

THE SUCCESSION PLANNING CONCEPT AND HOW THE CHURCH LEADERSHIP OF THE ADVENTIST EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN AFRICA PERCEIVE THE SUCCESSION PLANS

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Abstract: *The Seventh-day Adventist church operates an educational system, which caters learners from basic schooling to tertiary levels. But shortage of qualified candidates to run these institutions seems to continue to be a growing challenge in Seventh-day Adventist educational in Africa and people often leave the institutions before educational renormalizations have been institutionalized. Subsequently, people often hold leadership positions without adequate leadership preparation. For the successful continued growth and development of educational institutions, there needs to be a system for the development of leaders in place.*

Keywords: *Succession Plan, Adventist Education, Perception, Leadership Development, Top Management.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, most organizations have a system in place to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement (Rothwell, 2010).

In education, leadership development is gaining more interest and attention, this is because it is considered essential in providing stability and a necessary element for sustainable improvement within the institutions. There are indications internationally and within that there is a need to identify and develop educational leadership to meet the present and future leadership requirements of educational institutions. In relation to this, Bassett (2012) and Santiago et al. (2006) argue that developing leadership has become a top priority for schools. In higher education settings, Gardnier (2002 as cited in Cardno, 2012) affirms that educational leaders require developing leadership and management skills in order to provide high-quality leadership. This is supported by the work of Walker (1995) who notes that it is significant for building a fully-trained management team especially at first line and middle levels in higher education, in which the complication of middle leadership requires specialized knowledge and capacities (Fitzgerald, 2000). Therefore, leadership development is seen as the top priority in order to accelerate organizational success and student achievement. For the successful continued growth and development of an educational institution, the institution needs to have a system for the development of leaders. Seventh-day Adventist educational institutions are no exception.

However the Adventist educational institution have seem to overlooked this important factor, As a result finding qualified leaders with the right leadership skills has been a critical problem in seventh day Adventist educational institutions in Zambia. In some cases faculty are appointed to a senior rank based upon their deep subject knowledge, not based on leadership skills. Subsequently, senior faculty members hold leadership positions without adequate preparation. This is because there are no proper plans across the board regarding leadership development, and succession when need arises. It also seems there is no incorporation of leadership development and succession planning into strategic planning. Because of this deficiency, education institutions are facing great challenges in terms of leadership and leadership continuity in key positions, developing intellectual and knowledge capital for the future. As Blackaby & Blackaby (2011) say, “ the greatness of an organization is directly proportional to the greatness of its leader” (p.51). In line with such challenges, there is a risk of naming a successor who is not well prepared, lacks experience, skill, or training in Christian leadership and this greatly affects continuity and the achievement of institutional goals. Research in 2001 found that new administrators in educational institutions feel

unprepared to deal with key aspects of their jobs because they have not been prepared for such tasks. (Shults, p.10). On the other hand London (2002) says, "Leadership development strategies and programs follow from the changing needs of the environment in which it operates. Development is not a one time event, but a comprehensive approach to individual and organizational growth and renewal" (p.21). Neglecting leadership development and succession planning can put organizational success at great risk.

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

As Adventist educational institutions anticipate an ideal future, it cannot but mull over the needed resources indispensable to realization of that preferred future. These church educational Institutes should also find time to visualize the future if they are to succeed in achieving their goals. Cannella and Shen (2001) indicate that "the most important leadership topic for any organization is an effective succession plan that promotes an orderly succession of leaders" (p.252). This concern is buttressed by the reality that as change impacts the organization, workers dying, some retiring, others moving on to other callings, there needs to be a ready pool of successors to carry on the work. It is necessary therefore that all entities work diligently to identify and develop competent, motivated persons who are equipped to guarantee meaningful benefits for their organizations and to capably assume new responsibilities.

Too often Vacancies of top leadership in Seventh day Adventist educational institutions takes time to be filled and in most cases those that fill the positions are not groomed within the institution, because of this those who fill the vacancies always take six months to one year for them to fit in and have a good understanding of the way the educational institutions operate, meaning quite a number of them lack strong understanding of the organizational culture needed for these institutions to advance the mission of the church. Furthermore, too often vacant positions that fall outside the regular term of office are filled by persons already burdened with responsibility or in some cases wait for months till a suitable replacement is found. This is because no candidates are prepared to assume the specific roles and responsibilities of a given position that falls vacant outside the regular term of office. It is also surprising to outside observers that every time new top leaders are appointed they come up with new strategies and ideals throwing away what the previous leadership lead down even if the ideals were good, Charan, Drotter and Noel (2001) argue that "companies need to develop a leadership pipeline to allow for the orderly succession of leaders at all levels and that the entire length of the pipeline should be kept fully primed that is to say, there should always be sufficient numbers of adequately groomed employees to take on higher responsibilities as and when required" (p.54). For this reason, there is need to address the problem of leadership development and succession and the difficulties the institutions experience because of this challenge.

For the successful continued growth and development of an educational institution, the institution needs to have a system for the development of leaders. Seventh-day Adventist educational institutions are no exception. However it is well known that Seventh day Adventist educational Institutions have no leadership development to ensure continued growth and long-term sustainability.

As the development of leadership development has changes over the years, today's Education systems now compete on the strength of their intellectual rather than financial capital. While many education institutes used to view leadership development as a once-in-a-while activity like training programs or workshops, this attitude is changing. Leadership development has become a more continuous, holistic process that is at the heart of everything that leaders do. Great education systems have realized that developing more leaders is one of the top priorities in education today.

As we move into an era of many changes in education institutions it is important to have a plan across the board regarding who will be the future leaders that will guide others through the unforeseen challenges and successes. Leadership development is need in seventh day Adventist education institutions because they are not immune to this need. As Arsenault (2007) suggests, "Universities and schools are definitively not immune to this need for effective leadership development as they face similar challenges as any other organization" (p. 14). But this is not seen in most education institutions, Research shows that staffs in the area of leadership feel the least confident because they do not receive training in this area (Adey, 2000). Effective leadership development is central to an organization's success. This leadership development process starts with development of intrapersonal skills, continues with interpersonal skills, business skills and ends with leadership skills such as building and motivating high-performance teams (Hogan and Kaiser, 2005, p.169-180).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW AND OTHER RELATED STUDIES

Several studies have shown the positive effects of leadership development on a variety of educational institutions variables such as followers' satisfaction, commitment, and performance (Barling, Weber & Kelloway, 1996; Dvir, Eden, Avolio & Shamir, 2002; Popper, Landau & Gluskinos, 1992). Leadership development is critical to educational institutions and system effectiveness and, more specifically, its success. There is a growing body of research pointing to the integral relationship between educational leadership development and organizational achievement. Marzano (2003) cited a variety of studies pointing to strong relationships between leadership development and mission and goal clarity, overall school climate, the attitudes and classroom practices of teachers, the organization of curriculum and instruction, and opportunity to learn. (p. 172).

On the other hand "All organizations must provide for the growth and development of their members and find ways of offering them opportunities for such growth and development. This is the one true mission of all organizations and the principal challenge to today's organizations" (Bennis, 1989, p. 187). To achieve such it requires planning, developing and investing time and other resources into leadership development. And the prime concern to the education institutional leaders in such is the question of what can be done to help leaders at different levels of the organization grow and become more competent. Great organizations try to groom leaders who can think strategically but also possess the collaborative skills to tap into the entire organization's talent and energy. Walker (2005) posited that developing future leaders to take the reins of leadership is essential to an organization's success.

More recently, in the line of education, Beteille et al. (2009) found that school leadership development practices play a central role in school improvement. There can be no more powerful argument than the above for the devotion of time and resources to leadership development and to thoughtful and proactive planning for leadership succession. As it can be seen leadership development requires meaningful support from top leadership. According to DePre (1989) "Leaders are responsible for future leadership. They need to identify, develop, and nurture future leaders"(p.14). Meaning the first step to develop an effective leadership development is to have the support and participation of the top management, in the case, which includes the Councils of Educational institutions, the Academic Board, Principal Officers, Deans and Directors and the entire Senior Management Teams.

Future leaders are prepared by developing a pool of people with a range of leadership competencies. The focus is on future requirements, and providing high potential and high performing employees with developmental experiences that will skill them to meet the future demands of the business (Leibman, Bruer and Maki, 1996). This means Leadership development is the essential condition to achieve virtually all of an organization's objectives. If an organization is developing a dynamic group of leaders at all levels, its problems diminish in proportion to their numbers, strength, and distribution. Conversely, to the extent that an organization has few strong, skilled leaders, its plans, policies, programs, and procedures will not enable it to meet its challenges.

4. MAJOR FINDINGS

There are no proper outlined programs for leadership development in the Adventist educational institutions or written down documents. Leadership development cannot and does not happen by chance, especially if we want to achieve the standards of excellence and versatility necessary for mastering today's complex educational systems. Leadership development should become a more continuous, holistic process that is at the heart of everything that leaders do. Previous research has shown that educational institution needs to identify and prepare future leaders (Rothwell, 2005; Hargreaves, 2005). Adventist educational institutions should realize that developing more leaders should be one of the top priorities. This enables successful continued growth and development of an educational institution. These institutions should also create systems that encourage, reward and support the development of leaders at all levels, enabling to build great institutions to work for.

To be effective in future leadership development efforts, institutions should not think only on "what they know and have" but also on "what they aspire to become." It is not cost cutting but strategic innovation that differentiates great from mediocre institutions. These institutions need to take a long-term systemic approach to leadership development in their strategic planning and create a supportive environment and culture for doing so.

Developing and cultivating the next generation of leaders remains a complex life-long task that takes a concerted effort from all concerned parties in seventh day Adventist educational institutions. The earlier this fact is recognized, the faster they will enable more of our people to become effective leaders in the 21st Century. This will ensure a steady line-up of leaders for every critical position within the institutions. Securing the future of Seventh-day Adventist educational institution by being able to identify future leaders with the ability to grow and be groomed into important leadership positions is a vital component. The efficiency and survival of Adventist educational institutions is dependent on the development of future leaders.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Adventist educational institutions need a well-structured and integrated leadership development that can facilitate organizational capacity to deal with the demands of change. Furthermore these Institutions should take an approach to leadership development that creates a supportive environment in order to produce effective leaders. Leadership development is a continuous process that should not be limited to leadership training, formal instructions on professional skill. To be truly effective, leadership development must be included in their strategic plans or the institutions.

For the successful continued growth and development of an Adventist educational institutions, the institutions need to have a system for the development of leaders. This will ensure that there are successors in place to fill key positions, a smooth transfer of knowledge and long-term sustainability for the educational institutions. Leadership development needs to be valued and promoted as a process of preparing an organization for the eventual turnover in its leadership.

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