Succession Planning in Ghana's Nascent Technical Universities: The Case of Cape Coast Technical University

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Abstract: This paper investigated on succession planning in Ghana's Technical Universities with the Cape Coast Technical University as a case. In this study, the researchers interviewed nine purposively sampled senior managerial and administrative personnel. The interview transcripts were content-analysed using the Taguette computer-aided qualitative data analysis software. The study uncovered that the CCTU has neither a succession policy nor a formal arrangement for training and mentoring personnel to fill leadership roles. Personnel interviewed demonstrated a positive perception of succession planning even though it was based on basic knowledge of the concept. Further, interviewees expressed a desire to see succession planning given a try at the CCTU. However, they wanted such a program to be transparent, inclusive, and coherent. They also would like to see any such policy have adequate top-level backing. The challenges to a potential succession planning policy included the risk of it being abused as a tool for cronyism, the risk of people selected and sponsored under the policy leaving the organization and the risk of it only existing on paper without full implementation The authors recommend that the dominant coalition at CCTU should study feasibility of formal succession planning and formulate a unique solution that is based in local context. They also recommend that researchers expand on this study across HEIs in Ghana. Finally, the researchers recommend that it would be insightful to examine the prevalence and nature of succession planning in various Ghanaian organizations. Such research may uncover practices and leadership development philosophies that are rooted in Ghanaian culture and which may be further developed.

Keywords: Succession planning; mentoring, leadership; higher education; Ghana; Technical University.

Introduction

Succession planning (SP) aims at maintaining and building on an organization's current state of success by sustaining the leadership momentum in an ever-changing operational environment. Successful SP involves evaluating an organization to identify key positions that are likely to become vacant in the foreseeable future so that likely successors can be identified and offered training and professional development opportunities (McMahan & Masias, 2009). Succession planning is crucial for organizational continuity and for sustenance of organizational culture as it aims at providing leadership continuity and retaining high-

performing talents while sustaining intellectual capital (Rothwell, 2010). Because succession planning is crucial for organizational survival and competitive advantage, effective organizations get ahead of it by investing time, thought and planning (Kubal & Baker, 2003).

Higher Education Institutions (HEI) worldwide are generally slow to adopt succession planning (Bennett, 2015; Jackson, 2017; Mcconnell, 2006). For example, in the United States, evidence shows that academia lags far behind the military and the business world in the consistent use of succession planning (van Amburgh et al., 2010). Barden (2009) suggested that this lag is due to the fact that university management models are quite different from those in industry and defense organizations. Generally, in HEI management models, all faculty members and senior administrative personnel are actively involved in setting institutional policies and in decision-making. Therefore, selecting and setting up only a handful of personnel on leadership tracks is generally thought of as cronyism and therefore, improper (Parkman & Beard, 2008; Barden, 2009). Nevertheless, it is crucial to consider the potential losses that may accrue to an organization in the absence of good succession planning and management.

One such potential loss concerns knowledge and experience attrition. Knowledge attrition happens when HEIs hire from the external environment to fill positions for which qualified internal candidates could have been appointed. Knowledge attrition happens because there are usually no formal processes to tap and store the knowledge and experiences of key personnel before they exit the system (Laal, 2013; Power, 2014). Tacit knowledge, according to Muniz (2013) and Rothwell and Poduch (2004), is gained by experience, exists inside incumbents and is difficult to capture unless it is deliberately extracted from experienced personnel. In the absence of an effective succession management system, gaps in leadership and skills appear when incumbents are unavailable for a variety of reasons because they take with them not just the capacity to do work but also vital accumulated knowledge and experience (Akinniyi, Idowu, Marafa & Moyo, 2018; Rothwell, 2005). Where the incumbent's absence is permanent, it is often the case that their knowledge and experiences become permanently lost to the organization. Such knowledge attrition is a threat to CCTU's present competitiveness and future sustainability; poor

succession management has already exposed the institution to losses in intellectual capital and capabilities in both the academic and administrative sectors.

In 1951, Britain granted the Gold Coast colony, now Ghana, partial self-governance under Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah. One of the keystone actions of this internal government was to prepare and adopt the ten-year Accelerated Development Plan for Education (ADPE) in that same year (Martin, 1976). Under the ADPE, the government sought to expand access to formal education and to make formal education more sensitive to the cultural heritage of the people and also to meet the evolving socio-economic needs of a country leading Africa's charge toward independence from colonial rule (Martin, 1976; Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh and Addo, 2016; Boakye, 2019). Upon expiry of the ADPE in 1961, the government of the now-independent Ghana adopted in its place the 1961 Education Act (Act 87). Act 87 not only replaced the ADPE but was also a successor to the colonial-era Education Ordinance of 1925 (Martin, 1976; Boakye, 2019). Act 87 was among other things to position Ghana's education as a lever to help the fledgling nation exploit its economic potential (McWilliams & Kwamena-Poh, 1975; Antwi, 1992; Boakye, 2019). In recognition of the need and demand for tertiary education in the technical and vocational domains driven by the country's economic needs, the government of Ghana in 1963 converted four second-cycle technical institutes – in Accra, Kumasi, Takoradi and Tarkwa into post-secondary technical institutions and called them "Polytechnics" (Boakye, 2019). Eventually, each of the ten administrative regions of Ghana came to host one Polytechnic. The Polytechnics also expanded their education offerings to include programmes from the Business domain. By close of 2018, all but two of Ghana's Polytechnics had been converted to Technical Universities.

The Cape Coast Technical University (CCTU) was founded in 1984 as the Cape Coast Polytechnic, a second-cycle school offering non-tertiary education. Eight years after its founding, the school was upgraded into a tertiary institution offering Higher National Diploma programmes. In 2007, the Polytechnic was approved to offer Bachelor's degree programs. By the end of 2018, CCTU had gained an upgrade and was now a Technical University. As an HEI, CCTU directly competes for patronage with Ghana's traditional universities as well as all other

upgraded Polytechnics. Establishing itself as a preferred HEI among peers offering similar academic packages will require that the CCTU develops and maintains continuity of quality leadership at all levels by means of proactive human resource policies and processes, such as succession planning and management.

It appeared that the assertion concerning HEI being slow to succession planning applies to the CCTU. Exploratory informal conversations with both academic and administrative personnel painted the picture that either a formal succession planning policy did not exist or it was completely neglected. Furthermore, over the years, the university has engaged in time-consuming searches for qualified personnel to fill important management and administrative positions for lack of prepared internal candidates. Many a time, external hires have had a hard time gaining the trust and respect of staff who considered themselves candidates for those roles. Additionally, academic departments and faculties suffer succession troubles when personnel jostle to fill vacant posts. Problems with succession leave the university exposed to a host of problems that can be expected to work against its drive to be an exemplary academic institution. A lack of commitment on the part of incumbent duty bearers to leadership development and succession planning is a critical challenge to the future prospects of HEI (Barton, 2019). Therefore, the time to formally commit to or revive succession planning at the Cape Coast Technical University is now. This study aimed at exploring the existence of formal succession planning and management at CCTU, assessing academic and administrative personnel knowledge, views and attitudes toward succession planning policy and practice in the university. The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To ascertain the existence of a formal leadership succession planning program at the CCTU.
2. To establish staff familiarity with, perceptions of, attitudes toward and expectations of succession planning.
3. To outline internal stakeholders' views of possible challenges to formal succession planning and management at CCTU.

Literature Review

Identifying future leaders is a fundamental characteristic of succession planning (Galbraith, Smith & Walker, 2012). For this reason, this review of literature begins with a focus on leadership. It discusses challenges to succession planning and then talk about what effective succession plans look like.

Leadership

Leaders can make or break organisations (Northouse, 2019). An organisation's capability at thriving in unsettled times is directly related to that organisation's capacity to develop and maintain excellent leadership (Lynn, 2001). HEIs all over the world find themselves in challenging times that call for greater attention to leadership development (Ruben, De Lisi & Gigliotti, 2017). Therefore, leadership is an important consideration in succession planning because its explicit goal of succession planning is to develop and maintain a pool of people who, in the event of vacancies, are going to step up and rally others in the organisation to strategic goals (Gmelch & Buller, 2015; Ruben, De Lisi, & Gigliotti, 2017).

Succession planning need not preclude those in an organisation that may not be on track to fill formal leadership roles, such as headship of departments. Northouse (2019) identifies four common elements in the most popular definitions of leadership. They are that leadership is a process that it occurs in groups, that it involves influence and that it is geared toward shared goals. The author goes on to define leadership as a "process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve common goals" (p. 43). Leadership is an influencing process that is intended to bring about shifts in attitudes, feelings, thinking, behavior and performance in individuals, groups and organizations (Avolio, Kahai & Dodge, 2000). Leadership involves employing the interpersonal influence within a given context to drive people toward agreed goal(s) (Tannenbaum, Weschler & Massarik, 1961). Defining leadership as a process infuses it with the idea that the phenomenon is interpersonal and transactional, involving a give-and-take interaction between leaders and those they influence, with the consequence that leadership can be learnt and is not restricted to the person designated officially as leader. This assertion makes room for other people in a group, other than those officially recognised as leaders, to assume and project leadership, a phenomenon Northouse calls "emergent leadership." Northouse (2019), further asserts that "When others perceive an individual as the most influential member of a group or an organization, regardless of the individual's title, the person is exhibiting emergent leadership" (p. 47).

This type of leadership develops over the course of time through communication (Pavitt, 1999). Ellis and Fisher (1994) point out positive communication behaviours that identify emergent leadership as being verbally involved, being informed, soliciting others' views, initiating new ideas and being firm but not rigid. Just as much as assigned leaders, emergent leaders affect others in the group, or should do so, in the direction of objectives shared by members of the group.

Therefore, it is important that succession planning is not limited to only the highest-level key positions. As noted by Khatri, Gupta, Gulati and Chauhan (2010), talent exists at all levels of the organisation; therefore, processes and plans to track, manage and develop that talent in line with strategic goals should be organisation-wide. Of course, in light of limited resources, pivotal role analysis can help the organisation to segment its talent pool and invest in different segments according to strategic needs (Khatri et al., 2010).

Sooner or later, every organisation contends with leadership gaps; every organization will face the inevitable in and out movement of human resource for a host of reasons (Friedman and Singh, 1989; Fruth, 2003; Bolton and Roy, 2004; Cox, 2010). Organizations need to actively engage this flux by creating, executing and continuously reviewing, adjusting and supporting a formal succession plan for acquiring and grooming potential leaders (Blouin, McDonagh, Neistadt & Helfand, 2006; Bolton & Roy, 2004). The plan should assure a reserve of human resource capital that is ready to move into vacancies as they occur in order to minimize interruptions in critical functions (Bolton and Roy, 2004; Cochero, 2010).

Challenges to Succession Planning
While the utility of succession planning is hardly disputed (McMahan & Masias, 2009; Rothwell, 2010; Schoonover, 2015; Eddy & Mitchell, 2017), there are challenges to the adoption of the concept to the process of planning and to the actual execution of succession plans. Some challenges may be unique to particular organizational environments. For example, in academic institutions, it is generally not acceptable to name successors to any anticipated vacancies without formal recruitment and posting (Barden, 2009; Luzebetak, 2010; Parkman & Beard, 2008). This is particularly so in institutions that receive public funding. In such institutions, naming successors to

specific roles is barred in order to assure equality in recruitment practices (Rothwell, 2005).

Another challenge to succession planning is lack of guarantee that individuals put on succession tracks and in whom there has expended grooming resources will stay with the organization (Rothwell, 2005). Such a loss is potentially frustrating to organizational leaders (Galbraith, Smith & Walker 2012). From an agency theory perspective, it is reasonable to expect that individuals whose career aspirations align with the strategic goals of an organization should have minimized turnover intentions (Ali and Mehreen, 2018). Thus, individuals placed on a promising career path through succession planning should be at a low turnover risk because they have greater reasons to stay and progress.

Another challenge to succession planning is the apparent lack of a uniform, proven succession planning model that fits the needs of all or most organizations (Chlebikova, Misankova, & Kramarova, 2015; Griffith, 2012). The consequence is that organizations attempting to develop succession plans must build from scratch according to their unique circumstances and with guidance from literature. Succession planning, therefore, is a potentially expensive enterprise. Nevertheless, rather than a hindrance, this gap is an opportunity for organizations to develop from the ground up custom succession plans without the distraction of trying to fit their plan into an existing model.

Succession planning may be challenged where the program incorporates external hiring. Filling vacancies with external hires has the potential to bring unwelcome consequences arising from matters such as poor fit (Tison-Thomas, 2019) as well as erosion of motivation among existing personnel. Knowledge attrition is another potential problem when HEIs hire from the external environment to fill positions to which internal candidates could have been appointed. When knowledge and experience are not passed on by means of mentoring and other such arrangements, they become lost to the organization (Laal, 2013; Power, 2014). Mentoring as a succession management strategy can help to mitigate knowledge attrition.

Effective Succession Plans
An effective succession plan is well documented, coherent and has congruous components (O'Sullivan, 2015). An effective succession plan

encompasses recruitment, education and training, and exposure to relevant experiences and responsibilities (Griffith, 2012). The succession planning process should be a dynamic enterprise that is powered by an organization's dominant coalition (Chlebikova, Misankova & Kramarova, 2015). The planning and implementation of the programs would benefit from the participation of various levels of management. According to Schoonover (2015), successful organizations are those whose succession management programs enjoy widespread acceptance and support within the organization, align talent management with business goals, clearly state success benchmarks, specify roles and responsibilities for succession management implementation and closely relate succession management to other human resource processes.

Effective succession planning involves actions, activities and interventions that ensure that capable and motivated human assets are available to fill roles as the need arises (Bolton & Roy, 2004; Crosby & Shields, 2010). A succession plan could be some sort of grid that covers leading or strategic positions in the organization, with multiple successors listed under each key position according to, preferably, current identified competencies. What is recommended is a flexible order of succession that allows more competent personnel to be bumped up the ladder (Chlebikova, Misankova & Kramarova, 2015). For each key position in the organization, the succession plan should specify the risks associated with a vacancy in that post. Reid and Gilmour (2009) suggested that an effective succession plan should include, at a minimum: (1) talent development at all levels, (2) continuous obligation to the succession program, (3) positive communication, (4) talent identification based on organizational goals, and (5) program management that incorporates recruiting, selection, retention and development of candidates. Evaluation of the succession planning process should be built into an effective succession plan.

For HEI such as CCTU, effective succession planning would be one that improves the organization for faculty, administrative staff and students; keeps the organization to its mission and vision; helps to identify, recruit and retain top talent; and continuously grooms leaders for the future. When done right, the outcome of succession planning should be that capable, willing and qualified talents continue to grow into leadership positions. Capable and qualified talent refers those people in the organization who are able to, and actually do get the right things done in the right way (Griffith, 2012).

Methodology

Research Design

The study design was exploratory and it was set in the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivist research is metaphysically idealist in the sense that it posits that reality is in the mind and that the mind's interpretation of phenomena is as valid as the phenomena themselves (Walliman, 2018). This study was wholly qualitative. Qualitative research is "a method for examining phenomena, predominantly using 'words' for data" (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017, p. 142). Qualitative research is often conducted in the natural setting of the phenomenon being studied and it attempts to gain meaning through the voices of study participants (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). In this work, the researchers endeavored to solicit and analyze the subjective perspectives of university staff.

Population and Sampling

Eight senior managerial and administrative personnel were purposively selected for this study. Seven of the respondents were at the time of the interviews Senior Members of the University. The eighth respondent was on a Senior Staff rank. Five of the respondents had entered service in the CCTU as Senior Members while the remaining three had entered as Senior Staff.. Senior Staff are higher-rung personnel who have attained a minimum of a tertiary diploma. Senior Members are an even higher rung of personnel who have a minimum of a Master's degree. The shortest serving respondent had been in the university for five years. Two respondents had served for eight years each, two others had served for ten years each. One respondent had served for thirteen years, one had served for nineteen years, and the last one had been in service at CCTU for 20 years. As their lengths of service indicate, the respondents were mostly long-serving personnel with some experience in the institution. Perhaps in line with their lengths of service, most of them were currently serving as heads of department or in some other high-level managerial roles such as Deans. Before their current appointments, these had previously been appointed to other formal leadership positions. At the time of the interviews one respondent had finished serving as the head of a department and held no formal leadership appointment, while the sole Senior Staff among the interviewees had risen two steps in rank

in a decade of service. Their individual and collective experiences qualified them to share insightful responses to questions on succession planning at CCTU.

Instruments

Data collection started with a document search in the CCTU institutional archive and the school library for evidence of the existence of a formal succession plan and in the records at the Human Resource Department. Further data was generated using interviews. The questions in the interview guide were generated based on insights from reviewed literature. Interactions with interviewees were recorded using an audio recording application on a smartphone. The audio files were manually transcribed with the permission of respondents. The transcripts were coded with the help of Taguette, a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). Content analysis was done to generate insights from the interview responses. The information generated was discussed along with excerpts from the transcripts.

Findings and Discussion

This study sought to explore formal succession planning at the Cape Coast Technical University. Specifically, the researchers sought to establish the existence of a formal policy guiding succession, to explore coaching, training and mentoring systems and to record respondents' knowledge of, perceptions of and attitudes toward formal succession planning, among others. The results of these research activities are presented here.

Existence of formal Succession Planning

Through a document search at the Human Resource Department, in the institutional archives and in the school library, the researchers established that no formal succession plan or planning policy document existed, signaling the absence of formal succession planning in the institution. The lack of succession planning at CCTU is hardly surprising. It is noted in the academic literature that HEI are generally not quick to create and sustain programs that ensure long-term continuity in leadership (Bennett, 2015; Jackson, 2017; McConnell, 2006). Even in geographies as advanced as the United States of America, academic institutions significantly trail private industry and the armed forces in the area of succession planning (van Amburgh et al., 2010). In the HEI system, it is generally the norm that all faculty and senior administrative personnel are involved in decision-making and setting

organizational policy. Therefore, these institutions are generally not accepting arrangements that select and place some personnel on leadership succession pathways (Barden, 2009; Parkman & Beard, 2008). But, according to Ruben, De Lisi and Gigliotti (2017), the challenging times through which HEI the world over are now living, make it imperative that such organizations give greater impetus to leadership development. Therefore, the established lack of succession planning at CCTU suggests that the organization is not fully prepared to compete in the HEI space of contemporary times.

Respondents were required to explain how CCTU personnel get into key leadership positions. When asked how they assumed current administrative and managerial roles and what qualified them, the following responses came through:"…by appointment…the position became vacant and they appointed me…I had the highest academic qualification at the time." A DSAA added: "I was appointed. This department was new at the time of my appointment. They needed someone with experience. Among the shortlisted candidates, I had served the longest, so I got it." Another respondent said:"…I was appointed by [the University] Council…I have been here longer than the rest… [most of] My positions were as a result of promotions…" (DHR).Furthermore, one respondent added: "…by appointment…it depends on the number of years you have been with" [CCTU].

The foregoing responses suggest that CCTU practices ad hoc replacement of people who exit certain leadership roles, and not necessarily planned succession. This is because these replacements are largely based on long service and the highest academic qualifications. Using these criteria entrenched by commitment to tradition and resistance to change (Klein and Salk, 2013) are not necessarily detrimental. However, relying solely on long service and academic criteria for appointment to leadership positions implies little to no regard for leadership qualities and talent that could propel the departments and institutions forward. This is because, as posited by Murray (2007), optimal leadership talent does not necessarily automatically develop or become next-in-line without systematic development activities. This means that higher academic degrees and length of service will not automatically build leadership talent or make latent leadership potential manifest. The leader in contemporary times must comprehend the higher education environment, be conversant with an

assortment of organizational and leadership ideas and tools, and possess the practice-related and personal aptitudes needed to routinely put all these aptitudes to work (Ruben, De Lisi, & Gigliotti, 2017). To make CCTU more competitive in Ghana's HEI industry, the university needs to adopt a forward-thinking human resource strategy that anticipates future leadership needs and actively develops human resource to fill those needs.

Coaching, training and mentoring systems at CCTU

The researchers sought to explore how personnel of CCTU were trained, mentored or coached to prepare them for current appointments. Almost all of the interviewees were ambitious as indicated by their responses when asked if they had aspired to reach their current or similar levels of leadership. One DHR said: "yes, it was a goal…I want to go higher." One FHOD: of course, everybody wants to one day hold such a position! I wanted it. DSAA added: "…I just wanted to do more than teaching…I had the goal of contributing more to [the institution] than just teaching.

One interviewee even indicated that they had attempted to build themselves up for leadership roles: "I learnt on my own, by taking courses outside the university…I requested for re-designation in order to prepare myself for the ultimate goal of [my current major position]."

This respondent obviously took positive action to prepare for managerial leadership. He recognized the need to develop and also requested for career re-assignments within the university in order to place himself in a better position to fill a specific leadership role. This respondent was unique in this regard. Even though he expressed ambition, other respondents did not actively pursue appointments to leadership positions, perhaps because they expected that the default criteria of higher degrees and long service would eventually put them in line to fill future vacant leadership roles. Below are some of their responses: "…I did not think to get any specific training. As you work in the university, you get to know how things work. And that is what I am applying. The tradition goes on…" the DHR added: " Going through the ranks get you prepared for this position." Furthermore, it was established by one of the respondents that "I served as head of [various] sections at [another university], which got me prepared. Another respondent added: "Doing some

administrative work like being HOD prepared me for my current position (SAST).

It is interesting, though, that those respondents thought of their experiences in other roles as having built their capacity for their current roles. Beyond experience, it appears that very few interviewees had undergone any deliberate training, coaching or mentoring to prepare for future managerial roles. Here are some respondents who had reported having benefitted from some form of deliberate training, mentoring or coaching: "We had a seminar on how to hold this office [after we were appointed]. There were certain things expected of us they made us aware of. Helping me to know one or two things I need to do more…" (FHOD). It was further added that "There have been programs where they brought external people to come and train the staff…not for any specific position…it was general training for those who had been appointed at the time…"(FLIB). One more respondent revealed that "I remember that soon after my job appointment, I was given an important draft to work upon by my senior (sic). It was my first time. After it was done my senior (sic) was happy with my work and that boosted my motivation" (HR1).

As the above responses show, there had been some training. But these trainings were organized for the benefit of those who had already been appointed. Perhaps, these events can be more properly characterized as "orientation" seminars after persons had assumed the office. They were not part of a systematic arrangement to expose human resource to development opportunities ahead of assuming duty. For example, while HR1's response above points to some coaching; it is more of the mundane, on-the-job training that new hires undergo as they do their work. It was not part of a university-wide, deliberate strategy whose implementation is formally arranged and standardized as succession planning should be done (Cadmus, 2006).

For most of the interviewees, their responses indicate a lack of deliberate training, coaching or mentoring sponsored by CCTU as seen below:

> no training given…I don't think the university gives anybody training for any position. That is why we use how long you have been here. If you have been here for long (sic), then it is assumed that you have gained the training just by working here (HOD1).

The lack of formal training, mentoring and coaching means that when people assume roles of academic leadership at CCTU, they have to flounder their way through their role, at least in the beginning as the try to figure out just what and how much they are expected to achieve and how to do so as academic leaders, in agreement with Evans (2017).

Staff familiarity with, perceptions of, attitude toward and expectations of succession planning
Generally, interviewees demonstrated a basic familiarity with the concept of succession planning. The following responses indicate so.

> For example, I may move to another position and I need to train someone to be able to take care of the position when I'm not around… succession planning prescribes who will be next in line of position. Or who will take over affairs in the absence of the person occupying current position (DHR).

One FHOD considered it as a way of preparing people to take up a mantle [of office or leadership]. FLIB considered it as "a way of preparing someone to take after you. Preparing, mentoring and training someone to take a business." Still one HOD said: "Per my understanding, I believe preparing someone to take over a position is succession planning." And it was held that "succession planning is a way that organization prepares itself to replace members who will retire or resign from the organization (JAL). Furthermore, one VD argued that "…succession planning is fundamental. Identifying and training (career development training) people to take over when one is no more."

For the most part, the following HR1's comment echoed the general definition of a succession plan or policy as described by respondents: "A document that clearly states how positions should be occupied by the staffs."

That personnel of the CCTU are familiar with the succession planning concept is a positive situation. Much as successful succession planning policy implementation requires organization-wide buy-in, there cannot be buy-in if stakeholders of the university do not understand the basics of succession planning, at least. Importantly, respondents in this study had positive perceptions of succession planning as reflected in the following responses:

The VD said: "A formal succession policy is very essential to every business…it will help people to take up positions without any challenges, because they will be given the needed training for the position. Other responses were as follows: "But I think it is something good…." (DSAA). It would have been helpful (HOD1) and "yes, it is. Succession planning takes away too many problems when positions become vacant" (FLIB).

In line with their perceptions, respondents further expressed their attitude toward a possible succession planning arrangement. Such attitude was expressed in response to the question of whether they would like to see formal succession planning implemented in the CCTU: "I think that we should give it a try…at least, let us talk about it and see whether it is feasible…" (HR1). DHR added: "Yes, I think something like that will help. If it is working in industry, then we can try it here." And FHOD said "Why not? …may be challenging…but we can try it…" Other respondents held that: "I want to see such a system in place," (HOD1, " if the top people are willing to bring it, I will support it. I think we should do it" and "I think [our] institution should do [it]" (DSAA). Furthermore, it was held that "I don't know if it will work, but we should try it. If we don't attempt it, we will not know whether it is possible or not" (SAST).

The foregoing responses signal a general openness to the idea of formally planning and managing succession at CCTU. Of course, there is indication of uncertainty in several of the responses. This may be explained by low familiarity with the concept and practice of succession planning and also perhaps by the uncertainty that attends a shift from the traditional mode of doing things. Despite the seeming uncertainty, in the researchers' view, respondents had sound reasons for wanting to see CCTU formally plan succession, at least, for some managerial and leadership positions.

For example, HR1 said: "It will be of help in a situation whereby people are fighting over positions". And according to DHR: "…if there such [an arrangement] it would really help the institution…when probably the one there now is gone, the system doesn't collapse (sic). Without [succession planning] that in place, there is a high possibility that when a successful person is gone, there will be no one to take care of that position". FHOD declared that succession planning is necessary "to help people understand what it takes to occupy an office." In JAL's view, "succession planning will give room for people to get trained for positions.

For some of us in our early career, it will help us know how to progress. Also, it will make the system [transparent]. We all will know what is involved and if people don't qualify, it will be clear." VD held that "It will help people to take up positions without any challenges, because they would have been given the needed training for the position." DSAA said:

> Because I would not be here forever. This is by appointment, if tomorrow, you come and meet a new person here, it shouldn't be a new thing. I think we need to groom people to take after us. It would be good if we appoint people, we take time to equip them.

These reasons are in line with the definitions and justifications for succession planning in the literature. A distillation of the thoughts above show that personnel interviewed would like to see a formal succession plan so that the organization can prevent leadership gaps, avoid or minimize unnecessary and counterproductive squabbles over leadership positions, ensure that there is continuity in efficacious leadership by building on organizational knowledge and experience, equip people with development in the requirements of a leadership position, reduce the time needed for incumbents to come to grips with their new positions and prepare potential leaders for the challenges of the positions to which they aspire. These reasons are acknowledged in the literature. According to Rothwell (2010), succession planning is crucial to organizational continuity and the sustenance of organization culture as it aims to provide leadership continuity, retain high-performing talent, while sustaining intellectual capital (Rothwell, 2010). Furthermore, succession planning prevents leadership vacuums, according to Schoonover (2015). Organizations that plan succession are able to build up their intellectual capital across the human resource pool and ensure that strategic personnel can clearly see their potential career path because there is a coherent schedule to guide selection, retention, replacement and promotion (Schoonover, 2015). When people leave a position or an organization, their knowledge and experiences may be lost to successors unless there is a deliberate arrangement in place to tap this knowledge and experience (Laal, 2013; Muniz, 2013; Power, 2014). That this knowledge attrition can be mitigated with succession planning is implied in DHR's comment that "…when successful person is

gone, there will be no one to take care of that position."

When asked, interviewees expressed the desire that should succession planning start at CCTU, they would like to see that it is inclusive. They would likewise like to see that it clearly defines who qualifies to be placed on track for higher leadership, that it transparently specifies how personnel are put on leadership tracks and that it should specify which strategic positions or roles are being planned for. These thoughts were gained from the following comments: "Every [department] should be [involved]" (DHR), It should indicate at what level a person gets nominated for a position. How long has the person been in the organization? What experience should the person have? (JAL) and that "The policy should have a procedure to identify potential people to be trained, being based on careful consideration." DSAA said: "If we want to do something like that, then there should be clear-cut positions…like… for this position we have these people in place and at any point in time, there should be people in line and being developed."

These are reasonable expectations. An effective succession plan covers leading or strategic positions in the organization with multiple successors listed under each key position, preferably, according to current identified competencies. What is recommended is a flexible rank of succession that allows more competent personnel to rise (Chlebikova et al., 2015).

Potential Challenges to Succession Planning
The researchers asked respondents to put forth some factors that they could foresee as potential challenges to the adoption of succession planning at CCTU. This question was inspired by the authors' detection of hesitancy on the part of the respondents as they indicated their desire for succession planning in their institution. Among the responses was a concern about how to determine who qualifies to be put on a leadership track, as indicated by this comment: "…[the] Issue of qualifications, experiences, merits etc. [to form the basis of selecting and grooming people…" (HR1).

There was also a concern about how to design and give adequate training to personnel. Implicit in this unease is consideration for the resource and training component requirements that will attend such a program. Organizational needs assessments, human resource needs evaluations, training regimen construction, monitoring and evaluation

and the actual grooming process (Walker, 2020) may each and together require significant resource outlays. And there is no guarantee that those groomed to take the lead in future will stay with the CCTU. These potential challenges were expressed by DHR thus: "…designing and giving adequate training…the person after getting trained leaves the university…"

The lack of guarantee that individuals put on succession tracks and on whom there has been expended grooming resources will stay with the organization is acknowledged by Rothwell (2005). Such a loss is potentially frustrating to organizational leaders (Galbraith, Smith & Walker, 2012). However, from an agency theory perspective, it is reasonable to expect that those individuals whose career aspirations align with the strategic goals of an organization should have minimized turnover intentions (Ali & Mehreen, 2018). Thus, individuals placed on a promising career path through succession planning should be a low turnover risk because they have greater reason to stay and progress. This means that if potential leader identification is done right, it should be easy to motivate to stay those high-potential individuals whose competencies can be honed in line with strategic goals. Further, the turnover challenge could be mitigated if CCTU rolled out a long-term succession plan in which the organization at any point in time would have a large enough pool of successors to strategic positions being groomed and waiting in line to fill vacuums (Walker, 2020).

Meanwhile, other respondents foresaw potential lack of high-level support for implementation, as indicated in the following response: "… preparing the documents (policy) is not the problem but to see to it that it has been implemented is the challenge (FHOD). One FLIB added: "would top management give it full support? If those who have to implement [it] are not doing it, then it'll be a challenge."

Such comments reflect well-founded concerns. As with any strategy, the plan is only half the effort; success is tied to execution (Walker, 2020). And both planning and execution need top-level support. Top-level organizational support for succession planning has been acknowledged as crucial to effective implementation. In fact, poor commitment on the part of incumbent duty bearers to leadership development and succession planning is a critical challenge to the future prospects of HEI (Barton, 2019). Incumbents may be apprehensive about

succession planning because it forces them to face up to their own exit from the system and also to change in general (Beckhard & Dyer, 1983). However, such concerns should not be allowed to deny the organization the benefits of proven organizational practices such as leadership development and succession planning. Succession planning should be sponsored by people in an organization who have responsibility for minding the long-term direction of the organization and who decide on how to move in that direction.

Griffith (2012) points out that plans are mere inert expressions in the absence of impulse. Lacking the required degree of attention and emphasis, even the best documented succession plans could eventually become only existent in dusty volumes at worst, or be haphazardly executed at best (Charan, 2008). Therefore, effective succession management is a continuous, reiterative or cyclical process that spans planning, execution, and evaluation. The power movers should sponsor the succession program and make sure that it is implemented in satisfactory ways, and with the direct involvement of various management levels (Chlebikova, Misankova & Kramarova, 2015; Khatri et al., 2010). Khatri et al. (2010) further point out that in many of the most successful organizations; the highest echelons of management sponsor the necessary frameworks that ensure the right human resource is available at the right time to drive strategic objectives. So, while the human resource function will no doubt feed into and execute any strategy regarding personnel, effective succession planning will need to be underwritten by top-level management. Nevertheless, succession planning should not be only the concern of top management and the Human Resource function, but should involve careful stakeholder management (Walker, 2020).

One respondent provided an interesting response on the question of potential challenges. He alluded to vituperation that sometimes attends races to fill key positions in an organization and wondered if such scandalmongering may not affect effective succession planning at CCTU. When the researchers asked for potential challenges to succession planning, the response was: "The normal human back-biting [sic].

Such tendencies are perhaps coincidental to human interactions. And if industry is able to overcome these propensities, then the CCTU can likewise make succession planning work regardless. An

example of a way to control such behaviors, as suggested by Walker (2020), may be to signal to personnel that their potential has been observed while also affirming that such notice of potential is no guarantee of being picked to fill any posts.

Another potential challenge is the abuse of succession management, which could eventually lead to nepotism and cronyism. DSAA said: "There is a high tendency for us to put on track family and friends and neglect those who have shown true leadership potential."

Such fears are not without merit. Selecting and setting off some personnel on leadership tracks is generally thought of as cronyism and therefore, improper (Barden, 2009; Parkman & Beard, 2008). For this reason, succession planning is often considered anathema to institutions of higher education (Stripling, 2011). But if succession planning is done right, it can allow for more capable and qualified personnel to rise up the leadership ladder (Chlebikova, Misankova & Kramarova, 2015). Such competent persons are those who can to a high degree of objectivity be shown to have demonstrated the ability to and history of getting the right things done and in the right way (Griffith, 2012). The concerns raised by the interviewees are reasonable, as indicated by the academic literature. Nevertheless, as Murray (2007) contends, legitimate challenges should not get in the way of planning succession. Instead, the challenges should provide incentive to build a robust system of succession, and manage it well in line with important organizational objectives. Moreover, the academic literature appears to have a favorable view of succession planning; despite real challenges, organizations that embrace it are able to make it work to their strategic benefit.

Conclusions and Recommendations
Conclusions
The Cape Coast Technical University does not have a succession planning policy in place, neither does it have a specific training, coaching and mentoring regimen in place to equip personnel with the requisite leadership attributes for future service. This is despite that the personnel of the university appear to be quite ambitious and willing to serve in leadership positions. In an increasingly competitive higher education landscape, those institutions that are able to much better identify talent and to enhance the capacities of their human resource to meet the challenges of today and the future stand a

chance to stay ahead of the pack. It seems that the CCTU is yet to recognize, much less, capitalize on the benefits of succession planning to secure the organization's future.

An attempt to establish succession planning will likely enjoy considerable organizational buy-in. This conclusion is based on the positive perceptions the respondents had about succession planning. Furthermore, orienting CCTU personnel to succession planning may not be difficult because there seems to be a general basic familiarity with the concept. The respondents demonstrated a positive desire to see succession planning introduced to the CCTU. Among the reasons given for such desire include that succession planning would provide avenues through which people's leadership potential could be honed through training and mentoring before they assumed key positions, that succession planning would bring some coherence and transparency to appointments to positions, that it would minimize the vehement competition that arises upon vacancies in key positions and, that it would allow the hand-down of leadership knowledge and experience.

CCTU personnel would like to see that succession planning, if introduced, would be coherent, transparent, inclusive, involving all departments and having adequate support from the top echelons of the university hierarchy. Under this enthusiasm, though, the interviewees expressed their thoughts on what could challenge succession planning at CCTU. The potential challenges identified included neglecting succession plans after they have been made; identifying organizational strategic and human resource needs; formulating training and mentoring arrangements and the potential of the policy to be reduced to institutionalization of cronyism.

Recommendations
Based on the findings outlined, the researchers make the following recommendations:
1. The dominant coalition at Cape Coast Technical University should look into the feasibility of establishing succession planning in the institution. There appears to be some minimal positive acceptance of the concept. However, there is a need to begin to do a deeper risk assessment of possible leadership vacuums and cost-benefit evaluations of preparing a pool of talent to fill vacancies.

2. The researcher suspects that succession planning in other Ghanaian Institutions of Higher Education may be as lacking as it is at CCTU. Therefore, the researchers recommend the replication and expansion of this study in other HEIs in the country.

3. It would be insightful to examine the prevalence and nature of succession planning in various Ghanaian organizations. Such research may uncover practices and leadership development philosophies that are rooted in Ghanaian culture and which may be further developed to give Ghanaian organizations some sort of competitive advantage on the global scene.

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