the key positions.

The important attributes that are most common in succession planning include a systematic process implemented at all levels of an organization, employee opportunity for upward and lateral movement within the organization, rewarding leaders for promoting their best, talented employees (Rothwell, 2010). Rothwell (2005) mentioned succession planning consists of four best practices: 1) Identify high potential candidates in the organization, 2) diagnose and Assess individual candidates' strengths and weaknesses compared to the organization's needs, 3) prescribe and provide the right development to build competencies in the organization, and 4) monitor to make sure that the succession process works to build leaders over time.

### **Transformational Leadership**

According to Avolio and Bass (1994); Bass and Riggio (2005) transformational leaders are leaders who promote and motivate their subordinates by projecting and delivering similar visions, goals and values by setting an example for their desired behaviour. Transformational leadership is a process by which leaders and followers advance each other to achieve a higher level in motivation and moral. Furthermore, transformational leadership practices are believed to guide the organization to clear a vision, mission and goals (Amin et al., 2013; Leithwood & San, 2012).

Generally, transformational leadership characteristics are associated with four leadership styles. They are idealized influence or charisma, inspiration motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Avolio & Bass, 1994). The first dimension is idealized influence which defined as the leader's capability to become a model and demonstrate high quality performance and good ethics (Felfe et al., 2004). Second dimension is the demonstrating inspiration motivation which is to motivate and inspire others by offering a meaning and challenge to their subordinates' job (Avolio & Bass, 2002). The third dimension shows individualized influence is regarded as the efforts of leaders to give a human touch and holding them by guiding and providing counselling for their career development. In other words, individualized influence leader offers emotional and social support to subordinates.

Employees are treated based on their individual capabilities and knowledge possessed by each employee (Shin & Zhou, 2003) and finally fourth is intellectual stimulation illustrates the leaders' efforts to challenge subordinates to find modern, creative and promoting critical thinking and solving problems to make a better organization (Jyoti & Dev, 2015). Furthermore, the transformational leaders stimulate subordinates' efforts to be creative and innovative by querying assumptions, restructuring issues, and approaching the old situation in a latest way (Avolio and Bass, 2002). In a meta-analytical review indicates that transformational leadership positively correlates with performance (Lyubkyh et al., 2022).

### **Methodology**

This study used quantitative cross-sectional method with sets of survey questionnaire approach and was conducted among subject heads in national secondary schools. To determine the sample size, it is selected based on the formula suggested by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). By using simple random sampling, a sample of 312 respondents were chosen

from sixteen schools as participants of the survey. Out of 312 questionnaires distributed, 250 were useful for statistical analysis of this study. The two variables used for this research is transformational leadership style as the independent variable and succession planning as the dependent variable. A Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire based on Five-point Likert scale was used to measure the transformational leadership style. The MLQ was designed and developed by Avolio and Bass (2004) as cited in Jyoti and Bhau (2017) and commonly used for leadership study. For this study, the MLQ consisted of 25 items and based on Five-Likert point scale. A pilot study was conducted to maintain the validity of the research. The Cronbach's alpha value obtained ranges from .935 to .966 which is acceptable (Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson 2014). The instrument used to measure succession planning program was adopted from the questionnaire for Succession Planning and Management (SP&M) developed by Rothwell (2005). Total 28 items based on Five-point Likert scale was utilised. The reliability test was conducted on the measurement of the research, with Cronbach alpha values are more than 0.7 which is at acceptable level (Hair et al., 2014).

### Findings and Discussion

The multiple linear regression analysis was employed to determine the contribution of selected factors to succession planning. In this analysis, the succession planning as a dependent variable was regressed against the independent variables. The two predicting variables are transformational leadership that examined to provide the degree at which each of the predictor has significantly contributed towards succession planning. Hence, the multiple regressions consist of two predicting variables such as transformational leadership ( $X_1$ ) and talent development ( $X_2$ ). Each of predicting variables showed its level of contribution to succession planning. The results produced by SPSS in Table 1, indicated the level of contribution to succession planning.

Table 1

*Results of Multiple Regression between Factors and Succession Planning.*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i> ( $\beta$ )	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Succession Planning (Constant)	.549	.211		2.606	.010
Transformational Leadership	.166	.065	.116	2.537	.012
Talent Development	.620	.039	.733	16.010	.000

*F* = 224.73, *R* = 0.803, *Sig-F* = 0.00, *R*<sup>2</sup> = 0.645

The multiple regression analysis results in Table 1, illustrates transformational leadership has significantly contributed to succession planning ( $\beta$ =.116,  $t$ =2.537,  $p$ =.012). This indicated that, transformational leadership contributed significantly towards succession planning at .05 level of significance as perceived by the subject heads in national secondary schools Seremban district. Developing teachers into subject heads as future leaders positively led by principals' transformational leadership styles. This study collaborated with researchers that leadership is important for organization success and characteristics of leadership contribute to the effectiveness of leadership (Ahmad et al., 2017; Rohana et al., 2015). In addition, the



succession planning implementation on subordinates is closely linked to the leaders' leadership style (Rohana et al., 2017).

Subject heads perceived on principals' leadership styles are being supportive and promoting their skills and capability to hold responsibility of leadership criteria and teaching. Schools having a succession planning in place to identify and develop high talented teachers into subject heads to keep the leadership pipeline full and new teacher leaders are ready to move into positions when the time arrives. Thus, developing and grooming subject heads for the potential leadership roles is important for the success of the school organization. In a study, subject leaders were opined that leadership is about producing the vision and communicating that vision within the organization (Lyubykh et al., 2022)

Furthermore, transformational leadership principals making an effort to understand their subject heads or any leadership roles and assisting them to realise themselves deeper. Most importantly, this principal able to reflect and analyse upon their own practices towards succession planning in education and keep assisting for the improvement of leadership succession. Principal who practices transformational leadership characteristics in Seremban district schools, were able to witness teachers' higher commitment and dedication in the process and the success of the succession planning and management. This leaders as a role model for subject heads, inspiring them to increase their interest in the program. The transformational leadership practices are believed to uplift the organization to a clear goal, mission and vision (Amin, Shah, & Tatlah, 2013; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Abdullah et al., 2009).

Moreover, principal with transformational leadership practice aligning subject heads with succession planning program that improve their continuous performance in school organization. Therefore, this research is one of a kind that helped to close the gap to improve the understanding of the position as a transformational leader during the implementation of succession planning at national secondary schools, Malaysia. The leaders with the transformational leadership characteristics such as idealized influence, inspiration motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Avolio & Bass, 2002) the organization able to see employees engaged and devoted in the process and achieve success in succession planning program (Ahmad et al., 2017).

Principals have started to practice succession informally to reduce turnover into retirement among teachers. The main reason to have succession planning program in education system is mainly to hire capable and talented teachers into leadership roles within school organization. Furthermore, when any leader leaves the organization, their initiatives and programs vanish as well due to system and structure that supported the programs disappear together with the leader (Fusarelli et al., 2018).

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The main reason for succession planning in education is to get the best people to lead the school organization. The aim of succession planning is to ensure talented leaders are identified, developed and ready to contribute in the school leadership. Succession planning practice is not common in education. Thus, transformational leadership has significantly contributed to succession planning. When school leader leaves, many programs and initiatives disappear as well, because the structure and motivation that supported the

programs resided within the leader. Principals have begun to implement informal succession planning as a result of the combination of the general increase in turnover rates among teachers and the potential for an even higher turnover rate with Baby Boomers aging into retirement and to avoid the potential performance gap that often accompanies a change in leadership. Rural areas, particularly those encountering surges in growth, experience this problem as a result of the high demand for school leaders and the uncertain, uneven supply of candidates. In this era of accountability in public schools and the increasingly tough demands placed on school administrators, developing leaders to meet today's challenges in a school is a critical issue. To fill these positions effectively, many schools have begun to develop and implement succession planning programs to expand their internal pool of leadership candidates.

This study offers several distinct theoretical and practical significance to the field of human resource development (HRD), specifically to education sector, which involves school leaders. This study will contribute to the existing knowledge in educational research especially in Malaysia. The combination of transformational leadership and succession planning would provide researchers an insight to understand major variables that underlying from transformational leadership practices towards succession planning. Based on this study, there are contextual perspectives to advance our understanding of the complex issues of transformational leadership and succession planning. From the practical perspective, the formal process of succession planning in school will serve as input and facilitates for succession planning which serves importance to school leaders in educational systems. Therefore, it can provide feedback to the principal to renew and enhance the talent within in the realization of the concept and importance of succession planning in school system.

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