



## SUCCESSION MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN GHANA: CONTEXT, PROSPECTS AND SUCCESS FACTORS - A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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### Abstract

*Ghana, a sub-Saharan African country has been noted to be among the countries with a high rate of unemployment. An insight into the current trends in succession management in public institutions provides a panoramic view of the context, prospects, and success factors in the implementation of succession management in public universities in Ghana. As a country with a high unemployment rate coupled with a high rate of corruption and poverty, succession management has been found to be a challenging issue for university administrators and other stakeholders in the country. Routine procedures are not followed for replacement of workers who in one way or the other left their jobs. Also, the study found that new workers do not have the required skills and experience due to protocols involved in the recruitment and succession processes. The study, therefore, recommends, among others, the adoption of effective training and the flat management structure to enhance the implementation of succession management in public universities in Ghana.*

**Keywords: Career Opportunities, Recruitment, Succession Management, Talent Management, Ghanaian Universities**

### Introduction

As workers continue to leave the workforce, due to, among others, retirement, new job opportunities, illness or death, organisations have no choice but prepare to recruit human resources with the required skills and experience to fill vacancies in events of such occurrences (Hurley-Hanson, Giannantonio & Griffiths, 2020). The concept of succession management comprises a tactical selection of a suitable candidate in holding a reputable management position from several qualified candidates in a business firm (McCarroll, 2020). The concept involves three main stages. In the first stage, the firm makes a forecast on the need for future senior managers. The second stage completely revolves around assessing a list of short-listed candidates working in the firm to assess the one with the potency of assuming vacant

positions in future (Keller, 2018). In the final stage, the organisation provides plans to effectively develop the selected candidate with the required competence to hold such vacant positions (Acree-Hamann, 2016; McCarroll, 2020). Succession planning is the main route by which companies prepare individuals for executive positions that are of high importance to ensure proper management of the firm when old executives go on retirement or in the event of a change in a managerial position (Keller, 2018).

Owing to the importance of succession management, it has been made an integral part of the day-to-day decisions of companies or organisations that aim to continue operating smoothly in the future (Gitiche, 2016). To achieve the organisational goal of a firm, it should have

executive management with strategies much needed for a successful production. This is the purpose of succession management (Ahmed-Gamgum, 2018). A company or organisation that fails to make succession planning an integral aspect of its operations gradually retards its ability to continue production and also realise its organisational goal (Chakraborty & Biswas, 2020). Placement of qualified candidates in high-level positions, as well as the enhancement of staff morale, is highly achieved when successful succession management plans are made in an organization (Stokes, 2018). Moreover, the rate of employee turnover is lowered.

Several studies conducted in this field revealed the importance of successful succession management ( Onwuka Onyinye, Dibua & Ekene, 2017; Fusarelli, Fusarelli, & Riddick, 2018; Loomes, Owens & McCarthy, 2019). Some provided ways of achieving successful succession policies, with little or no attention given to the relationship that exists between the performance of an , executive succession policies as well as its effect on corporate performance (Ahmed, 2020; Farah, Elias, De Clercy & Rowe, 2020). Again, little work has been carried out on the outcomes of succession management on human resources.

Variability in the succession planning process has been the major factor hindering the observation of the effects of the process on the outcomes of human resources in businesses (Olatunji, Kehinde & Nwachukwu, 2017). In replacing senior-level managers, in the event of promotion or retirement, the execution of the succession plan may be enormously easy (Parfitt, 2017). On the other hand, this process may be regarded as highly formal with some rudiments governing the succession process of each managerial level in a firm ( Parfitt, 2017; Dapaa, 2019) . The question that comes to mind is what is the effect of succession planning on the outcome of human resource? The answer to this question is unveiled in this paper.

The importance, as well as the use of succession management, is manifested in several ways in the

lifespan of an organisation. Having the right and efficient human resources at the right time and place strongly determines the survival and progress of an organisation. Most organisations are faced with the problem of obtaining candidates that best fit in higher positions from within, owing to the efforts put in place by them for restructuring their economic activities (Fukuda, 2018). Succession is of high importance since it helps in eradicating homo-social reproduction on the part of managers (Ogutu, 2016). It again helps encourage multiculturalism as well as diversity from within (Galjot, 2018). Communication of career paths, training plans for employees, individual job changes as well as developmental establishments in a firm come by way of succession management (Chiocchio & Gharibpour, 2017).

For an institution or agency to consistently ensure smooth operation, there is the need to establish a succession management plan that will ensure the replacement of knowledge or expertise that the company will lose in its operation (Oppong & Oduro-Asabere, 2018). This loss may be intentional or unintentional, hence the need for a contingency plan to facilitate future growth and realisation of operational goals.

Goal realisation in the future requires the development of a model that will help nurture employees to ensure the availability of qualified personnel capable of assuming critical positions in an establishment (Bano, 2020). In state agencies, strategic developmental plans, as well as planning for the workforce, requires the use of succession management plans (Gitamo, 2020).

### **Succession Management around the Globe**

One of the most important tools utilised in the corporate world today for recruiting and developing talent among workers is succession management and planning (Gallardo, 2018). This has popularised the process referred to as talent management or development in the corporate world.

In the history of management, it is noted that Henri Fayol, a French management forerunner, was part

of the people that first realised the need for succession planning in institutions around the globe (Wren & Bedeian, 2020). Nonetheless, leaders with foresight centuries before the advent of Henri Fayol, developed massive succession plans that they implemented in their firms (Wren & Bedeian, 2020). However, today, little or no attention is attributed to succession management plans by many leaders in their companies (Wren & Bedeian, 2020). Such people only realise their efforts going to waste when their time to leave office is due. They realise a little too late that, much could have been done to consolidate their legacy if there was a capable successor.

At every level in an establishment, there is the need to create room for potential candidates that will take the lead of its prospects (Rothwell, Jackson, Ressler, Jones & Brower, 2015). This has helped many modern establishments to have highly qualified employees available who can fill their needs at any material moment (Kim, 2003).

The days when organisations were faced with the challenge of searching for qualified candidates in other firms to occupy managerial positions when staff who hold these positions leave or go on retirement are long gone. They have now imbibed the importance of putting in place strategic plans to select, develop and retain highly qualified persons within their institutions to serve as future leaders to ensure smooth operations in the highly competitive corporate world (Ali & Mehreen, 2019; Huang, 2001). It again ensures the availability of the much-required human resources within these firms (Johansen, 2012).

Creating a pool of future leaders in an establishment should not be geared towards a specific leadership position, but rather cover all levels of leadership within it (Von Krogh, Nonaka, & Rechsteiner, 2012). This means that, the spectrum for generating future leaders should be broad to cover or include all levels in a firm. This facilitates easy training and development of future leaders ready to undertake their future responsibilities.

## **Succession Management in Ghanaian Universities**

Succession planning and management in Ghanaian universities have still not received a face-lift since time immemorial (Oppong & Oduro-Asabere, 2018). To complement this, it has been observed that most public universities in Ghana lag in terms of facilities that positively affect effective learning among students (Bello & Thompson, 2003). This is basically because, policies set forth by outgone leaders are not worked on by their successors (Seniwoliba, 2015). Other developmental policies are rather set and these will require diverting resources meant for works in previous administrations (Zando, 2013). This continues to slash the backs of public universities and also hinder their effective development (Kusi, Opoku-Danso & Afum, 2020).

It is sad to leave behind developmental projects that are neglected when a successor assumes a higher position in a university (Kusi, Opoku-Danso & Afum, 2020). The main cause of such jeopardy is the lack of implementation of good succession management plans (Seniwoliba, 2015). Implementation of succession management plans in Ghanaian public universities is paramount to ensuring unceasing growth as well as development in such institutions (Karikari, 2014).

To ensure methodical management of institutions in Ghana as well as continuity in leadership, there is an impeccable requirement for these institutions to embrace the official succession management approach (Seniwoliba, 2015). On the contrary, most academic institutions in the country have failed or showed slow adherence to this approach (Karikari, Kodi & Poku, 2020). Institutions of higher learning in Ghana over the years paid little or no attention to develop and prepare leaders for their systematic advancement (Sawyer, 2004). However, managing an institution systematically forms the basis of achieving its institutional goals in the future.

## **Degree of Complexity in Succession Management Systems**

When it comes to succession management, there exists a great deal of variation from one firm to the other (Fink, 2010). Regarding the level of sophistication of the succession management process, five different stages have been identified (Lynn, 2001). The stepping stone of the process which is seen as the most basic involves the chief executive officer of a firm obtaining the name of the most qualified candidate to serve as his/her backup for the prospects of the institution (Haddadj, 2003). In the second stage, the candidate's potential to serve in that capacity is assessed through the appraisal data provided on him/her. The next level is where the identified potentials and career goals of the selected candidate are merged into the company's plan (Huang, 2001). In the fourth stage, a management development strategy is developed for candidates selected to be potential successors of the firm. In other words, for smooth succession management to be realised, all the aforementioned steps are engaged in all managerial levels in a firm (Huang, 2001). The formality of the succession process is manifested in these stratifications.

A succession management plan that is presumed to be sophisticated has the following critical parts; statement of vision, support of managerial staff, a database for planning, rewarding managers for their ability to promote the best-suited employee, a strategic way of accessing candidates and open as well as candid channels of communication among different departments (Huang, 2001). Actions, good feedback as well as participation are integral parts that should not be left out.

## **Integrating Succession Planning and Management in Ghanaian Universities**

In the process of ensuring good succession management, executive management of an academic institution needs to identify and institute measures that will help select the best candidate from a list of candidates presented by senior officials (Bello & Thompson, 2003; Karikari, 2014; Dei Johnson, 2017). To achieve this, five critical steps are required. These are:

1. Setting relevant as well as clear objectives
2. Preparing a good business plan summary
3. Comparing current working conditions with set objectives
4. Making room for the development of potential solutions
5. Implementing the plan by assembling an advisory team

In the case of public firms such as tertiary institutions in Ghana where there exists high competition among staff, unpredictable environment and continuous change in institutional configurations, selecting an individual for a specific task is not the way to go (Okofu-Darteh & Asamoah, 2020). The old ways of choosing people to succeed others do not work. The more valuable and useful knowledge the management of the company receives in the early stages about its employees, the more realistic the selection process for the progress of potential leaders (Kjellander, 2018). This is the secret to effective succession planning.

A succession plan has to be developed to ensure that the best staff are kept at all levels within the institution. It is time for leaders in state institutions to realise that individuals especially, among the younger generation, are probably going to change careers in their working life. Hence their set goals can only be achieved when good management plans are put in place to mentor young employees who are highly talented to assume high positions in future to factor the deficit that will set in when these employees change their jobs.

The long term identification, grooming and development of talented individuals and retaining such talents consistently within an institution is the aim of succession management (Weisblat, 2018). This concept is viewed differently by different institutions around the world. Some establishments or institutions view the concept merely as the need for the availability of candidates capable of assuming key positions to serve as replacements within a firm (Taylor & Robinson, 2019; Weisblat, 2018). However, others view the concept more empirically as a thoughtful and systematic



determination to foster continuity in key leadership positions by developing intellectual qualities in employees to maintain the reputation of the organisation and encourage individuals to advance themselves in knowledge and the much-needed skills to hold key positions (Oduwusi, 2018). This, in the long-run, ensures progress and the development of concerted programmes in an institution. Through this, talents in key positions are not lost in the event of death, retirement or career turnover.

The devastating loss of key skills or lack of timely performance in critical roles can quickly undermine the goals of any establishment (Buame, Buckman, & Jones, 2019). Combining these circumstances with increasing capacity, ageing, and rising workforce for high performance and competition, it becomes clear that public universities in Ghana must invest more time and resources in succession management (Kashefikia, 2009; Karikari et al., 2020). Recruitment practices that are highly traditional within tertiary education have caused a delay to the candidacy process and have again made the management of state universities in the nation less effective, because of the economic downturn and subsequent prohibition of employment.

### **Institutional Succession Management in Ghanaian Universities**

The time spent on approving applications, setting up committee interviews and concluding compensation packages is reactionary to the loss of critical job functions (Pennell, 2010). It is essential to create a University Management Team (UMT) which will be proactive in developing people with strong potentials, and the future leaders who can take the university further internally (Seniwoliba, 2015). Ghana's universities have seen increasing retirement rates of lecturers, department heads and administrative staff (Karikari et al., 2020; Karikari, 2014). Management needs to take strategic choices to determine key replacements to these positions. Concerning administrative workers, the selection of current employees with high skills and high rates is

crucial to future development and management of the university (Seniwoliba, 2015).

In an event where a worker unexpectedly resigns or retires, the effect will be dramatic on the way the university provides services and instruction to some of its students and employees (Davidson, 2017). The loss or lack of talent must not interfere with the educational process or individual performance. The university's management should be based on many areas of intellectual capital, administrative and university operational services with strategies developed to create an efficient and uniform recruitment process for such diverse needs, leading in turn to the creation of unique competencies (Sánchez-Barrioluengo & Benneworth, 2019).

State universities in Ghana must look at new ideas and approaches on talent development and succession planning on all their campuses to win the war on talent and succeed in the future. Many institutions with performance management processes at some levels, both automated and paper-based struggle to recognise the best performers without incorporating succession schemes into the process (Schreurs, 2019). This will remain closed to their career potential and will not give them the correct insight into their growth and leadership.

### **Critical Success Factors for Implementing Succession Management in Ghanaian Universities**

Succession management is an essential process not to be ignored by public higher institutions in Ghana. Public institutions continuously lose their workforce (Ahmad, Ming, & Sapry, 2020). The workers may be replaced in the short term, but a substantial number of institutional memory and basic competencies are lost.

Several common success factors influence succession management, despite the specific characteristics of every public university in Ghana. Several factors have been identified by researchers to influence succession management (Ahmad et al.,

2020; Karikari et al., 2020; Karikari, 2014). These include:

a) **Training:** Training programmes help workers develop and also provide them with new skills and knowledge. Trained staff are empowered; therefore, training programmes for effective succession planning should be made available.

b) **Management support:** Administrators need a great deal of support to develop any effective succession planning system.

c) **Understanding the career path of staff:** When a company clarifies the career path, that will ultimately allow workers to understand their respective career goals better and also allow better succession planning.

d) **Developing a vision:** This helps to create a positive insight into succession programming, thereby eliminating the fear of employees who feel that succession planning is a threat to their positions. As an important organisational culture, effective succession planning, provides all employees with values, beliefs, standards, and paradigms. These principles, beliefs, expectations, and paradigms can be viewed by employees as guidelines for their daily success.

e) **Implementation of the flat management structure:** The flat structure is also an influence on succession planning as it facilitates improved communication and faster sharing of expertise in firms, which are criteria that contribute greatly to succession planning.

f) **Adequate budgetary allocation:** Successful succession plans are also affected by financial factors in a university. For example, one of the main determinants for training people in any establishment is the availability of funds in the budget line.

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## Conclusion

Succession management plans are important for the success of public universities to foster unceasing developments by setting stringent strategic rules to ensure that accumulated experience of high-level executives does not go waste after their retirement or exit from the academic institutions. These unique qualities are rather given a face-lift by leaders who will assume such positions in future. Again, the loss in unique qualities developed by seasoned executive members can be greatly minimised through succession management.

Departmental heads as well as other faculty members can be easily replaced in the event of retirement, job changes or death through an effective planning process. This will greatly help executive management of tertiary institutions identify potential candidates within the same institution to assume positions of high performing faculty members instead of elections. Effective succession management plans in public universities will help eliminate governmental interference on who holds which position in the university. Unexpected challenges that state universities will face in future can be countered by putting in place, firm succession management plans to ensure that square pegs are not placed in round holes.

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