

SUCCESSION PLANNING: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON MANAGERS' PERSPECTIVE.

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ABSTRACT

Succession planning is an area of importance for the continuity of an organisation, especially in the development of talented staff that may be groomed to be its human capital. Subsequently, understanding the perspectives of different stakeholders involved in succession planning programmes may provide invaluable information for its implementation. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to gather the lived experiences of participants in a succession planning development programme in order to determine their understanding of succession planning as well as its implementation. The purposeful sample of participants from managerial positions served to provide the lived experiences or essence of participating in a succession planning training programme. The interviews conducted were analysed using the constant comparative analysis technique and established patterns were identified through four emerging themes, which are Successor identification and talent pool formation, Required skillsets development for successors, Importance of predecessors' coaching and mentoring and Assurance of continuity and stability of the organisation in the market place.

Keywords: *Success planning, talent management, qualitative research.*

INTRODUCTION

One of the intangible assets of an organisation is the talents and skills of its human resource because it's talented and high performing staff may ensure a productive organisation. This implies that specific human resource strategies need to be put in place in order to retain them as well as prepare future talent for an organisation's sustainability in a challenging global world. One of the important areas of discussion is talent management and succession planning of which the latter is the focus of this study. According to Kim (2012), "Succession planning is a deliberate and systematic approach of mentoring, coaching and grooming individuals inside the organisation identified as having the potential to advance when vacancies occur" (p.1). It is far more than identifying an employee merely to take over and step into an unoccupied position. It involves identifying, developing, and furnishing talent either for the top positions or other important roles in the organisation. More often than not candidates are identified within the organisation and chosen based on their talents and skills to be potential successors.

The common element in identifying potential successors is the performance of these individuals based on their present work and their leadership abilities to lead in the future. Such a review is managed by the Human Resource Department (HRD) to plan and strategize the short and long term goals to meet the required human capacity for the sustainability and continuity of the organisation in the future. In relation to this, it is crucial for the organisation to also evaluate the talent record because the observation of high potentials and high performers in the entire organisation will produce the talent pool that will be useful for the HRD to plan and structure the future of the organisation. Ghee, Ibrahim and Abdul Halim (2015) mentioned that the identification of the talents suitable for future positions is critical. Hence, an intensive approach towards the formation of the said talent pool is an important contributing factor in designing a comprehensive strategy for succession planning.

Following a successful assessment process, the organization may need to determine a combination of strategies for preparing and developing the future human resource requirements. This is crucial for succession planning as the decision for hiring external talents against grooming talents internally demands critical considerations of risks and financial implications (Jantti & Greenhalgh, 2012). The development of an impactful structured leadership programme is a key contributing factor to achieving continuous success of a succession planning policy. The development of the participants in the talent pool may include structured modules and training to further strengthen their skills and also to generate new skill sets which will benefit them in their future undertakings. Komora, Wario Guyo and Odhiambo (2015) said that professional coaching from consultants and trainers will contribute to the quality and credibility of the said programme.

Succession planning is a dynamic process which continuously evolves in meeting present and future demands of an organisation. Programs developed for preparing and training successors requires some form of monitoring and tracking in order to ascertain its impact. Tornack, Pilarski and Schumann (2014) pointed out that the progress of all talents to be developed need to be measured so that they may be deemed qualified for the future position. This implies that direct and interested involvement of the management at a higher level in assuring the continuity of the organisation is important.

Many organisations take the initiative to plan, strategize and even announce a policy for succession planning. In most cases the HRD is assigned to spearhead the programme through various leadership development programmes (Brooks, 2014). Nakauchi and Wiersema (2015) also pointed out that even top management, which includes the Board of Directors also support and endorse any policy related to succession planning. Eshiteti, Okaka, and Maragia (2013) argued that it is crucial to have a talent pool comprising mid-level employees from within the organisation. Succession planning requires more than a paper policy but actual grooming or building talents internally from within the organisation and it requires active participation and engagement of employees in the succession planning programme, especially when it is a long term strategy for the organisation (Miodonski and Hines, 2013).

This study aimed to identify and describe the understanding of the concept of succession planning and how it is being best implemented in an organisation. In order for the research to address the subject of succession planning and to understand the perspectives of the managers, it is crucial to establish key research questions for this study. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the components of succession planning?
2. What are the strategies in succession planning?
3. How can leadership programmes ensure good succession planning?
4. What are the implications of good succession planning?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Succession planning can be categorized into namely four areas of discussion. They are Leadership Development, Talent Management, Knowledge Management and Employee Retention.

Leadership Development

The concept of identifying talents and making them ready for a future position, which awaits them, is crucial in succession planning. The quality of candidates is the main focus in order for the management to identify suitable and relevant personnel to be positioned in the leadership pipeline (Alvani, Souteh, Jandaghi & Inaloo, 2016). It is a strategic initiative usually lead by the HRD in expanding the organisation's capacity in order to generate potentials internally (Graffin, Boivie & Carpenter, 2013). This is where the development of future leaders take place and Komora, Wario Guyo and Odhiambo (2015) stated that leadership development initiatives for potential candidates allows them to be exposed to numerous skills and experience for both present and future roles. In addition, Villadsen (2016), Halls-Ellis (2015) and Foster (2015) indicated that a structured programme in building the succession pipeline is still the dominant factor in succession planning as it will greatly affect the long term effect of the organisation.

In addition, the coaching and mentoring of these future leaders to become successors can take place if a mentoring programme is put in place (Larcker & Saslow, 2014). Corner (2014) further states that such a formal mentoring would not only provide strategic leadership to the organisation but it is also cost effective when the incumbent themselves participate and provide the necessary know-how to the potential leaders. Janti and Greenhalgh (2012) believe that being role models themselves, the predecessors will provide greater credibility to the succession planning programme. In an environment that is captive in nature, the coaching and mentoring will help candidates to experience and learn best practices. Corner (2014) stated that such an approach is indeed an effective strategy as all the input from the senior leaders or the mentors are invaluable.

Talent Management

Talent management and succession planning are closely linked. It serves the purpose to support the organisation when there is a need to satisfy critical positions soon to be vacant. Tornack, Pilarski and Schumann (2014) emphasized the importance of building a pool of candidates in the succession pipeline. Upon having a significant number of qualified and suitable candidates plus analysing the skills gap, the organisation would be able to position these talents into a programme specifically tailored made for them (Brooks, 2014). The

process is tedious and requires meticulous identification and evaluation of candidates (Kim, 2012; Komora, Wario Guyo & Odhiambo, 2015).

Carnegie and Fiedman (2014) stated that talent management is crucial in making succession planning a success. Graffin, Boivie and Carpenter (2013) stated that identified talents in a succession programme will enable the potential candidates to expand their network shadowing their mentors along the way to the top hierarchy. Alvani, Souteh, Jandaghi and Inaloo (2016) emphasized that it will be effective and efficient to design a succession programme with a pool of suitable candidates from within the organisation. Identified candidates will certainly help accelerate the development and growth of the company through the structured talent management programme coordinated by the HRD as (Brooks, 2014; Jantti & Greenhalgh, 2012, and Komora, Wario Guyo & Odhiambo, 2015).

Knowledge Management

Organisations that would like to retain their talents will need to have a succession planning programme which prepares a candidate for a particular vacancy. On this note, the identification of those employees who are retiring and leaving the company should be within the knowledge of the HRD as the primary coordinator of this policy (Kim, 2012). According to Halls-Ellis (2015), leadership development programmes with mentors allow for the knowledge they have be transferred to the pool of identified talents. If such a transition of knowledge could take place in the best form of sharing and coaching the suitable candidates and the organisation will surely benefit from the continuity of its talented leadership for the years to come (Durst & Wilhelm, 2012). The latter described that the explicit and tacit knowledge shared with the employee would enable the organisation to retain valuable insights into the market's best practices and what the related industry players demand from an employee.

Through standardization of documents and on-the-job coaching, the selected candidates would be able to grasp the knowledge that could be beneficial to the company (Durst & Wilhelm, 2012). The organisation at large will have to ensure that the knowledge of the many senior leaders be retained with the company as much as it could either through codifying or recording the information through a systemic channel (Komora, Wario Guyo & Odhiambo, 2015; Ghee, Ibrahim & Abdul-Halim, 2015 & Corner, 2014). The importance of tapping the knowledge from the senior leaders is extremely crucial as it will definitely leave a great impact to the company should they retire eventually. As a result, there will be even greater knowledge and skills gap closure among staff in the long run.

Employee Retention

Striving to get the support and trust from the employees, especially those concerned about their future and career path is a crucial element in retaining the best talent within the organisation. The usual norm for any organisation upon not having a suitable candidate is to proceed by hiring an external talent to fill the vacant position. Tornack, Pilarski and Schumann (2014) pointed out that a defined strategic direction of the company would eventually increase the retention rate amongst employees. A strong policy which ensures that the well-being and career plan is carefully crafted and monitored by the HRD will

surely gain support from the employees as the leadership development is able to differentiate the quality of talent within the organisation (Deery & Jago, 2015).

Brooks (2014) suggested that identifying a good talent pool would enable the organisation to position and channel the talent effectively. There may be many candidates possessing high qualifications and usually are the outstanding performers in their respective departments including subject matter experts also known as high performers but Graffin, Boivie and Carpenter (2013) stated that it is only the high potentials or those capable to build their own experience are able to learn new functions and manage consequences to climb the leadership ladder. Kim (2012) stated that employee retention is a significant outcome upon implementing succession planning in an organisation, as it not only appreciates individual strength as suggested by Jantti and Greenhalgh (2012) but the policy in place will help to build a strong level of loyalty towards the organization amongst its employees (Corner, 2014). Such initiatives according to Corner (2014) and Badara, Johari and Yean (2015) are not only cost effective but also very impactful in getting the succession planning running efficiently in the organisation. The buy-in and support from the internal talents will bring the company to greater heights and success, especially when all of the talented candidates have a common goal for the organization. Eshiteti, Okaka, Maragia, Odera and Akerele tetti (2013) further emphasized that such an approach will greatly benefit the company when employees see the opportunity to grow by contributing their best for the company. Ultimately, the performance of employees may improve with a higher level of dedication and commitment being observed effectively throughout the organisation.

METHODOLOGY

Merriam (2009) highlighted four common characteristics in qualitative research, which are Focus on Meaning and Understanding, Researcher as the Primary Instrument, An Inductive Process and Richly Descriptive. The first common characteristic states that qualitative studies focus on the meaning and understanding where the interest is on how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their world and what meaning they attribute to their experiences. The focus is mainly on the respondents or emic (insider's perspective) and not the researcher or etic (outsiders view). In this research the focus was to gain perspectives from the managers on their interpretation and understanding of succession planning. The researcher as the instrument allows one to have direct contact with the respondents and context of the study. The inductive process allows emerging themes to be identified and a richly descriptive text is developed.

Research Design

In this study, the focus was on understanding the experiences and viewpoints of the managers in a succession planning programme in the chosen organisation, which is an established business entity in the Klang Valley in Malaysia. Hence, the phenomenology approach was used to gather data from the respondents. Merriam (2009) highlighted that "A phenomenological research is well suited for studying affective, emotional, and often intense human experiences" (p. 26). Employees from the managerial positions are considered as crucial stakeholders in an organization. In phenomenology, the focus is on the experience of the respondents. Their lived experience as staff is important for this study. In this research, the perspectives and feedback from the managers are important as they are directly

participating in a succession planning programme. The primary method of collecting data was through interviews.

Demographic Information

A total of 11 respondents were interviewed. These respondents were from managerial levels of the identified organisation. They were chosen as they represented the level of employees in different managerial positions, which is the focus of this research. There were eight male and three female participants respectively. Their working experience ranged from five to 20 years.

Sample

Purposeful sampling was used for this study and the identified respondents were the managers of the identified organization. This is where (Patton, 2002, as cited in Merriam 2009, p.77) mentioned that “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in depth studies. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about the issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling”. Managers in a succession planning programme were purposefully identified mainly because of their direct involvement in the organization and understanding of succession planning. The respondents from the managerial level have views on succession planning because they have the experience as participants of a succession planning programme and are also responsible for implement succession planning in their respective departments.

Data Collection Procedures

A scheduled meeting included explanation about the succession planning programmes within the organisation. The briefing was to ensure correct understanding on how the structured leadership programme is executed and managed in the organisation. Documents related to the programmes were given as a reference in order to comprehend in detail about the programme, which was coordinated by the HRD. The human resource leader also provided a list of participants in the talent pool who had attended the structured leadership programme.

Upon receiving the list of names and contact details, the process of asking permission for interviews through telephone calls directly to the identified respondents took place. A brief introduction of the research was given and requests for their availability in order to interview them at their respective offices took place. Upon getting the consent and agreement to meet an email to the respondents to confirm the interview sessions including more details of the study was sent. Before beginning the interviews, the consent form was given to the respondents to read and sign indicating that they have no objection to the session and are agreeable to be interviewed. Confidentiality was assured and their actual names are not identified in this study. Member checking for accuracy was accomplished by sending the transcripts to the participants after the interview.

Data Analysis Procedures

Each interview was transcribed to document the information provided by the respondents. The transcript for each respondent was 20 pages the shortest and 35 pages the longest. The first interview was transcribed and immediately analyzed using the constant comparative method where data from interviews and documents were sighted and compared accordingly. Merriam (2009) mentioned that the “Constant comparative method involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences. Data are grouped together on a similar dimension. The dimension is tentatively given a name; it then becomes a category. The overall objective of this analysis is to identify patterns in the data” (p.30).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis from the interviews lead to the emergence of four major themes with sub-themes as presented in the Table 1.

Table 1: Themes

1. Successor identification and talent pool formation	a) Qualified talents b) Management transparency c) Leadership Quality
2. Required skillsets development for successors	a) Exposure to best practice b) Mental preparedness c) Managing people
3. Importance of predecessors' coaching and mentoring	a) Transfer of knowledge and skills b) Personalized coaching c) Clear career pathway
4. Assurance of continuity and stability of the organization in the market place	a) Increased staff loyalty b) Stakeholders assurance c) Better talent retention and development

The first theme is “Successor identification and talent pool formation.” The respondents provided their views and discussed at length the importance of identifying qualified talents and strong leadership quality. The second theme is “Required skillsets development for successors.” The respondents believe in generating knowledge through exposure to industry’s best practices. In addition, successors are also expected to be mentally prepared once they are in the pipeline as the future awaits them with great challenges. Hence their ability to manage administrative matters as well as human relations is significantly important. “The importance of predecessors’ coaching and mentoring” is the third theme. It is crucial for predecessors to have the knowledge and skills transferred from them to the identified successors.

It is through structured and personalized coaching that the information is shared effectively. Eventually, the pool of talents identified within the organization may have clearer career pathways for their future. The fourth theme is “Assurance of continuity and stability of the organization in the market place.” The respondents voiced the implications of good succession planning that will benefit the organization when it will witness greater

stakeholders' assurance. In addition to this, similar effects may be observed on an increased level of staff loyalty and better talent retention and development in the organization.

Successor Identification and Talent Pool Formation

The respondents were very vocal when the matter of identification of successors was raised during the interview. The identification of talent is not merely an exercise of sending personnel to a seminar or a workshop, but these are talented employees who are also qualified to climb the career ladder for positions that best suit them in the future.

Qualified Talents

An employee who has been identified by the organization as the successors would be grouped in a talent pool for monitoring and continuous assessments. According to a respondent, "Identifying a candidate with the correct attitude will help the selection process move effectively because some has the ambition where others don't" (R5). The management striving to obtain the best group of talent may face great challenges as the opportunity is open to all where the possibility of being fair in giving equal chances will require a great deal of transparency. According to another respondent, "Employees with relevant knowledge and skills are potentials to be groomed and positioned in the talent pool where a better future awaits them" (R2). The management is expected to ensure the identified group of employees are having all the required skills and knowledge for the future. Similarly, another respondent said, "It is important for the management to groom highly qualified candidates in a structured talent pool as the company continues to grow" (R9).

Management Transparency

A respondent expressed her concern on the selection of a successor by the management, "Succession planning at the higher level, would require the management to be transparent in identifying talent, especially when it is part of grooming and grouping them in a talent pool" (R5). The selection process requires the management to plan strategically and to give equal opportunity through merit where a talent is identified and such transparency will be perceived as fair to all employees according to Zepeda, Bengston and Parylo (2012). According to another respondent, "The management should be transparent because selection of a candidate to be in the talent pool should be made based on merits and not personal preference or seniority" (R3). Hence, the ideals of being fair and transparent include giving equal opportunity to more than one employee for a particular position in the future.

Leadership Quality

Jantti and Greenhalgh (2012) mentioned that it is important to appreciate the individual strengths of the successors as it includes leadership quality, which is very crucial in the succession planning programme of the organization. It will reflect on the person or the employee themselves because of their years of experience and ability to lead even a small team makes them a leader in their own setting. The respondents believed that identification of successors should also take place not only considering academic qualifications, seniority

or even skills but more importantly the leadership quality which one possesses which makes him or her stand out above the rest. According to a respondent, “The team members of a particular department or division in the company would be able to give a fair assessment of a good leader based on their relationship and observation” (R7). Eventually, the successor will helm the role of a leader and without having such a quality it will not help him or her to handle the responsibility effectively. As another respondent clearly said, “In identifying a suitable successor, it is not only about knowledge and qualification but more importantly their leadership quality and ability to manage people” (R6).

Required Skillsets Development for Successors

In order to be equipped for the future, especially when one is identified and being positioned in the talent pool, many respondents emphasized the need to have a tailored made programme providing skillsets in various areas of work. It is vital to be prepared as the challenges in the future are always dynamic. Eshiteti, Okaka, Maragia, Odera and Akerele (2013) stated that by conducting more management training programmes, it will prepare the identified talents with the knowledge and competencies of the future with the relevant skills to be the best amongst the others.

Exposure to Best Practice

The respondents indicated that a willingness to acquire more knowledge and skillsets will benefit them in the long run. Seeking knowledge is a lifelong process. It is only through best practices in the market that will equip the successors to be ready for the future. A respondent said, “Leaders are not born, they are made and to give exposure to industry best practices, training and required skills will make him or her successful in the future” (R4). Knowledge and skills will continuously evolve as future changes take place. Skills adopted from the best practice will assist the successor in meeting future challenges. Villadsen (2016) and Komora, Wario Guyo and Odhiambo (2015) stated that it is important to facilitate the talent pool by providing sufficient training on the required skills, as it will move the employees out of their comfort zone. According to a respondent on this matter “It is important to realize that in meeting future and global challenges he or she must be well prepared to learn from industry practices in order to be ready in climbing the career ladder” (R1). Getting the best knowledge from the industry will make a successor understand the job and responsibility better. He or she will be able to digest vital information that will make them a better leader in the future.

Mental Preparedness

The importance of being prepared both physically and mentally will make a person understand and prepare oneself on what is about to be expected from them. According to Tornack, Pilarski and Schumann (2014) the development of talent through training and coaching will prepare them mentally to foresee the enormous tasks which await them in the future. A respondent said, “It is vital to equip talents with skillsets and to be mentally prepared in order for them to take the next position.” (R2). Corner (2014) mentioned that the successor needs to be ready for the future roles and by capitalizing on their knowledge gathered through the training programmes will eventually make them mentally prepared for

the next level of leadership. It is crucial for the successors to be ready by acquiring as much as possible knowledge and skills provided by the management who are placing them in a passage towards a clear career pathway. Another respondent mentioned, “Their mindset has to be geared towards becoming a leader and understand the consequences” (R4).

Managing People

Organizations must focus on human relations as successors need to lead a team of people and such qualities must be developed amongst leaders. Many respondents agree to the idea of handling human relations as an important quality to have. Being a leader it is not a single person’s job or duty. It is a collective effort by different people. If we are able to handle our team, superiors, subordinates and more over our shareholders, customers and suppliers whom of which are the stakeholders, we will be able to move the organization forward. A respondent mentioned that, “In succession planning one must also have strong interpersonal skills and ability to manage people working with them” (R5). Another respondent said, “A successor is a person whom is able to interact positively with all levels of employees and such people relationship quality is what leaders and top management are lacking today” (R8).

Importance of Predecessors’ Coaching and Mentoring

In many organizations there will be experienced and very senior employees who had worked for many years and with voluminous information, knowledge and developed skills related to their work. According to Durst and Wilhelm (2012), retention of knowledge and skills from predecessors serves to build better preparation of future leaders. Such knowledge and skills are valuable assets of the organization. There will be a time where these valuable assets will leave, especially when the predecessors retire or move to another organization, that’s they prefer.

Transfer of Knowledge and Skills

Predecessors are ordinary human beings who will age with time. Memories and strength will fade as they grow older and without realizing it time passes by whilst the organization might just miss the opportunity to capture and retain these most valuable assets that the company has. Halls-Ellis (2015) mentioned that the organization should anticipate retirement from within and steps should be taken in advance. According to a respondent, “Obviously an experienced and senior predecessor would be able to share valuable insights on the required skills and knowledge to those identified to climb the succession ladder” (R10). Moreover, the organization has a talent pool and hence the process of transferring knowledge and skills would be convenient as the targeted audience has been identified. According to another respondent, “The predecessors are key factors in succession planning as most of their knowledge and skills are with them and the transfer process should be done efficiently without waiting to the last minute” (R7).

Personalized Coaching

The approaches of training in organizations vary and several methods can be adopted to best understand the subject of succession planning. Furthermore, according to Kim (2012) and Ghee, Ibrahim and Abdul Halim (2015) predecessors have the knowledge and skills which strongly relates to the organization. It is because of such an advantage that the organization may personalize the coaching to each of the identified successors. The benefit of a tailored made programme and focus to the needs of different employees in the talent pool will make coaching realistic and the successors would be able to relate to their respective career passage or event current job challenges. A respondent mentioned this when he said, “I believe that it is important for predecessors to have personalized coaching and mentoring to the identified talent pool as the successors will understand the work and responsibilities better” (R3). The opportunity of having a personal coach is something expensive to have if he or she is a very senior person in the organization. The hours spent and insightful knowledge sharing is extremely valuable and successors are the ones who will benefit greatly by engaging from the best source of information that the organization can offer. Another respondent also mentioned that, “The best way to learn about the company is from the seniors because once they leave it is difficult to get home grown coaches or mentors” (R1).

Clear Career Pathway

Larcker and Saslow (2014) pointed out that coaches and mentors are crucial for internal development programmes, especially for the identified talents as they are the most suitable to coach on career advancement based on their years of working in the organization. The organization has developed a talent pool, which may place the successors into a position which is most suitable to them. The required knowledge and skills were provided in order for them to be well equipped in meeting the desired objectives of succession planning. Preparing talents and channeling them into the best career plan is the fundamentals of grooming from within the organization (Graffin, Boivie & Carpenter, 2013). In addition to that a respondent said, “It is so much easier to understand where we are heading in the future especially when the predecessors support the trainings on business philosophy plus some project background and most certainly it gives a clearer career direction” (R1).

Assurance of Continuity and Stability of the Organization in the Market Place

The organization has and will always plan for the betterment of the business. The management team would want to see the expansion of the company with a stable future. The data collected shows respondents believe strongly that continuity is the major impact of good succession planning. A respondent agreeing to this mentioned that, “Implications of a good succession planning is when the organization has continuity and stability especially when talented employees are groomed professionally” (R5).

Increased Staff Loyalty

Corner (2014) highlighted that a structured succession planning programme will result in deeper levels of loyalty to the organization. The employees being identified in the talent

pool may feel secure because of career prospects, which await them in the near future. A respondent mentioned, “The loyalty towards the company by an employee will increase tremendously if they are certain that a stable future awaits them in their career progression” (R7). If a person can clearly see his or her future positively growing and expanding together with the organization, the commitment level of an employee would prevail as well. Another respondent said, “There is no practical reason for me to leave the company when my future is very certain and obviously my loyalty will be greater” (R10).

Stakeholders Assurance

A structured succession planning programme will give greater benefits to all stakeholders. Respondents voiced out that the company at large might greatly enjoy the fruits of succession planning in the future. Tornack, Pilarski and Schumann (2014) highlighted that stakeholders will be delighted and assured to have a clear direction of the company and its expansion plan, especially when succession planning is conducted properly and professionally. According to another respondent, “All stakeholders like the investors, customers and partners will be assured of continuity and stability in the organization once succession planning is organized through a structured programme within the company” (R8).

Better Talent Retention and Development

Employee retention is an outcome when grooming talent internally through a structured programme is conducted efficiently. According to a respondent, “Successors will not leave the organization if enough coaching and training were given to them specifically to helm the leadership role in the future” (R5). Kim (2012) mentioned that employee retention through a structured programme is a powerful succession planning strategy as it prevents highly qualified and potential employees from leaving the organization. The training and coaching given to the employees will enable the organization to retain them, as it will facilitate growth of the company in the market place. A respondent mentioned, “We also believe that all efforts made to groom internal talent will benefit the company as employees will not leave the organization once they have such a level of assurance of their own future” (R9).

RECOMMENDATIONS

A comprehensive succession planning programme is necessary if qualified and talented successors are to be developed. The succession planning programme involves the entire organisation. The department of finance, marketing, human resource, information technology (IT) and even corporate communications are amongst examples of departments in an organisation which should be involved in crafting the best policy on succession planning for the organisation. It is not a project and vision of the CEO or the HRD Head but it is the entire group within the organisation. A collective participation process may help to encourage internal grooming and create ownership among leaders.

SUMMARY

The understanding of the importance of succession planning for the continuity of an organisation is imperative, especially the potential roles played by managerial staff. The involvement of stakeholders in making it a reality, especially from the managerial level is an important element of succession planning.

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