

Succession Planning at Private Schools in Addis Ababa

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Abstract — Organizations in any industry benefit from clearly developed succession plans. Succession planning is not as pervasive in schools as it should be. In Ethiopia, teachers are either leaving the teaching profession or move from one school to another and join other occupations every year creating a huge gap in leadership development. To this end, schools and school administrators should proactively plan and incorporate succession planning in their strategy as well as daily operation. Using quantitative data collected from 283 teachers from a total of 3189 teachers in 146 Secondary and Preparatory Schools in Addis Ababa. This research tried to assess the succession planning practices of those private schools. Mean and the standard deviation was used to analyze the participant response while a One-Sample t-test was used to ascertain the statistical significance of the mean values. The result however suggests that succession planning at the sampled schools is done partially with mixed results. Even though participants accept the importance of succession planning, they indicated that talent identification and talent development are not done properly. The retention of talent however is done relatively well. It is therefore recommended that private schools in Addis Ababa introduce a proper succession planning program and make sure mechanisms of talent identification, development, and retention in place.

Index Terms — Succession Planning, Identification of talent, Development of talent, Retention of talent.

I. INTRODUCTION

Organizations in any industry benefit from clearly developed succession plans [1]. Educational institutions, particularly schools are no different and need proper succession planning. [2] however, believe that succession planning is not as pervasive in schools as it should be. Assuring succession at schools is a challenge to many schools all over the world. Various studies indicated that a shortage of leaders, headteachers are pointing to a growing crisis in the education sector [3] [4] and [5].

Similarly, in Ethiopia, the negative image attached to the profession of teaching leads many to avoid the education sector as a career choice, and those who join the sector change career soon. This leads to a significant level of instability and turnover challenges, which further creates leadership challenges for schools in the country. In Ethiopia, teachers are either leaving the teaching profession or move from one school to another and join other occupations every year creating a huge gap in leadership development [6] [7]. [8] points out that the need for hiring new teachers coupled with the fact that many teachers leave the field has created unease for educational leaders. Problems of unstable working conditions for teachers that leads to turnover is a major challenge to the education system [8]. [9] also indicated poor working conditions, the low social status accorded to teachers

by the society, teachers' lack of initial preference for the teaching profession were some of the factors for attrition in schools.

With this challenge in mind, schools and school administrators should proactively plan and incorporate succession planning in their strategy as well as daily operation. In this regard, succession planning can be an important way to identify employees who have the current skills or the potential to develop skills that can help schools to fill openings and assure continuity. Assessing succession planning, therefore, helps schools improve their practice. Hence, this research aimed at assessing the succession planning practices of private schools in Addis Ababa.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Succession Planning

Organizations benefit from stability for their human resources. Succession planning represents an organization's attempt to prepare for the transition of all management positions [10]. Succession planning as [11] defines it is an attempt to plan for the future needs of the organization that is caused by retirement, death, serious illness or promotion, and any new positions.

In line with this, [12] points out that succession planning could enable a seamless leadership transition across the organization. Succession planning has to be a systematic effort and a proactive practice [13], [14]. Hence, it should focus on consistency and a systematic approach to growing leaders within the company. A proper succession planning should address the need for critical backups and individual development in any job category, including key people in the professional, technical, sales, clerical, and production ranks [10].

Succession planning provides an organized approach to the process. Systematic "succession planning occurs when an organization adapts specific procedures to ensure the identification, development, and long-term retention of talented individuals." [10]. The benefits of succession planning lie on two main points, namely; business continuity and sustaining competitive advantage [15]. The benefits of succession planning can be explained in terms of its impact on organizations and individuals. [16] indicates that effective succession planning provides a balanced impact on both the organization and individuals.

Succession planning for Schools can be a source of stability and performance and could lead to student achievement [17], [18]. Like any other organization, schools can benefit from good succession planning. As the literature indicates, unlike other business organizations, the ubiquity of

change, the complexity of the role, level of remuneration, the status of the profession, legal constraints, and impact on family life are leading to a shortage of future leadership in schools [19].

In Ethiopia, teachers are either leaving the teaching profession or move from one school to another and join other occupations every year creating a huge gap in leadership development [6], [7]. [8] as well as [9] indicated a significant level of turnover and attrition from the education sector due to teachers' lack of initial preference to the teaching profession, a low social status given to teachers by the society, poor working conditions, and low salary scales.

Such challenges suggest the need for succession planning in schools. Despite this, however, [20] claimed that the education sector was not properly succession planning which is also reflected in the shortage of literature on succession planning at educational institutions.

B. Developing a Succession Plan

According to [10] effective succession plans frequently exhibited all or most of 15 characteristics: (a) participation of senior management, (b) benchmarks and needs assessments, (c) a developmental focus, (d) dedicated responsibility, (e) emphasis at all organizational levels, (f) a systemic approach, (g) analysis of future potential, (h) a timeframe for high-level replacement, (i) accountability to prepare successors, (j) specific training and development, (k) continual performance of current employees, (l) an understanding of the specific culture, (m) critical review of procedures, (n) focus beyond the next promotion, and (o) formal mentoring.

[21] suggested a flexible systems-oriented approach to the development of employees as the fundamental rule while [10] listed a systemic approach as one of the characteristics of an effective succession plan. [21] also stressed the importance of specific development over replacement planning, which solely focused on providing a list of names of top-tier candidates.

Job rotation, special assignments, classroom-based training, and real-life exposure were far more effective in providing specific, targeted development for promising individuals [21]. [14] cautioned that training should not be exclusively outside of the organization, or classroom-based. The employees needed to continue to succeed in current roles. [22] also specified the importance of including a great number of senior executives in the succession-planning process, and in providing development opportunities for subordinates. Supervisors need to also be held accountable for subordinates' growth [22]. Providing targeted professional development opportunities was also important and the process had to start with mechanisms to identify top-tier talent [23].

Some of the important activities in succession planning are the following:

Identification of Talent. Relying solely on manager evaluations was found to be a poor source of talent identification. Some managers ranked employees highly because of a sense of loyalty, or a high degree of personal trust. Conversely, emotional factors led to highly-skilled employees receiving lower ratings than deserved [22]. [24] believed the succession planning process was an opportunity to give stakeholders a voice in the process, as maintenance of

the culture for the organization was important.

[25] contended the process for talent identification should begin with entry-level employees. Top-tier candidates with the proper dispositions needed to be recruited for entry-level positions, and trained for positions with greater responsibility.

Identification of the proper candidates was imperative, yet difficult, as supervisors often hindered prime candidates from advancing, because of a desire to keep an employee in a current position for the perceived value of the current job performance [22]. [23] provided characteristics that should be possessed by suitable candidates, including (a) vision with passion, courage, and integrity; (b) open-mindedness and ability to listen to others; (c) risk-taking and a willingness to admit failure; (d) acumen; and (e) respect through being trustworthy, value-driven, and authentic. [22] also noted that the most successful organizations had active, cross-functional assessments of talent frequently. [14] agreed and specified for organizations to identify key competencies for the present and future. Multiple raters had to consider those competencies in the framework of the organizational culture.

Talent Development. Because the development of talent was one of the core components of succession planning. [26] believed one of the purposes of succession planning was to prepare individuals for positions of greater responsibility, even knowing that some of the individuals would leave the organization for other opportunities. To achieve the goal, however, specifically designed training and development are needed for identified candidates [23], [14].

[23] recommended a combination of traditional and non-traditional approaches. Traditional approaches included executive coaching, mentoring, and rotation of job functions. Non-traditional approaches included projects meant to stretch the candidate's experiences, community service, experience on a non-profit board, and reverse mentoring – where the candidate was tasked with a leading team composed of superiors. [22] specified to avoid the pitfall of providing generic managerial training, rather than intensive individualized professional development opportunities. [10] recommended the use of individual development plans to help employees develop the needed competencies to be successful in the future.

Some educational organizations recognized the importance of targeted development. [27] reviewed a program to train new administrators for New York City schools. Applicants underwent a multi-prong assessment, and those selected were provided with specific individualized development plans. No two leadership candidates had the same plan, as each plan was designed to help the candidate develop specific knowledge and skills, and gain targeted experiences.

[28] agreed that specific training and strong mentoring were needed for new principals. While there were similarities in many leadership development programs, there were also vast differences. For example, [29] reviewed a Delaware school district's succession-planning process. The district's assistant superintendent stated the school district struggled to fill administrative vacancies before implementing the program, and now the concern transitioned to which of the qualified personnel was the best cultural fit. All principals mentor candidates on a rotating basis for the two-year development program.

Retention. While the identification of talent in conjunction with targeted development and mentoring were frequent themes in the literature, the final component of a successful succession plan was the retention of top-tier candidates. [23] contended that retaining top performers was equally as important as preparing new talent; both were needed for organizational success.

Beyond the high costs associated with replacing high-caliber employees, [23] indicated that retaining top-tier candidates provided a higher return on investment, as the internal employees had demonstrated experience as well as an understanding of the culture at the organization. [22] asserted the link between performance and the reward as well as the recognition given should be clear to the employees. Reference [22] had also linked open communication and employee growth opportunities. He stated there had to be transparency in the entire process.

Combining the above discussions, the assessment of the succession planning could look at how a certain school do identification of candidates, what sort of training and development is provided and how retention of promising employees is conducted.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research was descriptive research that relied on quantitative data collected from teachers at selected private schools in Addis Ababa. The target population of this research was employees of private schools in Addis Ababa. According to the [30], there are 146 Secondary and Preparatory Schools in Addis Ababa with a total of 3189 teachers and administrative staff. Out of those, a total of 283 were surveyed.

Data was collected using a self-administered paper-based questionnaire (the survey method). The data collected was quantitative data collected employing a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha calculated for the scale to determine reliability (internal consistency) showed that all the six sub-scales had an alpha of more than 0.7 which is acceptable according to [31].

Descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation, were used to analyze the participant response. Further, a One-Sample t-test was used to ascertain the statistical significance of the mean values before making interpretations.

IV. ANALYSIS

The survey participants were asked to provide their opinion regarding the importance of succession planning as well as its key elements such as identification of talent, talent development, and talent retention. Lastly, they were asked about the success of succession planning at their respective Schools. In line with this, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree to the statements given regarding the importance of succession planning, identification of talent, talent development, talent retention, and the success of succession planning at their respective schools.

The response was measured using a Likert scale where options ranged from 1 to 5, with 1 representing 'strongly

disagree', 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, and 5= strongly agree.

Importance of Succession Planning: the first variable in the questionnaire is looked at the importance of 'succession planning' for the schools the participants worked for. This variable was measured using three questions: (1) SP is important to the school, (2) SP is important for the current operational needs, (3) SP is relevant for future and strategic needs. Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics for these questions.

TABLE 1: IMPORTANCE OF SP

Importance of SP	Mean	Std. Deviation
SP is important to the school	4.81	.394
SP is important for current operational needs	4.69	.462
SP is relevant for future and strategic needs	4.60	.490
Overall mean	4.70	

Participants response related to the importance of SP, in general, shows a strong agreement to its importance. To the first question asking 'is SP important to the school' participants indicated a strong agreement with M=4.81 and sd=0.394. Regarding its importance specific to the current operations, participants also showed their strong agreement (M=4.69 and sd = 0.462). Similarly, its importance to future needs and strategic importance has also received a strong agreement with mean M=4.60 and sd=0.490. Overall, the importance of succession planning has received a mean of M=4.70.

Identification of Talent: the variable rated by participants was the identification of talent in the sampled school's succession planning effort. This item was measured using four related questions (see Table 2). The first asked if the school makes a deliberate effort to identify potential candidates to be successors. Respondents' mean rating showed they disagree with the statement (M=2.46 and sd=0.933). Participants also disagreed with the statement that the school used multiple measures to identify potential candidates with their mean rating of M=2.16 (sd=0.855). Similarly, participants also disagreed with both the two statements 'assessment of candidates is based on multiple sources' as well as 'future carrier aspirations of staff members are considered in selection' with M=1.95 (0.825) and M=1.91 (0.849). This shows that all four items measuring identification of talent received a disagree rating (overall M=2.12) indicating poor identification of talent for succession planning at the sampled schools.

TABLE 2: IDENTIFICATION OF TALENT

Identification of Talent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Deliberate effort to identify candidates	2.46	.993
Use of multiple measures	2.16	.855
Multiple sources of assessment	1.95	.825
Future career aspirations considered	1.91	.849
Overall mean	2.12	

Talent Development: talent development was the third item covered by the questionnaire. This identified six different mechanisms or tools whose result is showed in Table 3 below. Descriptive statistics for each question show that the schools

covered in the sampling didn't do well in the deliberate efforts made to develop staff for successor positions. It can be observed from Table 3 below that participants disagreed with the use of all the six approaches like making a deliberate effort, plans for the individual development of candidates, degree program education, on the job training, mentoring, and rotation. All six items received a mean ranging from M=1.77 to M=1.54 with standard deviations less than one. This indicated, developing successors is an area that the schools need to improve a lot.

TABLE 3: DEVELOPMENT OF TALENT

Planned Development of Talent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Deliberate effort to develop successors	1.77	0.954
Individual development plans	1.69	0.880
On/Off-the-job degree programs	1.59	0.872
Planned on-the-job training	1.63	0.833
Planned mentoring	1.59	0.856
Planned job rotation	1.54	0.863
Overall mean	1.63	

On the contrary, participants indicated their agreement with the use of 'unplanned on-the-job training' with mean M=4.05 (sd=0.872) and 'unplanned mentoring' with M=4.18 (sd=0.696). This indicates that if any, the school's succession planning is dependent on unplanned talent development efforts.

TABLE 4: UNPLANNED DEVELOPMENT OF TALENT

Unplanned Development of Talent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Unplanned on-the-job trainings	4.05	0.872
Unplanned mentoring programs	4.18	0.696
Overall mean	4.12	

Talent Retention: this looked at efforts aimed at how potential successors are retained. The first item statement, valuable employees are rewarded, received a mean of M=3.90 (sd=0.970) while 'high-quality employees stay at the school' and 'high performing employees stay at the school' was given a similar mean of M=3.84 (sd=1.016 and sd=0.993). Participants to an extent tend to agree that talent is being retained at the schools sampled.

TABLE 5: RETENTION OF TALENT

Retention of Talent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valuable employees are rewarded	3.90	0.970
High-quality employees stay at the school	3.84	1.016
High performing employees stay at the school	3.84	0.993
Overall mean	3.86	

The success of succession planning: finally, the participants were asked the extent to which they agree with statements that show the success of succession planning at their schools. The first stated that 'the school can quickly fill vacancies in key positions from within the school'. The mean given by the participants was M=3.43 (sd=1.333) which was halfway between 'neutral' and 'agree'. This suggests that not all the participants agree to their school's ability to quickly fill vacancies from within. The second statement read as 'the school can fill the majority of vacancies in key positions from within the school'.

Similarly, the mean participants' rating was 3.49

(sd=1.216) suggesting that there is no clear agreement with the statement. The third statement 'internal replacements for key positions can quickly perform at the level required' also received a mean of M=3.48 (sd=1.189). The result shows that although they do not disagree, participants do not agree to the success of succession planning at their schools which was also evident in a relatively higher standard deviation (See Table 6).

TABLE 6: SUCCESS OF SP

The success of the succession planning	Mean	Std. Deviation
Quickly fill vacancies in key positions from within the school	3.43	1.333
Fill the majority of vacancies in key positions from within the school	3.49	1.216
Internal replacements for key positions can quickly perform	3.48	1.189
Overall mean	3.47	

V. DISCUSSION

The discussion of descriptive statistics above showed that certain dimensions and elements of succession planning at the schools sampled. As can be seen in Table 7 the importance of succession planning, unplanned talent development, and talent retention seem to receive a positive rating by the participants while identification of talent and planned talent development did not receive a positive rating. The success of succession planning on the other hand was given no clear rating by the participants.

Before making further discussion of these findings, a one-sample t-test was conducted to see if the mean ratings of the participants are significantly different from a neutral rating.

TABLE 1: MEAN RATINGS OF ELEMENTS OF SP

Elements of SP	Mean	Std. Deviation
Importance of SP	4.70	.346
Identification of Talent	2.12	.619
Planned Talent Development	1.63	.696
Unplanned Talent Development	4.12	.593
Talent Retention	3.86	.851
The success of the SP	3.47	1.089

To test the statistical significance of the mean ratings given by participants, a One-Sample T-Test was done. As shown in Table 8, the result indicated that the means of all the six elements are statistically significant at a 99% confidence interval.

TABLE 8: RESULT OF ONE-SAMPLE TEST

Elements of SP	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Importance of SP	82.619	.000
Identification of Talent	-23.910	.000
Planned Talent Development	-33.003	.000
Unplanned Talent Development	31.708	.000
Talent Retention	17.041	.000
The success of the SP	7.226	.000

Participants gave importance of succession planning for the schools they work at a mean M=4.7 with sd=0.346 which was statistically significant at $t(282) = 82.619, p < 0.01$. This is in line with the general body of knowledge that indicates the importance of succession planning to schools [20] [32]. However, looking at the different elements of succession

planning, one can see that there is no adequate or intentional practice in place at the sampled schools. For example, 'identification of talent' which is considered pivotal consideration [33] was given a mean of $M=2.12$ with $sd=0.619$ which showed their disagreement was statistically significant at $t(282) = -23.910$, $p < 0.01$. This indicates that the sampled schools are not doing well in the identification of potential successors.

Similarly, participants expressed their disagreement with the planned development of talent with a mean of $M=1.63$ and $sd=0.696$. This was also statistically significant at $t(282) = -33.003$, $p < 0.01$. This goes against other research findings like [34] who showed proactive talent development programs that offer the best learning, including mentoring, coaching, training, and special developmental activities such as university executive programs and in-company action learning sessions. On the other hand, unplanned development of talent received a mean of $M=4.12$ and $sd=0.593$ which was statistically significant at $t(282) = 31.708$, $p < 0.01$.

This shows that if there are any talent development efforts at the sampled schools, those only happen incidentally and unplanned. This in part is similar to the findings by [35] who in his study of four school districts in Florida found that informal mentoring occurred more frequently than formal mentoring. However, [36] who noted that deliberate learning, as well as unplanned learning, are very important to the development of successors, structured (deliberate) programs are more important.

The other aspect of succession planning was the retention of talent. Participants mean rating was $M=3.86$ and $sd=0.851$ which was also statistically significant ($t(282) = 17.041$, $p < 0.01$). In this aspect, the sampled schools seem to be doing relatively well. [32] also found that retention of talent is relevant and a shortage of teachers will inevitably lead to a shortage of potential successors.

The success of the succession planning at those schools was given a mean of $M=3.47$ and $sd=1.089$ gave a mixed message. Although it was statistically significantly ($t(282) = 7.226$, $p < 0.01$) higher than a neutral opinion, it did not result in a clear agreement between participants as evidenced in the relatively higher standard deviation. It can there suggest that succession planning at the selected schools is partially successful even though it is not a fully deliberate program.

VI. CONCLUSION

As the famous saying goes, failing to plan is planning to fail. Schools that fail to prioritize succession planning end up experiencing steady attrition in talent or retaining people with outdated skills.

As the findings of the study suggest succession planning at the sampled schools is done partially with mixed results. Accordingly, it can be concluded that participants understand the importance of succession planning for both current operational needs as well as future strategic aspirations.

This can serve as a good starting point to institute or put in place a well thought of succession planning program at the schools. Elements of succession planning are partially practiced and implemented. According to the participants, identification of talent and deliberate or planned development is not properly done while unplanned development of talent

and retention of talents is practiced.

This leads to the conclusion that succession planning is done traditionally in a manner that does not guarantee a positive outcome from the succession planning. Regarding the participants' view on the success of succession planning, it was found that participants had a mixed view. This implies a lot remains to be improved to assume the success of succession planning at the schools sampled.

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