

Perceptions of Succession Planning in Four Florida Districts: A Mixed-Method Study

Christopher M. Parfitt
Florida Gulf Coast University

Abstract

Through a mixed-method study, perceptions of succession planning were researched in four Florida school districts. The study was conducted in two phases. First, 99 participants responded to an online survey, which contained 44 items in five categories. Analysis indicated no statistically significant differences among independent variables. Respondents indicated input, development, and review of a succession plan were conducted infrequently, while opportunities for development and a clear list of the qualifications for administrative positions occurred frequently. Second, 11 individuals participated in an interview. Qualitative findings included five themes. Complete findings may be used by school districts to address succession-planning issues.

Keywords: succession planning, educational leadership preparation, leadership development, pipeline, mixed-method study

Introduction

Background

The term succession planning evokes greatly varying responses from people, and implementation of succession plans are widely varied. Lost productivity and lack of direction from poor succession could quickly doom a for-profit enterprise to failure (Lewis, 2013). While Neefe (2009) stated that formal succession plans have been utilized by businesses for more than 30 years, succession planning in the field of education has often been nonexistent. The lack of planning has often yielded poor results for schools (Fullan, 2005). However, the field of education has slowly begun to adopt models and practices long employed by other disciplines (Riddick, 2009). To ensure sustainability in school leadership, succession plans need to be created in advance, and must account for the organizational culture (Fullan, 2005).

Need for Further Research

Chavez (2011) provided a framework for succession planning with three major components: (a) identification of top talent, (b) targeted development, and (c) retention of the highest performing employees. Beeson (1998) agreed and contended the succession plan had to account for all levels of the organization, and warned against presenting generic management training instead of specific and targeted opportunities. The concept of replacement planning in which one individual was identified for succession was no longer an effective strategy (Beeson, 1998; Conger and Fulmer, 2003). Conger and Fulmer (2003) also stressed the importance of a systems-oriented approach for the succession-planning process. Furthermore, 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.

I could not locate any study conducted on perceptions of succession planning through a quantitative or mixed-methods approach. A mixed-methods approach will permit an examination of perceptions of leadership candidates, assistant principals, principals, and principal supervisors on the processes of identification, development, and retention, while considering organizational sustainability through the culture as an overarching theme.

Statement of the Problem

Overlapping themes are distinct in the academic literature, though 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). Other authors addressed specific aspects germane to succession planning in schools, such as mentoring and professional development (Brittingham, 2009; Drago-Severson & Aravena, 2011). Therefore, a study to examine the perceptions of various employees in a school system regarding succession planning would provide beneficial insight. From the literature, four research questions were developed.

Research Questions

1. How do school administrators define succession planning in their schools and school districts?
2. Are the requisite components, as identified by Chavez (2011): identification, development, and retention evident for a succession plan to yield quality results?
3. Do the stakeholders (principal supervisors, principals, assistant principals, and leadership candidates) involved in the succession plan view the process as successful?
4. In what ways do participants believe that succession plans be improved?

Significance of the Study

In an era of high-stakes testing and accountability measures, school systems cannot afford to choose the wrong person to lead a school. The importance of the principal on student achievement is evident from Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), who ascribed a .25 effect size 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 (Author, 2017). 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 using three components for succession planning. The first component was to identify the organization's emerging leaders. She described the characteristics of emerging leaders as open-minded, visionaries, who took risks while being respected because of core values. The second component was the engagement and development of employees at each organizational level. She recommended a combination of traditional and non-traditional methods, including opportunities within and external to the organization. The third component of the succession-planning process was to retain the highest performing employees in the organization, as the return on investment was much greater for retention of proven talent, rather than attempting to recruit top talent.

Early succession planning can be traced to the research and development board established by the National Security Act of 1947, which produced the first study on succession planning (Zaich, 1986). The modern concept of succession planning was derived as a function of human resources development theory in the mid-1950s and changed over time. From inception in the 1950s, the focus evolved 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 had changed, the core components were evident through the various iterations. Succession plans was primarily utilized by governmental agencies, businesses, and non-profit entities (Riddick, 2009).

Succession Planning in the Business Discipline

Although Neefe (2009) stated that succession planning had been employed in the business discipline for over 30 years, the implementation has been inconsistent. Gurchiek (2015) cited a survey conducted by XpertHR, in which 58% of 505 major corporations did not have a succession plan in place. Furthermore, of the organizations with succession plans, 9% focused solely on senior executive positions, 20% focused on critical positions, and 33% were in various stages of creating a succession plan. Failing to have a robust succession plan can be detrimental to an organization. McDonald (2015) described "the pain felt watching a star employee walk out the door with no backup in place is immediate and costly" (para. 2). The lack of planning was most detrimental at senior executive level.

In addition to the focus, the scope of succession planning has changed over time, as well. Succession planning in the 1950s and 1960s was focused almost exclusively on the chief executive positions; whereas, through human resources planning in the late 1970s and 1980s, the focus was broadened to include the needs of the entire organization (Zaich, 1986). The trend continued into the 1990s, as Beeson (1998) contended a quality succession plan must address each level of the organization; not just focus on executive succession.

Beeson (2000) further opined that succession planning had undergone another 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. Because of uncertainty, quality succession planning became even more important. Because of which, McDonald (2015) stressed the importance of having several qualified people ready to assume senior executive positions. As Cappelli and Hamori (2004) noted, failure to deliver on promises of upward mobility was the prime reason executives left a previous organization. However, Conger and Fulmer (2003) reviewed the readiness of selected individuals, and discussed the lack of development as a reason for high-profile failures from CEOs who were the identified heirs-apparent. The challenges faced in succession planning were not unique to the corporate sector.

Succession Planning in Non-profit Entities

Many non-profit entities have also adopted principles of succession planning. In reviewing succession planning for human services organizations, Gothard and Austin (2013) stated that the executive and board of an organization are responsible for preparing for the planned and unexpected exit of a top executive. Because of the nature of a non-profit organization, the discussion of succession strategies had to include the members of the governing board early; otherwise, challenges from the lack of a succession plan magnified issues for the organization upon the departure of the executive. Schall (1997) contended that public-sector organizations faced two problems that businesses did not in managing succession: (a) limited access to search technology and professional search firms, and (b) a lack of understanding of how to conduct a strategic search process. Despite these challenges, the scope of action could not be limited by frequent problems faced by the organization.

The current executives were responsible for creating an environment conducive to leadership development in a nonprofit setting; however, boards were often uncomfortable with the fact that turnover increased due to employee marketability (Gothard & Austin, 2013). Smeltzer (2002) believed employees had to be prepared for higher positions, knowing some of them 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 Education

As Riddick (2009) posited, the field of education had been slower to embrace succession planning. Without mentioning the concept directly, Fullan (2005) addressed the lack of succession planning. Without describing succession planning, he focused on the failure to perpetuate a sustainable culture, which stemmed from a lack of planning. When there were no measures to ensure a sustainable culture in place, Zepeda, Bengtson, and Parylo (2012) contended that rapid turnover of principals—which they defined as four years or less—resulted in an adverse negative effect on student achievement and school culture. Because of the increased responsibilities, greater accountability for student achievement measures, and long working hour, the desirability of the principalship has diminished. With a perception of the position as principal being less desirable, there were fewer qualified candidates to assume administrative roles.

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 succession-planning studies in school districts. In 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 administrators could produce any formal documentation, or used a process to evaluate the effectiveness of the implied succession plan. According to Riddick (2009), officials of one of three school districts stated that opportunities for teachers to earn a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards licensure was a succession-planning initiative. The administrators interviewed also erroneously cited turnover data for principals as evidence of succession planning; however, no data were available for other positions.

Stressing the importance of development, Riddick (2009) found evidence of sustainable collaborative programs between one of the school districts and a local university. Depending on budget allocations, funds were available to offset the cost for teachers to complete a cohort-based leadership program. However, identification of talent was lacking, as rigorous selection processes for future leaders were limited, or completely absent (Riddick, 2009). There was no mention of retention in Riddick's (2009) dissertation; though, the importance of finding the right person to maintain the organizational culture was evident.

Steele (2015) also conducted a multiple case study analysis, and interviewed 10 principals. None of the administrators indicated a formal succession plan had been utilized; though, all 10 principals had served as assistant principals. Participants indicated frustration over inconsistent hiring practices. Furthermore, while a majority of the respondents indicated a future plan to retire, or a desire to seek a promotion into a district-based administrative role, none were actively seeking an employment change.

While none of the individuals were seeking a change in employment, there were several aspects as important to success in roles as administrators. 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 (Steele, 2015). 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).

Succession planning in Canadian school systems. Hengel (2007) studied a Canadian school system's effort to understand why teachers were not pursuing administrative opportunities. Throughout the study, he also interviewed individuals who were seeking promotions to administrative positions. Hengel (2007) 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, both formal and informal.

Current principals needed to recognize the accomplishments, and leadership activities of current staff members to assist in identifying potential leadership candidates. Furthermore, current principals needed to 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 opportunities by providing growth opportunities, providing release from certain duties, and providing financial support (Hengel, 2007). Hengel (2007) specified retention of school administrators as an important research implication; however, he did not provide any specific information about retention efforts in the Canadian school districts.

Thomas (2011) conducted a case study to analyze efficacy of succession planning in school systems located in Alberta, Canada. He addressed the important aspect of identification of candidates and indicated the need to hold the proper degrees and credentials; however, ascribed the responsibility of identifying candidates solely to the principal. The rationale was based on interviews with superintendents who specified the job of identification of future leaders belonged to the principal. A reliance on a direct supervisor as the only source of talent identification contradicted the best practices identified by Beeson (1998), who specified that subjective personal factors influenced decisions more so than an objective assessment of ability and skills.

The superintendents interviewed by Thomas (2011) 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 aspect identified by Thomas (2011) was the importance of quality training programs at the university level coupled with mentoring by successful administrators.

Challenges to Succession Planning in Education

Ambiguity in subordinate administrative positions. Instability within the organization often 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. Oleszewska, Shoho, and Barnett (2012) also asserted the role of the assistant principal varied from school to school, and in agreement with Hausman et al. (2001), the role was not clearly defined. 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 (Oleszewska et al., 2012).

Leadership experience was important. Santacrose (2016) indicated 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. A long-term strategy was needed to help develop knowledge and skills, as well foster the socialization into the position.

Lack of a consistent vision. Lee (2015) asserted that poorly managed succession quickly destroyed progress built over several years and greatly affected faculty and staff members. Some faculty and staff members were affected disproportionately; Meyer, Macmillan, and Northfield

(2009) found that younger teachers were affected more by the uncertainty of poorly planned succession of principals. Not only for younger teachers, 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. 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. Even though the time in position should be increased, Hargreaves (2005) also echoed Fullan's (2005) assertion for leaders to plan for a departure from the organization from the beginning of one's tenure in the position. 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 also 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. Beeson (1998) noted an important factor in succession planning; the most successful organizations developed talent at each level of the organization, and did not simply focus on grooming a CEO, which aligned with several characteristics identified by Rothwell. Conger and Fulmer (2003) called a flexible systems-oriented approach to development of employees as the fundamental rule. Rothwell (2005) listed a systemic approach as one of the characteristics of an effective succession plan. Conger and Fulmer (2003) also stressed the importance of specific development over replacement planning, which solely focused on providing a list of names of top-tier candidates.

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). Using the scholarly research pertaining to effective succession planning, I developed an instrument to assess perceptions of stakeholders pertaining

to succession planning (Author, 2017). Using Lawshe's (1975) content validity ratio, the items were reviewed by a panel of experts. The panel results indicated the instrument had content validity and reliability.

Research Method

Rationale and Characteristics of a Mixed-Methods Study

A mixed-methods study was chosen to provide a quantitative analysis of survey results from current school administrators, aspiring school leaders, and principal supervisors, along with qualitative data to yield in-depth responses from participants identified through survey results. Creswell (2012) rationalized the purpose of mixed methods research as an alternative to pure quantitative or qualitative studies, and as a method to provide a better understanding of the problem. Torrance (2012) asserted that mixed-methods research had a long history in program evaluation; the proliferation of usage has spawned specific techniques and associated vocabulary.

The study was designed as sequential-explanatory, which Creswell (2012) defined as research in which quantitative data are collected first and prioritized in analysis. Then, qualitative strategies are used to explain and clarify the quantitative results. Torrance (2012) believed mixed-methods research should focus on triangulation through comparing and contrasting data, with the findings being useful at the local level.

The first phase of data collection focused on the quantitative data obtained through administration of an electronic survey to reveal perceptions of various groups of stakeholders surrounding succession planning in their respective school districts. A case study approach was used for the second phase. Creswell (2013) contended a case study is useful when the concept being studied was bound by a specific time and place to reveal natural generalizations. Yin (2009) cited an examination of a decision-making process as a case to be studied. While Stake (1995) delineated case studies into two categories: (a) intrinsic and (b) instrumental. An intrinsic case has unique interest, and must be defined and detailed. An instrumental case is used to analyze a specific problem or issue. Because different school districts were studied, the approach was labeled as a multiple-instrument case study, which Creswell (2013) defined as a collective case study.

Research Design

A purposeful sampling of respondents for the qualitative portion were identified through a question on the electronic survey asking if the respondent would volunteer for a follow-up interview. Creswell (2013) recommended selecting participants to yield maximum variation in responses; though, he did not specify an acceptable sample size for a case study. Stake (1995) and Yin (2009) also did not provide specific guidelines for sample size. Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, and McKibbon (2015) contended qualitative research authors did not provide recommended sample sizes, because qualitative research is not intended to yield generalizable results. However, through a synthesis of sources, Gentles et al. (2015) listed an acceptable sample size as four to 10 for a multiple case study approach. As Creswell (2012) recommended, care was taken to ensure data were collected ethically and respectfully.

Once the quantitative data were analyzed through a multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) for differences between age range, current level, current position, district, gender, and years of experience, I created qualitative questions based on the results. After identifying the potential participants, I contacted each through e-mail, and arranged a time and place for a personal meeting, or via video conference. Upon completion of the interview, all participants had the opportunity to member check the transcription of their individual responses (Creswell, 2013).

Data from the qualitative interviews were triangulated with the quantitative survey results, and any written documentation provided by a human resources administrator for each school district.

Instrument

The purpose of my study was to determine how administrators and administrative candidates defined succession planning, and if the school districts in the study were implementing succession planning. The framework for the survey is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Succession-Planning Framework

Procedures for Data Collections

Institutional Review board approval was obtained before any research was conducted. Prior to distributing any surveys, or conducting any research, I sought approval from the superintendent, or appropriate designee from each school district to distribute surveys to principals, assistant principals, principal supervisors, and aspiring leadership candidates. An informed consent agreement was provided along with the survey instrument, and no personally identifiable information was used in the manuscript.

Collection of Data

The use of an electronic survey allowed me to disburse the instrument quickly, and collect results efficiently for phase one. The survey is divided into five sections, with the first section devoted to 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 (Author, 2017).

Qualitative data were collected through interviews. Questions were open-ended to allow for the respondent to provide information without being influenced. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Results of the interviews were analyzed for themes. Triangulation was used to reconcile the quantitative and qualitative data (Torrance, 2012).

Data Analysis

An adequate number of responses were required. Respondents were given two weeks to complete the initial quantitative survey. A follow-up message was sent after a week; however, two of the participating school districts specified no follow-up requests were to be sent. At 100 respondents, Creswell (2012) indicated a confidence level of +/-9%. Survey data were analyzed using separate MANOVA, descriptive statistics were utilized to present trends from the

quantitative data. Differences in responses by organizations, gender, years of experience, age range, and the different levels of position were analyzed.

Follow-up interviews were transcribed for qualitative research. Creswell (2012) recommended focusing the qualitative data collection on elaboration and in-depth exploration. Therefore, the qualitative data analysis was used to identify themes, which explained and elaborated on the results identified through the quantitative survey. Finding reoccurring clusters among the transcripts was an important component to qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2013). Silverman (2000) believed in the importance of analyzing elements from an interview, not merely listing information.

Establishing Validity

The survey instrument was designed based on the characteristics identified in the review of the literature. An expert panel reviewed the contents of the instrument for validity. Each item was reviewed for job-essential content validity using Lawshe's (1975) content validity ratio (CVR), and the content validity index (CVI) was calculated for the instrument (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 assistant principals and leadership candidates before full distribution. The pilot responses indicated there were no ambiguous items. For further detail on the validation process, see Author (2017).

Triangulation was used to establish validity for the qualitative items (Torrance, 2012). Triangulation included the survey results, and the documentation provided by the human resource administrators from the school districts. Creswell (2013) recommended triangulation as one strategy to validate qualitative research. He also recommended employing “member checking” as a method of validation. Member checking is achieved by asking participants to review transcribed materials to confirm accuracy of statements.

Limitations

A potential delimitation included the fact the survey was only distributed to current administrators and leadership candidates. Other limitations included the reliance on the individual organizations to identify leadership candidates, and provide a list containing contact information. Two of the school districts did not permit a follow-up request for participation, and therefore the completion rate for the two school districts was lower. Limitations may affect the generalizability of the study. Future studies may reveal more information.

Results

The purpose of the study was to identify to what extent succession planning was utilized in four school districts in South Florida, and to analyze the perceptions of various stakeholders on the fidelity of the process. There were 99 respondents to the survey, and 11 individuals participated in a follow-up interview—with a minimum of two from each district, one from each school level (elementary, middle, & high school), and one of each position.

Quantitative Findings

Among the four school districts, 659 individuals were asked to participate in the study, and 99 completed the online survey (15.02%). Principal supervisors had the highest percentage of respondents with 18.75%; however, because fewer individuals hold the positions, the number of respondents was the lowest of the four categories (n=3). Leadership candidates comprised the only category of participants who were not active administrators. The number of respondents by school district are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of Respondents by School District

Level	District A	District B	District C	District D	Total
Supervisors	0	1	2	0	3
Principals	3	1	7	9	20
Assistant Principals	15	3	8	17	43
Leadership Candidates	7	0	0	19	26
Other	0	1	2	4	7
Combined	25	6	19	49	99

The distribution of age ranges was approximately normal. Age ranges of respondents are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Age Ranges of Survey Respondents

Age Range	Number	Percent
25 to 34	20	20.2%
35 to 44	28	28.3%
45 to 54	35	35.4%
55 to 64	14	14.1%
65 or older	2	2.0%

Time as an administrator was skewed, as the second largest demographic of respondents, leadership candidates had zero years of experience. Table 3 shows the years of administrative experience of respondents.

Table 3. Years of Experience for Survey Respondents

Years of Experience	Number	Percent
0 to 2 Years	42	42.4%
3 to 5 Years	22	22.2%
6 to 10 Years	14	14.1%
11 to 20 Years	14	14.1%
21 or More Years	7	7.1%

Among respondents, females (n=71) outnumbered males (n=28), 71.7% to 28.3%. With the exception of principal supervisors, females outnumbered males in every position category. Current school level for respondents is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Current School Employment Level of Respondents

School Level	Number	Percent
Elementary School	49	49.5%
K-8 Combination School	7	7.1%
Middle School	10	10.1%
High School	22	22.2%
Central Office	7	7.1%
Other	4	4.0%

Findings based on talent identification. Participants answered 12 questions focused on the identification of talent in the organization. The survey item responses ranged from (a) never, (b) rarely, (c) sometimes, (d) frequently, to (e) always, with an option of selecting not applicable. Descriptive statistics are provided for each category, and include the mean and frequencies. The answer choice *Never* was assigned one point, and at end of the continuum, *Always* was assigned five points. Results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Number and Percent of Responses from Identification of Talent Questions

Item	Never		Rarely		Sometime		Frequently		Always		<i>M</i> n
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
I-1: The school district has a formal succession plan in place.	11	11.1	9	9.1	23	23.2	19	19.2	26	26.3	3.45
I-2: Resources are devoted to develop high-quality leadership candidates.	1	1.0	7	7.1	33	33.3	32	32.3	25	25.3	3.74
I-3: Assessment of candidates is based on multiple sources, not just a recommendation from the direct supervisor.	4	4.0	3	3.0	28	28.3	23	23.2	39	39.4	3.93
I-4: Potential Candidates are encouraged to seek leadership development opportunities early in their careers.	1	1.0	12	12.1	30	30.3	34	34.3	21	21.2	3.63
I-5: Future career aspirations are sought from all faculty and staff members on a routine basis.	5	5.1	23	23.2	41	41.4	23	23.2	5	5.1	3.00
I-6: Stellar candidates are considered to be organization-wide assets.	2	2.0	7	7.1	26	26.3	38	38.4	24	24.2	3.77
I-7: The organization looks for people with passion, courage, and integrity.	2	2.0	4	4.0	26	26.3	29	29.3	36	36.4	3.96
I-8: Individuals are encouraged to take risks.	3	3.0	15	15.2	41	41.4	29	29.3	9	9.1	3.27
I-9: Open-mindedness is considered to be a desirable trait.	1	1.0	10	10.1	31	31.3	38	38.4	17	17.2	3.62
I-10: Newly promoted or transferred administrators are trustworthy, humble, and authentic.	1	1.0	3	3.0	47	47.5	32	32.3	11	11.1	3.52

I-11: All aspects of the succession plan are transparent.	8	8.1	20	20.2	34	34.3	23	23.2	8	8.1	3.03
I-12: The succession plan is clearly communicated to all stakeholders.	11	11.1	22	22.2	31	31.3	20	20.2	10	10.1	2.96

Note: M = Mean.

The mean score for the category was 3.49. Question I-12, *the succession plan is clearly communicated to all stakeholders* was the only question with a mean score less than 3.0 (n=2.96), and seven of the 12 questions had a mean score greater than 3.50.

Findings based on development and mentoring. Questions pertaining to development and mentoring comprised the largest category with 14 items. The questions utilized the same five-point Likert-type scale as the talent identification questions. Descriptive statistics for development and mentoring are shown in Table 6. Question D-14, *who is involved in selecting leadership candidates?* is omitted from the table because the answer choices were: (a) principal, (b) central-office administrator, (c) colleague, (d) university professor, and (e) other, and the participants could select multiple answers.

Table 6. Number and Percent of Responses from Development and Mentoring Questions

Item	Never		Rarely		Sometime		Frequently		Always		<u>M</u> n
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
D-1: An established succession plan is conveyed clearly to all stakeholders.	11	11.1	18	18.2	26	26.3	21	21.2	8	8.1	2.96
D-2: Succession plan results are reviewed regularly.	11	11.1	13	13.1	25	25.3	19	19.2	6	6.1	2.95
D-3: Constant follow-ups occur to ensure the success of the succession plan.	8	8.1	20	20.2	25	25.3	17	17.2	7	7.1	2.94
D-4: Succession plans are reviewed based on organizational performance.	9	9.21	15	15.2	25	25.3	20	20.2	7	7.1	3.01
D-5: Developmental high-leverage assignments are identified for candidates to develop needed knowledge and skills	3	3.0	15	15.2	40	40.4	24	24.2	5	5.1	3.15
D-6: Specific assignment to high leverage opportunities is available.	2	2.0	18	18.2	33	33.3	27	27.3	5	5.1	3.18
D-7: A specific person or office coordinates development assignments.	6	6.1	5	5.1	21	21.2	31	31.3	17	17.2	3.60
D-8: Clear feedback is provided to leadership candidates.	3	3.0	15	15.2	35	35.4	23	23.2	11	11.1	3.28

D-9: Specific skills and competencies are identified for administrative positions.	1	1.0	9	9.1	18	18.2	33	33.3	28	28.3	3.88
D-10: Participation in professional organizations is encouraged.	1	1.0	14	14.1	21	21.2	30	30.3	23	23.2	3.67
D-11: Formal mentoring opportunities are arranged.	3	3.0	14	14.1	36	36.4	18	18.2	17	17.2	3.36
D-12: Informal mentoring opportunities are available.	2	2.0	9	9.1	30	30.3	29	29.3	19	19.2	3.61
D-13: A robust, formal leadership development program is in place.	4	4.0	17	17.2	21	21.2	29	29.3	14	14.1	3.38

Note: M = Mean.

The mean score for the development category was 3.31. Questions D-1 through D-3 each had a mean score lower than 3.0, and Question D-4 had a mean score slightly over 3.00. All four questions pertained to establishment, review, and conveyance of the succession plan. Question D-9, specific skills and competencies are identified for administrative positions had the highest mean score for the category (n=3.88). Questions D-11 and D-12 focused on mentoring opportunities. Informal mentoring, question D-12 had a higher mean score (n=3.61) than formal mentoring (n=3.36).

Findings based on retention. The retention of talent questions comprised the smallest category with four items. The same Likert-type five-point scale was used for questions in the identification and development sections. The results for retention questions are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Number and Percent of Responses from Retention Questions

Item		Never n	Never %	Rarely n	Rarely %	Sometime n	Sometime %	Frequently n	Frequently %	Always n	Always %	M n
R-1: Rewards and recognition are clearly given to valuable employees.	2	2.0	22	22.2	46	46.5	11	11.1	8	8.1	3.01	
R-2: High performing employees are encouraged to stay in the organization.	2	2.0	9	9.1	31	31.3	26	26.3	21	21.2	3.62	
R-3: There is evidence of high performing employees staying in the organization.	0	0.0	5	5.1	32	32.3	37	37.4	12	12.1	3.65	
R-4: Administrative vacancies are filled by qualified, internal candidates.	2	2.0	6	6.1	39	39.4	34	34.3	8	8.1	3.45	

Note: M = Mean.

With a category mean score of 3.43, the retention category was the only category to have the mean scores from all questions exceed 3.0. Question R-3, there is evidence of high performing employees staying in the organization, was the only question in the survey in which no participant selected “never” as an answer.

Findings based on organizational culture. The category included seven questions. The items used the same five-point Likert-type scale as the identification, development, and retention categories. The results for organizational culture questions are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Number and Percent of Responses from Organizational Culture Questions

Item	Never		Rarely		Sometime		Frequently		Always		M n
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
C-1: Executive administrators appear to value succession planning.	1	1.0	10	10.1	30	30.3	25	25.3	9	9.1	3.41
C-2: Growth and improvement are clearly high priorities of the organization, and fostered appropriately.	1	1.0	7	7.1	24	24.2	34	34.3	18	18.2	3.73
C-3: A person from outside the organization would be hired for a position, if he or she had superior credentials, and was the appropriate fit.	2	2.0	8	8.1	34	34.3	25	25.3	15	15.2	3.51
C-4: Succession plans are made with the input of all stakeholders.	10	10.1	23	23.2	23	23.2	14	14.1	6	6.1	2.78
C-5: Succession plans consider the unique organizational culture.	6	6.1	7	7.1	35	35.4	20	20.2	6	6.1	3.18
C-6: Executive administrators have visible input into the selection-planning process.	3	3.0	7	7.1	23	23.2	27	27.3	11	11.1	3.51
C-7: Executive administrators are open and honest about challenges and issues.	2	2.0	16	16.2	29	29.3	21	21.2	10	10.1	3.27

Note: M = Mean.

The mean score for the category was 3.34. Question C-4, *Succession plans are made with the input of all stakeholders* had the lowest mean score (n=2.78) for the category and for entire survey. Only three questions in the category had mean scores greater than 3.50.

Multivariate analyses. A one-way MANOVA was conducted to analyze differences among responses by district. No significant differences were found ($p > .05$). Separate one-way MANOVAs were also conducted for age range, current level, current position, gender, and years of experience. There were no statistically significant differences found, as all p -values were greater than .05.

Quantitative summary. Because there were no statistically significant differences among any of the independent variables, the quantitative analysis focused on questions in each category with the lowest and highest mean scores, as well as the category mean scores.

Qualitative Findings

Based on analysis of the survey responses, I created qualitative questions for a follow-up interview. The final question from the online survey asked if the individuals were willing to participate in a face-to-face or video-conference interview. A total of 11 of participants were interviewed. Creswell (2013) recommended selecting participants with diverse experiences and viewpoints. The participants covered all job positions, all school levels, all age ranges, both genders, and a wide range of years of experience. Seven of the participants were selected from the two larger school districts because of the sizes. Table 9 includes the demographic results for the interview participants. The participants are only identified by an interview code, age range, range of experience, and current employment level.

Table 9. Interview Participant Demographic Information

Participant	Age Range	Gender	Years of Experience	Current Setting
LC-1	25-34	Female	0 to 2	Elementary
LC-2	35-44	Female	0 to 2	Elementary
LC-3	25-34	Female	0 to 2	Middle
LC-4	35-44	Female	0 to 2	Middle
AP-1	55-64	Female	0 to 2	Elementary
AP-2	35-44	Male	6 to 10	High
AP-3	35-44	Female	3 to 5	Elementary
P-1	45-54	Male	3 to 5	High
PS-1	65+	Male	21 or more	District
PS-2	45-54	Male	21 or more	District
PS-3	45-54	Male	11 to 20	District

Note: LC = Leadership Candidate, AP = Assistant Principal, P = Principal, PS = Supervisor

Qualitative themes. All interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. Each participant had the opportunity to member check by reviewing the transcription of his or her interview; provide clarification or further insight. Transcripts were read multiple times, and then coded for themes. Based on the coding of the interview results, five major themes emerged: (a) culture, (b) mentoring, (c) lack of resources and job complexity, (d) situational input, and (e) a lack of input.

Culture. Although the MANOVA from the quantitative results did not indicate any statistically significant differences among respondents, one major difference between smaller and larger school districts, the importance of considering culture for administrative positions was apparent through the interview process. A principal supervisor aptly described the reason, and indicated that “one of the advantages of being a small district is that there is a small enough group; we know one another, see everyone in the community.” The downside for smaller districts was the lack of resources and time for having robust leadership development opportunities.

The respondents from larger districts indicated there was often a lack of consideration for the unique organizational culture of each school when new administrators were hired. The process for selecting administrators was very political, and greatly influenced by one’s connections and networking abilities. Respondents agreed that assessment of talent occurred from multiple perspectives; however, the multiple perspectives were almost always current

principals and central-office administrators. Parents and students were rarely involved, and colleagues and community members were only peripherally engaged.

Mentoring. Every participant agreed that informal mentoring occurred more frequently than formal mentoring. There were myriad reasons listed, including: (a) convenience, (b) time, (c) location, (d) comfort level or trust, and (e) a need to build upon skills. The level of comfort and trust were important aspects. An assistant principal indicated “you have to be willing to jump in the fire at any time, and ask questions when you don’t have someone immediately at your side.” One of the principal supervisors relayed the widely varying situations an administrator might encounter, “especially beyond the formal training requirements, all the different things no one told you about.”

Self-advocacy was cited as a necessary trait, as was the importance of networking. One of the leadership candidates indicated there was pressure to have a wealth of experiences, more so than the experiences from a leadership preparation program. An assistant principal indicated that one had to advocate and network to find proper mentors. One of the leadership candidates captured the essence of informal mentoring with the belief that “you have to go out and search for people who are willing to invest in you and help build you to be what you need to be.”

Lack of resources and job complexity. A lack of resources and times were addressed in the cultural theme; however, in a larger sense, lack of time and resources were a consistent theme for leadership development opportunities. Many of the respondents felt the programs were designed to meet the required mandates from the State Department of Education, not to provide needed professional development. One of the principal supervisors indicated the developmental program for principals existed because of the state requirements, but “it has never been the quality program, we would like it to be.” Therefore, the respondents believed the process was not robust enough, and needed to be strengthened.

Complexity in administrative positions added a challenge in developing and mentoring new administrators. One of the assistant principal described the phenomenon well:

I feel because the job itself has so many vast responsibilities, that training for each of those responsibilities is almost impossible. There are so many moving parts. It is great to “target this right now,” but that is just one piece of the 300.

The number of aspiring leaders seeking leadership opportunities add to the complexity. One of the leadership candidates asserted there was a lack of high-leverage assignments because so many people were seeking the opportunities. The issue of complexity is compounded through the very diverse school settings for which administrators need to be prepared.

Situational input and preplanned transitions. Depending on the context and the situation, many respondents indicated they had some input into the succession planning process, and some of the transitions were preplanned. However, the decision-making authority rested with a senior administrator, and there was no guarantee the input would be honored. However, there was evidence of identifying and preparing new leaders from current administrators.

Lack of input. All of the assistant principals indicated a lack of input into training and professional development. One of the assistant principals stated, “I don’t think at the assistant principal level, they have ever been asked how can things be improved.” Leadership candidates felt a similar lack of input or even knowledge of the process. One leadership candidate indicated, “I think it is literally those people in that bubble, that’s who knows what is going on. No one else knows unless they are supposed to know.”

Most of the respondents from the larger districts indicated that many administrative hiring decisions were political. One of the leadership candidates described the sentiment, “I don’t

think it is fair that they post positions that we know are already filled.” Another leadership candidate agreed by stating, “I would say it is very political in terms of who you know.” One of the assistant principals agreed, “there are some administrators that are not held to the same criteria.”

Triangulation of results. A single document outlining a succession plan was not located for any of the school districts. Policies and processes for leadership development, as well as strategic planning initiatives were available for some of the school districts. A strategic plan goal for one school district was to expand leadership development programs for assistant principals and principals, which was to be aligned with the district leadership evaluation model. The material for the programs for development of principals and assistant principals focused on the requirements, specified the outcomes of the programs, and indicated alignment with the Florida Principal Leadership Standards (Florida Department of Education, 2011). In addition, a handbook was available for mentoring new principals.

Materials for another school district indicated the school district had a leadership development program for preparing new assistant principals, preparing new principals, supporting new principals, and developing experienced administrators. The available documentation also indicated the programs focused on the 10 Florida Principal Leadership Standards (Florida Department of Education, 2011). A strategic goal for the school district was to attract and retain high-quality administrators; however, no detailed steps were provided.

Discussion

Succession planning is a function necessary for organizations to move forward by having a pipeline of qualified applicants at every level of the organization (Beeson, 1998). As Neefe (2009) believed, education as a field has been slow to adopt models of success from other disciplines. Therefore, I focused on the perceptions of administrators and leadership candidates in four school districts toward the concept of succession planning.

How is Succession Planning Defined?

In the literature, a lack of a consistent definition for succession planning led to inconsistent findings, which were summarized by Steele (2015), who believed that education professionals were unfamiliar with the terminology associate with succession planning. Echoing the research by Steele (2015), one of the leadership candidates stated, “this is bad to admit, I had to look up to see what the term succession planning meant.” Based on the response, Steele’s (2015) assertion that educational professionals may not be familiar with the terminology traditionally accepted by other disciplines was confirmed.

From the responses to the survey, respondents believed their districts had some type of a succession plan, yet the plans did not include input from all stakeholders, and were not conveyed to all relevant stakeholders. The theme was highlighted by multiple respondents from the interview phase of the study. Rothwell (2005) listed 15 characteristics of effective succession planning, and several were not evident through survey results or follow-up interviews. From the triangulation of documents, and follow-up interviews, the school districts focused on preparing and developing principals, with some evidence of programs to create pools for potential assistant principals.

One of the pool admission requirements was a recommendation from the current principal. Beeson (1998) contended sole reliance on evaluations from direct supervisors was a very poor source of talent identification. Based on survey and interview responses, multiple sources were used during the identification process; however, in most cases, only principals or senior administrators were involved. Of the survey respondents, 72.7% indicated the principal

and central office administrators were involved in identifying talent, and only 17.2% indicated colleagues had any input. Two of the qualitative themes addressed pool requirements, the political facet relating to culture of larger districts, and a lack of input.

Formal plans were not evident beyond documents for state-mandated principal preparation and administrative pool requirements. Two separate principal supervisors indicated their districts needed to adopt a more thorough and systematic plan. While there were pool processes for principals and assistant principals, the required training appeared to be generic, which directly contradicts the best practices identified by Beeson (1998) and Chavez (2011). However, some of the documents from the larger districts for entry into the pool indicated applicants had to write individualized plans to demonstrate competency.

Are Succession Planning Components Evident?

Defined skills and competencies for administrative positions and coordination of leadership opportunities received high survey scores, yet opportunities for growth, formal mentoring, and a robust development program received low scores. As indicated in the interview responses, input was not solicited from school-based administrators on training needs. Although documents for admission into the administrative pools indicated a plan for addressing specific growth needs, none of the interview participants indicated receiving target professional development.

The retention category was the only category in which all questions had a mean score of 3.00 or greater. Evidence of high performing employees being encouraged to stay in the organization and evidence of employees remaining in organization were the questions with the highest mean scores for the category. Beeson (1998) and Chavez (2011) addressed the importance of retaining the top talent in the organization. Through the follow-up interviews, several administrators indicated they would make recommendations for internal promotions; however, the decision rested with senior central-office administrators.

Hargreaves (2005) indicated that all stakeholders needed to provide input to ensure maintenance of the culture was achieved through succession. During the follow-up interviews, principal supervisors from the smaller districts indicated culture was considered during administrative appointments; however, a lack of time and resources often prohibited a robust identification and development program. Whereas, respondents from larger schools districts indicated a frustration with the political aspect of administrative appointments, and contended there was a lack of consideration for the unique school culture from senior administrators.

Do Stakeholders View the Process as Successful?

From the follow-up interviews, at each level, respondents indicated a need for more robust succession-planning processes. The survey respondents deemed some aspects were successful, and indicated the specified qualifications and competencies were identified for administrative positions. According to respondents, potential leadership candidates were encouraged to seek administrative opportunities early in their careers, and newly appointed administrators were trustworthy, humble, and authentic. The newly appointed administrators were able to receive support, as opportunities for informal mentoring were shown through the survey responses.

There were many challenges identified, as well. Riddick's (2009) contention that educational organizations were slow to adopt succession-planning models was evident through interviews with principal supervisors. One of the principal supervisors in a small district indicated the preparation program for principals was in place to meet the guidelines from the State Department of Education, and the assistant principal training program was nonfunctioning.

While several interview respondents indicated having some input with the choice of a successor, an element of uncertainty existed because senior administrators might not honor the input. Interview respondents from larger districts also expressed concerns pertaining to the lack of consideration for the unique school culture when new administrators were hired. As demonstrated through survey results and through follow-up interviews, certain groups of stakeholders were not involved in the succession-planning process. Hargreaves (2005) contended that all stakeholders need to have input.

How Can the Process be Improved?

The qualitative theme of a lack of input is a major impediment to succession planning, as reflected during the interviews. The comments mirrored the contention by Hausman et al. (2001) that training was focused on the job functions for the principal, not for the role of the assistant principal, or other subordinate administrators. An assistant principal believed administrators needed training on engaging stakeholders. The additional training would help to bring more stakeholders into the succession-planning process. One of the leadership candidates indicated more information needed to be provided to all stakeholders.

Bringing stakeholders into the process is important; however, engagement cannot occur without a written plan. During the interviews, several of the respondents commented about a need for a well-documented plan. Furthermore, the plan needed clearly outlined goals, and procedures to meet the goals. A leadership candidate echoed the position that a plan should not just be established, but also implemented fully. Another leadership candidate believed implementation of a succession plan would mitigate the political aspect of positions, and assist in building a positive culture in which dedication is valued.

As evidenced through one of the qualitative themes, establishing succession planning as part of the culture is needed. A principal supervisor believed succession planning must be in the forefront every day, and not exist as an ancillary item. Another principal supervisor stated that plans had to be reviewed annually with adjustments to the plan be made as needed. To have a robust plan, individualized development is essential. Though additional professional development does not necessarily equal better, as Beeson (1998) warned against substituting targeted professional development with generic training.

Training was also needed for formal mentors. Bengtson, Zepeda, and Parylo (2013) cited the importance of having a robust formal mentoring program for new principals. One of the leadership candidates stated there needed to be follow-through and accountability for formal mentors. Accountability for preparing the next generation of leaders was cited by Beeson (1998) and Rothwell (2005) as extremely important facets to succession planning. The results from the survey and the interviews highlighted the importance on Beeson's (1998) assertion that a succession plan must address every level of the organization.

Implications

The results of the study reflect a lack of comprehensive succession planning in four school districts. Based on the four components of effective succession planning, some of the best practices identified in the literature were not evident. Administrators at all levels of a school district can use the results of this study for strategic planning, creating and revising succession plans at the district-level, providing targeted development and mentoring opportunities for teachers and administrators in schools, and strengthening measures to retain high-quality employees at all levels.

While the identification of talent, development and mentoring, and retention of high-performing employees are all vital components to creating a quality succession plan,

consideration for the unique organizational culture is critical. As one of the leadership candidates described during an interview, there is a need for new administrators to understand norms and beliefs of the school, and to recognize the established traditions.

Recommendations

As indicated through the survey results, respondents believed succession plans were inadequately conveyed, did not consider input from all stakeholders, and did not consider the unique organizational culture of each school. Therefore, senior school district administrators need to engage all stakeholders in the process of creating, conveying, and revising of succession plans. Specific goals and procedures need to be established for the identification and development of leadership candidates. True multiple measures for talent need to be considered for identifying future administrators. While development plans addressed transitions from teacher to assistant principal, assistant principal to principal, and mentoring new principals, there was no indication of professional development for principal supervisors.

The culture of each school is unique, and succession plans must address the complexity and specific organizational culture. Informal mentoring was frequently cited as necessary because of time, convenience, and need for self-advocacy. However, some participants sought informal mentors because the assigned formal mentors did not adequately serve in the required capacity. As Rothwell (2015) indicated, supervisors need to be held accountable for training new leaders. Bengtson et al. (2013) also stressed the importance of matching mentor to protégé. Practical issues including a lack of resources for succession planning efforts can be addressed through creative approaches.

Limitations

The survey and subsequent qualitative interviews were limited to four districts in South Florida; though, with 99 survey respondents, the population sample was sufficient to yield generalizable results, albeit with a +/-9% confidence level (Creswell, 2012). I am presuming all respondents answered questions truthfully. A total of 26 leadership candidates completed the survey, and are not practicing school administrators, which may be considered a limitation. However, the limitation is mitigated, as Conger and Fulmer (2003) and Rothwell (2005) stated the importance of transparency and engagement at all levels.

The 99 respondents from a population of 659 yielded a response rate of 15.02%. Baruch and Holtom (2008) asserted response rate was only one indicator of quality. One recommended analysis to mitigate for potential bias was to compare early responses to late responses. In this study, no noticeable differences were evident. Another factor was to consider non-respondents. Since response rates were similar for all four categories within the population, the possibility of bias in responses was lessened. Also, electronic surveys typically have lower response rates than hard-copy surveys (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). Nulty (2008) agreed that online survey response rates are traditionally lower; therefore, additional methods of evaluation were needed to confirm findings.

For two of the districts, participation was requested through a district central-office administrator, and that fact could have influenced several participants. However, those school districts distributed the survey directly, as a condition of agreement.

While this study was focused on perceptions surrounding succession plans, the scope of the survey interviews was limited to practicing administrators, and leadership candidates aspiring to obtain administrative positions. The perceptions of classroom and specialty teachers were not reviewed, nor were the perceptions of students, parents, support staff members, business partners, and other stakeholders.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings and limitations, future research recommendations include:

1. Examine perceptions of school board members, teachers, students, parents, support staff members, business partners, and other various stakeholders to broaden the perception of effectiveness.
2. Specific quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method studies can reveal important information surrounding, (a) identification of talent, (b) development and mentoring, and (c) retention of high-performing employees.
3. A study can be conducted to analyze the concept of succession planning to include recruitment and selection of teachers, and the impact on the organizational culture.

Conclusions

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, provide for development and mentoring, and retain the highest performing employees. Across all three components, the specific organizational culture is honored.

The quantitative and qualitative results confirmed there are gaps in every component in the each of the four school districts. As school districts continually strive for improvement, the results contained in this study can be used to develop and strengthen quality succession plans. As Owens and Valesky (2015) defined organizational culture as the norms, values, and beliefs of a school, they also contended that an administrator must understand and strive to shape the culture in a positive manner. Only by understanding the organizational culture, can a succession plan yield effective results.

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