LDR 813, Organizational Dynamics

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1. Write a 5-page essay responding to a significant problem you have identified in an

organization you are knowledgeable about.

Paper Outline

a. Begin with an introductory paragraph that has a succinct thesis statement.

b. Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.

c. End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.

d. Use a minimum of eleven scholarly research sources (two books and the

remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

**Continuity and Operational Stability: The Importance of Succession Planning in Higher Education**

Succession planning is important for organizational continuity and operational stability (Gordon, & Overbey, 2018; Dahlan, 2024). When leaders move on through retirement, resignation and redundancies, organizational change becomes eminent. In some organizations critical roles and leadership positions become vacant at inconvenient times where there are either multiple leaders leaving or critical roles to the function of the organization are vacant. When multiple leadership vacancies or pending vacancies without a clear succession instability ensues.

“Higher education (HE) institutions face many external challenges including decreased funding (Marcus, 2019), declining enrollment (Beyer, 2019), impending college closures (Seltzer, 2019), pandemics (Huelsman, 2020), increased competition, expanding use of online learning modalities, and new government policies and initiatives (Gigliotti, 2017),” (Jackson, B. A., & Allen 2022, p. 800). These challenges impact sustainability and are dependent on leadership and management, creativity and marketing strategies and staffing within the organization which highlights the importance of succession planning. Succession planning is crucial in difficult times and should be in place long before hard times come. Succession planning is a “well-defined systematic procedure in which workers are harmonized to critical jobs with ongoing development and growth plans” (Keerio, & Ahmad, 2023 p. 2). Succession planning has benefits of stability within the organization, boosting morale of employees and developing leaders, however there can be negative outcomes such as challenges with maintaining old practices that stifle the organization’s growth and opportunity for change.

A key benefit of succession planning is that leaders can be developed from within (Maduforo, Scott, & Scott, 2024). Leadership development is ongoing and includes a process of evaluation and personal reflection. There are benefits to leadership development including “competitive succession planning, talent attraction, talent retention, expanded networking, and enhanced capabilities to confront contemporary challenges in higher education” (Maduforo, Scott, & Scott, 2024, p. 13). “In the context of leadership development in higher education, theories pertaining to leadership succession planning, as grounded in organizational development literature (Conger & Fulmer, 2003), emphasize the strategic significance of identifying and preparing future academic leaders. Prioritizing succession planning is imperative for academic institutions to ensure a smooth transition of leadership, fostering sustained effectiveness in addressing evolving challenges within the educational landscape (Conger & Fulmer, 2003; Kri et al., 2021). By cultivating an internal candidate for leadership roles, such as a dean or department head, academic institutions can ensure a deep understanding of the institution’s culture, educational goals, and strategic direction (Maduforo, Scott & Scott, 2024). The internal candidate for leadership can learn the intricacies of daily operations and engage with various stakeholders by observing and working alongside the current leader. This approach facilitates a seamless leadership transition, preventing any disruptions in academic operations that might arise if an external candidate were selected for a key leadership position.” (Maduforo, Scott & Scott, 2024 p. 4). Leadership development from within emphasizes the importance of seamless transition to leadership through a succession model similar to monarchies and religions. Based on this model, organizations promote leaders from within the organization to retain power and control of organizational direction similar to monarchies. Similarly, promoting academic faculty (Deans and Heads of departments) ensures continuity and understanding of organization culture and strategic direction. Operational activities can be learnt while shadowing the current leader. Variant to this view however, is the notion that leadership succession from outside the organization can be useful to bring about needed change that promote sustainability of the organization (Cain, 2024).

Another benefit of succession planning is it boosts morale and fosters engagement of employees (Abdullahi, Raman & Solarin, 2022; Sevier, 2018; Davenport, 2012). When staff know that the organization will invest in their development and promotion they are encouraged by opportunities presented for upward mobility in the organization. In higher education it is no different, staff retention and loyalty strengthens where there are opportunities for growth within. This therefore promotes an important level of stability. Group dynamics are also important in forging good relationships with staff and the organization in general. This helps to promote comraderies within a system of internal growth processes.

Notwithstanding the benefits of succession planning, inflexible practices as they operate in bureaucratic colleges and universities limit the ability of these institutions to develop and implement succession planning strategies (Barton, 2019; Jackson and Allen, 2022; Maduforo, Scott & Scott, 2024). Barton (2019) points out that academic faculty in higher education see themselves as working within their profession and from a department rather than operating from the overall institution and limits organizational alignment and psychological belonging. This culture can result in disconnection from the needs of the institution and prospects for successive leadership. As department head, working with a fairly large regional University of British heritage, there are remnants of ordinances, committees and procedures that though sometimes useful can impact the process with succession planning. My institution has many policies, career path committees, staff development protocols and other documentation and committees that sometimes do not make for effective planning for the future. In spite of this, there are sometimes opportunities to consider anomalies in the system.

Continuation of old ways that do not support innovation and stifles change is a downfall of succession planning in some organizations where the old boys club is perpetuated and the same ideas are recycled without new and creative thoughts for change (Barton, 2019). Barton (2019) posits that “it is important that current leaders with power and influence carefully reflect on their understanding of succession planning as an approach to developing future leaders, including whether the desire for a personal legacy comes at the unacceptable price of an ineffective or ill-prepared succession. It is likely that many leaders historically understood succession planning to involve tapping a “good old boys” network of other individuals who looked and thought like them in order to ensure continuity of the work under way” (p. 38).

Succession plans often only focus on the executive level which means that “the description of essential jobs in succession planning is also a topic of controversy, with some companies concentrating solely on top positions. Meanwhile, some contend that succession planning needs to be a thorough part of long-term strategy for continuous leadership development; the attention of succession planning ought to include the establishment of middle management and supervisory level posts”(Keerio & Ahmad, 2023 p. 3).

Succession planning approaches from corporate companies may not necessarily translate to higher education institutions for a number of reasons (Jackson, & Allen, 2022). These include the belief that internal successions will not make the needed changes, that there should be an open call to fill senior leadership vacancies, governance structures and multilayered stakeholder approach to selection, academic faculty lack of interest in administrative leadership among others. The latter has a negative perception as having a debilitating effect on professional academic careers (Jackson, & Allen, 2022).

In conclusion, a succession plan is not a program that is created suddenly. It is structured and forms part of the strategic focus of the organization. It is not isolated from operations, mission or culture of the organization. A well-established succession plan protects the intellectual capital, promotes talent management and is aligned with smooth leadership continuity. Succession plans ought to reflect a strategic focus and foresight for positions that will be required in the future. Succession planning has benefits of stability within the organization, boosting morale of employees and developing leaders, however caution must be taken given challenges with maintaining old practices that stifle the organization’s growth and opportunity for change.

References

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