The library succession planner’s decision making style
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The library succession planner’s decision making style

Abstract

Purpose - This study explores succession planning in academic libraries, specifically to understand how succession planning is carried out and how the decisions making styles of library managers influence each stage of the succession planning.

Design/Methodology/approach - A qualitative approach was used to gather data through document analysis and interviews with library managers at four Sri Lankan university libraries. Data analysis was done applying the framework analysis tool.

Findings - The study revealed that succession planning has been practiced in Sri Lankan university libraries to develop a bench strength – skilled backup for key positions at all levels, while inculcating leadership competencies in their respective positions. The Dominant decision style is the identifiable decision making style within the succession planning process.

Limitations - The volume of the data obtained depends largely on the participants’ responses and the interpretation of the data is subjected to minimum personal biasness of the researcher.

Practical Implications - An understanding of how decision making styles influence practices of succession planning contributes to assist Library managers to carry out succession planning within the limitations of their autonomy to do so. The findings of this study benefits library managers in recognizing their own decision making styles and the level of succession planning they have achieved.

Social Implications - Library managers decision making style can have an influence on how succession planning is carried out successfully at an academic library to ensure continuity of the library’s mission and vision.

Originality/value - This is the first known study to investigate how decision making style of the manager influences each level of the succession planning at an academic library. The use of a systematic Framework Analysis method for qualitative data analysis reveal trustworthy results.

Keywords Succession planning, decision making, academic library, qualitative, Sri Lanka

Paper Type Research paper

Introduction

It is well known that the library’s response to patron needs strongly influences the decision of both the library’s process structures and its leadership structures (Konya and Gurel, 2014). Both management style and decision styles have an impact on performance of staff in a university (Ismail, 2010). Thus, as claimed by Singer and Griffith (2010), “having the right people at the right place at the right time can be achieved through successful succession planning”. According to the Business Dictionary, succession planning is the “identification and development of potential successors for key positions in an organization, through a systematic evaluation process and training”. It is a complex task to plan and carry out a succession exercise. Within a library, the responsibility commonly falls in the control of the Library Manager (chief librarian) or the management group for a larger library set up.

Succession planning should be a priority among managerial tasks, however many institutions, though they do understand the importance of succession planning, do not see it as a priority. Offering job specific training does not adequate equals succession planning! Few libraries have established succession plans that actively prepare current staff for future leadership opportunities. Noryati (2006) found that many of the long-established universities in Malaysia are losing their academicians and administrative officers to younger universities by offering higher salary or higher positions to the
staff. Succession planning strategies will need to be implemented to retain these potential young leaders. In Sri Lanka, no such investigation has been carried out on understanding the decisions and processes involved in succession planning for university libraries.

This paper concentrates on understanding how library managers in Sri Lankan university libraries plan and design succession planning. It also attempts to explore how the decision-making styles of these managers influence the choices they make with respect to each component of succession planning carried out by them within the limited autonomy given by the university.

**Objective of the Study**

This explorative study is motivated by the need to know how library managers make decisions in the process of succession planning. The aim is to understand succession planning practices in Sri Lankan academic libraries and further identify if decision making styles of library managers influence their experiences in the process of succession planning.

**Succession planning**

A report in the Occupational Outlook Handbook predicted that “Employment of librarians is projected to grow 2 percent from 2014 to 2024, slower than the average for all occupations” (Bureau of Labour Statistics U.S.A, 2015). This figure is quite alarming. Wilder (1996) had predicted that 67% of United States Association of Research Libraries (ARL) librarians were expected to retire between 2000 and 2020, with the largest percentage (27%) retiring after 2010. This wave of retirement would be expected to create large vacancy opportunities for the oncoming graduates of library and information science. In an analysis of the reported literature, van der Walt and du Plesis (2010) reported that the retirement trend is reflected in Australia and Canada as well. They investigated the academic librarians retiring trend in South Africa and concluded that nearly half of the librarians will be retiring within 10 to 15 years. This also highlights the issues related to decisions on succession planning even in developed countries.

Succession planning principles need to be understood and the implementation of these principles must be put into practices which reflects this understanding, however it is often not the case (Galbraith, Smith and Walker, 2012). Whitmell (2002) believes that “libraries cannot afford to wait to locate and groom the people when there is a need”. The preparation of the next in line must be carefully visioned and structured.

Several studies (Whitmell, 2002; Kieserman, 2008; Galbraith et al., 2012; Hall-Ellis and Grealy, 2013; Fitsimmons, 2013) have discussed the importance of a succession plan in libraries. Since succession planning is a long-term process, all library staff should be involved in it (Whitmell, 2002). Top management is not to simply identify successors for a managerial position, but also take into account the long term needs of the library, its community and its users. This will bring their focus onto strategically looking for the right people for the right position. Galbraith et al., (2012) assert that succession planning involves more – “it is training and developing employees throughout the organization to have the skills, knowledge, and experience to be effective in their current and future positions”. Hall-Ellis and Grealy (2013) too suggest that to create a workplace that responds quickly to changes and individual development, an effective succession plan is required.

In their study on academic librarians’ competency requirements, Hall-Ellis and Grealy (2013) used a career development framework for succession planning and management, known as “The Dreyfus Model of Skill Acquisition”. Their investigation revealed that this framework can be effectively applied in retaining current staff and recruiting new staff as part of the strategic succession planning. Fitsimmons (2013) expresses his views on succession planning by encouraging library leaders to recognize potential staff who can be groomed for higher positions, and also on how to identify less motivated staff and take necessary actions to mentor them into realizing their full potential. An interesting view on succession planning in academic libraries by Weare (2015) yields a very controversial outcome. He suggests that rather than planning to fill anticipated vacancies, academic library leaders need to treat each vacancy as an opportunity to create a new position. Weare
believes that recruitment of external staff can help libraries fulfil the new role of the academic library defined by new job specifications. To date there has been no attempt to understand the process of succession planning with reference to the decision making style of the library manager.

**Decision Making**

Decision making is an important component of managing. In fact, it is a job requirement of a manager. Muhammad Umar et al.’s (2016) study on the competencies of university librarians in Pakistan, revealed several competencies necessary in relation to decision making with regards to resources, services and humans. Although people may not fall into neat categories of types of decision makers, there is some attempt to logically derive decision styles. Based on Rowe and Mason’s (1987) psychological perspective, four major styles of decision making were conceptualized. The four basic styles are: a) Directive, b) Analytical, c) Conceptual, and d) Behavioural (Figure 1).

![Decision Style Model (Rowe and Mason 1987)](image)

Based on the matrix, the left axis shows the distinction between high cognitive complexity-thinking orientation and the low cognitive complexity–action orientation of a decision maker. Two main categories of those who are task oriented are the thinkers (think orientated) and the doers (action oriented). The conceptual and behavioural style are more people oriented. The dichotomy in this model is consistent with approaches that focus on the technical or behavioural concerns of managers (Rowe and Mason 1987). This study will use these categories to study the behaviour of library managers during succession planning.

**Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative approach. According to Srivastava and Thompson (2009), “qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct and methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or a human problem”. There are 15 universities in Sri Lanka and a ‘Librarian’ (Manager) heads the library. Initially, all 15 librarians at each university was requested through an individual e-mail to participate in this study. Only six Librarians gave their consent to participate, however two participants later withdrew from the study due to work commitments. All participants are in the operational positions and have been involved in the process of decision making at both library and university level. Table 1 provides a summary of each participant’s current position, organization, years of experience and prior positions. Pseudo names have been used to protect the identity of the participants.
Table 1: Participant profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Neetha</th>
<th>Nelum</th>
<th>Siri</th>
<th>Tissa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational type</td>
<td>University Library</td>
<td>University Library</td>
<td>University Library</td>
<td>University Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current position</td>
<td>Librarian – 4 years</td>
<td>Librarian – 9 years</td>
<td>Librarian – 5 years</td>
<td>Librarian – 12 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total library experience Yrs.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An initial list of questions to guide the interviews were developed based on the succession planning directions for a library proposed by Singer, Goodrich and Goldberg (2004). Table 2 depicts the guide.

Table 2: 8 Directions for Developing a Working Succession Plan for Libraries

| Determine the organization’s strategic direction | Consider the changes in the population’s age and diversity, and changes in access to information probably due to make a shift |
| Identify critical management and technical positions | Will the next generation of leaders have to especially adept at understanding technology |
| Project future vacancies | Inventory your employees as you would your up-to-date materials in the reference collection |
| Determine executive descriptors for future leaders | Executive descriptors or competencies are organizationally based requirements that support performance success |
| Identify holes in staffing | Determine what your future potential leadership needs will be and who might be available to fill in the gaps |
| Diagnose developmental needs | Ensure your potential leadership pool have the skills, knowledge, abilities and experience to take on the mantle of leadership |
| Create a deliberate developmental plan | Your high-potential candidates will need care and cultivation to amass the skills still needed |
| Review progress and provide new assignments | Tell your high potentials that you are giving them developmental opportunities for future leadership positions |

Total number of interview hours were about 12 hours. The audio recordings of these interviews produced 83 pages of transcribed dialogues.

Data analysis was done using the Framework Analysis (FA) described by Ritchie and Spencer (1994). Framework analysis involves several inter-related but distinct stages that allows for theme-based or case based analysis or a combination of the two, through the development of charts that may be read across (cases) or downwards (Ward et al., 2013). Framework analysis involves five key stages as shown in Table 3.
Table 3: Stages in Framework Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages in Framework Analysis</th>
<th>Detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Familiarisation**          | - gain an overview of the data coverage and became thoroughly familiar with the transcripts and audio recordings.  
- identify relevant topics or issues |
| **Identifying a thematic framework** | - create the conceptual framework. Sort themes and group them under a smaller number of broader, higher order categories or ‘main themes’. Place themes within an overall framework. |
| **Indexing**                 | - systematically apply thematic framework or index to the textual data. All the interview data are read and annotated according to the thematic framework. In this study, indexing is carried out using NVivo 10 software. |
| **Charting**                 | - data are ‘lifted’ from their original context and rearranged as appropriate thematic references.  
- Charts are devised with headings and subheadings which may be drawn from thematic framework  
- Case approach (by participant) is applied to lay out the charts as opposed to thematic. |
| **Mapping and Interpretation** | - determine the characteristics of the data and map and interpret the data set as a whole. |

The fifth step, Mapping and Interpretation, involves the following rigorous steps:

**Defining concepts**
At this stage, charted material are systematically examined for key elements and themes. Once the summarized data is familiarized within the chosen sub-topic, different elements are then identified. The Librarian discusses matters with library managers but the final decision on staff training programs, number of staff, composition of the staff, certain administrative functions, staff recruitment, disciplinary action to certain extent are made by the Librarian.

**Mapping the range and nature of phenomena**
“‘A core function of qualitative research is to identify the form and nature of a phenomenon, and where appropriate, to map the polarities’ (Ritchie and Spencer 1994). Table 4 represents a mapping for the sub theme ‘Identifying a critical position’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identifying a critical position</th>
<th>Identified Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A position becomes critical depending on the requirement of it and as a consequence, the demand for it. Position who handles the institutional repository has becomes critical as others are not well conversed with the library management system. Librarian determined to have a plan for it by assigning two people to get trained along with him to become conversant with the system | Requirement and the demand determined the position critical.  
Position who handles the institutional repository is critical.  
Two people are assigned by librarian as successors for the critical position. |

Once all of the elements are extracted, categories are formulated then it is possible to classify them by grouping them under categories. Each of these were considered to see if they link with or are similar to others. The researcher had to go through the process of forming categories several times. Since this study is a case based study, elements were identified under each theme and sub-themes. Categorization was done considering all the elements as a whole set of data. Figure 2 shows an example of how categories were formed.
Creating Typologies

Typologies are specific forms of classification that help to describe and explain the segmentation of the social world or the way that phenomena can be characterized or differentiated. “Establishing typologies involves identifying relevant dimensions, testing the fit of the dimensions, establishing cross-fertilized typological categories and testing the fit of the newly defined categories” (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). In this study, typologies were not created. Concepts or explanations came from the literature. Outcome through the analysis mapped with the pre-existing decision making styles which were found through the literature. Therefore, there was no need to create typologies from the data.

Finding associations and providing explanations

If the researcher is looking for connections between different sets of phenomena in different perspectives, then it is important to find associations. This study however was examining only the decision making pattern, which is a single phenomena and perspective. Spencer et al. (2014) stated that some qualitative researches complete their analysis at the categorization stage and produce rich descriptive accounts of the way in which particular phenomena are viewed and experienced.

Findings and Discussion

In the following sections the findings are presented and discussed based on the major research objectives of this study. Unlike typical succession or replacement planning that concentrates only on a few senior leadership positions, this study investigated the whole system involving a broad range of members of the workforce. Succession planning directions outlined by Singer and Griffith (2010) as in Table 2, were used in determining the succession planning process.

Determine the organization’s strategic direction

A university’s strategic planning bears all the university commitments, goals and strategies with long term planning. It is usually for a 5 year time period with the involvement of all high ranking people in the university. The Library manager represent the library in the university’s strategic planning process. According to Tissa, “at the university level we discuss about our vision statement…our actions, our rules, goals and objectives…including infrastructure development, HR development, even collection development. …
There is a separate strategic plan for most libraries which complements the university’s master strategic plan. Nelum mentioned; “…But we have a strategic plan for the university, in that strategic plan all the departments, faculties have separate strategic plan. Anyway embedded in that, we adopt the corporate plan as a succession plan”. This is confirmed by the Tissa: “… Yes we have. It’s a rolling plan. It’s going to be 4 years, every year we add another year. It’s called a rolling plan”.

The organizational structure is a very important aspect in the process of succession planning. Each and every category is mentioned and it includes clearly defined tasks of the individual. Library managers review it and make necessary updates depending on the abilities and the skills required. If there is a need for a new position, the decision is taken by the Library manager in consultation with the senior staff. That position should be defined and all recruitment procedures and salary should fit with the UGC (University Grant Commission) circular. It is not possible to simply create a new position as it is not a one step procedure. Though the university is concerned about the ‘human resource factor’ of the university in the strategic plan, there is no clear evidence of succession planning as a strategic goal, but the Library manager identifies the importance of it and pays attention to operate within their preview. Nelum informs: “Our library is different from other conventional libraries…because we’re serving to specific kind of community. All the librarian who comes here always try to train the other person to take over the position. Otherwise, anybody who comes from outside, it’s difficult to manage… it is not only for the head positions but also for library technical positions”.

2) Identify critical management and technical positions

Once the strategic plan decides the direction of the library, it is easy to look at the key work, key positions and key employee. There were certain aspects that concerned identifying critical management and technical positions. One aspect is that the key areas in the library system. Another is the key people who require continuity and development to deal with the identified key areas. According to responses by the Library manager, IT (Information Technology) related positions were identified as critical positions in general. Neetha confirms that; “SAL IT (Senior Assistant Librarian – Information Technology) is critical. Because we solely depend on him for the LMS (Library Management System) on managing our institutional repository. Critical because others are not well conversed with IT operating systems. But I always have to have a backup. Because if something happens to this person I can’t say that we have to stop everything, no. I have to have a plan”.

A position becomes critical depending on the requirement and as a consequence, the demand for it. Position that handle the institutional repository has becomes critical as others are not well conversed with the library management system. The Librarians are determined to have a plan for it, assigning two people to get trained along with him to become conversant with the system. Critical position for one library may not be a critical to another. Though the university libraries are under the control of UGC and shows the homogeneity in administration, requirements of the key stakeholders are different. Nelum confirms it; “I have entrusted all the library technology and related activities to the system librarian. SAL (Senior Assistant Librarian) that is Harsha. It is not only IT that is important… user services as well. It’s very important to us, because our learners are independent learners and need lot of support from the library. So we have to have very strong reader support service. We have online service as well as onsite service”.

User services are very critical and very important in one of the libraries because users are independent learners and need a lot of support from the library. Therefore, it is necessary to have very strong reader support service in Library B. Generally Library managers identified that ‘system librarian’ and ‘reader support service librarian’ as important and critical in university Library B.

3) Project future vacancies and identify the development pool

This explains to look at who is currently on staff, how much longer can they serve, what their capabilities are, what are the given developmental opportunities, etc. Nelum explained; “There are AL
(Assistant Librarian) under each SAL, in certain divisions. Within the division there are staff assistants and library assistants. Library assistance are promoted to staff assistance. It’s a higher category. They cannot be promoted higher than that category. There are several categories such as professional, para professional, technical and supportive staff. Academic or professionals consists of Librarian, Deputy Librarian, Senior Assistant Librarians and Assistant Librarians. While para professionals consists of Library Assistants and Staff Assistants. Technical staff consists of Technical Officer, Computer Analysts, System Analysts, and Programmer. Attendants, labourers and binders are categorized as supportive staff.

The organizational structure of the library provides a clear picture of the present cadre and it helps to determine certain aspects such as determining a new position based on the requirement, promotions etc. Librarians who headed the library in the past were forward thinking and had taken initial action to set up certain positions and units to meet the future needs. According to Nelum, “we have a Skills Development Unit. I assigned Dr. Usha as the head. It’s 7 years old. But the user services are there since the inception of the library in 1980s…and the system library position was there since 2000. In case Usha is absent, another staff can manage, but needs to develop his skills further”.

There is clear evidence of having a bench strength that is the skilled backup for key positions at all levels. Galbraith et al., (2012) stated that there are several levels of succession planning. It is a spectrum. At one end of the spectrum, a basic succession plan may occur which develops the bench strength. It creates an organization of employees who are leaders in their respective positions. Singer and Griffith (2010) stated that determining the employees, who with proper mentoring and assignments, can master the critical skills, abilities and knowledge, eventually enables the identification of the potential leadership development pool. Unfortunately, the libraries where the study had been carried out do not practise it to such extent.

4) Determine executive descriptors for future leaders

This is looking at job description/ duty list identify critical knowledge, skills abilities and competencies that the library needs to succeed. Nelum express her views; “I think a balanced mind and unbiased thinking about the fellow workers and subordinates, especially decision making, conflict resolution, there are always conflicts no? (Laughing) I think that is the main thing, otherwise you cannot survive. Another thing is the attitude. What kind of attitude you have, whether you’re going to be a conventional librarian or you’re going to be in the same stream or think about dynamism to upgrade your services, changing according to the other changes happen in technology, attitude to learn new system, so you have to be dynamic”.

Systematic way of determining this step is to review the profiles of individuals and determine which competencies were required for all, or most of the positions, but consider only the competencies required in general.

5) Identify loopholes in staffing/ identify potential gaps

This relates to positions that have not been filled in recent recruitments or critical positions that may not have potential candidates, particularly, internal candidates. In general, there is a high demand for IT personel in the library. It arises with the advancement of technology which demands the transformation of conventional library services to IT related services. It is confirmed by Neetha; “...It arise with the need. Earlier we didn’t have a programmer, network manager or IT people in the library. We didn’t have such equipment and services. So, when the technology was adopted...things change...we needed change in manpower skills”.

Demands cannot be fulfilled from the traditional labour markets, such as graduate students from library schools. In that case, there is a need to determine if the external market will be able to meet the demand. Therefore, looking for employees from non-traditional labour markets, such as those with IT related degree, is a requirement. This employee may be a part-time basis, not an Assistant Librarian/Senior Assistant Librarian.
6) Diagnose developmental needs

Formal succession planning process in a library should start with the identification of the potential leadership pool and then ensuring that they have the right skills, knowledge, capabilities, competencies, and experience to take up potential leadership roles in future. Reviewing candidates against the job specifications, including competencies, should result in some clearly identified developmental gaps. The participants clearly were focusing on job specific training rather than developing leadership competencies among the staff. These librarians believe that they do a better job of providing job specific training than managerial and leadership training. This is reflected by a statement by Tissa; “…It’s not only about planning and doing the succession within the library…but it’s training them. If you are an ICT librarian, you should know how to run the computer system here…the network, assembly of internet services, developing a digital library. These things we need and it’s in my mind and I train people especially for these things”.

According to the views of the participants, there is one common thing which relates to developmental needs. It is basically IT related activities in the library. They have identified the potential gap of available competencies and the requirement. According to Tissa; “In our case, its venture into more ICT (Information Communication Technology) based services…to have people to develop a Moodle based information literacy program, and developing our web interface”. Siri had similar views; “It is technology, customer service and most importantly trust between the library and the student and staff of the university. If the students depend on the library, that is a big service…we have very practical subjects, dancing, music…”

Things like digital libraries, automation, improved customer service, improved service quality are within the boundary of future development needs in all libraries in general. Some are at the planning and some are in the functioning mode. Another important thing that is expected is the attitude change of the individual. It will help in many ways in terms of competencies which will be needed in the future. Librarian Tissa strongly express his views regarding this; “…Actually, within the senior staff I say they’re ok. But in this present generation that extra element is not there. something is missing. Basically I think the drive no? We have very good staff. But that extra mile is not there…."

7) Create a deliberate development plan

This is planning to close developmental gaps identified earlier. By means of training programs, special assignments and leadership opportunities the requirement is addressed.

To develop the bench strength, it’s ideal to prepare several people to become strong candidates for promotion. In addition, it is impossible to know how many future opportunities there may be, and even if there is a ‘first choice’ in the bench, he/she may abruptly redirect her career or be enticed by another employer. It is always best to be prepared.

Nelum expressed similar views “… No such procedure. Because, the advertisement will be open. But I trained that person to take over the position even though there are competitors and the person should be able to compete and get the position. Anyway I trained her. That is up to that person to build up their career… but professionally I had given enough training…."

The nature of the training depends on the position that the individual is assigned to. The library has internal training programs and counter operations, office etiquette, and professional ethics done within the library. Training program should be tailor made according to the requirement of the position, but there are general training for everyone which is conducted by the staff development centre.

8) Review progress and provide new assignments
This is obtaining feedback on how the employees are progressing. If they are not progressing or meeting expectations, inform them about it and take necessary actions to make them meet the expectations. If they are meeting expectations, provide additional assignments to challenge their learning. At the same time they get rewarded.

There are similar situations experienced by Nelum who expressed: “...Actually, here there are no under performing people. We have staff in the periphery. They are like that. Normally what I do is I issue a letter of advice based on their performance...I mention that the performer should improve by the next year. Then the next year the officer should tell me whether the office has improved or not. Some people have improved a lot, some people stay the same. I did this to 2 employees. I differed them for 6 months. So they have to perform and show us. Normally it’s not done, but I had to do it, because I have to deal with very difficult users. Very difficult to manage these people”.

This is a good time to get an idea whether the development program is progressing. Do the employees progress the way that is expected? Are they performing in the way that the library expects? There is a need to evaluate overall development planning by asking senior leaders in the library what is working well in the program and what should change.

**Decision making styles evident in the process of succession planning**

During the analysis, it is clearly revealed that librarians demonstrate decision making in the process of succession planning. These decisions are made subjected to the power and authority vested with the individual Librarian. Reviewing the responses by each Library manger as they described the succession planning, it was possible to identify characteristics of these library managers and assign decision making styles based on these characteristics. It is difficult to assign a single style to each individual as the characteristics changed according to the situation they face, however it was possible to identify a dominant style and supportive styles, as depicted in Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Manager</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neetha</td>
<td>Structured/ follow procedures, authoritarian/power, status, result oriented, action oriented, tangible rewards, consider facts and rules,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelum</td>
<td>Future possibilities, Consider options, decentralized setting/Willing to share power, Concern for other’s views/Discussion with others, Insightful, Focus people/ well liked, Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siri</td>
<td>No distinctive characteristic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominant Decision Style Categories</th>
<th>Supportive Decision Style Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directive</td>
<td>Enthusiastic, concern for other’s view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual</td>
<td>Task/target oriented and Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure/ follow procedures, action oriented, power</td>
<td>Directive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to share power</td>
<td>Analytical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Conceptual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Librarians’ Decision Styles during succession planning

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Neetha’s dominant style is a Directive decision making style, with two supporting styles, which are conceptual and analytical. As a directive decision maker, Neetha is perceived as autocratic, willing to exercise power and control. She is action oriented and decisive and looks for speed, efficiency and results. Her two supportive decision styles which are conceptual and analytical shows a kind of a flexible person who is able to use any of the other two styles when needed. During the interview Neetha could not produce any formal documents to prove that the university library has any formal succession planning, but explained how such informal succession planning is been supported with the librarians involvement. She explained that the training and developments needs are addressed by the available funds and programs planned. Most of the time academic vacancies are filled by advertisement on papers where internal candidates also could apply. The librarian with directive decision making style can influence the speed of the procedure through her authoritative nature and follow procedure when it comes to recruitment and finalizing the candidates and receiving resources for development of the staff. She efficiently manage the funds to optimize the resources on people development and training as she is action and result oriented.

As for Nelum, she portrays the Conceptual decision style as the dominant style. Being a conceptual decision makers, she is creative and has the vision to see future alternatives. Conceptual decision makers are regarded as perfectionists or idealists with a strong emphasis on value and ethics. Her supportive decision style is the Analytical style. With the combination of conceptual and analytical decision styles exhibit high tolerance for ambiguity which is towards think orientation. This combination of Conceptual and Analytical definitely lies within the ‘leader’ who uses ideas to deal proactively with the future. This combination signifies the successful people. During the interview it was revealed that there is no formal succession planning in University B library as well. However, Nelum’s conceptual decision making style has created a succession planning for all senior and technical positions. She has time to evaluate the needs of training and development of the staff and provide sufficient funding. She actively promote and also get herself in mentoring the staff and provide an environment to learn and develop. It was also revealed that all staff in the library also have been assigned to external projects to improve their capabilities and knowledge. Such creativity in people development can be considered as a very healthy environment for succession planning with the librarian conceptual decision making style.

Library manager Siri did not show a dominant decision style. He showed the traces of Directive style but could not consider as a dominant style as number of characters developed through the analysis is not significant. Apart from Directive style there are other two styles also derived which are Conceptual and Analytical. Combination of Directive, Analytical and Conceptual style does not make a clear idea of interpretation. Conceptual and Analytical style shows the high tolerance for ambiguity or think orientation, while Directive style shows the low tolerance for ambiguity or action orientation which is totally contradict. Siri has been in the library field for a considerable period of time, but exposure to a leadership role such as librarianship is less competitive compared to the other 3 librarians. It is understandable that leadership competencies are developed through the experience in which present opportunities. Lack of experience in a leadership role may lead to yield only supportive decision styles but not to derive a clear decision style. During the interview, Siri confirmed that there are no formal documents to show how the succession planning is taking place. Interview revealed that all actions required related to promotions are taking place according to the procedure set by the University, and senior positions are only filled by advertisements on newspaper. During the interview...
it was difficult to understand if any sort of training and developments needs are identified to develop
the staff or any such program is available in the library. Librarian Siri does not show any dominant
decision making style other than just adhere to university policy and regulations.

Library manager Tissa has an Analytical style as the dominant style, while Conceptual and
Directive as supportive style. The analytical thinker generally tries to gain the broadest possible
perspective of the problem. Having Conceptual and Directive as supporting decision styles adds a
colour to the dominant Analytical style. Rowe and Mason (1987) further stated that many chief
executive officers whom they have interviewed were having Conceptual style – for planning and
innovation & Directive style – for deciding and directing. During the interview it was revealed that
the university D library also does not have a formal succession planning process. However, Tissa
believes and spends considerable time and resources on development of staff by training. University
D has a training and development centre where Tissa make use of this resource very efficiently to
develop his staff. He also makes himself available for evaluation of the staff so that he can get a good
feeling of the strengths and weakenss of the staff. This helps him to identify the training and
development required and support such individual. Such training and development priorities set by
Tissa, irrespective of succession process helps him to develop his staff to a level of optimum
capabilities and great amount of motivation among staff. Tissa believes in passion and dedication
which are strong signs of broader perspective of training and development.

In conclusion the dominant style is the prevalent style among the Librarians. Thus, a manager
can be forceful and result oriented (directive), or can be logical and careful about choosing
alternatives (analytical), may be very creative with a broad perspective who has a vision to see future
alternatives (conceptual). Rowe and Mason (1987) stated that “because the style is innate, we do not
think about which style we’re going to use in each decision situation. Rather, we believe in a manner
that tends to be consistent with our style”.

Conclusion
The study intended to understand the current level of succession planning in Sri Lankan University
Libraries and the impact of the library manager’s decision making style in the succession planning
process. During the study, it was revealed that all four universities have no formal succession
planning process or documentation available. However, it was revealed that some level of an informal
succession planning is available. Such level of basic succession planning can be considered as bench
strength – skilled backup for key positions at all levels. Some libraries maintain the bench strength
while trying to inculcate leadership competencies in respective positions.

The present study supported the early research about the dominance of directive, conceptual and
analytical decision making styles of library managers. In other words, behavioural style was not
dominant in any of four university librarians’ decision style. There are certain points where the
librarians make decisions in the process of succession planning. Decisions are made subjected to
power and authority vested with the librarian. Every decision is made in their own way in which the
pattern of thinking describes one’s style. There are identifiable decision styles within the succession
planning process. It is evident that the Conceptual decision style librarian has better planning and
innovative management style when it comes to succession planning. This can be due to the leadership
and management capabilities of the individuals. It can also be contributed by the maturity of the
person and organisation involved with the high level of training and development.

Policy makers and librarians willingness in accepting these results relating to decision making
styles and current level of succession planning in Sri Lanka university libraries requires a high level
of policy changes and resource allocation in library development for long term success of succession
planning.

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