

A Study on the Relationship between Succession Planning and Strategic Planning. Case Study: Payame Noor University of Aleshtar

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Abstract

This research aims to study the relation between succession planning and strategic planning in Payame Noor University of Aleshtar branch. For this purpose, a descriptive method of correlation type has been applied. The number of the population sample based on randomized method is equal to 32 personnel of the university. To collect data, the questionnaire of Succession planning and management in two parts (succession planning and strategic planning) has been used. To test the hypothesis, two-tailed t-test and Pearson correlation coefficient and simple linear regression have been employed. The findings of this research show that succession planning in the studied population is rather weak. Moreover, it is proved that strategic planning is carried out in this population moderately. The results confirm the relation between succession and strategic planning and identify a strong positive correlation between strategic planning and succession planning in Payame Noor University of Aleshtar. According to research findings, we recommended that a systematic process of succession and strategic planning should be used.

Keywords: *succession planning, strategic planning, Payame Noor University of Aleshtar, higher education*

JEL Classification: *I23, H83*

Introduction

The effective management of universities plays a critical role in meeting the social needs of the twenty first century (Boggs, 2003). As higher education enters twenty first century, many universities face management crises including the retirement of chancellors. These crises are rooted in the following factors:

1. High rate of chancellor's retirement;
2. Shortage of potential alternatives in universities (Shultz, 2001);
3. Reduction of applicants outside universities (Evelyn, 2001);

Higher education must respond to the challenge of identifying and developing future leaders of scientific potential. According to Shultz (2001) as the number of succeeding inter-organizational candidates reduces, institutes have to find solutions to increase the number of such candidates or seek competent ones from outside the organization.

The identification of such solutions is not only necessary for universities, but also for the beneficiaries of higher educations. Many universities use their professors for the management of the institute. Although such lecturers may have higher qualifications in their field of study, they may lack managerial competencies. Therefore, universities shall use a formalized and systematic succession planning and management for the positions in universities. This issue is going to be studied in this research. On succession planning and management in universities, different researches have been conducted. In the following, we review only two of them.

In 1997, Cembrowski conducted a study in a technical university of Canada to research formal and informal models of succession plans applied in the university. He studied the application rate of seven succession planning models including administrative training plans, personnel transfer plans, formal training plans, job rotation, horizontal occupation mobility, career coaching, and payment missions. The results of his research showed that job rotation, formal training plans, coaching, succession, and administrative training plans were common methods used in this university.

In 2009, another study, which is immediately related to our research, was carried out by Neefe in Wisconsin College. The study evaluated the aspects of succession planning and strategic planning, as well as their relation to effective management development of this college. According to Neefe, succession planning is carried out rarely, and strategic planning averagely. There is also a significant positive relation between succession planning and strategic planning in Wisconsin college.

In our research, we have tried to evaluate succession planning in studied population and investigate the relationship between succession planning and strategic planning, because Nkomo (1987) suggests that alignment of succession planning with organizational strategy is as important as the mere usage and robustness of succession planning. Moreover, according to Rothwell (2005), successful succession planning processes are driven by strategic planning.

According to Rothwell (2005), succession planning and management is of great importance for the organization, since it stabilizes and updates organizations, such as higher education sector. Therefore, we believe that higher education must be able to tackle environmental challenges and this is only possible by the development and recognition of the future managers. An effective strategy for such a tackle and filling the gaps arising out of the retirement of the present university directors is to use succession planning and management in order to keep and develop the talented personnel of key managerial position among inter-organizational talents facing management crises.

This research aims to find out whether there is any succession or strategic planning in Payame-Noor University of Aleshtar, and if there is any significant relation between succession planning and strategic planning in an organization.

Literature Review

Succession Planning

In the course of human history, succession planning has been prevailing in different forms. Royal families of the United Kingdom committed many evils to appoint successors. From the time of Industrial Revolution, organizations adopted methods to plan the changes in their leaders in order to protect their organizations. In recent decades, formalized and concentrated methods of succession planning were introduced and such methods led to the development of a new field for succession planning. Nowadays, organizations try to apply succession planning to fill key positions with competent individuals. The purpose of succession planning is to minimize the gap appearing in the operations of the organization, when key personnel retire.

What is Succession Planning?

Succession planning is a process ensuring organizations that their required personnel are employed, and they are trained and developed for filling key positions in the organization. The purpose of succession planning is to ensure that the key positions, which have been left by the related personnel, are filled using this planning effectively (Department of management and administrative services, 2010). Succession planning is not merely a promotion, rather a set of processes including experimenting, training, coaching, evaluation, testing, communication, understanding, and active achievement of the organization's objectives. Succession planning is not a provisional process, rather an annual permanent one beginning from the employer of personnel, since the future managers of an organization are among the personnel employed today (Paul, E. Ricci, 2006). The research literature of 1980s and 1990s discussed the principles of succession planning. The recent researches carried out by Conger (2004), Kesler (2002), Leibman (1996), Rothwell (2005) have defined the key items of succession planning and management system consisting of ten elements: organizational commitment with articulation of expectations, process transparency, assessment of organizational needs, identification of key positions, establishment of knowledge, skill, and ability, evaluation of talents, development of individual growth plans, individual feedback, accountability, process evaluation, and integrity of process throughout the organization.

Organizational Commitment with Articulation of Expectations

For an effective process of succession planning and management, organizational leaders must identify clearly the objectives and purposes of the process and participate actively to achieve the objectives of this process (Fulmer & Conger, 2004). The managers of organizations must explain the purpose of talent assessment, role of new leaders in the development of talent, the purpose of personnel transfer throughout the organization, and organizational values in the employment of potential (Kesler, 2002).

Transparency of Process

If an organization has an effective succession management process, the process and steps in the process are well known across the organization (Conger & Fulmer, 2004). Succession planning also needs to be well communicated up, down, and across the organization (Rothwell, 2005). In addition, organizations fear the transparency of the succession management process and worry that high-performing employees not identified as part of the process may become less motivated or leave the organization. As employees are aware of both the process and the data utilized in the process, companies have observed increased accuracy in the data used and in the process of employing personnel (Conger & Fulmer, 2003).

Identify Organizational Needs and Key Positions

One of the critical elements of the succession planning and management process is the identification of key positions within an organization (Fulmer and Conger, 2004). Rothwell introduces six strategies that may be used to identify key positions within an organization. These six strategies include Rothwell (2005):

1. The analysis of the consequences as a result of a vacancy;
2. Organizational charting;
3. Discussions with senior leaders;
4. Previous experience as vacancies occurred;
5. Network charting (tracing communication pathways);
6. A combination of two or more of the approaches.

Establishment of Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Organizations often identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities ideal in a potential successor, and compare the existing skill of the personnel with the skills required in the future

(Kesner&Sebora, 1994). Leibman (1996) suggests that organizations identify the leadership competencies of the future and provide appropriate opportunities to obtain these skills. Kerr and Jackofsky (1989) assert that the skills required of all future leaders are flexibility, communication, and teamwork.

Assessment of Talent

According to Sahl (1988), an appropriate assessment should consider aspirations of the individual, organizational opportunities as compared to individual aspirations, intellectual capacity, and level of managerial expertise, job-related traits, or personality items. Management selection implies a pairing of job requirements and individual attributes. Selection assumes that both sets of variables, individual and job, are essentially stable, i.e. once made, the match remains valid for some period of time (Kerr & Jackofsky, 1989).

Individual Developmental Planning

Individual development planning can assist the organization in the achievement of organizational strategy by matching individual abilities to a specific strategy challenge, while promoting organizational flexibility and providing an objective approach to job assignment (Kesner&Sebora, 1994). In developing an individual development plan, organizations must recognize the difference between task learning and personal learning. Task learning often results in a short-term performance gain for the organization, while personal learning is a long-term investment in shaping individual attitudes and understanding within the organization (Heuer, 2003).

Accountability

Effective organizations develop systems to ensure follow-up and follow-through on the completion of individual goals and the identification of additional learning opportunities (Heuer, 2003). Failure to hold individuals accountable may result in the process becoming simply an exercise on paper and a drain of organizational energy (Getty, 1993).

Evaluation of Process

Regular evaluation of the succession planning and management process is critical (Fulmer & Conger, 2004). The evaluation includes an update on the progress relative to individual development plans and affords the organization an opportunity to identify quickly new talent as organizational needs evolve (Rothwell, 2005). Although organizations utilizing the succession management process conduct evaluations on a monthly, quarterly, or semiannual basis (Leibman et al., 1996), the literature recommends a minimum of quarterly reviews (Fulmer & Conger, 2004).

Integration of Process

Succession planning cannot be effective as a stand-alone process (Rothwell, 2005). An effective succession planning and management process within an organization is well integrated, systematic, continuous, aligned with strategic planning, and matches available talent to projected talent needed for the future (Rothwell, 2005).

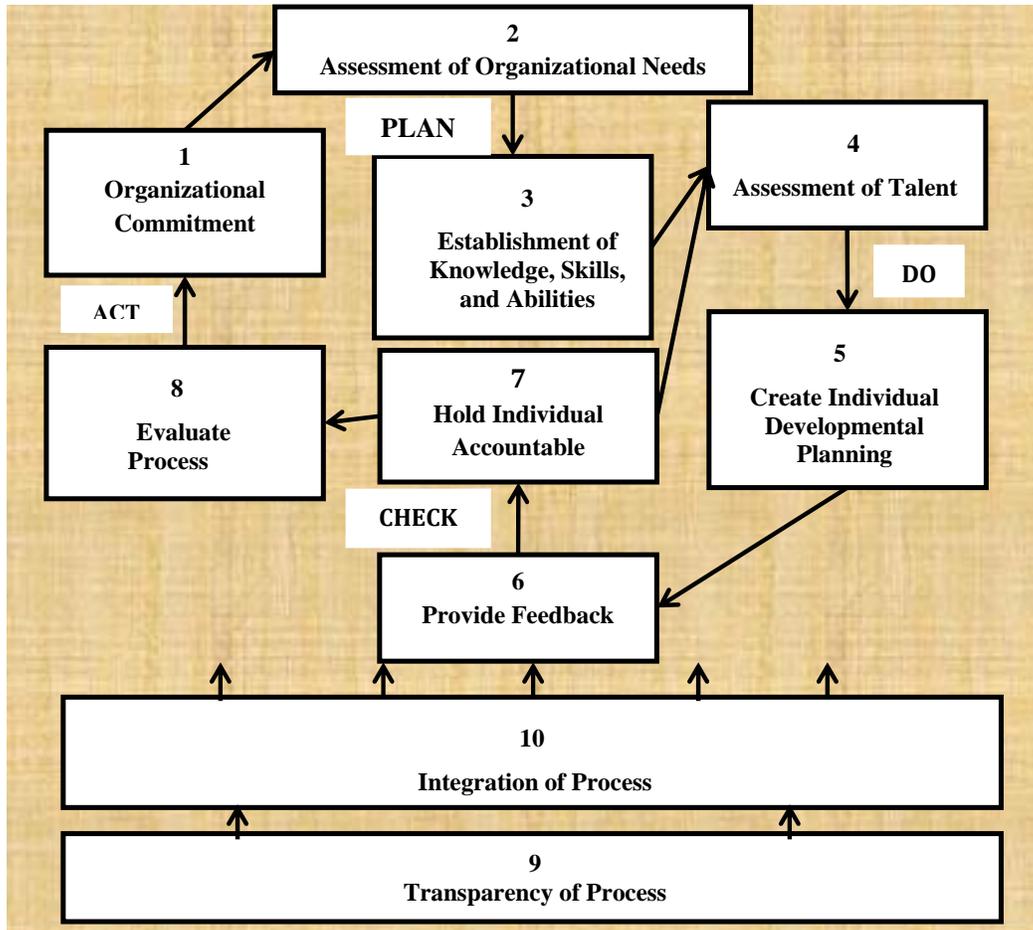


Fig.1. Framework for an Effective Succession Planning Process

Source: Neefe, 2009

The application of succession planning in higher education

Boggs (2003) views the upcoming change in community college leadership as an “opportunity to bring greater diversity, new energy, and new ideas to community college faculty and leadership” (Boggs, 2003). People are the most valuable asset in successful organizations (Rothwell, 2005). Higher education leaders need to recognize the need to invest in the future by investing in its people. Today, in higher education, succession planning is more critical today than it was a decade earlier, given the retirement exodus and coupled with the fact that higher education leadership requires complex relationships that must be developed with diverse internal and external stakeholders. Individual higher education institutions can expand the leadership source of internal talent by looking more deeply within its ranks to identify potential successors using a succession management process (Rothwell, 2005). Many organizations, including higher education, rely on an approach to succession planning in which a talent source is developed.

Strategic planning

The term “strategic planning” means the process of formalized analysis (Mintzberg, 1995) analysis. Strategic planning attempts to forecast organizational outcomes, which is a combination of strategies. Strategic planning is a process, which is used to study the strength and weaknesses of an organization, identify environmental opportunities and threats, enhance

strengths, remove weaknesses, use environmental possibilities to equip itself for facing environmental threats.

Strategic planning in higher education

During the years following World War II and through the 1960s, higher education grew by leaps. It was at that time that higher education leaders began to recognize the need to utilize some type of planning process to facilitate a more organized approach to universities growth (Keller, 1983). During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the costs of higher education began to increase, which in turn prompted higher education leaders to look more closely at strategic planning as an instrument to guide organizational direction.

Keller encouraged academic institutions to utilize and adopt management principles that would help institutions navigate the upcoming turbulent years and forecast decreased enrollments and funding, increased costs, and a shift in priorities for higher education. Academic leaders were urged to spend their time not planning for the present, but planning, with their eyes intently focused outward, yet planning inwardly. Keller's model for the development of an academic strategy emphasizes scanning both the internal and external environments (1983). Both the internal and external environments are composed of three sectors.

Internal Environment

1. *Organizational values, traditions, and aspirations:* for example, the traditions and values of a public university are much different from the traditions and values of a private college. Differences in traditions and values will shape and impact the academic strategy.
2. *Assessment of organizational strengths and weaknesses;*
3. The third component of the internal environment consists of the president or chancellor and board of trustees to assess academic abilities and priorities.

External environment

1. *Environmental Trends* allow the organization to assess threats, such as a decreasing number of high school graduates, and to envision opportunities.
2. *Precise look at the marketplace to learn about preferences and future directions;*
3. *Assessment of competition:* In the past years, most higher education institutions defined their competition by geographic region or Carnegie classification. In higher education today, the competition is global, given the advent of the World Wide Web and online learning.

Together the three internal forces and three external forces feed into the development and implementation of an academic strategy that provides a framework for organizational success (Neefe, 2009).

Rothwell introduces several methods used by organizations to consolidate succession planning with strategic planning.

In the following, three methods utilized by organizations are listed:

- Top – down planning;
- Market-driven planning;
- Career planning.

The top-down approach relies on corporate strategy to inform and guide the organization's succession planning and management process, while a market-driven approach responds to changes in the competitive environment (Rothwell, 2005). No single approach is used consistently in any one organization; rather organizations use multiple approaches to integrate the succession planning process with strategic planning and organizational strategy.

Leibman *et al.* (1996) view succession planning as critical to the achievement of organizational goals because the process must integrate with the organization's strategic initiatives in order to help the organization remain viable and competitive in the rapidly changing global environment.

The Research Methodology

Research Main Objective

- Study the relation between succession planning and strategic planning in Payame Noor University of Aleshtar

Research secondary objectives

- The study of succession planning situation in Payame Noor University of Aleshtar
- The study of strategic planning situation in Payame Noor University of Aleshtar

Research method

The research method used in here is a descriptive one based on correlation.

Research scope

This research has been carried out in Payame Noor University of Aleshtar to study the relation between succession planning and strategic planning, and to research the situation of both planning methods. The data were collected in November 2011.

Target population

The target population involved in this research is composed of the personnel of Payame Noor University of Aleshtar, including 32 individuals, of which 12.5% female and 87.5 % male. The population members held high school certificate, bachelor's degree, and master's degree. They were between the ages of 24 to 44.

Classification of research variables

The variables of this research are succession planning and strategic planning with strategic planning considered as independent variable and succession planning as dependent variable. Moreover, as the members of the statistical population are selected from only one organization, the effects of organizational conditions and structure have been controlled.

Instruments for data collection

To collect the data of succession planning and strategic planning, a closed questionnaire with Likert scale, to a great extent (3), to some extent (2), very little (1), or not at all (0), developed in Wisconsin College in 2009, based on the literature of these two methods of planning has been used. However, due to the extended range of the subjects researched by this questionnaire and limitations of time and facilities available to the researcher, the questionnaire has been solely used for succession planning with 11 elements, and strategic planning with 13 elements.

Questionnaire reliability and validity

Questionnaire reliability

In this research, Cronbach's alpha has been applied to test the reliability of the questionnaire. Bisection method is used to test the internal coordination of the test. To calculate the confidence coefficient based on Bisection method, the questions are divided into two parts, and after calculation of the grades of each half, the correlation between the grades of two halves

were determined. Thereafter, Brown – Spearman Formula is used to calculate the total confidence coefficient of the total test.

To measure the reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha the software application SPSS has been used.

Cronbach's Alpha after the completion of all questionnaires

After all questionnaires are completed, Cronbach's alpha has been used to ensure that the measuring instrument including two variables of succession planning with 11 elements, and strategic planning with 13 elements are reliable.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha Calculated for the Questionnaire based on Variables

Variables	Number of Samples	Number of Questions	Cronbach's alpha
Succession Planning	32	11	0.937
Strategic Planning	32	13	0.944

Questionnaire validity

Validity means how much a measurement instrument is able to assess the related variables. The measurement instrument used in this research is designed based on the literature of succession and strategic planning, and it covers the indices of these two types of planning. These indices used by Rothwell, Conger, Fulmer, Liebman, Kesler, Baldrige, Keller, etc. to measure succession planning and strategic planning, showed that the validity of questionnaire is confirmed. However, the opinions of researchers acquainted with the validity of this questionnaire are inquired and the validity of the questionnaire has been approved by them. Therefore, it has been confirmed that the measurement instrument of this research is sufficiently valid.

Method of data analysis and statistic tests

To analyze the collected data, several descriptive and inferential statistic methods have been used. To describe demographic variables, descriptive statistic methods including frequency, percent, accumulative percent, and mean have been applied in form of tables and statistic diagrams. The results show that:

- The individuals who participated in this research are 87.5 percent male, and 12.5 percent female;
- The educational levels of the tested individuals were as follows: 3.1 % high school diploma; 43.8 % bachelor's degree; and 53.1% master's degree.

The study of succession planning situation in Payame Noor University of Aleshtar

The Succession Planning Index was determined by examining responses to the items in section two of the survey related to strategies used within the university as part of the succession planning process. The respondents were asked "To what extent do the following statements reflect activities at your university?" and were directed to select one of four Likert Scale responses: to a great extent (3), to some extent (2), very little (1), or not at all (0). Table 2 presents the means and T-Test results for the 11 items that contribute to the succession planning Index. The empirical mean of the overall succession planning index is equal to 1.17, which Sig=0.052 shows it is not significantly different from the theoretical mean which among the components "The university encourages future academic leaders to create a personal development plan" had the highest mean of the answers equal to 1.47, and the component "The university identifies the likelihood of academic administrators leaving the university" had the lowest mean of the answers equal to 0.81. The Sig value for the following components shows these components are significantly different from the theoretical mean and lower than the theoretical mean: "The university identifies future academic leaders" (Sig= 0.001), "The university tracks potential administrative openings as a result of retirements" (Sig= 0.012),

“The university identifies the likelihood of academic administrators leaving the university” (Sig= 0.000), and the Sig value for the components of “The university identifies competencies required for future academic leaders” (Sig= 0.096), “The university uses performance appraisals to assess faculty performance” (Sig= 0.114), “The university identifies faculty who have the potential to become future academic leaders” (Sig= 0.199), “The university encourages future academic leaders to create a personal development plan” (Sig= 0.892), “The university provides individual feedback to future academic leaders as they are developing” (Sig= 0.106), “The university holds developing academic leaders accountable for their personal development” (Sig= 0.136), “The succession planning process aligns with broader planning at the university” (Sig= 0.625), “The succession planning process supports the achievement of university strategic goals” (Sig= 0.501), show these components are not significantly different from the theoretical mean (see Table 2).

Table 2. The Situation of Succession Planning Aspects in Payame Noor University of Aleshtar

Succession Planning Aspects	Test Value = 1.5				
	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Mean Difference
The university identifies future academic leaders	-3.760	31	.001	.84	-.656
The university tracks potential administrative openings as a result of retirements	-2.653	31	.012	1.03	-.469
The university identifies the likelihood of academic administrators leaving the university	-4.527	31	.000	.81	-.688
The university identifies competencies required for future academic leaders	-1.717	31	.096	1.19	-.313
The university uses performance appraisals to assess faculty performance	-1.628	31	.114	1.16	-.344
The university identifies faculty who have the potential to become future academic leaders	-1.314	31	.199	1.22	-.281
The university encourages future academic leaders to create a personal development plan	-.137	31	.892	1.47	-.031
The university provides individual feedback to future academic leaders as they are developing	-1.667	31	.106	1.19	-.313
The university holds developing academic leaders accountable for their personal development	-1.531	31	.136	1.22	-.281
The succession planning process aligns with broader planning at the university	-.494	31	.625	1.41	-.094
The succession planning process supports the achievement of university strategic goals	-.680	31	.501	1.38	-.125
Succession planning index	-2.024	31	0.052	1.17	-0.326

The study of strategic planning situation in Payame Noor University of Aleshtar

The Strategic Planning Index was determined by combining responses to the items in section one of the survey related to the strategies used within the College as apart from the planning process. The respondents were asked “to what extent are the following issues addressed in your university’s current planning?” and were directed to select one of four Likert Scale responses. The empirical mean of the overall strategic planning index is equal to 1.71, and the component “Organizational Values” had the highest mean of the answers equal to 2.06, and the component “Marketing” had the lowest mean of the answers equal to 0.97. The Sig value for the following components shows these components are significantly different from the theoretical mean and higher than the theoretical mean: Educational reforms (Sig= 0.010), Technology (Sig= 0.021),

Management abilities (Sig= 0.005), Organizational traditions (Sig=0.012), and Organizational values (Sig=0.000); But The Sig value for the component of Marketing is equal to 0.002 which indicates this component significantly lower than the theoretical mean. Moreover, The Sig value for the components of Students' needs (Sig= 0.325), Demographic information (Sig= 0.280), Competition (Sig= 0.174), Environment regulation (Sig= 0.161), Organizational objectives (Sig= 0.190), Institutional strengths (Sig= 0.077), Institutional weaknesses (Sig= 1.000), show that these components are not significantly different from the theoretical mean (see Table 3).

Table 3. The Situation of Strategic Planning Aspects in Payame Noor University of Aleshtar

Strategic Planning Aspects	Test Value = 1.5				
	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Mean Difference
Educational reforms	2.743	31	.010	1.97	.469
Technology	2.436	31	.021	1.88	.375
Students needs	1.000	31	.325	1.69	.188
Community demographics	-1.099	31	.280	1.31	-.188
Marketing	-3.349	31	.002	.97	-.531
Competition	1.392	31	.174	1.75	.250
Environment regulation	1.438	31	.161	1.75	.250
Organizational objectives	1.339	31	.190	1.72	.219
Institutional strengths	1.829	31	.077	1.78	.281
Institutional weaknesses	.000	31	1.000	1.50	.000
Management abilities	3.007	31	.005	2.03	.531
Organizational traditions	2.675	31	.012	1.88	.375
Organizational values	3.974	31	.000	2.06	.563
Overall Strategic Planning Index	1.741	31	0.090	1.71	.213

Testing the hypothesis

There is a significant relation between strategic planning and succession planning in Payame Noor University of Aleshtar.

To test this hypothesis, Pearson correlation coefficient between these two variables has been determined and this correlation coefficient is equal to 0.625 (see Table 4). Thereafter, two-tailed T-test has been applied to test the significance of the correlation value. The value of Sig is equal to 0.000 that rejects H_0 , and in contrast, H_1 stating that the correlation coefficient is significant has been confirmed.

Table 4. Results of Pearson correlation coefficient between Succession planning and Strategic planning

	Succession planning	Strategic planning
Succession Pearson Planning Correlation	1	.625**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
N	32	32
Strategic Pearson Planning Correlation	.625**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N	32	32

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Further correlation analyses are performed on each of the 13 strategic planning items with the succession planning index as the dependent variable (see Table 5).

Table 5. Correlation Analyses for Strategic Planning Items with Succession Planning Index

Strategic Planning Item	Succession Planning Index
	Pearson Correlation Value
Educational Reform	.462**
Technology	.168
Student Needs	.448**
Community Demographics	.522**
Marketplace	.669**
Competition	.503**
Regulatory Environment	.487**
Organizational Goals	.133
Institutional Strengths	.573**
Institutional Weaknesses	.731**
Leadership Abilities	.473**
Organizational Traditions	.412**
Organizational Values	.462**
Strategic Planning Index	.625**
Significance levels	** p<.01 (2-tailed)

Table 5 shows that correlation analyses are performed on each of the 13 strategic planning items except Technology item and Organizational goals item with the succession planning index as the dependent variable. Moreover, correlation analysis was performed between the strategic planning index and the succession planning index.

Further Simple Linear Regression between Strategic Planning and Succession has been determined, and Beta correlation coefficient has been equal to 0.625 and R Square is equal to 0.391, It can interpret that 39.1% of the changed in succession planning is determined by strategic planning. The value of Sig ANOVA in the Table 6 shows a linear relationship between these two variables (see Table 6) and Linear equation between these two variables can be written as follows:

$$\text{Succession Planning} = - 2.645 + 0.698 \text{ Strategic Planning}$$

Table 6. Results of simple linear regression between Strategic Planning and Succession Planning

Coefficients	ANOVA (Sig)	F	R Square	Beta	Dependent variable	Independent variable
B						
Constant= -2.645	0.000	19.248	0.391	0.625	Succession Planning	Strategic Planning
Strategic Planning = 0.698						

Discussion and Conclusion

Succession planning is driven by the philosophy that the leadership can be learned and current employees can be identified and nurtured to fill future leadership openings, allowing for a smooth transition while ensuring business continuity (Neefe, 2009). This study was conducted to explore the relationship between strategic planning and succession planning. The study identifies a strong positive correlation between strategic planning and succession planning, According to Rothwell (2005), succession planning implies an ongoing process that is integrated with other key processes in the organization such as strategic planning. The study reveals that elements such as “The university identifies competencies required for future academic leaders”, “The university uses performance appraisals to assess faculty performance”,

“The university identifies faculty who have the potential to become future academic leaders”, “The university encourages future academic leaders to create a personal development plan”, “The university provides individual feedback to future academic leaders as they are developing”, “The university holds developing academic leaders accountable for their personal development”, “The succession planning process aligns with broader planning at the university”, “The succession planning process supports the achievement of university strategic goals, used to some extent by the university” and elements of “The university identifies future academic leaders”, “The university tracks potential administrative openings as a result of retirements” and “The university identifies the likelihood of academic administrators leaving the university” are used to a less extent”. In general, succession planning index was used to some extent by the university. The findings of Barden (2006), Bisbee (2005), Clunies (2007), Rothwell (2005), Hull (2005) and Montague (2004) shows the use succession planning to a less extent in higher education and therefore this is a more informal process in higher education, which supports the observations of this study. Moreover, according to Fulmer & Conger (2004), Leibman et al. (1996), Rothwell (2005), Walker (1998), organizations with more mature succession planning processes have a higher percentage of internal hires for leadership positions and therefore costs of highly qualified workforce from outside the organization will decrease. Succession planning was the least mature of the two processes measured in this study, and so the data from the study suggest that succession planning is a more informal process.

The research also shows the five most common elements of strategic planning used by the university include the Educational reforms, Technology, Management abilities, Organizational traditions and Organizational values. According to Keller (1983), an effective strategic planning process aligns with other key processes within the organization including succession planning. The data indicate that there is a direct, positive relationship between strategic planning and succession planning in the Payam Noor University of Aleshtar and we can say that universities with a more immature strategic planning process also have a more immature succession planning process. According to Jasinki (2004), Keller (1983), Leibman et al. (1996) and Nkomo (1987), alignment of the strategic planning and succession planning process is very important.

The results of this research show that succession planning in the studied population of this research is very weak, according to Hull (2005) succession planning is a very informal process in higher education and according to Rothwell (2005), although succession planning has been used successfully in business, faculty tenure and unions along with elected officials serving on boards can provide challenges for the implementation of succession planning in public higher education. So we conclude that higher education institutions should set policy and create strategies to develop succession planning, maybe in other universities and even in other organizations. The lack of this planning may be due to the following reasons:

1. Follow-up of the occupational appointments to the political changes in the society;
2. Lack of attention of the leaders and planners to succession planning;
3. Adoption of a short-time approach by the leaders of the university and paying no attention to the long-term future of the organization;
4. Lack of a formalized process of succession planning;
5. Dependence of the university on the central organization, and unconditional compliance with the policies prescribed by the central organization.

Moreover, the results show that strategic planning is carried out in the researched population rarely. This means that strategic planning is not conducted in the studied population in a scientific and fundamental manner. This may be due to the following reasons:

1. Failure in the appointment of competent leaders in the university;
2. Appointment of the leaders, who are not trained academically in the fields of management or related disciplines;

3. Follow-up of the appointments to the political trends, consequently the appointment of incompetent leaders in the university.

In addition, the results of this research show that there is a significant positive relation between succession planning and strategic planning in the studied population. The analytical result of this finding is that the improvement of either planning method can lead to the improvement of the other type of planning, and as a result, the improvement of the whole organization.

Results Based Recommendations

Considering that, there is a significant positive relation between succession planning and strategic planning in the studied university, and as these two types of planning interact with each other, it is recommended that the university adopt a succession plan to reduce the gap in its activities when its personnel are retired or dismissed, and improve strategic planning indirectly. Considering the findings of this research, it has been proved that the university has approximately young personnel. Therefore, it has potential for succession planning for the future key positions. This will be achieved by a continuous and systematic process consisting of the assessment of organizational talents, identification of competent personnel, identification of the existing skills of personnel, determination of the skills required for the future, determination of skill gap, adopting different training programs inside and outside the organization, and more effectively, on-the-job trainings, job rotation plans, and plans for the development and keeping the personnel. For the implementation of succession planning, it is suggested that a formalized and concentrated process for succession planning should be developed, and senior directors, who are committed to participate actively in this plan, encourage their personnel to participate in this planning. The central organizations are suggested to grant universities independence to some extent so that they can use succession plans for the selection of individuals for their key positions in accordance with their special plans. Finally, it is suggested that the appointments in universities should be carried out notwithstanding political plans and changes. The leaders of universities must have a long-term perspective for the implementation of succession plans in their universities without paying any attention to leaving their office. According to the results it is suggested that competent leaders trained in the field of management and related disciplines must be appointed to prevent incompetent managers from taking office of managerial positions. This enhances the effectiveness and improvement of strategic planning in universities and strategic planning will be carried out in a scientific and systematic manner. In conclusion, it is recommended that the results of the conducted strategies be evaluated so as to modify and direct them based on their strengths and weaknesses.

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