Creating a Succession-Planning Instrument for Educational Leadership

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Businesses, non-profit entities, medical units, governmental departments, and other organizations have utilized succession planning for over 30 years, yet the field of education has been slow to adopt models used in other disciplines. Upon review of the literature from various disciplines, themes for developing and assessing quality succession plans were synthesized. The major themes included identification of talent, development and mentoring, and retention of the highest performing employees, with consideration of the unique organizational culture as an overarching theme. Based on the review of the literature, a survey instrument was established. The survey was validated through an expert panel using Lawshe's (1975) content validity ratio before being administered to a pilot group of 12 school administrators and aspiring administrators. The purpose of the instrument is to examine how school administrators and leadership candidates perceived the employment of succession planning in educational organizations. The survey can be administered to aspiring administrators, school-level leaders, and district senior administrators to identify perceptions of succession planning. The results can be used to develop, modify, and strengthen existing succession plans through revitalized professional development and mentoring.

Keywords: succession planning, educational leadership preparation, leadership development, pipeline, survey validation.

People interpret the term succession planning differently; implementation of a succession plan is also widely varied. For the purpose of this article, succession planning is defined as a systematic and purposeful effort to fill vacancies for key positions with qualified individuals in an organization (Chavez, 2011). To most business leaders, a succession plan is necessary; issues resulting from lost productivity and lack of direction can quickly lead to failure (Lewis, 2013). The roots of modern succession planning can be traced to a study commissioned through the National Security Act of 1947, in which the plans for executive administration from 53 national corporations were reviewed (Zaich, 1986). Neefe (2009) stated that formal succession plans have been utilized by businesses for more than 30 years. Yet, in the field of education, succession planning has been nonexistent. However, the field of education has slowly begun to adopt models and practices long employed by other disciplines (Riddick, 2009). Without using the term succession planning, Fullan (2005) discussed the need for sustainability in school leadership. He asserted advanced planning was necessary to ensure continuity of leadership, and the plan had to account for the organizational culture, particularly the vision of the organization.

Need for Further Research

Several authors reviewed succession planning in education from a qualitative perspective to understand why geographically isolated districts had difficulty in recruiting candidates to become administrators (Hengel, 2007; Thomas, 2011). Other analysts reviewed how officials in specific school districts treated succession planning. One of the findings was that senior school administrators believed their school districts were successfully utilizing succession planning because vacancies were filled by candidates from within the organization, or because professional development opportunities were available (Riddick, 2009; Steele, 2015). Simply filling a vacancy with an internal candidate was not enough. Fullan (2005) asserted that a principal had to plan for his or her departure on the very first day in the position.

Chavez (2011) provided a framework for quality succession planning. Potential candidates were identified, targeted development and mentoring were provided, and the highest performing employees were retained as the result of having a quality succession plan. Beeson (1998) contended the succession plan had to account for all levels of the organization. He also warned against presenting generic management training instead of specific and targeted opportunities. Conger and Fulmer (2003) agreed that replacement planning was no longer an effective strategy. Conger and Fulmer (2003) also focused on a systems-oriented approach for the succession-planning process. Beglinger (2013) postulated that potential candidates had to be prepared for positions of greater responsibility knowing that some will leave to accept promotions with other organizations.

Knowing individuals will leave the organization to pursue other options, only heightens the importance for succession planning. According to Fullan (2005), the need for sustainability in leadership is vital for the continued success of schools. Therefore, educational organizations need to analyze current succession-planning activities, refine existing plans, or develop a succession-planning process.

Statement of the Problem

Although overlapping themes are distinct in the academic literature, a clear definition of succession planning is not evident. Furthermore, in-depth studies into succession planning in educational organizations were limited. Four examples were found in which succession planning

was examined from a qualitative perspective (Hengel, 2007; Riddick, 2009; Steele, 2015; Thomas, 2011). In addition, a few journal articles addressed specific aspects germane to succession planning in schools, such as mentoring and professional development (Brittingham, 2009; Drago-Severson & Aravena, 2011); however, I could not locate any quantitative or mixed-method studies which have been conducted related to succession planning in schools. Based on the need for a system-oriented and comprehensive approach to succession planning (Conger & Fulmer, 2003), creating a survey to examine the perceptions of various employees in a school system regarding succession planning would provide beneficial insight.

Responses from a survey could provide significant and detailed information for senior school district administrators to identify current success-planning practices, analyze current processes for quality, align with best practices, or create new processes to identify, train, and retain promising leadership candidates.

Significance for Educational Leadership

In an era of high-stakes testing and accountability measures, school systems cannot afford to have the wrong person lead a school. The importance of the principal is evident from Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) who ascribed a .25 effect size on student achievement to the principal. Using Chavez's (2011) three points for succession planning, in conjunction with Fullan's (2005) focus on organizational sustainability, and Rothwell's (2005) process for creating a succession plan, an instrument was developed to assess an educational organization's succession plan. Results can be used to modify and strengthen succession planning for various administrative positions in the educational organization.

Review of the Literature

Chavez (2011) addressed the importance of succession planning for future growth through three components. The first step was the identification of the organization's emerging leaders. Leaders should be open-minded, visionaries, who took risks while being respected because of core values. The second step was the engagement and development of employees at each organizational level through a combination of traditional and non-traditional methods, including opportunities within and external to the organization. The third step was to retain the top performers in the organization, as the return on investment was much greater for retention of proven talent, rather than attempting to recruit top talent.

The modern concept of succession planning was derived as a function of human resources development theory in the mid-1950s. From inception, the focus changed into technology-based employment planning in the mid-1960s, to a focus on *manpower* in the early 1970s, and eventually toward more comprehensive human resources planning in the 1980s (Zaich, 1986). Although the focus on succession planning had changed, the core components as identified by Chavez (2011) were evident through the various iterations.

Succession Planning in Businesses

Although Neefe (2009) stated that succession planning had been employed in the business discipline for over 30 years; however, the implementation was inconsistent. McDonald (2015) described the fallout from a lack of planning, as "the pain felt watching a star employee walk out the door with no backup in place is immediate and costly" (para. 2). Therefore, Beeson (1998)

contended a quality succession plan had to address each level of the organization; not just focus on executive succession.

Beeson (2000) further opined that succession planning had undergone a change at the turn of the 21st century. Fast-paced and unpredictable change had rendered the models used over the previous quarter-century obsolete. Retention of top talent became a focal point, and organizations took greater risks in promoting people before they were deemed fully ready. Providing employees with a clear sense of direction was a paramount factor in retention, and the involvement of senior executives in the succession-planning process was a key to success.

Mehribani and Mohammed (2011) concurred with the historical focus of succession planning as simply replacing people, not in developing a potential successor's skillset. Enabling flexibility, establishing competency, and developing leadership at each level of the organization became the new foci, rather than simply identifying a candidate to assume a position next. However, Chavez (2011) warned that many processes to identify talent were based on charisma, or only analyzed performance for an employee's current job function. Therefore, Beeson (2000) believed the focus on developing skills was important, as the rapidly changing business climate meant that executive positions of the day might not exist in the near future. In addition to development of skills, retaining the top-performing individuals was vital. Cappelli and Hamori (2004) noted that failure to deliver on promises of upward mobility was the prime reason executives left a previous organization. Therefore, McDonald (2015) stressed the importance of having several qualified people ready to assume senior executive positions. However, challenges faced in succession planning were not unique to the corporate sector.

Succession Planning in Non-profit Entities

Non-profit entities have also adopted principles of succession planning, as the executive and board of an organization were jointly responsible for preparing for the planned and unexpected exit of a top executive. Because of the nature of a non-profit organization, executives had to discuss succession strategies with the board early; otherwise, challenges from the lack of a succession plan magnified issues for the organization upon the departure of the executive. Creating the environment for leadership development was especially important, as boards were often uncomfortable with the fact that turnover increased due to employee marketability (Gothard & Austin, 2013). Smeltzer (2002) believed that employees had to be prepared for higher positions, knowing some of the employees would leave to pursue positions with different organizations. Having a pool of trained employees, of which some will leave, was better than having no potential successor after the unexpected loss of an executive.

Succession Planning in the Nursing Field

With a focus on the patient, there was a need for stability in health care organizations. Griffith (2012) attributed the rise of succession planning in health-care organizations to a shortage of qualified nurses and nursing managers. Therefore, succession had to be planned for all management levels through identification, development, and retention of promising leaders. Furthermore, a successful succession plan ensured preservation of the organizational culture, and continuity of vision. Unfortunately, most succession plans did not include all of the requisite components to be successful.

In addition to the early identification of leaders, Griffith (2012) advocated for recruiting promising candidates for entry-level positions, and developing those individuals to assume

positions of greater responsibility. The recruitment process needed to be robust and include a component for encouraging candidates with the proper dispositions and potential to enroll in academic preparation programs in nursing.

One of the misconceptions with the concept of succession planning arose from supervisors believing they were simply training one replacement. Succession planning needed to be viewed through a broader lens, as supervisors had an obligation to prepare subordinates for positions of greater authority, knowing some will leave the organization to accept promotions with other institutions. Supervisors had to be held accountable for ensuring subordinates met goals (Smeltzer, 2002).

Succession Planning in Education

As Riddick (2009) posited, the field of education had been slower to embrace succession planning. Widespread efforts of succession planning in education were not found in the literature. However, succession planning was needed, as Zepeda, Bengtson, and Parylo (2012) contended that rapid turnover of principals—which they defined as four years or less—resulted in adverse negative effect on student achievement and school culture.

As an example of Riddick's (2009) contention that education has been slow to adopt principles of succession planning, Zepeda et al. (2012) focused significantly on replacement planning. Beeson (2000) asserted that business models for succession planning had moved away from replacement planning before the turn of the last century. However, Zepeda et al. (2012) also included a need for development of candidates.

Qualitative studies of succession planning. From three large school districts, Riddick (2009) interviewed two senior-level administrators from each district, and conducted follow-up interviews with other personnel to triangulate the data. She found that administrators from all three school districts believed succession-planning strategies were employed and effective, yet none of the districts could produce any formal documentation. None of the school districts used a process to evaluate the effectiveness of the implied succession plan. One of the school district officials stated that succession planning was evident because opportunities for teachers to earn a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards licensure. The administrators interviewed also cited turnover data for principals as evidence of succession planning; however, no data were available for other positions (Riddick, 2009).

Steele (2015) also conducted a multiple case study analysis, and interviewed 10 principals, and none indicated a formal succession plan had been utilized; though, all 10 principals had served as assistant principals. Mentoring and networking were cited as major themes, as all respondents indicated a reliance on mentors. Mentors included colleague principals, former supervisors, and current principal supervisors. Respondents also indicated an obligation to train the next generation of principals. Despite the small sample size, Steele (2015) generalized that serving as an assistant principal was useful in training future principals, because most of the respondents were promoted within the same building. Transparency with the succession-planning process was not evident in any case; however, all stakeholders would have benefitted from transparency in the process (Riddick, 2009; Steele, 2015).

Hengel (2007) studied a Canadian school system to understand why teachers were not pursuing administrative opportunities. He cited several factors that yielded a positive influence on potential candidates to pursue administrative positions, these included support from colleagues, professional development opportunities, and leadership opportunities—formal and informal. Furthermore, current principals needed to recognize the accomplishments, and

leadership activities of current staff members, assist in identifying potential leadership candidates, as well as encourage potential candidates to pursue leadership opportunities. Once identified, leadership candidates needed specific and targeted professional development opportunities. The organization's top leadership had to support development by providing growth opportunities, release from certain duties, and financial support.

In a similar case study, Thomas (2011) analyzed efficacy of succession planning in school systems located in Alberta, Canada. He interviewed several superintendents who indicated their district-based leadership training programs were successful; however, the evidence was not empirically based, and relied on assumptions of quality because internal candidates who attended the district-based programs filled all vacancies. One important finding was the need for quality training programs at the university level coupled with mentoring by successful administrators.

Importance of organizational vision. Sustainability efforts had to consider the organizational culture and climate. Owens and Valesky (2015) defined culture as the beliefs, norms, and values of the organization. They defined climate as a combination of the culture, ecology, milieu, and organizational structure of the school. Maintaining a positive culture was vital, as the impact of a principal was greatly influenced by his or her predecessor, and the foundation previously established. Although continuity between the visions of the incoming and outgoing principals was important, limiting the frequency of transfers provided for a more effective strategy, as cultures that fostered strong leadership there were easier transitions between leaders (Hargreaves, 2005).

Benefits of succession planning. Ease of transition was not the only benefit of a quality succession plan. Lee (2015) contended that succession planning was critical for maintaining momentum for a school. Innovative schools needed a quality succession plan to continue the innovations, and low-performing schools needed a quality succession plan to begin the transformation process. Although some transitions occurred unplanned, the negative effects were mitigated through a more structured support, an effort to build relationships immediately, and continued mentoring and development.

Challenges to Succession Planning in Education

Ambiguity in subordinate administrative positions. Part of the instability within the organization resulted from the ambiguity in subordinate administrative positions. Hausman, Nebeker, McCreary, and Donaldson (2001) cited that professional development and formal training focused on the role of the principal. Specific professional development focused on the assistant principal role was extremely rare, and in most cases non-existent. Because of the lack of specific training and development to become an assistant principal, there was a lack of understanding and clarity of the role.

Rintoul and Goulais (2010) examined moral decision making by vice principals in Canadian schools. The respondents all conveyed a sense of ambiguity in the role, and specified their roles were dependent upon the leadership style of the principal. Oleszewsku, Shoho, and Barnett (2012) also asserted the role of the assistant principal varied from school to school. As a recommendation, the role of the assistant principal needed to be clarified with specific boundaries, and a clearly defined role. Any restructuring had to be consistent with the culture of the school; however, a focus on shared or distributed leadership was beneficial for student learning.

Prior leadership experiences influenced the confidence of assistant principals to perform successfully in the role. Mentoring and support were also needed to help novice assistant principals build confidence and competence, and overcome feelings of isolation and anxiety. An increased sense of self-efficacy was developed by novice assistant principals through support from principals, fellow assistant principals, leadership team members, and assigned mentors (Santacrose, 2016). Building self-efficacy was important, and the behaviors were influenced by personal attributes, as well as environmental factors (Bandura, 2012). A long-term strategy was needed to help develop knowledge and skills, as well foster a continuous vision.

Lack of a consistent vision. Lack of stability and administrative support was a leading reason for faculty departure, as Steele (2015) asserted that teachers were more likely to seek employment elsewhere when a change in principal is made in three years or less. Meyer, Macmillan, and Northfield (2009) found that younger teachers were affected more by the uncertainty of poorly planned succession of principals. Hargreaves (2005) stated that moving a successful principal from one school to address problems with another had contributed to discontinuity, and prevented lasting improvement. He contended a principal should remain in a position for five years or more. When the transition occurred, a key strategy for an organization to deal with the loss of a dynamic leader was to utilize more distributed leadership opportunities (Hargreaves, 2005).

While analyzing challenges for incoming principals, Lee (2015) described three scenarios for incoming principals: (a) planned continuity, (b) planned discontinuity, and (c) unplanned succession. Planned continuity ensured succession of principals, while keeping the same direction and overall goals. Planned discontinuity allowed for a smooth transition to a new principal, yet allowed him or her to make changes in the organization; often times to turn around a declining school, or push a good school toward status as high achieving. Both methods provided for support from various stakeholders and time to prepare for the transition. Those appointed to positions without any preplanning were often consumed by day-to-day tasks, which prohibited enactment of meaningful change initiatives. Even though planned discontinuity involved appointing a new principal to bring change to the organization, the individual had support, and was better prepared for the task. Planned continuity provided the least resistance to an incoming principal, as the vision was compatible with the vision and goals of the outgoing principal (Lee, 2015).

Developing a Succession Plan

According to Rothwell (2005), 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.

Job rotation, special assignments, classroom-based training, and real-life exposure were effective strategies in providing specific, targeted development for promising individuals (Conger & Fulmer, 2003). Rothwell (2005) cautioned that training should not be exclusively outside of the organization or classroom-based. The employees needed to continue to succeed in current roles. The senior executives had to be intimately involved in the process for a succession plan to yield quality results. Beeson (2000) also specified the importance of including a great

number of the senior executives in the succession-planning process, and in providing development opportunities for subordinates. Ultimately, the discipline displayed by the members of the organization, and their supporting actions determined the success of a defined plan (Lewis, 2013). While providing targeted professional development opportunities was important, the process had to start with mechanisms to identify top-tier talent (Chavez, 2011).

Identification of talent. Relying solely on manager evaluations was found to be a poor source of talent identification. Some manager 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 (Beeson, 1998). Griffith (2012) 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. Rothwell (2005) asserted that an effective succession plan trained employees for future positions beyond the next promotion.

Conger and Fulmer (2003) focused on the development aspect for top-tier candidates, as early exposure to their own limitations allowed for development of needed skills. Development of skills should coincide with assessment of future needs of the organization (Rothwell, 2005). 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 (Beeson, 1998).

Chavez (2011) 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. Beeson (1998) believed that feedback had to be solicited from supervisors, subordinates, peers, and those external to the organization. Beeson (2000) also noted that the most successful organizations had active, cross-functional assessments of talent on a frequent basis. Rothwell (2005) 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.

Development and mentoring. Specific leadership training and development is needed for identified candidates (Beeson, 1998; Chavez, 2011; Rothwell, 2005). Chavez (2011) 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 in which the candidate was tasked with a leading team composed of superiors. Beeson (1998) specified to avoid the pitfall of providing generic managerial training, rather than intensive individualized professional development opportunities. Rothwell (2005) 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. Durden, Izquierdo, and Williams (2008) 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 development specific knowledge and skills, and gain targeted experiences.

To gain knowledge and skills, Hopkins-Thompson (2000) contended mentoring and coaching served to model collaboration and collegiality. Mentors served to impart wisdom about

the culture, and provided feedback beyond the scope of the formal employee and supervisor relationship. To be successful, mentoring had to be supported from the superintendent, have clearly defined outcomes for the protégé, and most importantly, the pairing had to be a good match for both. One key distinction is the mentor should not be a direct supervisor, or have an evaluative position over the protégé.

Retention. The third component to a successful succession plan was retention of top-tier candidates. Chavez (2011) contended that retaining top performers was equally as important as preparing new talent; both were needed for organizational success, as retaining top-tier candidates provided a higher return on investment, because internal employees had demonstrated experience, along with an understanding of the organizational culture. Beeson (2000) asserted a link had to be clear between performance, and the reward and recognition systems. Ina previous article, Beeson (1998) had linked open communication and employee growth opportunities, as there had to be transparency in the entire process.

Beyond retention, internal movement of principals was another factor to be considered. Farley, Solano, and McDuffie (2012) divided retention and turnover into static and dynamic categories. Furthermore, they contended retention and turnover were defined differently in the literature. Therefore, analyzing the retention and turnover for principals was complex, especially as there were instances in which principals were transferred to new schools without participation in the decision-making process. Administrative retention and turnover had to be analyzed through static and dynamic approaches to yield valid data for policy considerations.

Organizational culture. Understanding the climate and culture of a school is an important facet for an administrator (Owens & Valesky, 2015). Poor planning is the enemy of sustainability. Succession plans should consider the organizational culture. Attempts to change the organization through a forceful, top-down strategy do not inspire teachers to improve teachers, the strategy only entrenches resistance among the faculty. Instead, distributed leadership was the only method to ensure important aspects of sustainability were perpetuated in the organization (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006).

Combined with an assessment of organizational culture, a quality succession plan includes measures for organizational leaders to identify candidates, provide targeted training and development, and retain the most promising employees (Chavez, 2011). Only when organizational culture is considered in conjunction with each component, can a succession plan yield effective results (Griffith, 2012).

Research Design

The purpose of this article was to create and validate a survey instrument to reflect how school administrators and leadership candidates perceived the employment of succession planning in an educational organization. An analysis of perceptions could lead to revitalized mentoring and professional development opportunities better suited to create quality succession plans in primary and secondary schools.

Creating an Instrument

Based on the review of the literature, a survey instrument was developed. The survey questions are divided into five categories: (a) demographic information, (b) identification of talent, (c) development and mentoring opportunities, (d) retention of top talent, and (e) organizational culture based on the components identified by Chavez (2011). The framework for the survey is shown in Figure 1.
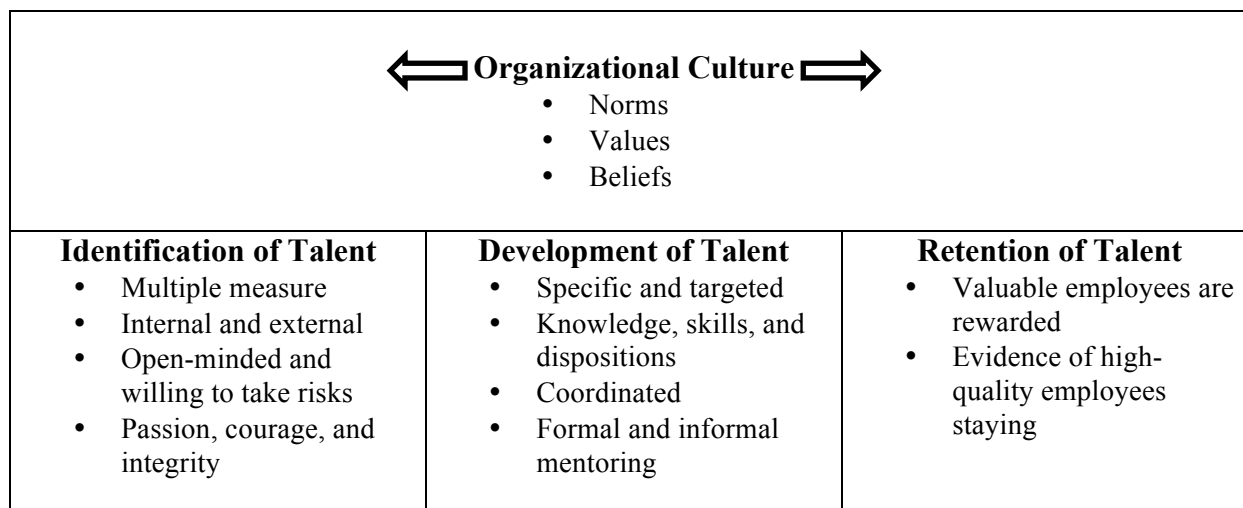
Organizational Culture
- Norms
- Values
- Beliefs

Identification of Talent	**Development of Talent**	**Retention of Talent**
• Multiple measure • Internal and external • Open-minded and willing to take risks • Passion, courage, and integrity	• Specific and targeted • Knowledge, skills, and dispositions • Coordinated • Formal and informal mentoring	• Valuable employees are rewarded • Evidence of high-quality employees staying

Figure 1. Succession-Planning Framework

The first section of the survey contains items inquiring about demographic information. The second through fifth sections contain items to identify perceptions of how the characteristics of effective succession plans are utilized in the educational organization. The survey items were developed using a five-point Likert-type scale (i.e., never, rarely, sometimes, frequently, & always).

Identification of talent. A total of 12 questions comprise the section for identification of talent. Examples of talent identification questions appear in Table 1.

Table 1
Sample Identification of Talent Questions

Number	Item
I-3	Assessment of candidates is based on multiple sources, not just a recommendation from the direct supervisor.
I-5	Future career aspirations are sought from all faculty and staff members on a routine basis.

Development of talent. The largest category is development of talent with 14 questions. Table 3 contains examples of the development of talent questions. Sample items from the development section are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Sample Development of Talent Questions

Number	Item
D-9	Specific skills and competencies are identified for administrative positions.
D-12	Informal mentoring opportunities are available.

Retention of highest performing employees. The smallest category, with four questions, is the retention of highest performing employees. Sample questions are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Sample Retention of Talent Questions

Number	Item
R-3	There is evidence of high performing employees staying in the organization.
R-4	Administrative vacancies are filled by qualified, internal candidates.

Organizational culture. The overarching category of organizational culture contains seven questions. Table 4 contains sample questions pertaining to organizational culture.

Table 4
Sample Organizational Culture Questions

Number	Item
C-4	Succession plans are made with the input of all stakeholders.
C-5	Succession plans consider the unique organizational culture.

Establishing Validity

An expert panel reviewed the contents of the instrument. Several retired administrators, current administrators, and leadership candidates comprised the expert review panel. Each item was reviewed for job-essential content validity using Lawshe's (1975) content validity ratio (CVR). The CVR value ranges from -1.0 to +1.0, with a positive number indicating content validity. For ease of computation, 1.0 is reduced to .99 (Lawshe, 1975). With 11 panelists using the Lawshe statistic (1975), the results were statistically significant at 5% with a CVR of .59. The CVR results are displayed in Figure 2, and the demographic information of the expert panel is listed in Table 5.

Content Validity Results					
I-1	.99	D-1	.99	D-13	.82
I-2	.99	D-2	.99	R-1	.82
I-3	.64	D-3	.99	R-2	.99
I-4	.82	D-4	.99	R-3	.99
I-5	.99	D-5	.99	R-4	.45
I-6	.99	D-6	.82	C-1	.99
I-7	.99	D-7	.64	C-2	.99
I-8	.99	D-8	.99	C-3	.99
I-9	.82	D-9	.99	C-4	.82
I-10	.82	D-10	.82	C-5	.99
I-11	.82	D-11	.82	C-6	.99
I-12	.99	D-12	.99	C-7	.99

Figure 2. Content Validity Ratio Results

Table 5
Demographic Information for Expert Panel Reviewers

Reviewer	Gender	Age Range	Level	Administrative Experience
1	Male	65+	Former Supervisor	20+ Years
2	Female	65+	Former Principal	20+ Years
3	Female	65+	Former Principal	11 to 20 Years
4	Female	35 – 44	Assistant Principal	3 to 5 Years
5	Female	35 – 44	Former Assistant Principal	3 to 5 Years
6	Female	35 – 44	Leadership Candidate	0 to 2 Years
7	Female	35 – 44	Leadership Candidate	0 to 2 Years
8	Female	25 – 34	Assistant Principal	3 to 5 Years
9	Female	45 – 54	Curriculum Coordinator	3 to 5 Years
10	Male	45 – 54	Leadership Candidate	0 to 2 Years
11	Female	55 – 64	Former Principal	20+ Years

All of the survey items were found to have content validity, and all were statistically significant at 5%, except for Question R-4 (CVR = .45). Question D-14 is omitted from the expert panel review, because the item was not content based. The content validity index (CVI) is computed as the mean of the CVRs for all questions in the final survey (Lawshe, 1975). The CVI for the survey is .91. To demonstrate validity and reliability for the survey instrument, Gilbert and Prion (2016) recommended a CVI of .80 or higher. After validation, the survey was administered to a small pilot group of 12 current and aspiring administrators to detect any ambiguous items. No changes were made based on the pilot survey administration.

Discussion

Implications for Practice

Respondents for the pilot survey administration indicated the entire survey took between 10 and 15 minutes to complete. The CVI of .91 indicated very strong content validity. Wilson, Pan, and Schumsky (2012) asserted an instrument validated using the CVR process inherently has been shown to have high interrater reliability, as a majority of subject matter experts indicated an item as job-related essential. Therefore, the survey has been shown to be valid and reliable. Because the survey can be administered within a reasonable time frame, senior administrators can use the results to analyze the perceptions of stakeholders pertaining to identification, development, retention, and culture within the organization.

Further Research

Results from survey administration can be used to determine generalizable perceptions of stakeholders pertaining to succession planning. Comparing results between large and small school districts, urban and rural settings, and geographical differences could yield beneficial information for educational organizations to consider in preparing for leadership succession. The results may also provide a basis for follow-up qualitative studies for specific locations.

Conclusion

Succession planning is vital for ensuring high-quality candidates are prepared to assume positions of greater responsibility at every level of an organization. A quality succession plan contains measures to identify potential candidates early. Feedback is provided from an individual's peers, subordinates, supervisor, and knowledgeable individuals outside of the organization. Individualized professional development is targeted for specific skill development to meet future needs of the organization, formal and informal mentoring opportunities are available, and the process is continually refined based on the organizational needs. High-performing employees are fairly rewarded, and their contributions are recognized, and both are directly connected to performance. Across all three components, the specific organizational culture must be honored. The survey can be used to assess an educational organization's strengths and weaknesses, and the results used to foster, modify, and expand succession-planning opportunities. Because student learning is directly influenced by the quality of the principal, a school setting cannot afford to place the wrong individual in a leadership position. Using an instrument to analyze current succession-planning processes will greatly aid in ensuring the proper individuals are selected for key leadership positions at all levels of the organization.

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