



A Conceptual Model of Succession Management at Medical Universities: Experience of Iranian Higher Education Based on Grounded Theory

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Abstract

Background: The higher education system needs to succession management based on academic environments and its professional dynamics.

Objectives: The present study aimed to modeling succession management at medical universities based on grounded theory.

Methods: Through reviewing the related texts, articles and 12 semi-structured interviews with faculty members of medical universities in three stages of open, axial and selective coding, the data were analyzed.

Results: The results were indicative of twelve general categories as follows: main phenomenon (meritocracy, management skills and strategic management), causal conditions (organizational structure, human resources management, beliefs of senior manager and rules); strategies (career path development, knowledge-based management, productivity management, financial resources management, organizational stability and academic independence); underlying conditions (complexity, research orientation, interactions within the educational groups, the crisis of shortage of capable directors, native provincial management, appointment of directors from within universities, detecting talents, policy-making councils, non-competitive rewards, key positions, organizational misconduct, political atmosphere, and pressures to the university); interventional conditions (organizational culture and environment, managerial experience, physical fitness and knowledge capacity) and consequences (improving satisfaction, ethics management, using academic models, dynamic universities, increasing organizational motivation and the existence of counseling culture).

Conclusions: This study suggested a succession management model in medical sciences universities. According to the findings, special differences such as meritocracy, environmental complexity, managers' scientific and professional maturity, the centrality of science in production, the political sensitivities of the community and the use of proprietary scientific models of succession management in universities can be found between the establishment of succession management in higher education compared to other organizations.

Keywords: Succession Management, Medical Universities, Grounded Theory, Conceptual Model

1. Background

In the 21st century, one of the actions that has brought about fundamental transformations in the human resources of organizations is the implementation of succession management (1). According to International Institute of Kernn Frie, succession management is among the prominent issues that organizations face in the future (2). Succession management refers to the process by which the organization's human capacities are identified for key occupations and positions in the future (3). The goal of succession management is identifying talented individuals in organizations (4). The main reasons behind the need for

succession management are developments in the fields of science, technology and innovation, as well as access to higher levels of productivity (4, 5). Modern approaches to succession management are seen as career paths development and an approach based on knowledge-based management (6). Therefore, with this approach, there exist various academic models in succession management, of which mentoring and leader channel can be named (7), while the latter is suitable when entering career paths without boundaries and diverse career paths (focus on values) (8). In higher education, given the principle that the results of other areas of management cannot be general-

ized to this area, one should look for other models that are specifically applicable to the levels of intellectual maturity and the viewpoints of faculty members (9). Hence, the succession management models presented by (4, 10) can be named.

The implementation of succession management and talent identification in educational institutions, especially universities, is of paramount importance (11). However, it should be noted that various studies have shown that there is a significant difference between the status quo and the desirability of succession and talent management in state universities (12) due to factors such as the lack of use of succession management, lack of effective strategies for recruiting valuable directors, lack of succession management programs, talent and brain drain, skill and science gap, and most importantly, changes in culture and performance of institutions, to name but a few (13).

The present study aimed to modeling succession management among the faculty members of medical universities of Iran through a qualitative method based on grounded theory. The conceptual framework of the model was a deductive approach in qualitative research based on Strauss and Corbin's systematic approach (2015).

1.1. A Review of Academic Concepts in the Field of Succession Management in Higher Education

The results of numerous studies about the reasons behind the failure of succession management are indicative of a clear gap between the existing and desirable succession management, which can be attributed to issues such as inappropriate organizational culture, lack of systematic approaches, lack of meritocracy and unclear job promotion model (14), limiting the development of individuals to access higher positions and management responsibilities, identifying and introducing people without using credible methods, or lack of support (15) and lack of direct effective support of the senior management of the organization (16). Other obstacles include the lack of adequate time allocation by directors, lack of focus on the process of talent detection and succession management as their main responsibilities, and lack of necessary skills in this regard (2). Other studies have reported that some of the specific constraints facing government agencies in the implementation of succession management programs are political pressure on government agencies, bureaucracy and redundant administrative formalities, directors' instability, ineffectiveness of HRM, attention to public values and specific conditions and restrictions on government agencies (17). Role ambiguity, inappropriate training of employees, lack of attention to meritocracy, inappropriate performance evaluation and indifference culture, lack of job placement and lack of equal opportunity for promotion

are among the most important challenges of deployment of succession management in universities (18).

Despite the above-mentioned factors reported by previous studies in the area of deployment of succession management, some solutions have also been proposed for the successful deployment of succession management in universities, including the formation of successor reserve and transformational leadership in the higher education system (19). The significance of these factors stresses the need for the implementation of succession management and talent management as the goals of the strategic plan of universities (20).

Implementation of a strategic plan based on the establishment of succession management in higher education requires the use of scientific models and the executive guarantee of the model for the operation of the model (21). With the introduction of succession management to the universities' strategic plans, the best predicting aspects of the deployment of succession management are organizational commitment and learning, organizational culture, teamwork and team learning, systemic thinking, participatory leadership, systemic thinking, and meritocracy development (22). Some other strategies have been suggested by researchers, including empowerment and talent management (23), human resources management, and financial management (24).

The strategies resulting from the deployment of succession management can be affected by various underlying conditions, which have been addressed in various studies (25). The accreditation requirements, curriculum development, educational strategies and educational needs have been addressed (26) and a succession management model has been reported based on mentoring model (27, 28). In addition, the leader channel model has been stressed in some studies for the succession management in universities (29).

With the acceptance of this perspective, universities, as a complex environment (30), use four key indicators of human resource output, including staff ethics, organizational climate, job abandonment rate, commitment, and job satisfaction, which have been introduced to the succession management model in universities. The acceptance of these underlying factors in strategies for deploying succession management in public universities should not result in anything else but the employment of university principals from the efficient human resources by succession management (11). Some of the other consequences of deploying succession management are the minimization of the outcomes of leadership crisis in universities (31), reducing the costs of academic organizations through preventing the faulty test-error cycle (19), avoiding the challenges of leadership weakness (24), more organizational

efficiency (32), protection of key expertise and knowledge of the organization (33), and strengthening the positive organizational culture and helping the organization to survive (8).

2. Objectives

The present study aimed to present a model for succession management for medical universities based on the identification of organizational components affecting the deployment of succession management.

3. Methods

This qualitative research was conducted based on grounded theory. Moreover, the conceptual framework of the present study was a deductive approach based on Strauss and Corbin's (34) systematic approach (2015), and was designed through collecting extensive data based on the concept of succession management and focusing on higher education documents including articles, textbooks, and semi-structured interviews. Data were collected in two stages through a comprehensive review of credible documents in the Scopus Citation database, PubMed, ISI and ISC, and selection of 29 articles which were more closely related to the concept of succession management in higher education were selected for open coding systematic literature review attempts to identify, appraise and synthesize all the empirical evidence that meets pre-specified eligibility criteria to answer a given this research question. The reliability of the analyzed documents was assessed by the intercoder reliability (ICR) using the Lawshe formula (83.87%). In the second stage, the required data were gathered using 12 semi-structured interviews with faculty members (8 male and 4 female) holding managerial positions, and data collection continued in both steps until data were saturated. The duration of each interview was 25 minutes. Moreover, the reliability of the interviews was analyzed through peer debriefing, and the inter-rater reliability measured 85.35%.

After going through three stages of open, axial and selective coding, the data were analyzed and controlled by four co-workers of research to received more validity. The content analysis of the documents was carried out in three stages of open, axial and selective coding, as a result of which 456 primary open source codes were identified, which were reduced to 277 non-repeated open source codes. Then, the non-repeated open codes were reduced to 26 axial and eight selective codes. In the analysis of semi-structured interviews during three stages, open, pivotal and selective coding were conducted. After writing

the texts of the interviews line by line, the collected data were converted into textual data, which were then open coded with full precision. In this stage and residual stages, textual data and coding of data, controlled by four co-workers of research. At the initial stage of open coding, 484 primary open source codes (concepts) were identified, which were then reduced to 381 non-repeated open codes. Later, the non-repeated open codes were reduced to 33 sub-categories and 10 selected codes (main categories). It should be noted that the categories were considered that saturated the conceptual space of concepts as much as possible. Finally, in the pivotal coding, the identified codes fell into six categories based on the systematic approach of grounded theory: causal conditions, underlying conditions, intermediate/interventional conditions, central category, deployment strategies, and consequences. The chart of the paradigm model for deploying succession management in the university of medical sciences was designed based on the systematic approach to grounded theory (Figure 1).

4. Results

Base of extracted model the three subcategories of meritocracy, management skills and strategic management, as the core subcategories of the Phenomenon-oriented of organizational factors affecting succession management in medical universities. The causal conditions of requirements for Succession management in this model made up the categories of organizational structure, HRM, the beliefs of senior university executives, organizational rules. The underlying conditions included three categories; specialized characteristics (the complexity of academic environment, research orientation and interactions within the educational groups); management factors (the Crisis of the shortage of capable directors, native provincial management, appointment of directors from within the universities, finding talents in universities, policy-making councils, non-competitive rewards, identifying key positions); behavioral factors (organizational misconduct); and political issues (political atmosphere and pressures from outside the university).

Intermediate/interventional conditions in this model divided to potential of the effectiveness of succession management and organizational factors. The potential of the effectiveness of succession management consist of managerial experience, physical fitness and knowledge capacity and organizational factors included organizational culture and organizational environment.

In suggested concept for succession management in medical universities Strategies consist of laying the

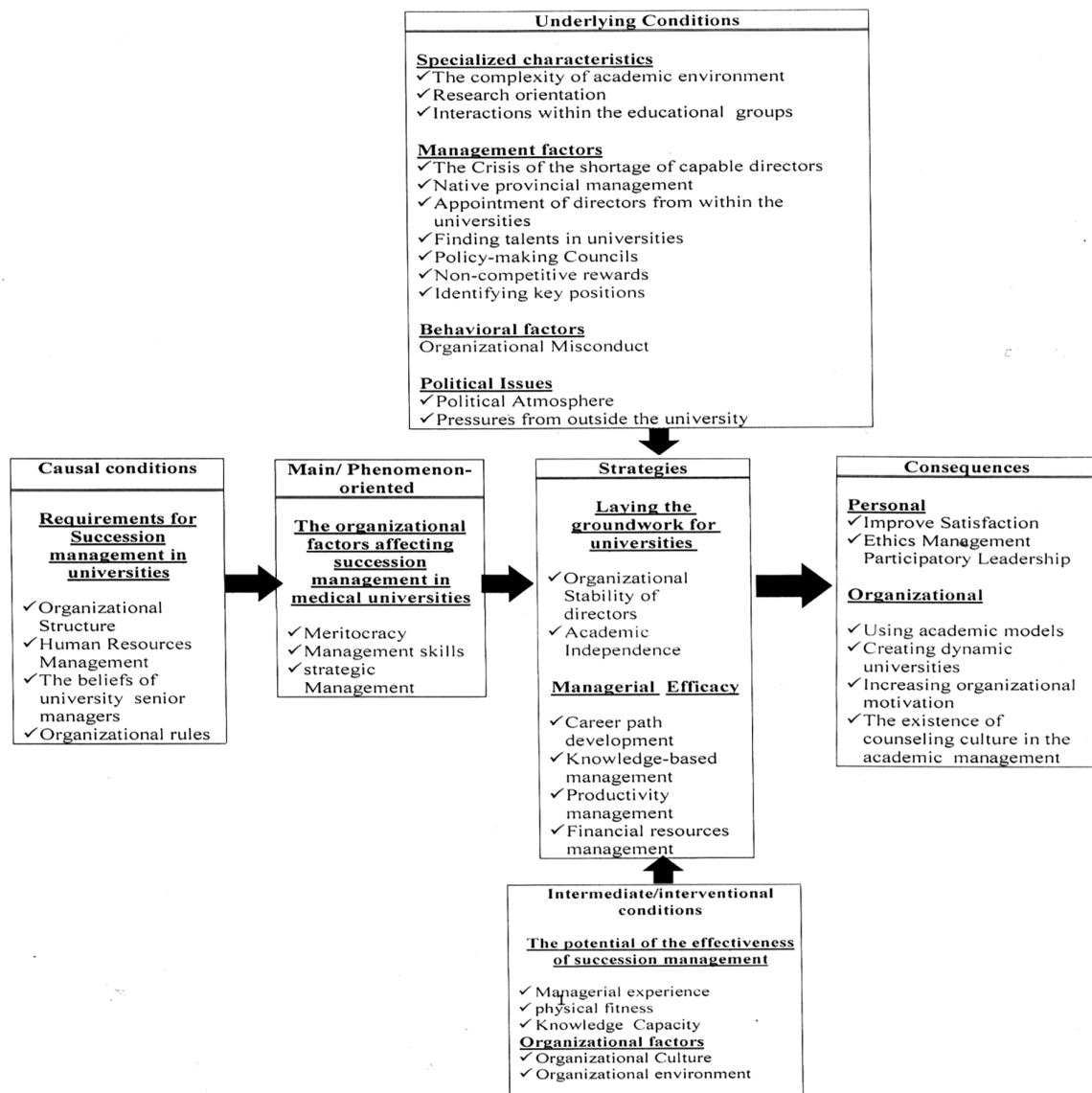


Figure 1. The proposed conceptual model for the succession management in medical universities

groundwork for universities and managerial efficacy. Organizational stability of directors and academic independence there were subcategories for organizational stability and directors and academic independence factor followed by the development of career path, knowledge-based management, productivity management and financial resource management. Finally, in the dimension of succession management consequences, there were two categories; personal) improve satisfaction and ethics management participatory leadership) and organizational (using academic models, creating dynamic universities, in-

creasing organizational motivation and advancement of counseling culture in the academic management) issues. These factors illustrated in Figure 1.

5. Discussion

Based on the components and exploratory dimensions of the proposed model in the present study, the theoretical fundamentals stressed in succession management can be used based on documents, and the concepts and exploratory dimensions of the interviews can be explored.

It should be noted that the fundamentals of succession management are based on talent detection (35). The key informants expressed that “choosing a competent person is a major factor in deploying succession management in universities.” Many scholars and researchers believe that the concepts of talent management and succession management overlap (10), which can be considered equivalent and interchangeable. Hence, it can be said that despite the differences in this twofold relationship, they can be used interchangeably. The component of managerial skills with 87 mentions is one of the requirements of the process of training directors, and the focus should be placed on the skills and capabilities that are needed in the organization’s future business (2). The repeated iteration of the sentence “having expertise and academic mastery over the subject of management” and “need for innovative, innovative” in interviews was an emphasis on the existence of triple technical, human and perceived skills in the candidates for succession management. The importance of this component has been demonstrated in some models (10). Interviews with informants under expressions such as “using a long-term approach to considering people’s performance is a good way to replace surrogacy,” as for the dimension of causal conditions, consist of three categories, HRM, the beliefs of senior university executives and organizational rules have been repeatedly used in previous studies. Not only is the organizational structure based on succession-oriented organization stressed in industry sector, it is of prime importance in higher education organizations (4, 23, 36). HRM that is in the organization’s strategy and the governing rules, which are not only included in the documents (2, 3, 7, 12), but also interviews with informants under expressions such as “the strategies and tactics of deploying succession management is highly influenced by HRM”. The component of the beliefs of senior university executives with 39 mentions, as the support at the highest level of organization and organizational units, is one of the pillars of deploying succession management in all organizations (7). More to the point, the lack of support as the most important factor in the failure succession management (16). In interviews, it was concluded that “university administrators were too busy, there was a lack of attention to the future and succession programs.”

In qualitative projects based on grounded theory, the underlying conditions are specific factors that influence both strategies and the general environmental factors that affect strategies, and they are known as intermediary conditions (37).

Interaction means the actions, activities and movements of two or more individuals, or animals or objects such as cars, and the related behaviors of people affecting communication through each other is called ‘social in-

teraction’ (38). The belief that “faculty members’ lobbying affects succession,” is examples of social interaction that should be addressed in complex academic environments. Indigenous provincial management with 8 mentions and the appointment of directors from within universities with 8 mentions should be given special attention in the macro academic planning. These two factors were described by interviewees as “the deployment of succession management is negatively influenced by the arrival of non-native officials” and “the director himself must have grown in the system.” Although these components have not been specifically stressed in higher education in other studies, the design of the succession management model based on indigenous organizational indexes has been recommended in a study done (39). In this model, the role of policy-making councils in universities with 2 mentions was introduced under expressions such as “the impact of policy-making councils on succession management in medical universities” which were not addressed in previous studies.

Rewards include the positive work outcomes for individuals or a pleasing message for a person’s desired behavior in order to increase the likelihood of repetition (40). However, the non-competitive rewards that have been introduced to some higher education systems such as medical science universities, apart from the conventional rewards, are regarded as negative factors in deploying succession management. These factors were described by the interviewees as “the non-competitive payments leave adverse effects on succession management because it can create the opportunity for some to pull strings to get the desired position.”

The components of organizational misconduct of the director for survival with 5 mentions in the managerial positions and the false dependence of the educational organization on the current director with 4 mentions were described by the interviewees as “the lack of succession management causes damage to the system because of taking away the accumulation of managerial experiences of the current director and failure to transfer them to the new director.” Organizational misconduct is referred to any deliberate action by the members of the organization that violates the organizational and social core norms (41).

The two components of the political atmosphere with 8 mentions and pressures from outside the university with 11 mentions had a special position both in citations and interviews, which was not clearly conceivable in earlier studies in the industry sector (42). Universities are also faced with the effects of political climate, so that their institutional autonomy, the reduction of policies and academic freedom are among the underlying factors that need to be considered in the strategies for the deployment of succes-

sion management at universities (23). The most important belief of the interviewees in this regard was that “taking the opinions of irrelevant upstream sectors into account for the selection of directors has adverse effects and disrupts the succession management,” which should be given special attention. Nevertheless, having accepted the effects of politics on universities, there are more recent articles that have proposed political decision-making models based on the interaction between stakeholders, including professors, students, and faculty members inside and outside universities (43).

The intermediate conditions in this model were been organizational culture with 9 mentions and organizational environment with 11 mentions in previous studies, but the component of management experience under expressions such as “effective work experience in universities is helpful” and “the review of the managerial work record is essential for succession” was stressed in the interviews. The component of physical and mental fitness with 2 mentions was described by the interviewees as “having the ability to work in the field of management,” and “being young.” Moreover, interpretations turning around pivots such as “the selection of directors and their positions should be consistent with their education” and “having academic expertise for the managerial position” led to the discovery of the academic capability component with 16 mentions in the model, as one of the mediating conditions for the deployment of succession management in universities.

In this suggestion model based on qualitative data designs, the foundations of strategies are specific actions or interactions that result from the main phenomenon (42). The career path is a means by which an organization can sustain or increase the current productivity of its employees (44), and knowledge-based management is the process of creating, verifying, presenting, distributing and applying knowledge in the field of management (35). In interviews, some specific interpretations were presented for knowledge-based management by the interviewees, including “succession management in medical universities will transfer knowledge and management experiences to others.” The interviewees also believed that appropriate career paths are required for successful succession management in universities. In addition, the financial resources management was interpreted by the interviewees as “financial experience is necessary” and “time and resources are less wasted through financial resources management.” The component of organizational stability of directors in this model was emphasized by the interviewees. The stability or instability of government executives is also one of the reasons for directors to succeed in implementing long-term programs and policies of the organization (45). More-

over, stability and continuity and management is one of the main dimensions of the Cheryl’s succession management model in universities (46).

By examining the specialized functions of higher education institutions, it can be easily seen that management in educational and higher education organizations differ from other organizations (47). In addition, the biggest problem in managing universities may be the complex and unstable environment and the lack of organization in universities (48). Empowerment and talent management in succession management in universities are affected by an intervening condition by the title of academic autonomy, which results in academic freedom and a reduction in politicization (23).

Conditions such as increased satisfaction, ethics management, participatory leadership, application of academic models, the establishment of dynamic universities, an increase in organizational motivation, and the existence of consulting culture in the academic management. Although these components have been repeatedly addressed and stressed in previous studies, the components of dynamic university with 24 mentions, such as “avoiding the neglect of previous management programs, avoiding favoritism,” were extracted from the interviews.

5.1. Conclusions

Based on the results of the present study, the succession management model consisted of six dimensions and 35 components. By deploying this model, the strategies of career path development are facilitated, and universities’ knowledge-based management is institutionalized in terms of executive programs, re-training programs for directors and knowledge-based research products, productivity management and managing financial resources towards maintaining human and financial capitals. The organizational stability of directors provides the selected directors with an opportunity to implement the organization’s goals in higher education and to realize academic autonomy based on academic and research independence. In the continuation of the deployment of succession management model in universities, the fruits are a rise in the satisfaction of faculty members, staff and students, governance of ethics management in key positions of universities, increasing the participatory leadership style in faculty members as personal outcomes, as well as using the academic succession management models, such as mentoring, increasing organizational motivation, and establishing dynamic universities with the governance of best directors and clear job paths for faculty members interested in key positions.

Footnotes

Authors' Contribution: Study concept and design: Reza Pourmirza Kalhori and Susan Laei; analysis and interpretation of data: Reza Pourmirza Kalhori, Elham Kavyani, and Faramarz Malekian; drafting of the manuscript: Reza Pourmirza Kalhori; critical revision of the manuscript for important intellectual content: Reza Pourmirza Kalhori, Elham Kavyani and Faramarz Malekian; statistical analysis: Susan Laei.

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