

The Mediating Effect of Teacher Commitment between Succession Planning Practices and Faculty Readiness for Leadership Position

Allan A. Magsipoc, LPT, MAEd

ABSTRACT

This study explored the relationship between succession planning practices and faculty readiness for leadership positions with a particular focus on the mediating effect of teacher commitment. Utilizing Principal Component Analysis (PCA), Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), and PROCESS macro for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the results of the survey of 318 teachers and middle managers from 19 private schools revealed that teacher commitment has a significant direct effect on readiness to lead. Moreover, results also reveal that teacher commitment has a significant indirect mediating effect between succession planning practices and faculty readiness for leadership positions. The findings of this study have implications for school administrators and policymakers in preparing academic leaders by strengthening the commitment of teachers.

Keywords: *teacher commitment, succession planning practices, faculty readiness to lead, exploratory factor analysis, mediating effect, structural equation modeling*

INTRODUCTION

Faculty readiness for leadership positions has diverse definitions, but most scholars agree that the term readiness for leadership refers to the willingness and motivation of a teacher to take the role of the leader (Oppi et al., 2022) and aspire to have an impact beyond the classroom (Hunzicker, 2018), whether in policy or decision making (Whitehead and Greenier, 2019) or having an effect on the professional development of their colleagues (Margolis, 2020). The utmost aim of teacher leadership is to enhance student learning and achievement (Siddiqui et al., 2021).

However, teachers' readiness to take on the leadership role is rather multifaceted (Qadach et al., 2020). Teachers themselves are somewhat reluctant to take part in decision-making outside their classroom, to invest their personal resources such as time and effort in wider school development, or in general, to take on the leadership role (Taimalu et al. 2020; Durias, 2010). In addition, several reasons why teachers hesitate to take on the teacher leadership role, such as the lack of time, poor relationships with peers and/or administration, climate and structural factors, and personal characteristics (Wenner and Campbell 2017).

In a quantitative study by Oppi et al. (2022) with 480 teachers from 16 schools in Estonia, results revealed that teachers are reluctant to take on leadership roles due to low appreciation of them as valued professionals and that recognition, appreciation, and respect by their colleagues and leaders is scarcely demonstrated. Wolverton et al, (2010) examined the first step taken at the University of Nevada Las Vegas (U.S.A.) to address mid-level academic leadership preparedness issues and found that the majority of academics are unprepared to carry out academic leadership responsibilities. A study conducted with the academic community, as reported by Gohain (2013) at the Education Promotion Society of India (EPSI) summit, found that 92% of the respondents consider that there exists a deficiency of capable leadership in Indian HEIs. Morris and Laipple (2015) surveyed a sample of 1515 university directors, academic deans, and department heads on leadership skills, readiness for administrative positions, and job satisfaction, and their findings highlighted the demand for capacity building, continued leadership development, and management training. In a similar study by Chew and Andrews (2010) in Australia and Singapore, they argued that a school culture that is based on the recognition of teachers as professionals, functional democratic norms, participation, and cooperation and promotes the professional development and leadership of teachers is supportive of teacher preparedness for leadership. On the contrary, hierarchy and strong structures, led by an autocratic principal, impedes teacher leadership readiness. Likewise, the study of Brosky (2011) at Michigan State found that those prospective teacher-leaders who were unwilling or unable to disturb traditional hierarchical structures or who did not feel comfortable "being the boss" had difficulties fulfilling their roles efficiently.

In the Philippine setting, even though leadership is a much-written and talked about concept, there is a little amount of literature that has attempted to discuss "readiness to lead" as

an emerging concept and pre-requisite for leadership. This readiness gap refers to the deficiency of necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes that may affect the performance of an aspiring leader after entering into a leadership role and is detrimental to the institution if not addressed once the candidate has been hired (Kearney & Valadez, 2016; Thompson, 2019).

In relation to the concept of teachers' readiness to lead, succession planning also plays a role in the preparation. Succession planning refers to a purposeful and methodical effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, preserve and develop intellectual and knowledge assets for the future, and inspire individual improvement (Ritchie, 2020; Umans et al., 2021; Bano et al., 2021). While succession planning is often considered to focus solely on administrative leaders, LeCounte (2020) emphasized the need to see such planning beyond management ranks to include production, clerical, technical, and professional ranks. Some scholars and practitioners have used the terminology of succession planning and leadership development interchangeably, but there is a difference. The former is a deliberate strategic process to plan for the future replacement needs of the organization, which includes advancing the skills and experiences of leaders through leadership development. Basically, succession planning is a process with a long-term view, whereas leadership development is a series of activities with both dimensions to support and manage talent roster across the organization Conger and Fulmer (2013). The irony of succession planning is that it is a process whereby incoming leaders are placed into stretch situations they are not quite ready for, which exposes the organization to risk. Such high-risk situations are important to expand their leadership capacity, and in contrast, placing these individuals in an environment where they are fully capable would not allow them to grow for the future good of the organization (Berger & Berger, 2017).

Despite the crucial role that academic leadership plays in the multifaceted field of education, research in readiness for leadership particularly in local settings is scarce and literature is mostly focused on either the effectiveness of leadership or the various domains of academic leadership, hence, leaves a research gap on readiness for academic leadership (Mohnot, 2017; Zainab, & Baig, 2011). Moreover, although recent literature has identified links between succession planning practices and faculty readiness for leadership positions, teacher commitment, with its apparent value as a key component of institutional development, has received relatively little research attention with regard to leadership preparedness hence, there is a gap in the literature which deserves necessary attention. Considering the adverse effects of a leadership vacuum, this study aims to fill these gaps in the research on faculty readiness for leadership roles. Moreover, the study attempts to contribute to the body of knowledge on the role of teacher commitment as a mediating variable between succession planning practices and faculty readiness for leadership positions.

Research Question

1. Is there a mediating effect of teacher commitment between succession planning practices and readiness for leadership positions?

METHOD

This study utilized the quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. The respondents were 318 faculty members, including middle managers such as program heads and coordinators, who have been teaching in their respective current schools for at least five years while excluding top management officials from 19 private educational institutions in Davao Region. Complete enumeration was employed and the three adapted research questionnaires were subjected to pilot testing.

The first instrument was the Teacher Commitment survey developed by Razak, Darmawan, and Keeses (2010). It was subjected to pilot testing to establish its reliability in the Philippine context and the result revealed a 0.944 Cronbach Alpha. The second and third instruments were Succession Planning Survey and Readiness for Leadership Position Survey developed by Galvez (2017). The instruments were pilot tested and the results showed the five (5) indicators of Succession Planning with the following Cronbach Alpha values: Commitment of top leadership to succession planning - 0.972, Evaluation of present and future important leadership needs - 0.946, Succession planning as a part of policy and culture - 0.967, Supervision: identification, development, transition, and rewards for leadership potential - 0.948, and Evaluation of overall institutional succession planning practices - 0.768. The Cronbach Alpha results of the third questionnaire, Readiness for Leadership Position with three (3) indicators are the following: Ability - 0.926, Engagement - 0.932, and Aspiration - 0.932. For the data analysis, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, Principal Component Analysis (PCA), Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) were utilized in Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS) and PROCESS MACROS for mediation were employed in Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

Initially, KMO was used to measure sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to examine whether there was a significant correlation between the factors in the dataset and whether a data reduction technique such as factor analysis was suitable to be used (Bobbitt, 2019). Then, Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was performed to reduce the dimensionality of a large dataset while preserving as much variability as possible for increased interpretability. It does so by finding and creating new variables or "principal components" defined by eigenvalues (EV) (Jolliffe and Cadima, 2016). New variables with eigenvalues greater than one ($EV > 1$) are considered interpretable and qualify as principal components (Reio and Shuck, 2014).

Next, EFA was conducted for teacher commitment with 17 items, succession planning practices with 27 items, and readiness for leadership position with 27 items. The aim of EFA is the reduction of data with highly correlated items and the grouping of uncorrelated items into underlying or latent relationships. The identified items for each of the three variables were subjected to a reliability test.

The final analyses yielded three (3) factors for teacher commitment, two (2) for succession planning practices, and three (3) for readiness for leadership positions. The results of the EFA were loaded into the SEM model for the analysis and testing of the hypotheses.

Research ethics clearance was secured before conducting this study. Prior to participation, the respondents were provided with clear and comprehensive information regarding the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study through an informed consent form attached to the research instrument. Respondents were given the right to make an informed decision about their voluntary participation and understand that they can withdraw at any time without any consequence or explanation required, moreover, no monetary compensation was involved. The confidentiality of participants' personal information and survey responses was strictly maintained. The researchers ensured that all data collected was stored securely and that individual responses were anonymous.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed on the hypothesized model containing eight (8) observed variables; one endogenous/ dependent variable and two exogenous/ independent variables using AMOS.

Looking into the regression weights of the standardized estimates as shown in the figure, it was revealed that succession planning practices contribute .33 (33%) to teacher commitment and only .14 (14%) to faculty readiness for leadership positions. Moreover, the mediating variable, teacher commitment, contributes .73 (73%) to faculty readiness for leadership positions which indicates a significant causal relationship.

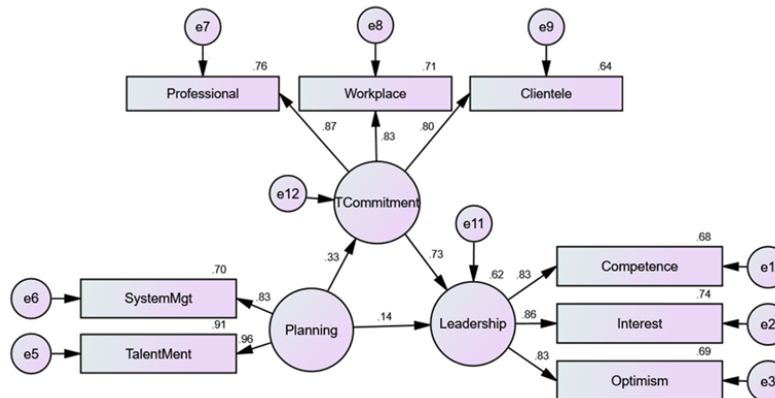


Figure 1. Hypothesized Model

The following table shows the values of different fit indices- Absolute Fit, Relative Fit, and Parsimony Fit for both hypothesized and modified models with the threshold values. The chi-square was very large at 851.095, which was understandable given the large sample size. After undergoing the specification process and all the loading values were more than 0.5, the modified model was tested again, and the results showed the model's goodness of fit as it satisfied the threshold requirements, particularly RMSEA = .440, which is <0.6, therefore the model obtained the goodness of fit.

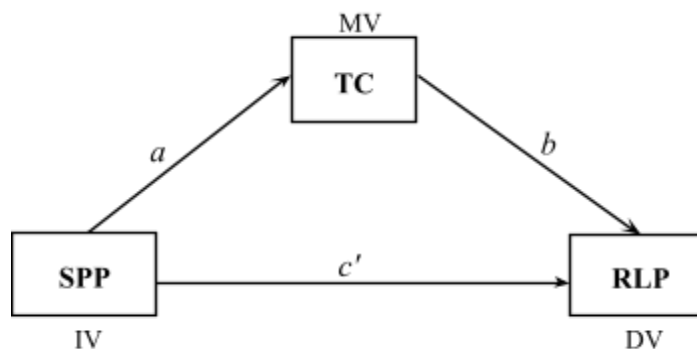
Table 1. Fit Indices for the Hypothesized Model

Fit Index	Symbol	Hypothesized Model	Modified Model	Threshold Values	Source
Absolute Fit Indices					
Degrees of Freedom	Df	24	36		
Chi-Square	χ^2	851.095	2249.445	<2 or 3- Good and <5-permissible	Kline (2005)
Chi-Square/Degree of Freedom	χ^2/df (CMIN/df)	35.462	62.485	2 to 5	Marsh and Hocevar (1985)
Probability of CMIN	P	.000	.000	>0.05	
Goodness of Fit Index	GFI	.716	.344	0 (no fit)-1 (perfect fit) (Should be >0.90)	Byrne (1994)

Root Mean Square Residual	Mean	RMR	.064	.144	<0.05	Kline (2005)
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation	Mean	RMSEA	.330	.440	<0.6	Hu and Bentler (1999)
Relative Fit Indices						
Normed Index	Fit	NFI	.622	1.000	>0.90/>0.95	Byrne (1994)/Schumacer& Lomax (2004)
Tucker-Lewis Index		TLI	.439	1.000	>0.90/>0.95	Byrne (1994)/Schumacer& Lomax (2004)
Comparative Fit Index		CFI	.626	1.000	>0.85/>0.90	Byrne (1994)
Parsimony Fit Indices						
Parsimony Comparative Fit Index		PCFI	.418	.667	0 (no fit)-1 (perfect fit)	Mulaik et al. (1989)
Parsimony Nomred Index	Fit	PNFI	.414	1.000	0 (no fit)-1 (perfect fit)	Mulaik et al. (1989)

Conceptual Framework for Mediation

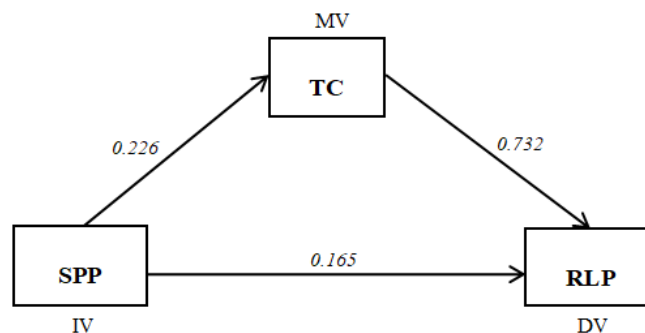
To assess the serial mediating effect of teacher commitment between succession planning practices and faculty readiness for leadership positions, the following mediation model will be applied.



Moreover, the regression-based bias-corrected bootstrapping approach via macros such as PROCESS proposed by Preacher and Hayes (2004) was used. The results of the 5,000-bootstrap mediation with 95% confidence are indicated in the table that follows.

Direct Effects					
Effects	Product Coefficients		of	Bootstrapping 95% BCaCI	
	Point Estimate	SE		Lower	Upper
Succession Planning Practices to Teacher Commitment (a)	.226***	.043	.000	.140	.312
Teacher Commitment to Faculty Readiness for Leadership Positions (b)	.732***	.226	.000	.631	.833
Succession Planning Practices to Faculty Readiness for Leadership Positions (c)	.164***	.041	.000	.082	.246
Total Effect of Succession Planning on Readiness for Leadership					
Succession Planning Practices to Readiness for Leadership Positions (c)	.164***	.041	.000	.082	.246
Indirect Effect of Succession Planning on Readiness for Leadership					
Succession Planning Practices to Readiness for Leadership Positions(c')	.165	.049	-	.074	.266

Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; All presented effects are unstandardized.



In determining serial mediation of Teacher Commitment with the model through PROCESS macro, results indicated that Succession Planning Practices have a significant direct effect on Teacher Commitment ($a = 0.226$). Also, Teacher Commitment has a significant effect on Faculty Readiness for Leadership Positions ($b = 0.732$); Succession Planning Practices have a significant direct effect on Readiness for Leadership Positions ($c = 0.164$). Furthermore, the indirect effect of Succession Planning Practices on Readiness for Leadership Positions through the mediating variable Teacher Commitment (c') is 0.165 as shown in the figure.

To validate the observed factor structure with the remaining eight (8) underlying factors; three (3) for Teacher Commitment, two (2) for Succession Planning Practices, and three (3) for Faculty Readiness for Leadership Positions as obtained from EFA, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed (Suhr, 2016) on the modified mode by examining the reliability and validity as measured by several fit indices. CFA results yielded the goodness of fit as the modified model obtained the threshold requirements of $CMIN / df = .000$, $RMSEA = .440$, and the Relative Fit Indices = <0.90 .

In addition, the findings of this study also validated the causal path of Succession Planning Practices toward Teacher Commitment that conforms with the theory of Myers (2021) that succession planning is a significant predictor of organizational commitment, which means that employees who work in an organization with an active succession plan had higher levels of commitment. It also implies that the presence of a system of mentoring, ranking, and promotion in the organization contributes to the enhancement of employees' commitment (Bernthal and Wellins, 2016; Beck and Conchie, 2012; Charan, 2015; Greer and Virick, 2018).

Also, the findings show that there is a significant correlation indicated by the direct effect of Succession Planning Practices on Faculty Readiness for Leadership Positions. Likewise, the result of this study coincides with the claims of Madsen (2005) that employees have a higher level of readiness when they are committed to their organization (Liu, 2019; Hur and Perry, 2020; Jacobsen and Staniok, 2020).

Moreover, further analysis confirmed the researcher's conceived effect of Teacher Commitment as a mediating factor between relationships of other variables (Yousaf et al., 2015; Yao et al., 2015; Wei et al., 2019; Schechter and Qadach, 2019), in this particular study, between Succession Planning Practices and Faculty Readiness for Leadership Positions. The final analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) revealed that indeed Teacher Commitment has a mediating effect between Succession Planning Practices and Faculty Readiness for Leadership Positions as explained by 0.165 significant indirect effects. It is also interesting to note that the results suggest that Teacher Commitment has a stronger path correlation toward Faculty Readiness for Leadership Positions as indicated by a 0.732 direct effect. This study, therefore, further argues that Teacher Commitment has a stronger direct effect on Faculty Readiness for Leadership Positions than as a mediating factor.

Conclusion

The findings confirm the researcher's conceptualized mediating effect of Teacher Commitment between Succession Planning Practices and Faculty Readiness for Leadership Positions which means that the effect of Succession Planning Practices in preparing teachers for leadership positions can be partially enhanced when mediated by Teacher Commitment. However, the minimal direct effect of Succession Planning Practices on Faculty Readiness for

Leadership Positions implies that it is not a guarantee for school administrators that teachers who are selected for succession planning programs are prepared to lead in the institution.

Moreover, the findings also suggest a stronger direct effect of Teacher commitment to Readiness for Leadership than as a mediating factor which implies that fostering Teacher Commitment is significantly a “must” in preparing future leaders for the academic institution. It further implies that teachers who are strongly committed to the school tend to be the most ready to lead.

Furthermore, significantly, the results of this investigation add to the existing literature wherein the mediating effects of Teacher Commitment on causal relationships that exist between other variables have been examined. It can also be noted based on the available literature in the past decade, this study is the first to quantitatively describe and theoretically establish a critical path that shows the direct effect of commitment towards readiness for leadership in the academic setting.

Recommendations

The presence of a well-structured succession planning program in the institution cannot fully enhance the readiness of the faculty for leadership positions. Nevertheless, the mediating effect of Teacher Commitment between Succession Planning Practices and Faculty Readiness for Leadership Positions improves the teachers’ readiness to lead. This finding suggests that school administrators should bank on cultivating and nurturing teacher commitment by conducting programs focused on the identified factors such as professional, workplace, and cliental commitment.

In line with the finding that Succession Planning Practices slightly translate to Faculty Readiness for Leadership Positions, it is recommended that Human Resource professionals need to devote extra attention to revisiting the policies and guidelines pertaining to the factors of succession planning. In systems management such as in the incentive system, ranking, and promotion, likewise in talent mentoring programs, it is recommended that it should be re-assessed and recalibrated if needed to enhance the level of Succession Planning Practices.

Finally, for further research, aside from utilizing the findings of this study, it is suggested that an investigation be conducted involving teacher commitment and faculty readiness for leadership positions in the context of the “new normal” situation since the available literature has yet to further consider the influence of the pandemic to teacher commitment and readiness to lead. Also, the data of this present study came from respondents from private institutions, a further study on teacher commitment, succession planning practices, and readiness for leadership positions in the dynamics of public, academic institutions could extend the body of knowledge on this topic.

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