

Investigating the Link between Transformational Leadership Style on Succession Planning Program in National Secondary Schools in Seremban District, Malaysia

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Abstract

School organizations are facing with numerous challenges especially on the practice of succession planning program including identifying future leaders, retaining and developing employees' leadership skills, key positions not filled by talented leaders and high turnover rates. This study utilized "Seven-Pointed Star Model" for succession planning and management program as it has been used in practice extensively. 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 individualised influence, inspiration motivation, idealize influence and intellectual stimulation were used. This study aims to examine the level of transformational leadership style and succession planning as well as the relationship between them and the contribution of transformational leadership style on succession planning among principals in national secondary schools, Seremban. 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 style portrays at high level of practice ($M=3.86$, $SD=0.530$) while succession planning indicates at moderate level ($M=3.40$, $SD=0.758$) and has a significant positive relationship with transformational leadership style ($r = 0.527$, $p<0.05$) in the organization of the studied population. The multiple regression analysis results revealed that idealised influence ($\beta=.222$, $p<0.05$) is the main predictor on succession planning as perceived by subject leaders. 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 Practice

Introduction

Succession planning issues in school organization commonly happened in identifying future leaders, retaining and developing employees' leadership skills, key positions not filled by talented leaders and high turnover rates. A recent study mentioned succession planning program is widely practised in corporate organisation, but it is less common in educational organization (Fusarelli, Fusarelli and Riddick 2018) although many researchers are emphasizing that the quality of leadership is necessary for schools (Neefe 2009). An education reform announced by Ministry of Education Malaysia recently is a great effort to cultivate future school leaders by guiding, educating and developing them and asserted the need for succession planning in education system at the right time.

An experienced leader with positive attitudes can create a school environment that promotes mutual support and communication among teachers, staffs, administrators and students. Therefore, a strong transformational leader in the most important roles at every level in the education system will improve the system rapidly. The leaders with transformational leadership characteristics such as idealize influence, inspiration motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualize consideration (Avolio and Bass 2002) can see employees engaged and devoted to the process and the success of the program over time in the organization (Hart 2011; Ahmad, Mohamed and Manaf 2017). This is essential for leadership that focuses on schools in a shared vision to achieve excellence. Transformational leadership fits into the succession planning and management equation (Hart 2011). Many studies support the idea that the practice of transformational leadership style by principals able to motivate teachers to change their attitudes and values with a commitment to the mission and vision of education (Yu, Leithwood and Jantzi 2002).

Therefore, transformational leadership is usually integrated with an effective leadership styles and the capacity to transform subordinate perceptions and motivations towards organizational excellence (Amin et al. 2013; Selamat et al. 2013; Leithwood and Sun 2012). The best starting point is to identify and train the potential leaders who can lead the staff and students for the school betterment. Therefore, Rothwell (2005) strongly stressed the organizations' continued survival is depending on placing the right leader at the right roles and at the right time. Hence, the impact on succession planning in school will be affected if a successor was needed suddenly but no one is identified to assist for smooth transition of leadership. Furthermore, it is emphasized that to ensure success the organization required the backup of leadership and individual development in related job field (Bano, 2016). This suggests there is a need to identify and develop the quality of the leader in the organization and to motivate people to a higher level of performance through their strong human relations.

A succession planning, whether in business or in education should not serve as an isolated system but should work as an integral component for the entire process of human resources planning (Zaini et al. 2009). Literature indicates transformational leadership contributing to

succession planning in the organization. Hence, a recent research from Malaysian Public sector shows that multiple regression results indicated significant relationship on succession planning and individualized influence becomes the main predictor for succession planning program. Therefore, it is important for leaders to continually observing and improving their leadership style and behaviour in order to become effective leaders (Ahmad et al. 2017). Thus, such integration makes succession planning program wholesome and more efficient but most of the education sector especially school system does not fully integrate it. Although four dimensions of transformational leadership as composite subject, but they can be clearly assessed (Agyemang, Boateng and Dzandu 2017). Hence, it encouraged researcher to conduct study on the relationship between transformational leadership and succession planning within national secondary schools in Seremban district.

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, Reed and Kingsberry 2018). Furthermore, succession planning has shown significant influence as a medium to help shape future leaders and workforce development (Rohana, Martadha and Halimah, 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 (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 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; 2010a) 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, Samah, Jusoff and Isa, 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, Leithwood, Wahlstrom and Anderson 2010; Hallinger and Murphy 1985). Hence, leadership styles in schools moving a school forward and improving performance (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013; Tajasom and Ariffin Ahmad 2011). Meanwhile, in a study conducted by Mohd 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. This study from an understanding of leadership characteristic experience together with the succession planning within the school leaders may contribute to the improvement of the planning and leadership practices in education system. Therefore, this study explored the relationship between principals' transformational leadership styles and succession planning practices among national secondary schools in Seremban district.

Literature Review

Succession Planning

Despite the positive response of achieving succession planning program from successful corporate organizations, this program is not supported fully by educational organizations due to inefficient planning, implementation, executing and managing the process of succession planning program (Clunnies, 2003). The understanding of succession planning is important for the school organization because it allows them to learn about their future planning decisions about the potential development and effective school organization. According to Rothwell (2010) systematic succession planning take place in the organization that secured specific procedures to ensure experienced leaders in key posts, retain and develop talented individuals. Meanwhile, Sambrook (2005) defined succession planning as an effort to plan for the quality and key skilled staffs to cover death, critical illness, retirement or promotion and any new roles created in future organization planning. Therefore, the development of career alternatives for successors can meet the needs of organizational leadership.

Followers in the organization expecting the leaders should possess certain characteristics' as followers assume that the leader should be the best role model in an organization. Therefore, leaders should portray good behaviour to gain the confidence of followers. However, this current situation not only requires a competitive advantage but related to commitment, ethics and creating a safe and fair working environment. As Kim (2003) defined succession planning is the purposeful, continuous and systematic identification of qualified employees for leadership to improve performance and commitments. Therefore, it is emphasized several times the main reason to have succession planning in education is to get the best and talented employees to lead the school organizations. Meanwhile, the process of succession planning is to ensure capable leaders are recognised, developed and prepared to participate in the school leadership (Farashah, Nasehifar and Karahrudi 2011). This may help to reduce the potential performance gap that often accompanies during leadership change.

One of the popular succession planning model introduced by prominent scholar is called The Seven-Pointed Star Model Rothwell (2005; 2010a). Although Rothwell's framework is obtained from a variety of non-educational organization studies, it offers one of several theoretical views on the succession process of leaders (Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom and Anderson 2010). This model for systematic succession planning and management has been widely used in private organizations (Ogotu 2016). For this reason, this study used empirical research on the succession of subject leaders using Rothwell's The Seven-Pointed Star Model. The theory that school leadership has an impact on schools that identifies successors, if not planned earlier may have a negative impact on school performance (Zepeda, Bengtson and Parylo 2012).

Transformational Leadership

According to Avolio and Bass (1994) and 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, Shah and Tatlal 2013; Leithwood and Jantzi 2000).

Generally, transformational leadership characteristics are associated with four leadership styles. They are idealized influence or charisma, inspiration motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Avolio and 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, Jörg, Tartler, Kathrin and Liepmann 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 and 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 and 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 organizations (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 (Cheung and Wong, 2011).

Methodology

The objectives of this study were i) to determine the level of transformational leadership styles and succession planning program; ii) to determine if there is a relationship between transformational leadership styles and succession planning and iii) to determine the contribution of transformational leadership styles on succession planning program in national secondary schools, Seremban district as perceived by subject heads. 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).

Data Analysis and Findings

Descriptive analysis was performed to discuss the results of the research on the level of transformational leadership style and succession planning in national secondary schools in Seremban district according to subject heads perceptions while inferential analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between them. Regression analysis was also performed on variables to identify the contribution.

Table 1:

Level of Transformational Leadership Styles

Scale	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Idealised Influence	3.90	.565	High
Inspirational Motivation	3.87	.582	High
Intellectual Stimulation	3.85	.602	High
Individualised Consideration	3.72	.628	High
Overall	3.86	.530	High

The level of transformational leadership practice among principals were determined by the level of the dimensions of transformational leadership style. These dimensions include idealise influence, intellectual stimulation, individualise consideration and inspiration motivation. The levels of the dimensions are determined by calculating the mean score and standard deviation value of each dimensions using SPSS.

From the Table 1, indicated that the mean score for all four dimensions such as idealise influence, intellectual stimulation, individualised consideration and inspiration motivation are within the range of high level. Overall, the transformational leadership styles practice in national secondary schools of Seremban district is at high level as perceived by subject heads based on the descriptive analysis results of the study. Furthermore, idealised influence recorded as the highest mean in this study. However, this study is inconsistent with Ahmad et al. (2017) research on leadership which resulted that individualize influence is the main predictor on succession planning program in Malaysian Public Sector. According to Avolio and Bass (2002) stated idealized influence is the charismatic element of transformational leadership whereby leaders become role models who are respected, admired and emulated by subordinates. Therefore, principals as a role model in studied population providing strategic direction in their school system. They monitor day to day activities, implement standardized curriculum, monitor student achievements, encourage teachers and parents' involvements in the school and evaluate teachers. These personalities in principal has motivated and inspired the subordinates for organisational achievement in the schools.

Table 2:

Level of Succession Planning

Scale	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Succession Planning	3.40	.758	Moderate

Table 2 illustrates that succession planning recorded the mean score and standard deviation as 3.40 and .758 respectively which falls within the range of moderate level. This clearly indicates the succession planning program in schools are in moderate level as perceived by subject heads in national secondary schools Seremban district. This is because in the Malaysian context succession planning practice is relatively new particularly in the school system. Currently, the practice of succession planning in national school organizations is performed unofficially. Even though many organizations acknowledging the importance of succession planning to sustain leadership roles and other important positions but yet there is still the lacking in systematic approach. If used effectively, formal succession planning can be extremely beneficial for organizations. In addition, the main reason for organizations planning for succession is for identifying and developing future leaders within organizations.

Pearson product correlation analysis was conducted to determine the significant relationship between the transformational leadership styles practice and succession planning. Table 4 portrayed the correlation of all independent variables and dependent variable is strong ($R=.527$) and all the independent variable explains 26.6% of the variance in succession planning. The value of $r = 0.527$, $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$). The r value indicates a positive correlation coefficient at a high level. A correlation of .5 and above is representing the high degree of relationship (Cohen 1988). Therefore, the interpretation of correlation analysis is positively high significant relationship between the leadership styles and succession planning in national secondary schools Seremban district as perceived by subject heads.

Table 4:

Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error Estimate
1	.527 ^a	.278	.266	.64966

- a. *Predictors: (Constant), Individualise Consideration, Idealised Influence, Intellectual Stimulation, Inspiration Motivation*

Hence, principal as a top leader in school organization strengthening the relationship with other teachers because followers rely on officials for achievements in employment. This findings were consistent with the study conducted by Ahmad et al. (2017) particularly in the process of developing future leaders. The practice of transformational leadership among principals can motivate teachers to change their attitude and culminate good leadership values by being supportive to achieve goals and vision of education. Similarly, transformational leadership traits need to be relevant to improve followers' career pathways. Meanwhile, communication is one of the most essential traits any good leader possesses. Principals take the responsibility to communicate effectively among teachers by conveying the shared goals and vision of the school in achieving quality leadership.

Table 5 indicate the results of multiple regression analysis for transformational leadership style which is significant $F(4, 245) = 23.60, p = .000$. This shows, the slope test of estimated linear regression model is not equal to zero because of the significant $F < .05$. Hence, it becomes as an evidence that regression model fits the data at 0.05 level of significant. The strongest predictor is known by finding the absolute biggest beta value (Hair et al. 2014). Therefore, according to Table 5, when the differences between the four types of leadership styles with respect to practices of succession planning were examined, the study showed only one dimension found to be significant (at $p < 0.05$) namely idealised influence ($p = 0.222$). This illustrates idealised influence positively significant the most in the variance in succession planning program as perceived by subject heads in regular national secondary schools in Seremban. Whereas, other results showed that three dimensions of transformational leadership were negatively related to succession planning. The variables were inspiration motivational ($\beta = .116, p > 0.05$), intellectual stimulation ($\beta = .112, p > 0.05$) and individualized consideration ($\beta = .139, p > 0.05$).

The outcome of Ahmad et al. (2017), showed that individualised influence variable influenced most of the variance in career development program perceived by followers in Malaysian Public Sector. However, current findings are in collaboration with Avolio and Bass (2002) which described the four dimensions of transformational leadership, idealize influence and inspiration leadership are most effective and satisfying. This can be said that idealised influence principals in schools are inspiring role model for high ethical behaviour, respectful and trusted by teachers. These leaders guiding through teachers to improve individual development to enter into potential leadership roles in school organizations.

Table 5:

Multiple Regression Analysis: Independent Variable and Succession Planning

Independent Variables	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficient Beta	t	Sig.
Idealised Influence	.297	.137	.222	2.169	.031
Inspiration Motivation	.151	.138	.116	1.095	.275
Intellectual Stimulation	.141	.131	.112	1.076	.283
Individualised Consideration	.167	.096	.139	1.752	.081

F Value = 23.600, Sig. = .000, R = .527, R² = .278

Discussion and Conclusion

An empirical study was carried out to evaluate the variables. From the research, the results show that high level practice of transformational leadership styles among school principals and succession planning program practiced moderately in national secondary schools. The relationship between transformational leadership styles in practice is significantly positive on succession planning especially in leadership qualities.

Analysis of the data, found that idealised influence is contributing significantly ($\beta = .222, p > 0.05$) to succession planning program. It indicates that successful succession planning program may positively lead by the idealised influence of transformational leaders. According

to Avolio and Bass (2002) idealised influence (attribute and behaviour) described as the degree to which leaders are seen as an inspiring role models. Followers identify and emulate their leaders. Therefore, portraying idealised influence characteristic style, the principal able to guide teachers to show determination, possess talents and strength, taking risks, creating a sense of empowerment and joint mission in the school organization. At the same time the school leaders instilling on good values and beliefs, emphasizing the strong sense of purpose and personal development of teachers that would encourage leadership succession in the school organizations.

Three other dimensions such as inspiration motivation, individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation were found to be not significant contributors ($p > 0.05$) to succession planning. This can be argued that a leader does not strengthen followers with emotional and social support (Sikalieh 2017), the skill of encouraging creativity and innovation among followers (Avolio, Bass & Jung 1999), planning future with optimism and empowerment (Bass & Steidlmeier 1999) characteristics are not enough to encourage followers to understand the succession planning program as a medium to develop individual career in the organization.

In general, transformational leadership style practiced by school principals able to motivate teachers to change their attitude and values by supporting towards the vision and mission of education. Furthermore, the practice of transformational leadership is said to move the organization closer to their targeted goals (Amin et al., 2013). However, Hallinger (2003) in his study argued that the role of principal is less effective in guiding and sharing goals with the teachers. The teachers alone cannot affect student learning outcomes without the support from principal. This leads to poor planned teaching to achieve the aims of the school. **In conclusion** school leaders must be motivated and encouraged to practice this leadership style to contribute for leadership succession by establishing a structured mechanism and seeing that followers are empowered in carrying out responsibilities and duties in schools.

Moreover, a recent research in Malaysia's Public Sector suggested that developing follower as future leader is positively leading by transformational leadership. Hence, such leading can be encouraged by the strong support given by transformational leaders (Ahmad et al., 2017). It is consistent with the study on relationship between principals' transformational leadership and teachers' commitment which suggest that principals' transformational leadership practice can bring about good change in the administration and management of the school. This change can also increase teachers' motivation and commitment (Raman, Mey, Don, Daud and Khalid 2015). The leadership styles relate to followers' career goal and school system may utilize as value added to invest in leadership programs for middle management such as subject heads in schools. However, this study is still an initial stage to understand the link between transformational leadership style and succession planning program in the national secondary schools as perceived by subject heads in Seremban district, Malaysia. Since this relationship has not been explored before in school context in Malaysia hence, it is one of very few studies to fill the gap by investigating how four transformational dimensions' leadership influence on succession planning program in education system. Thus, this research is a major contribution to school system.

Contribution

The contribution of this study is to add value to the theory and concept of succession planning for human resource development particularly the practices in education sector. The findings from this study were significant and insightful that produce new platform which able to strengthen the succession planning programs within school organizations. Theoretically, the results obtained would increase the number of empirical evidences of the principals' leadership practices and succession planning and would act as a reference to future researchers conducting research on similar disciplines. The present study of transformational leadership linked to the succession planning for school leadership may contribute to the enhancement of leadership qualities in education system as a whole. The findings will also help all principals especially in national secondary schools to identify the level of leadership knowledge, management skills and attitudes of existing subject heads in their respective schools and make appropriate action plans to improve their management skills in their respective schools. Therefore, in the effort to encourage school leaders, this study is able to provide specific insight to relate transformational leadership and succession planning that will bring crucial benefits to school organizations if it is managed properly.

Recommendation

The finding of this study shows succession planning is affected by leadership characteristic from followers' perception. Therefore, there is a significant amount of space for further research in the area of leadership succession planning in the field of education. Therefore, further empirical research would be a great help in the improvement of school leadership succession in education system.

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