

The Leadership Practices That Are Used In Succession Planning In the Adventist Educational Institutions in Africa.

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Abstract: *One of the most significant events in the life of Adventist educational institutions is a change in its leadership. Yet few things in Adventist education succeed without leadership succession practices in place. Adventist educational institutes are better off when transitions in their top ranks go smoothly. However the Adventist educational institutions seem to have overlooked this important factor, As a result finding qualified leaders with the right leadership skills has been a critical problem in seventh day Adventist educational institutions in Africa. In line with such challenges, there is a risk of naming a successor who is not well prepared, lacks experience, skill, or training in Christian leadership and this greatly affects continuity and the achievement of institutional goals.*

Key Words: *Leadership Practices, Leadership Skills, Succession Planning, Intellectual Talents, Institutional Goals, Knowledge Capital.*

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I. Introduction

The success of any educational institution depends largely on its ability to plan for its leadership transitions. Visionary successful institutions tend to promote and develop leadership talent grown from within their internal structures. One aim of succession planning is to match the organization's available talent to its needed future talent. Another aim is to help the organization meet the strategic and operational challenges facing it by having the right people at the right place and at the right time to do the right things (Kim, 2006). In the new perspective of succession planning, each person in an organization is a leader (Beyers, 2006).

II. Purpose Of This Study

New administrators in Adventist educational institutions feel unprepared to deal with key aspects of their jobs because they have not been prepared for such tasks. In some cases faculty are appointed to a senior ranks based upon their deep subject knowledge, not based on leadership skills. This is because there are no proper plans across the board regarding leadership development, and succession when need arises. It also seems there is no incorporation of succession planning into strategic planning. Because of this deficiency, Adventist educational institutions are facing great challenges in terms of leadership and leadership continuity in key positions, developing intellectual and knowledge capital for the future. Succession planning has become an important practice in educational institutes around the world. But for Adventist top leadership succession planning is a strategic process that minimizes leadership gaps for critical positions.

III. Literature Review And Other Related Studies

Henri Fayol (1841 to 1925), a French pioneer of management history, was among the first individuals to recognize and document the universal organizational need for succession planning (Rothwell, 2001). However, effective leaders down through the centuries have developed and implemented succession plans for their organizations. In contrast there are many educational institutes including seventh day Adventist educational institutes today who give little or no "thought to the inclusion of their leadership and so they do little to prepare for it. However, when suddenly faced with leaving their offices, they realize that much of their work will have been in vain unless there is a capable successor" (Rothwell, 2001). This is the real situation my observations have captured in the seventh day Adventist educational institutes in Zambia yet this component of management is very paramount for continuous growth and development of the institution. Seventh day Adventist educational institutes have been slow to embrace a formal approach to succession planning for their top management, however succession planning abounds several advantages in terms of leadership continuity and systematic management of the institutions.

Martin (2010) asserts that “Organizations that fail to develop and promote employees from within may breed low staff morale due to lack of a sense of career path” (p.258). On the other hand Maxwell (2003) asserts that, “There is no success without succession,” (p.10). Barry & Jacobs (2006) “Succession planning is not a short term strategy, but entails a long term and an extensive approach towards the training and replacement of leaders in key positions” (p.327).

Today, most organizations have a system in place to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement (Rothwell, 2010). With the advent and aggressive expansion of the global marketplace, organizations are faced with increased pressure to identify individuals who possess the skills and qualifications necessary to lead the organizations in the challenging today’s environment. Many senior leaders have learned that the distinguishing characteristic of successful organizations is the ability to identify, develop, and deploy exceptional leadership talent (Barner, 2006).

IV. Major Findings

Succession planning therefore follows a deliberate attempt by the current leadership of an institution to provide for its future needs for competent personnel in key positions that may become vacant. Any succession plan will have the following functional objectives: (1) identify and select best-fit candidates for leadership positions; (2) assure effective leadership development; (3) preserve organizational knowledge and intellectual capital, and (4) maximize retention and minimize turnover of top-performing employees.

The major benefit of succession planning is that it makes it possible to sufficiently source and develop crucial talent, the retention of employees and supports long-term growth. It also makes possible to meet the career development requirements of existing employees, and to counteract the increasing difficulty of recruiting employees externally. Martin Haworth (2007) states in his Ezine article “Succession Planning Toolkit” that holes in the hierarchy can be disastrous causing major effects in a company’s productivity. This is more the reason why it is a good idea to hire from within for key positions, so that the only sudden openings are in the lower positions that are more easily filled.

One of the aspects of succession planning involves looking over each position periodically, evaluating the current employee and the possible successor to make sure that there is a smooth transition and to minimize any possible disruption in the organization. The training and grooming of a successor can take years to achieve and therefore this process must be given the importance it deserves.

Succession Planning is significant to the overall health of an organization and therefore extra care should be taken in the hiring process to ensure that all employees hired or recruited can be groomed and trained to move up the organization’s corporate ladder. By hiring from within, the organization demonstrates and gives people an incentive to want to work for the current organization. An employee that is happy in an organization is not likely to abscond. It also enhances a company’s good reputation and competitiveness.

Furthermore, succession planning can assist organizations in accomplishing employee commitment, in becoming a learning organization, in surviving changing markets, and in being sustainable businesses. Succession planning actively prepares the company and employee to survive the ever-changing markets, equipped for future needs. Continuous matching of employees’ talents to current needs and training them for future responsibilities creates a cycle of anticipated developmental growth and goal attainment.

Succession planning also allows company executives to vigorously plan for business sustainability even for a uniform change of ownership. Succession planning ensures that when key leaders are about to exit the system then an exit strategy must be prepared and a solid plan must be provided for continuity of the business.

The beauty of succession planning is that it identifies and grooms high-potential candidates for future key positions, ensuring that the investment made in each employee brings a return in the form of preparedness, confidence and ability, giving organizations the ability to be more competitive and to meet the challenges of the future with confidence.

Commitment to succession planning has to come from top down in an organization. It needs to be owned by people at the top and actively led by the organizations executive committee, who ensures that succession planning is given the importance it deserves. It should be ensuring that there is a healthy pipeline of potential leaders to secure the sustainability of the future of the organization.

The seventh day Adventists educational institutions in their own operations should have at least potential successors. This is a critical issue because if the organization is not actively identifying potential successors, then the top leadership lacks the ability to delegate, develop and groom successors. According to Rothwell (2005, p.15-41), for succession planning in a management programme to be effective, organizations must have a method to replace key job incumbents as vacancies occur in their positions. The traditional method that was used for succession was from within the organization.

Rothwell (2005) notes that in preparing individuals for succession the organization has an obligation to do more than identifying current and future work requirements and performance. There must be a way to clarify

and systematically close the development gap between what successors can do and what is required for advancement. Organizations should engage their employees in individual development planning programs to equip them to qualify for advancements. Groves (2007) states that for optimal development of a healthy leadership pipeline, best practice organizations encourage effective integration of leadership development and succession planning systems. Best practice organizations fully utilize managers in developing the organization's leadership development network and establishing a flexible and fluid succession planning process.

Adventist educational institutions in this study lacked a proper formalized and proper written succession planning in place no formal plans exist. There is need for Adventist education institution to understand what succession planning is, that succession planning deals with passing on responsibility rather than merely filling a vacancy. It is clear that recruitment occurs in the moment and deals with the issues that the organization is facing it that point and not the future. The traditional replacement approach method used to fill in vacant senior position is viewed as not being the best method because it is reactive rather than proactive.

V.Conclusions

There is a need for actions to be taken to develop a written succession plan that directs the planning process for leadership positions and to work on writing a definite guide for leadership development that guides the Educational institutions. This will help in guaranteeing that organizations have employees on hand ready and waiting to fill new roles. Seventh day Adventist educational institutions should include leadership development and succession planning within the annual plan. This will provide more talent information to the leaders as they participate in meetings, which will enhance the decision-making process regarding the selection of high potentials and successors. Additionally, succession planning must be continuously evaluated and improved to ensure the organization is fully prepared. Seventh Day Adventist educational institutions should make an effort to develop policies and procedures that are related to the planning of leadership development and career paths for their staffs.

Succession cannot and does not happen by chance, especially if we want to achieve the standards of excellence and versatility necessary for mastering today's complex educational systems. Succession planning should become a more continuous, holistic process that is at the heart of everything that leaders do. Previous research has shown that educational institution needs to identify and prepare future leaders (Rothwell, 2005; Hargreaves, 2005). Adventist educational institutions should realize that having a succession plan in place should be one of the top priorities. This enables successful continued growth and development of an educational institution. To be effective in future succession planning efforts, Adventist education institutions should not think only on "what they know and have" but also on "what they aspire to become." It is not cost cutting but strategic innovation that differentiates great from mediocre institutions. These institutions need to take a long-term systemic approach to succession in their strategic planning and create a supportive environment and culture for doing so.

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