

# Succession Planning Strategy for Non-Academic Staff at Malaysian Public Universities

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## Abstract

Today's successful organizations realize on the important of strong key position to maintain and sustain long-term productivity. In a time when the competition for top talent increases, many organizations have developed strategic succession planning process to ensure their organizations will be well positioned to compete in the long-term. Besides, Higher education will face similar challenges as those who have led for years leave their institutions. This quantitative research aimed to identify the nature and characteristics of succession planning, to determine the relationship between the degree of clarity of the concept of succession planning and the implementation of succession planning and to identify the relationship between managerial support towards succession planning and the implementation of succession planning among non-academic staff at one of public university in Malaysia. Quantitative research method is practiced in this research. The questionnaire, 5 point Likert scale has been used to collect the data. Hence, the research sample is composed of 55 non-academic staff from Grade N41 to N54. Nevertheless, 46 of the completed questionnaires were received, producing a 92 per cent response rate for this study. The finding revealed that managerial support towards succession planning had overall highest mean values from the respondents, while the degree of the clarity of the concept and implementation of succession planning had moderate mean values from the respondents. There is a significant positive relationship between the degree of clarity of the concept and implementation succession planning. Likewise, there is a significant positive relationship between managerial support and implementation of succession planning. Moreover, implications of the findings, suggestions for future studies and recommendations for proactive implementation and action to be taken were also presented.

**Keywords:** Succession planning; Non-academic staff; Public university.



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## 1. Introduction

Succession planning involves having the right employees in place at every level of the organization. It is a systematic effort and process of identifying and developing employees for key managerial or professional positions to ensure business continuity (Adewale *et al.*, 2011). Succession planning is a comprehensive plan to address both current and future leadership needs while maintaining the existing merit principles (Garcia, 2006). Darvish and Zahra (2014) defined succession planning is the process of identifying the key leadership positions within each department and developing employees within state government to assume these positions. A good Succession plan is supported by strategic HR systems such as Learning and Development of key talent, Recruitment and Selection of internal and external talent and Performance Management to drive competence excellent in identified talent. These key HR systems will enable a successful execution of the succession plan. Today's business environments are changing rapidly that organizations are facing serious unpredictability and uncertainty, which sometimes causes instability in the business operations. In this unstable environment, organizations need to rely on the most important assets such as their employees and its satisfaction (Alizadeh *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, organizations need to strategize to motivate and connect their employees in order to create competitive advantage and achieving higher profitability. Hence, organizations may consider methods like succession planning to promote their employees' knowledge, skills, talents, and capabilities to tackle problems created by the challenging environments (Mehrabani and Mohamad, 2011). According to Hirsch (2007) for the organization to meet its business suitability, it must execute the succession planning to their overall strategy. In addition, most of the organizations succession planning

solely focus on senior key employees, yet other organization chooses to apply the same concepts and processes to specific groups of people and job.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Succession Planning in Higher Education

According to [Darvish and Zahra \(2014\)](#), Succession planning has a great importance for the organization included higher education, since it has been stabilizes. Therefore, higher education needs recognize and develop their future leaders, and then they can be able to tackle environmental challenges. Hence, an effective strategy that higher education need to use to fill the gaps that arising out of the retirement of the directors at universities is to use strategic succession planning in order to keep satisfy and develop the talented staff. A number of high education group, are experiencing a lack of qualified successor ([Jacobson, 2010](#)). However, there are some studies in academic area exist to guide strategic succession planning ([Meek, 2007](#)). Besides, there is a need to develop employees' leadership capacity. These capacities included networking, managing staff, academic activities, management and administration, planning and policy development, that according to [Scott et al. \(2008\)](#), find out on their study on 513 and top level academic leader in Australian Universities. Nevertheless, these activities need an effective tool or method for change management; strategic succession planning might consider developing managerial knowledge and skills among the employees. ([Scott et al., 2008](#)). In New Zealand education workforce need large number to staff to replace leadership roles form 2010 to 2020 when baby boomers generation will announce their retirement. Effective Strategic succession planning would help to make sure that the basic competency implemented. In addition, about 30 per cent of academic staff will retire in the period of 2010 to 2020, according to ministry of education, ([Scott et al., 2008](#)) that may result worsening to professionalization of key position leaders in New Zealand school education if they do not use an effective strategic succession plan.

### 2.2. Implementation of Succession Planning

Succession planning process implements in two companies which are general management and human resource management ([Hall, 1986](#)). Succession planning implementation processes include recruiting, key leadership development. The most important step in the succession planning implementation process may well be recruiting that is focused on identifying employees with ability for leadership ([Griffith and Griffith, 2012](#)). According to ([Crosby and shields, 2010](#)) outlined the requirements for leadership development should include educational side of the employee to the implementation process, whereas ([Shifflet and Moyer, 2010](#)) emphasized the steps employees needed to take to become a department leaders. In addition, succession planning implementation starts with the organizations' strategic planning based upon a clear vision and mission that involves management and support with other departments within the organization. A large and growing body of literature has investigated the implementation of succession planning is the failure to acknowledge the possible obligation for external recruiting ([Griffith and Griffith, 2012](#)). The implementation of leadership succession is an important agenda in very organizations to remain competitive and archive its long term objective ([Alsarhi et al., 2012](#)) through an effective implementation of succession system the organization will grow future leaders and to ensure continuous development, succession is one of the important strategy in achieving long term of the organization's objective and it is a good way to enhance people knowledge internally. Thus, organizations will have smooth transfer of leadership roles and responsibilities and it delivers continuity in business operation, organizational attitude and work environment. Yet, the issue of succession is fundamental to understand the whole process of implementation of leadership succession system ([Alsarhi et al., 2012](#)). However, organization fail to implement an effective succession planning because their thought of succession when it is too late as its leaders are too busy with egotistical plan and leaders do not know how to go about the process of selecting a successor as they do not involve in applying it in the first place ([Pauline Joyce et al., 2009](#)). [Long et al. \(2013\)](#) also cited dissimilarities in institution and organization cultures result in a challenge to implement succession planning in the field of higher education sectors. Likewise, the difficulty in connecting a principle taught during the classes with a concept that should be applied in the of higher education institutions administrations ([Lampton, 2010](#)). Moreover, the proper implementation of a succession strategy, universities and colleges will be able to drive their academic and organizational excellence to up levels. Similarly, using this strategic system, colleges and universities will be able to attain a degree of success that can only be professionally derived through staff productivity self-motivation and the organization support. Hence, with these tools higher education equally will be able to continue to develop and enhance their own capabilities.

## 3. Methodology

Methodology plays a very significant role in the research. It is mainly use as a method for the researcher to carry out a research by using the method of collecting and analyzing the data. This chapter discussed the various methods and approaches that were adopted to achieve the research objectives. The research design, data collection methods and data analysis methods were appropriately selected in accordance to the research objectives. All of these were presented in the part as following.

Populations refer to the entire group of people, events, or things of interest that the researcher wished to investigate. The population frame is a listing of all the elements in the population from which the sample is drawn. Hence, a sampling frame is the source material or device from which a sample is drawn. It is a list of all those within a population who can be sampled, and may include individuals, households or institutions. The target population of

this study was non-academic staff in University A. Therefore, the target respondents of this study are assistant registrar staffs from grade N41 to N54, who are involved in the systematic succession planning process.

Data collection is part of the research design, there are several data collection methods, which are interviews, questionnaires, and observation. The purpose of this study was to identify the nature and characteristics of succession planning and to determine the relationship between the degree of clarity of the concept and managerial support towards succession planning on implementation of succession planning among non-academic staff in University A. Thus, for data collection of this research, a questionnaire tool was used as a primary data. The data were collected and analyzed by using "IBM Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) Statistics" version 20.0. Collected numerical and statistical data was analyzed and concluded.

## 4. Discussion and Conclusion

This last section summarized the most important results that have been gathered as results of this study and discusses the findings of this project. Besides, the research questions that have been identified were answered in this chapter. It is partitioned into five sections. The first section provides an overview of the research and summarizes the research process. The second section presents the discussions and interpretations of the key findings of this study. The third section outlines the research implications for theory, methodology, and practices. Meanwhile, Section 4 outlines the most important recommendations proposed in light of the results are presented which contribute towards promoting and supporting strengths or addressing and correcting weaknesses. After all, the fifth section concludes this research study which is to know the implementation of succession planning among non-academic staff in University A. Hence, Research findings were outcome from Chapter 4 which the findings were based on two (2) types of analysis aforementioned in the study. Therefore, several findings emerged from this study and the following are the main results.

### 4.1. Research Objective I

This objective was achieved by using deceptive analysis; three variables, which are clarity concept of, managerial support towards succession planning and implementation of succession planning, used to fulfill the objective of the study. There is a moderate approval from the respondents that the degree of the clarity of the concept of succession planning, the overall highest mean found to be ( $M=3.67$ ,  $SD=0.626$ ). The mean values were classified as 1.00-2.33=low, 2.34-3.67= medium and 3.68-5.00= high based on the agreement level of mean measurement developed by [Chua \(2006\)](#). Another important finding was that there is a high approval from the respondents that the managerial support towards succession planning the overall mean found to be ( $M=3.74$ ,  $SD=0.729$ ). Surprisingly, the implementation of succession planning among non-academic staff in UNIVERSITY A was found to be at a moderate level with overall mean of ( $M3.61$ ,  $SD=0.778$ ) same as the mean in degree of clarity of the concept of succession planning part. These findings contradicted the findings of [Ku et al. \(2016\)](#) who found that there is significant influence of two independent variables which are leadership style and knowledge management on successive planning effectiveness. Likewise, this results is also contradicted with the results of [González \(2013\)](#) found that is a gap between the perceived importance of various principles of succession planning and how well the principles are practiced. After all, it can be concluded that only one variable has a high approval from respondents which is managerial support towards succession planning. While the others two variables namely clarity of concept and implementation of succession planning were at moderate category. However, that proves that the nature and characteristics of succession planning among non-academic staff in University A still has yet to reach its expected level.

### 4.2. Research Objective II

The second objective was to determine the relationship the second objective was to determine the relationship between the degree of clarity of the concept of succession planning and the implementation of succession planning among non-academic staff in University A. This objective was achieved by using spearman correlation analysis. The results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between the degree of clarity of the concept and implementation succession planning. This outcome is differ from the study of [Campbell and Mentor \(2009\)](#) who found acknowledgement that while leadership development activities were prevalent, few institutions had formal succession plans, and examples of how academic governance and culture may have influenced institutional approaches to succession planning. Likewise, [Mckay \(2012\)](#) outlined that there was a significant correlation between trustees' perceived behavioral control of succession planning and trustees attitudes towards succession planning. This result has shown that the respondents agreed to field of managerial support towards succession planning. Hence, this finding differ from study by [Othman \(2012\)](#) who found that there is no significant difference among the officers Grade N41 to N54 on their perception on the effectiveness of succession planning, career development and knowledge management practices. Although both of the studies aim to identify the level of succession planning among administrative staff from Grade N42 to N54, the chosen factors were not same.

### 4.3. Research Objective III

The third objective was to determine the relationship between managerial support towards succession planning and the implementation of succession planning among non-academic staff in University A, also was achieved by spearman correlation analysis. The results found to have a significant positive correlation between the two variables same as the correlation in the degree of clarity concept and implementation of succession planning part. There is a

significant positive relationship between managerial support towards succession planning and implementation of succession planning. This finding is in line with findings of Heba (2013) who found that there is a significant relationship between the degree of clarity of the concept, managerial support of succession planning and the current state of succession planning in major NGOs in the Gaza Strip. However, Ku *et al.* (2016) they found that there is significant influence leadership style and knowledge management on successive planning effectiveness which was contradicted with the findings of this study. Hence, it can be concluded that the respondents agreed to field of the degree of clarity of the concept of succession planning.

## 5. Conclusion

The key aim of this research is to scrutinize the implementation of succession planning among non-academic staff in University A. In line with this objective, three main research questions are formed: First, What is the nature and characteristics of succession planning among non-academic staff in University A? Second, is there any relationship between the degree of clarity of the concept of succession planning and the implementation of succession planning among nonacademic staff in University A? Third, is there any relationship between managerial support towards succession planning and the implementation of succession planning among non-academic staff in University A? Hence, the objectives of this study were successfully achieved through distribution of surveys. A questionnaire that manifests the proposed research model constructs is formulated to gather the primary data for the research. The data was gathered from 46 non-academic staff at University A administration center, office, faculties and library. This study is a quantitative approach. Based on the results obtained through IBM SPSS Statistics software, the nature and characteristics of succession planning among non-academic staff in University A still not reach it is expected level yet. Likewise, based on the results found there is a there is a significant positive relationship between the degree of clarity of the concept and implementation succession planning same as the correlation in the degree of clarity concept and implementation of succession planning part. There is a significant positive relationship between managerial support and implementation of succession planning at the level of significant  $\alpha = 0.05$ . Throughout the research, researcher experienced several limitations. The lack of similar past research, and validity of results obtained from questionnaire were limitations faced by the researcher. Several recommendations were also suggested for university in special and other education in general as well as for future researchers. For University A, it is suggested that the university should include succession planning within the short and long-term plan. Likewise, succession planning should be discussed and updated on a regular basis in each department in order to increase leaders' responsibility toward following through with budding activities with staff and Hold training courses on the succession planning concept and its characteristics for senior management to develop more understanding on succession planning. Recommendation for future researchers to use a larger sample of respondents stratified sampling method and qualitative analysis, in conducting similar study in the future. After all, we hope that the findings of this research would not only shed light on or contribute to the literature, but more significantly to improve the performance of the staff in University A in special and high education sectors in general.

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