SUCCESSION PLANNING PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES IN MALAYSIA'S PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Succession planning is a process of potential talent identification, classification, and growth of talents, and ensures a continuously abundant supply of potential candidates with leadership qualities in universities. Nevertheless, succession planning is not a common practice in universities around the world, likewise in Malaysia. The statistics have shown that universities worldwide are facing the issues of mass retirement of key leaders who came from the baby boomer generation. These universities will lose the institution memory when they leave their offices, hence, universities may face leadership crisis. Therefore, this paper intends to review the succession planning practices in Malaysia's public universities and also discusses the challenges faced by them when they try to implement succession planning. A systematic literature review was conducted pertaining to the succession planning practices and issue in Malaysia's public universities. The inclusion criteria are: (i) publications between 2010 and 2019, (ii) Malaysia's public universities succession planning only, and (iii)publications written in English. Four themes have emerged for these practices. They are potential leader identification, leadership development, promotion, and centre-in-charge. At the same time, the issues faced are financial limitation in a university, brain drain syndrome, university recruitment requirements that do not require leadership, two houses of legislature in a university, short tenure of managerial leadership positions, and misconceptions among staff of leaders who were chosen by default. It is hoped that this review can help the relevant stakeholders in Malaysia's public universities to plan for a better structured and systematic succession planning.

Keywords: Educational organisations, Leadership, Management, University, Succession planning

INTRODUCTION

Universities are facing the issue of the mass retirement from the baby boomer generation, where many of them are key persons in universities (Othman, 2012; Sirat, Ahmad, & Abd Majid, Komoo, & Mokhtar, 2012; Golden, 2014; Richards, 2016; Gilbert, 2017). Malaysia is no exception to this situation. Data from the *Majlis Profesor Negara* (2016) show that thousands of professors are going to retire soon. Consequently, Sirat et al. (2012) mentioned that universities might face the issue of temporary shortages of leadership. The universities might lose the skills, abilities, experiences, and institution memory when these key personnel leave their offices (Fulmer & Conger, 2004; Mustafa Kamil, Hashim, & Abdul Hamid, 2016). One of the methods to overcome the above-mentioned issue is to have a systematic and comprehensive succession planning in an organisation (Rothwell, 2010).

Succession planning is critical to the survival and sustainability of a highly successful organisation. It refers to the process of potential talent identification, classification, and gradation of talents, for an abundant and continuous supply of potential

leadership candidates (Rothwell, 2010). Succession planning can also act as a platform for a committee, task force, or an in-house talent searching team to keep a record of the talent pool, which is a vital part of grooming and development process of an institution (Shamsuddin, Chan, Wahab, & Mohd Kassim, 2012). To achieve this, institutions need a series of leadership development programmes to narrow the competency gap of potential leaders (Rothwell, 2010). Indeed, a strong and vibrant leadership can lead a university to greater heights, like the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in Singapore that was founded in 1991, but today is the 12th in the 2022 World University Rankings (Coaldrake, 2016; QS Quacquarelli Symonds Limited, 2021).

In 2016, the Malaysia Government had initiated the succession planning program for academicians in universities (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2017). However, little is known about the practices and the outcome of this succession planning program in Malaysia's public universities. Therefore, the research questions for this paper are (1) what are the practices in academic succession planning and academic-managerial succession planning in Malaysia's public universities at faculty level? (2) what are the challenges that universities can encounter with the enforcement of the implementation of academic and academic-managerial succession planning at faculty level? This paper only focuses on succession planning practice at the faculty level because the top leader appointment like Vice-Chancellor is under the purview of the Minister of Education (*University and University Colleges Act 1971* (PoM)).

This article will provide some insight into the existing succession planning policy and best practices for Malaysia Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and further assisting HEIs in achieving their strategic plan. The finding can also serve as a reference for the HEIs in setting up their succession planning policy or programme. Other than that, there are limited studies on university succession planning (Klein & Salk, 2013; Morrin, 2013). The amount of literature existing is insufficient to cover all the succession planning features and how various factors are connected. Clunies (2004) and Morrin (2013) had suggested more research was needed in university succession planning, while Giambatista, Rowe, and Riaz (2005) and Mateso (2010) mentioned this research should be conducted with robust theoretical frameworks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Succession planning brings several advantages to institutions. It helps employee retention (Gandossy & Verma, 2006; Mustafa Kamil, 2015; Ng'andu & Nyakora, 2017), preserves institutional memory, technology, and culture (Wallin, 2007), more economical compared to hiring external employees (Berchelman, 2005), and requires shorter time for the successor to understand internal and external organisational settings (Berke, 2005). Thus, succession planning can lessen the odds of failures within the first two years that external successors tend to experience (Berchelman, 2005). This is because succession planning increases trust and acceptability of the successor in the organisation (Harrison & Hargrove, 2006), minimises stagnation, discouragement, and attrition of internal talent (Gandossy & Verma, 2006). Therefore, succession planning reduces problems linked to leadership transition (Wallin, 2007) and brings stability to institutions.

Malaysia scholars were aware of these issues and suggested a model to promote succession planning in public universities (Abd Majid et al., 2012). In this model, there are five critical components namely academic leader, academic leadership,

management leadership, life-long career development, and succession planning tools. An academic leader is defined as someone who has a doctorate, and he/she is recognised for his/her scholarly expertise and knowledge. At the same time, academic leadership consists of Teaching Leadership, Research Leadership, and Public Leadership (Abd Majid et al., 2012). Management leadership is a temporary appointment to a managerial position within the institution (Abd Majid et al., 2012). Meanwhile, life-long career development is an academic career based on academic development and excellence which also includes tutorship to professorship. Finally, succession planning also includes the various existing appointment and promotion tools (Abd Majid et al., 2012). Figure 1 illustrates the structure of the model.

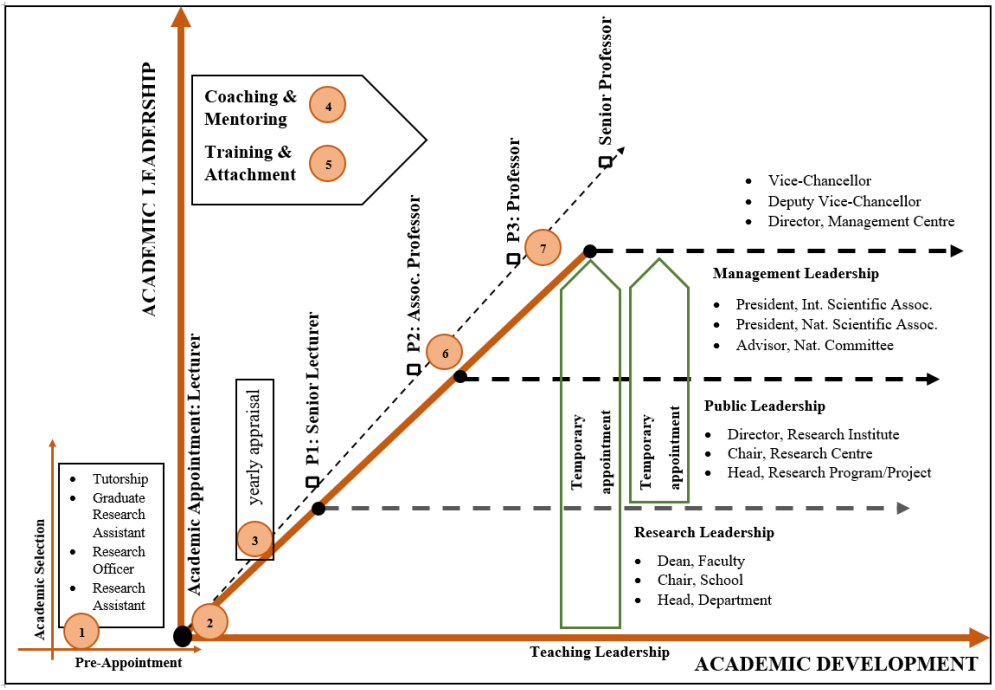

Figure 1: Succession planning in developing young academic leaders' model
Sources: (Abd Majid et al., 2012)

In contrast, without succession planning, institutions face the institutional memory or job knowledge loss due to mass retirement of leaders (Fulmer & Conger, 2004; Morrin, 2013; Mustafa Kamil et al., 2016). At the same time poor succession planning increases the odds of 'Glass Ceiling Problem' and bias in choosing successors (Kanter, 1977; Rothwell, 2010; Abd Majid et al., 2012; Golden, 2014). As a result, leadership quality might be compromised (Sirat et al., 2012; Azman, Sirat, & Dahlan, 2012; Mustafa Kamil et al., 2016). Lack of succession planning practices will cause a substantial negative impact to the university, either to the wastage of the time and resources of the university or on the morale of their colleagues due to the poor decisions from the unsuitable candidates.

METHODOLOGY

Systematic review generally is a method used to answer a specific question or questions by identifying and retrieving global evidence, followed by appraisal and synthesising the results, to inform the practice and research (Aromataris & Pearson, 2014). In addition, systematic review uses an orderly and explicit method to lessen biasness in the process of identification, selection, synthesis, and summary of the

studies or results. Therefore, systematic review is able to deliver trusted results from which conclusions can be drawn and decisions are made (Higgins et al., 2021). Furthermore, a systematic review can be used to identify new practices, confirm existing practises, and report the dissimilarities in practices (Munn, Stern, Aromataris, Lockwood, & Jordan, 2018). Hence, the systematic review method that is used matches the requirements to answer the research questions for this article.

Thus, after framing the research questions, the next step was to conduct an extensive search of the related literature. Search engines such as Google Scholar, Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC), and Scopus Database were used to search for the related articles. Keywords like 'university succession planning' and 'higher education succession planning' were used to search for the related articles in Google Scholar, ERIC, and Scopus Database search engines. The articles chosen were published from 2010 to 2019 and were written in English. The inclusion criteria are the articles used would only focus on academic succession planning of Malaysia's public universities, and managerial succession planning at faculty level based on the model above. Nevertheless, high-rank leader succession planning like Vice-Chancellors was excluded from this review because their appointments are with Minister of Education (*University and University Colleges Act 1971* (PoM)). Furthermore, duplicated articles were filtered by Endnote 20. This was done by importing all the citations from Google Scholar, ERIC, and Scopus Database search engines into Endnote 20 and then the "Preferences" button in the "Edit" menu was clicked. Then the "duplicate" button was clicked to select the "author, year, title", and the "OK" button was finally clicked. From here, duplicate references were deleted. Based on these criteria, 18 articles related to succession planning in Malaysia's public universities (Table 1) were selected and analysed.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data from these articles. The data analysis started with line-by-line open coding. All finding from the articles that referred to Research Questions were coded. Next axial coding was done when the same group of data were grouped as a category. In the end, the list of grouping was merged into one master list, which had the primitive outline or classification system that reflected the recurrent regularities or patterns in this study. These regularities and patterns are known as categories or themes. Four themes have emerged from the analysis that will be thoroughly discussed in the next section.

Table 1: *Description of the 18 articles matched the inclusion criteria of Malaysian public universities succession planning (respondent is for the quantitative study sample, the participant is for qualitative study sample)*

Authors	Research Methodology	No. of respondents/participants
Mohd Isa, Abu Samah, Abdullah, & Jusoff (2009)	Mixed method	11 respondents, 11 participants
Abdullah, Abu Samah, Jusoff, & Mohd Isa (2009)	Literature review	
Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (2011)	n/a	
Shamsuddin et al. (2012)	Literature review	
Othman (2012)	Quantitative	399 respondents
Sirat et al. (2012)	Literature review	

Abd Majid et al. (2012)	Qualitative	125 participants
Azman et al. (2012)	Qualitative	
Muslim, Haron, & Hahim (2012)	Qualitative	2 participants
Asimiran & Hussin (2012)	Qualitative	
Md Yunus & Pang (2015)	Quantitative	651 respondents
Wan et al. (2015)	Qualitative	67 participants
Mustafa Kamil et al. (2016)	Quantitative	399 respondents
Azman, Che Omar, Md Yunus, & Md Zain (2016)	Literature review	
Pang, Azman, Morshidi, & Koo (2016)	Quantitative	1202 respondents
Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (2017)	Mixed method	
Bano (2017)	Literature review	
Bano & Omar (2018)	Literature review	

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Malaysian government has adopted succession planning since 2006 (Othman, 2012) and the Department of Civil Service has developed a guideline—Service Circular No.3 — for the continuity of critical positions and the sustainability of organisational performance. Following its introduction, the 12 public universities in Malaysia have adopted this practice of succession planning with the assistance from the AKEPT (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2011).

The findings from the literature have shown that the practice of succession planning in public universities in Malaysia are not comprehensive and systematic. Abd Majid et al. (2012) have found that there is no specific succession planning policy or document in their case universities. This implies that these universities are without a formal mechanism of succession planning, but instead are functioning with some forms of informal succession planning. The section below further discusses the succession planning practices according to the emerging themes from the literature, namely (1) identification of potential leaders, (2) leadership development, (3) promotion, (4) centre-in-charge and (5) issues affecting succession planning in Malaysia's public universities.

Identification of Potential Leaders

In succession planning, talents need to be identified before developing them to become leaders. Historically, academic leaders were identified based on their abilities in research and teaching, rather than administrative skills (Muslim et al., 2012). In light of that, Abdullah et al. (2009) have emphasised that there is a need to have a standard selection for potential leaders. As important as it seems, Muslim et al. (2012) have found that there is no standard or framework in selecting a potential leader for succession planning in their case university, but Key Performance Index (KPI) is used as a reference. Findings from Othman (2012) resonate with Muslim et al. (2012), that the University Performance Appraisal System has been used to identify elite candidates. The finding from Abd Majid et al. (2012) showed that a leader was selected by convenience in some of the 'younger' local universities. Meanwhile, Othman (2012) stated that the measured aspects for the Dean or director were their

personality, leadership, and field of expertise. A shared view amongst interviewees from Abd Majid et al. (2012) stated that there was an urgency for a more holistic interview for succession planning in identifying and appointing future leaders. Hence, it is concluded that they are no standard in identifying the potential leaders in the universities and there is an urgent call for a standard to identify the leaders of Malaysian universities.

Leadership Development

According to Othman (2012), one of the methods to ensure the continuity of leaders is through the succession planning program. Thus, the existing talent pool in the university can fulfil the leadership needs. Therefore, leadership development plays a vital role in succession planning. In other words, the succession planning process must fulfil the leadership development, which are individual competency, ability, and the skill gap between what he/she can do now and what he/she should meet for the needs of future work requirements (Rothwell, 2010).

At the federal level, the Ministry of Higher Education had created the Critical Agenda Projects for Leadership under the National Higher Education Strategic Plan to strengthen the university's leadership (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2011). In the early stages, this program was chaired by the Governance Division of Higher Education Institution and later by Higher Education Leadership Academic Malaysia (AKEPT). In Phase I (2007-2010) of this project, the focus was based on four Strategic Objectives and five Key Performance Indicators. In other words, the emphasis was on developing talent groups and succession planning for academic and administration, learning and teaching, research, innovation, and commercialisation. In Phase I,

- 40% of the public universities had gone through training programs under the AKEPT leadership framework
- 12 universities had succession plans
- 17% or 36 of the 210 Deans from public universities had been profiled
- 78% or 807 of 1,035 Principal Trainers were trained under the AKEPT learning and teaching module
- 441 leading researchers were trained in the area of research, innovation, and commercialisation.

Additionally, according to Bano (2017), the candidates for the top leadership — Vice-Chancellors, and Deputy Vice-Chancellors — profiled by AKEPT needed to undergo five professional development programs. While the candidates for middle management positions, i.e., Deans, needed to complete seven professional development programs conducted by AKEPT. Furthermore, according to Bano (2017), AKEPT initiated a Young Scholar's Programme in search for the next generation of academic leaders. The main objective of this programme was to develop skills among future academicians from public universities.

At the institutional level, one of Malaysia's public universities has adopted a mentoring program for their succession planning programme and is known as Master Malim (Othman, 2012). In it, high-performing academic staff acted as mentors and coaches in this program. The Talent Management Division also conducted courses to improve work performance and career development — for the Certification of Heads of Departments as Certified Coaches. Moreover, the said university also encourages

its staff to engage in professional associations by footing the bill. Furthermore, this plan has also developed a Directory Expertise System for monitoring university leadership.

According to Shamsuddin et al. (2012), the direct skill enhancement for potential candidates involves a single educational and training course. A lecture will be followed up by real-world exposure by engaging them in cross-functional development. The motivation behind it is to encourage the lateral expansion of skills in a candidate in order to develop a holistic leader with minimal weaknesses, who can take up the job within short notice. To ensure its success, Abd Majid et al. (2012) called for a tool to be developed for succession planning especially for the coaching and mentoring of young academic leaders. This is due to the existing tool, that is the yearly appraisal is insufficient as a result of data manipulation.

In conclusion, there is leadership development at the university and the federal levels as well. Both levels are equally important because, at the university level, it produces a leader for the needs of the faculty. While at the federal level, it produces a leader for the central university like the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor etc, and also for the national needs. If there are needs, the university leader can be transferred from one university to another university (*University and University Colleges Act 1971* (PoM)). Thus, leadership development at federal level is to produce a pool of talents for the national needs of public university leadership.

Promotion

Promotion is one of the most critical components in succession planning after the talents are well developed and ready for leadership position. According to Mohd Isa et al. (2009), there are two types of academic appointments. They are the appointment of lecturers, senior lecturers, associate professors, and professors, which are based on the performances and achievements of these academicians. These types of appointments are preferred because they bring lucrative returns. As pointed out by Mohd Isa et al. (2009), another type of appointment is the academic managerial positions, such as the deans, deputy deans, heads of programmes or heads of departments. However, there is no standard competency and criteria for these appointments that can measure their performances and achievements in these positions. Further, these appointments are based on a job rotation basis. In other words, a new leader will sit on the leadership chair between two to five years only (Sirat et al., 2012).

Mohd Isa et al. (2009) found that the case university had identified the requirements of the key positions in succession planning, and they were competencies, success factors, and job responsibility. However, the requirements like not having standardised protocol for the promotion selection criteria, and the succession planning process are not sustainable (Mohd Isa et al., 2009). This process (promotion) only takes place when the key position is vacant, and it is without forethought. Hence, Mohd Isa et al. (2009) concluded that the case university lacked succession planning. It is important to be aware that the succession planning program is a people-inside-the-people organisation development program instead of a replacement program (Mohd Isa et al., 2009).

For the appointment of associate professors and professors, Azman et al. (2016) found that the academicians in public universities shared the same grade for promotion and

salary, rendering it rigid. On top of that, the promotion practice among university clusters is inconsistent. Promotion is mostly based on a single pathway, that is research output; the diversity of talents is not much appreciated (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2017). Academicians past and present have predominantly focused on research and publications in comparison to teaching, administration, or academic leadership (Shamsuddin et al., 2012; Azman et al., 2012). The narrow definition of performance had led to job dissatisfaction and job-hopping among the academicians in the university (Azman et al., 2012; Wan et al., 2015; Azman et al., 2016; Pang et al., 2016). In a newly established public university, the appointment of a managerial leader is based on a policy of natural and convenient selection (Abd Majid et al., 2012). In the same setting, Muslim et al. (2012) has found that promotion is based on seniority rather than convenience.

Malaysia's public universities are structurally aligned to the civil services thus the staff in universities are deemed to be public servants (*University and University Colleges Act 1971* (PoM)), receiving the same promotion schemes. Nevertheless, the evidence discussed above clearly show that the promotion requirements in each university is selectively different. Furthermore, this has led to a displeasing situation, which would be further discussed in the succeeding sections.

Centre-in-Charge

In order to establish stability in the administration within an organisation, the competency of employees need to be developed through succession planning (Mustafa Kamil et al., 2016), and a centre or an individual is required for this specific purpose. There are specific centres both at the federal and institution levels that deal with succession planning.

Federal Level - AKEPT

At the Federal level, Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia formed the AKEPT in 2006, a centre specifically established to assist tertiary institutions in leadership development (Higher Education Leadership Academy, 2019). Three centres were established under AKEPT namely Centre for Leadership Development, Centre For Leadership Profiling, and Centre For Leadership Sustainability. The main objective was to develop holistic, quality, respected, and competent academic and administrative leaders who could lead local higher learning institutions to international heights (Higher Education Leadership Academy, 2019).

Besides profiling leaders from each public university, it provided leadership training and development to public and private universities. AKEPT also had initiated the public university succession planning project and published the guideline for Malaysia in 2017. The guideline entitled Strengthening Academic Career Pathways and Leadership Development, Universities Transformation Programme, is referred to as the Orange Book (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2017). The objective of the Orange Book is to achieve the Shift Two - Talent Excellence in Malaysia Higher Education Blueprint (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). This involves the corporation between the HEIs and AKEPT. In this guideline, four different pathways are made possible for the academicians compared to only one pathway before. The four pathways are the Teaching, Research, Professional Practice, and Institutional leadership. Each partway has a different requirement, and an academician is allowed

to choose any one of these four pathways according to their interests. However, the Institutional Leadership Pathway, is only for those identified as transformative leaders in the leadership position.

Institution Level - Universities

Institution wise, Othman (2012) identified at least one local university that had formed a Talent Management Division, Centre for Corporate Planning and Leadership for the development of the academic, management, and professional talent management for employees in accordance with the University Talent Management Plan in 2009. Meanwhile, for the administrative staff, succession planning was managed by the Human Resources Division, Registrar's Office. This division developed an N Scheme for the administrative staff and this scheme intended to grant all executives with equal opportunity to become a successor.

Conversely, Muslim et al. (2012) has found that an Institute Of Leadership And Quality Management has played an essential role in succession planning in another local university. The centre provides succession planning courses and training. The Dean needs to submit a list of potential leaders to the centre without the knowledge of the candidates. There is a succession planning supportive culture in the institution. The top leaders in the university are involved in the support succession planning. Even though the influence of a centre is evident in the succession planning for this particular institution, Muslim et al. (2012) has also discovered that potential candidates will only be identified three months before the end of the Dean's tenure with the final say in the hands of the Vice-Chancellor.

In summary, the Human Resource is responsible for the succession planning of the university while AKEPT is responsible for the national level leadership succession planning. As pointed out in the Orange Book (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2017), succession planning involves the corporation between two parties, which are the university and AKEPT. A university is responsible for the faculty level leadership succession planning and AKEPT for the central level leadership succession planning. Table 2 summarises the four themes mentioned above.

Table 2: *Succession planning practice in Malaysian public universities*

No.	Succession planning practice	References
1	Potential leaders' identification • KPI • University appraisal system • Convenience selection • Talents' personality, leadership and field of expertise	Othman (2012) Muslim et al. (2012) Abd Majid et al. (2012)

2	Leadership development • Critical Agenda Projects for Leadership, 2011 National Higher Education Strategic Plan • AKEPT professional development programme • Young scholars programme • Master Malim • Direct skill enhancement	Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (2011) Shamsuddin et al. (2012) Othman (2012) Bano (2017)
3	Promotion • Academic and Managerial promotion based on competencies, success factor, and job responsibility. But subject to the university • Natural and convenient selection in newly established university • Seniority	Mohd Isa et al. (2009) Abd Majid et al. (2012) Muslim et al. (2012) Azman et al. (2016)
4	Centre-in-charge • Higher Education Leadership Academic Malaysia (AKEPT) at the federal level • Talent Management Division and Human Resources Division • Institute Of Leadership and Quality Management	Othman (2012) Muslim et al. (2012) Higher Education Leadership Academy (2019)

From the aforementioned discourse, a framework of succession planning practises is formed. There is a correlation among the four themes. The sequence of this correlation starts from the identification of possible leaders, that leads to the development of leadership and, ultimately, promotion. The themes of centre-in-charge fall under these three themes. Besides that, the influence of incumbent leaders is also one of the crucial factors that has surfaced from prior discussions.

Leaders are influential, create unity out of disorder, encourage others to excel, inspire their followers, make changes, enhance shared objectives, visions, goals, and values among his/her followers (Bennis & Goldsmith, 2003; Sirat et al., 2012). Hence, the perspective of a leader towards succession planning is essential because his/her perceptions toward succession planning will have a direct effect on how well the succession planning operates in an organisation. Studies indicate that several leaders of Malaysia's public universities have misinterpreted and displayed a negative outlook of the concept of succession planning as having a succession plan means that the existing leadership of the university is approaching its end (Mohd Isa et al., 2009; Muslim et al., 2012). Therefore, the incumbent leaders need to look into the succession planning seriously in order to ensure universities have s a systematic and comprehensive succession planning practices and policies. These forms of succession planning can help to facilitate leadership transition of the baby boomer generation to the next generation smoothly, and the institution's memory can be preserved. Figure

2 illustrates the succession planning practices framework that has emerged from the above discussion.

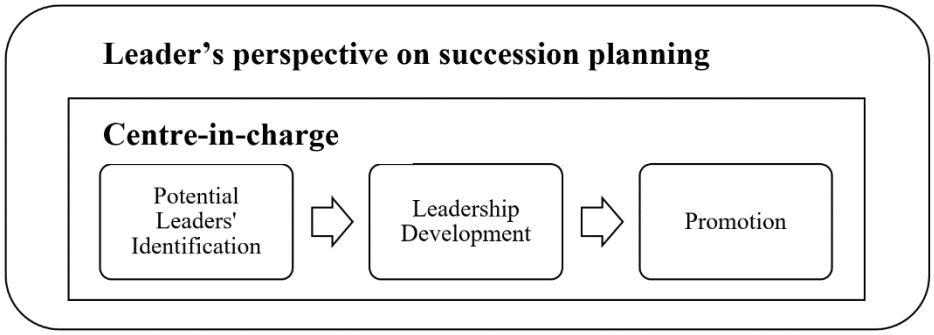

Figure 2: The fundamentals of succession planning activities. The leader's viewpoint on succession planning affects the entire operation of the four significant themes.

Issues Affecting Succession Planning Among Public Universities in Malaysia

Financial constraint is one of the contributors to poor succession planning, or in the words of Muslim et al. (2012), 'complicated'. Shamsuddin et al. (2012), has supported the notion by stating that the remuneration package for leaders is not congruent with their workload. In conclusion, the additional workload from the leadership office is poorly rewarded with a fair and adequate allowance or remuneration. As a result, from the extra workload from the leadership and unbalanced remuneration, the academic administrator needs to spend extra for his/her daily expenses. This has led to a phenomenon of brain drain, from the public to the private sector, or to private universities among potential leaders (Mohd Isa et al., 2009; Md Yunus & Pang, 2015).

To make matters worse, the public universities emphasis rewarding research excellence over leadership capabilities that has not been helpful in talent retention (Shamsuddin et al., 2012). Md Yunus and Pang (2015) stated that 65.6% of the respondents had the intention to leave public universities due to the income factor. The above-mentioned issues have led to the problem of a shortage in academic workforce. According to Mohd Isa et al. (2009), Malaysia's public universities are facing this brain drain syndrome, where succession is concerned. The universities are facing a shortage of talents and a high turnover rate because the talents are attracted to other profitable organisations with better rewards. These profitable organisations provide a feasible career path, attractive salary, and lucrative benefits to these talents. Furthermore, Azman et al. (2012), Wan et al. (2015), Azman et al. (2016), and Pang *et al.* (2016) have supported that they are further affected by the inconsistent and rigid promotion criteria in public universities. Historically, the promotion criteria emphasised research publications instead of the leadership contribution to the university.

In addition, the promotion criteria differ from one public university to another. For instance, a public university in Malaysia in the Research Universities (RU) category has higher promotion requirements compared to non-RU (Azman, Pang, Sirat, & Md Yunus, 2014). This situation has led to job hoping among academicians in public universities (Md Yunus & Pang, 2015). These factors have contributed to an uncertainty regarding an academician's commitment to a university (Muslim et al., 2012). Accordingly, it is hard to construct a comprehensive succession planning program. This has resulted in a vicious cycle where the high turnover rate has led to a

lack of necessary program to nurture the existing talents, and a short-sighted disregard of talent management has led to further turnover (Mohd Isa et al., 2009).

Another issue related to the shortage of talents discussed above is that potential talents have no interest in leadership position. Muslim et al. (2012) findings showed that potential talents had chosen other pathways instead of leadership position. In other words, leadership is not considered as an essential trait. The selection requirements of university lecturers ignored the leadership quality of candidates. The emphasis is on the number of publications by the candidate (Shamsuddin et al., 2012). There is also a misconception that there is a successor in line, and no interference is required (Shamsuddin et al., 2012).

Besides that, the short tenure of a Vice-Chancellor affects a university's succession planning. According to Bano and Siti Sarah Omar (2018), the tenure is between two and three years, a short period for any high impact decision to be delivered. As argued by Mateso (2010), high leadership turnover led to a situation where the leader failed to execute a reasonable succession plan that led to challenges in organisational leadership. Succession planning needs time to plan, execute, and evaluate. As such, universities need to give leaders a reasonable tenure and sufficient power to steer the direction of their universities.

What more, the complex university structure also makes the succession planning harder to manage in a university. The two houses of legislatures—Board of council and the Senate—in the university (Asimiran & Hussin, 2012) make it hard to implement succession planning, especially in terms of coordination. According to Asimiran and Hussin (2012), the Board of council consists of members from the administrative branch, while the Senate is dominated by academicians. The existence of the management and the academic hierarchies in a university has made governance difficult. As such, even the implementation of succession planning in a university requires the drafting and approval of related policies from both sides of the legislature become complicated. Table 3 shows the overview of issues that affect succession planning in Malaysia's public universities.

Table 3: *Issues in Implementing Succession planning In Malaysian Universities*

No.	Challenges	References
1	Financial limitation • Insufficient remuneration for a leader • Economic situation • University reward system is tilt toward research excellent	Shamsuddin et al. (2012) Muslim et al. (2012)
2	Brain drain syndrome • Shortage of talents • High turnover • Job dissatisfaction and job-hopping • Uncertainty about the academician's lasting commitment to the university	Mohd Isa et al. (2009) Azman et al. (2012) Muslim et al. (2012) Md Yunus & Pang (2015) Wan et al. (2015) Azman et al. (2016) Pang *et al.* (2016)

	• Potential talent not interested in a leadership position	
3	Leadership is not required in the recruitment requirement	Shamsuddin et al. (2012)
4	Misconception that leader was chosen by default	Shamsuddin et al. (2012)
5	Short tenure of Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor position	Bano & Omar (2018)
6	Two houses of legislatures in the university	Asimiran & Hussin (2012)

The issues discussed above are linked to one another; similar to a spider's web. To have an effective and comprehensive succession planning practices in a university, there is a need to find a way to bridge the gap and stop the vicious cycle. If not, eventually, the university will decline when the staff have strayed away from their core businesses due to problematic leadership.

CONCLUSION

Public universities in Malaysia do practice some forms of succession planning practices, that can be divided into four themes, which are potential leader identification for succession planning, leadership development in succession planning, promotion, and centre in-charge for succession planning. While issues faced consist of financial limitation in a university, brain drain syndrome, university recruitment requirements that do not emphasis leadership, two houses of legislature in a university, short tenure of managerial leadership positions, and staff misconceptions on leaders who were chosen by default. This situation may not improve if succession planning issues discussed above remain untouched, hence the overall performance of the university can be negatively affected. The university stakeholders need to look into the issues discussed above critically if they want to achieve all the goals mentioned in the Malaysia National Higher Education Blueprint (2015-2025), especially for the Talent Excellence (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). It is crucial to put the correct people in the right places at the proper time to implement appropriate policies and achieve suitable results (Rothwell, 2010), that is to meet the objectives in the National Blueprint. The authors hope that this review would help relevant stakeholders in the Malaysian universities to plan for a more structured and systematic succession planning system.

As stated earlier, the Minister is responsible for the final decision of the appointment of high-rank leaders in the public university. As Malaysian Public Universities are considered as assets of the Malaysian government; therefore, the government bodies have the power to influence the decision making of the university (*University and University Colleges Act 1971* (PoM); Abd. Rahim, 2002; Asimiran & Hussin, 2012; Wan et al., 2015). Hence, the Malaysia government has the power to influence the succession planning of the universities. For example, in the University Malaya, the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor is directly under the power of the Prime Minister, even though the university itself does have the Board to recommend who is the next high-rank leader (Asimiran & Hussin, 2012). Therefore, a new question has emerged

from this phenomenon that is how the Malaysia's government can influence the succession planning practice and policy of Public Universities, especially in the appointment of the Vice-Chancellors.

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