

## Successor type and coaching performance in NCAA Division I men's basketball

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Abstract 148**

One of the most important duties of an athletic director in NCAA Division I athletics is hiring coaches, particularly in high-profile revenue sports such as football and men's basketball. Candidates considered for such a head coaching position can generally be categorized into one of three groups: (1) an assistant coach from within the institution, (2) a head coach from outside the institution, and (3) an assistant coach from outside the institution. While exceptions may periodically exist, such as a coach from the high school or professional levels or a currently unemployed coach, most candidates typically fall into the aforementioned categories. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between successor type, whether inside assistant coach, outside head coach, or outside assistant coach, and subsequent performance.

Managerial succession has been examined extensively over a period of many years in the business management literature (Grusky, 1960; Helmich & Brown, 1972; Shen & Cannella, 2002; Weirsema, 1992). In general, this literature has found managerial succession to lead to instability within the organization (Grusky, 1960). Succession has also been investigated in the sport industry, relative to study the head coach of a sports team as the manager of the team/organization. These studies have primarily focused on professional sport settings, such as Major League Baseball (Allen, Panian, & Lotz, 1979; Grusky, 1963), the National Basketball Association (Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1986), the National Football League (Brown, 1982), and the English Premier League (Audas, Dobson, & Goddard, 2002). Few studies were identified investigating managerial/coaching succession in intercollegiate athletics (Ehrhardt, McEvoy, & Beggs, 2006; Eitzen & Yetman, 1972). Three theories have emerged from this literature to explain the effect of coaching succession on team performance in sport: (1) the "common sense theory," that succession results in an improvement of performance; (2) the "two way causality theory," that managerial succession leads to deterioration in performance, as succession leads to organizational instability, which results in even poorer performance than before the succession took place; and (3) the "ritual scapegoating theory," that managerial succession has no impact on performance. Recently, Ehrhardt, McEvoy, and Beggs (2006) found that none of these three theories was satisfactory in explaining the impact of coaching succession in the college football setting. These researchers proposed the "cyclical regression theory," which suggests that successful teams hire from within while unsuccessful ones look externally for a successor, but that in either case, teams tend to regress to their program's mean performance level following succession.

The purpose of this study was to examine these theories on coaching succession and team performance in the context of NCAA Division I men's basketball, a sport context that is of significant revenue importance for many athletic programs across the country, yet one that remains unstudied in this area of the literature. All Division I men's basketball head coaching changes from 1989-2000 were included as subjects in the study. Successors were categorized into three groups as mentioned previously: (1) inside successors, (2) outside head coach successors, and (3) outside assistant coach successors. Subjects not belonging to one of these groups were excluded from the study. Team performance data, in the form of published computer ratings, was collected for each subject, including the four years prior to and after the succession took place. A mixed between-within subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine if differences existed among successor types in team performance across the eight-year time span. Results showed support for the "cyclical regression theory" proposed by Ehrhardt, McEvoy, and Beggs (2006). Further results will be discussed at the presentation.

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