

Review

Succession planning: Preparing the next generation workforce for the University for Development Studies

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ABSTRACT

The study seeks to unveil the importance of succession planning, find ways of designing a coordinated approach to track high performers to specific leadership positions and propose a conceptual succession planning model for the University for Development Studies. The researcher therefore gathered and reviewed secondary data on empirical studies on succession planning and its impact on organizational performance. The review was specifically geared towards the concept, its importance and benefits, factors that influence succession planning and the appropriate criteria for a succession planning programme. The study revealed that, identifying candidates is not just a matter of sitting down with an organization chart. It requires meetings and discussions with leaders and if possible a representative from each department, section, and unit. It said the presence of a vacant position does not necessarily suggest that there will be a perfect match for the position, but discussions with employees will give an idea of what is needed, who is available and allow management to put a plan in place to bridge any gaps. The study concluded that succession planning does not have to be a complicated, time-consuming endeavor but, understanding the key principles of an effective succession planning and management initiative and working with experienced employees who have a proven track record to ensure that this critical initiative meets all of the university's objectives.

Key Words: Succession planning, university, leadership continuity, talent pool, management.

INTRODUCTION

"A person who does not worry about the future will shortly have worries about the present" (Ancient Chinese Proverb). Henri Fayol (1841 to 1925), a French pioneer of management history, was among the first individuals to recognize and document the universal organizational need for succession planning (Rothwell, 2001). However, effective leaders down through the centuries have developed and implemented succession plans for their organizations. In contrast there are many leaders today who give little or no "thought to the inclusion of their leadership and so they do little to prepare for it. However, when suddenly faced with leaving their offices, they realize that much of their work will have been in vain

unless there is a capable successor" (Rothwell, 2001). This is the real situation my observations have captured in the University for Development Studies yet this component of management is very paramount for continuous growth and development of the University. Universities in Ghana have been slow to embrace a formal approach to succession planning for their top management, however succession planning abounds several advantages in terms of leadership continuity and systematic management of the institutions.

Succession planning which is frequently referred to as talent development and talent management continues to be an element of regular practice in the corporate world.

Much of the public sector especially higher education, however, has historically done little to systematically prepare key organizational leaders for advancement. On the contrary, where the leadership of an Institution plans strategically, there is clear recognition that they are strategically managing the human capital to drive transformation and to support the accomplishment of the Institution's goals, that is to say, succession planning is a necessary part of the process. Conducting an appropriate gap analysis and developing professional competencies is understood as key to future organizational success.

Succession planning is the deliberate and systematic effort made by leadership of organizations to recruit, develop and retain individuals with a range of leadership competencies capable of implementing current and future organizational goals (Leibman et al., 1996). In the past it has been seen largely as job replacement. Succession planning now needs to include activities to attract, extend, and keep the best staff at all levels. It needs to recognize that younger leaders are likely to change employers and careers several times during their working life.

Succession planning is best described as a consistent set of specific procedures to ensure the identification, development, and long-term retention of talented individuals. While this general definition works well, organizations view succession planning in many different ways (Schoonover, 2011). For some organizations, it simply means making sure there are replacement candidates for key positions, for others with a more comprehensive perspective, succession planning represents a deliberate and systematic effort to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital within key employees for the future, encourage individual advancement, ensure the stability or "bench strength" of key personnel, provide an overarching approach to continue effective performance of the organization, and organize concerted programmes for the development, replacement, and leveraging of key people to ensure a deep talent pipeline (Schoonover, 2011).

In a similar vein, Rothwell (2001) opined that succession planning and management is important for several reasons: the continued survival of the organization depends on having the right people in the right places at the right times. As a result of recent economic restructuring efforts in organizations, there are simply fewer people available to advance to the top ranks from within. Succession planning and management is needed to encourage diversity and multiculturalism and avoid "homo-social reproduction" by managers and succession forms the basis for communicating career paths, establishing development and training plans, establishes career paths and individual job moves.

According to the Texas State Auditor's Office (SAO), "the purpose of succession planning is to prepare an agency for risks associated with the planned or unplanned loss of knowledge that is critical to the success of the agency." To accomplish this, a successful succession planning model develops "employees to ensure that the agency has highly qualified employees who are capable of filling critical positions" (SAO, 2006). Succession planning is a key element to both workforce planning and strategic planning in state agencies.

In today's dynamic world where competition is high, work is fluid, environment is unpredictable, organizations are flatter, and the organizational configuration repeatedly changes, the old view of succession planning by defining specific individuals for specific tasks does not work. Modern organizations perceive the necessity for creating a pool of high-potential future candidates, on all organization levels, to fill any needs, at any time. In the past, organizations were busy searching for a substitute for top executives and CEOs when their current top leaders were due to move out. At present, organizations are more aware of the importance of the succession planning possesses new perspective in that selecting, at all levels of the organization, preparing, developing, and retaining high-potential future leaders is their bridge to maintaining sustainable competitive advantage in today's highly revolutionary environment. Developing and retaining future leaders is important to make sure that those human assets are there and ignore any outside temptation to leave their organizations (Heinen and O'Neill 2004). An "acceleration pool" for future candidates is a good example that covers a broad range of the organization's leadership levels all the way through and do not target a specific position. Those acceleration pool future candidates should then be trained, developed, and groomed to be ready for future responsibilities (Anonymous, 2004). The more information the organization's management in early stages, got from their human resources about their staff, the more useful and practical the future leaders' selection process for advancement will be. This is the central part of a successful succession planning process.

IMPORTANCE OF SUCCESSION PLANNING

Without any doubt, succession planning is definitely important. "When things are going along just fine and significant changes aren't needed, you don't need real strong leadership," says Michael O'Brien President of Executive Leadership Solution a Cincinnati-based consulting firm. He added "But when things are at risk, shifting, and you're at point, that's when leadership is most necessary". In modern years, competition is strong in almost all the higher education sector and Vice Chancellors, Directors and Deans terms of office are

becoming shorter and shorter. Due to this, the University's capacity for identifying, selecting, nurturing and developing future leadership can create the distinction between meeting the mandate of the university and failure (Buss, 2001). Selecting a successor for top leader and senior management positions is one of the most vital decisions to be taken by all higher educational institutions. Searching for and selecting a Vice Chancellor is such an important task as picking the future Pope in Rome or the king in the United Kingdom (Anonymous 2005).

The belief that good leadership has a direct effect on the university's performance lies at the heart of the move towards succession planning. Today, we live in a fast moving, high pressured, competitive society, where the slightest advantage may give an institution a valuable aggressive edge especially with the inception of private higher institutions in the country. If an institution such as university for development studies is to grow and expand into new areas and programmes, it is important that the university is built on a strong foundation. The best and strongest foundation for the university is a pool of capable, talented individuals, who have grown with the university; absorbing its knowledge and its culture, ready to move up through the university into pivotal leadership roles.

Universities that do not provide this 'home grown' talent, and possibly lose valuable knowledge and expertise along the way, may have to seek replacements from outside, with this course of action runs the risk of recruiting the wrong person. This latter occurrence could be a disaster, particularly when a wrong choice is made at that level. This situation could lead to serious disruption in a university and depending on the importance of the employee concerned, the result could be terminal decline.

Succession planning is an option that all institutions should be ready to take advantage of. They must not ignore it. The search for an heir for key personnel is a hard task without a proper succession planning policy. Leaving the university without proper leadership skills is risky. One of the main motives for succession planning, especially for key leaders, is to assure leadership continuity. Key leaders create and build strong relationships with clients, stakeholders, suppliers, and decision makers. Another motive for succession planning is to set a plan for staff employment, development, inspiration and preservation.

Furthermore, succession planning provides continuity of leadership, which is essential for universities to survive as principal officers' positions become vacant due to retirement. Succession planning allows organizations to strategically place the right people in the right leadership positions for the future (Rothwell, 2001). These programmes also provide institutions with emergency leadership plans when tragic events create unexpected

vacancies due to death or serious injury (Peak, 1996).

The lack of succession plans may not be due to a lack of need. The poll also showed that 5% of higher education institutions had experienced long term vacancies in the previous three years and 36% had experienced vacancies in other management areas (Peak, 1996). The results showed a "slight but strong correlation" between the presence of a succession plan and the degree of disruption felt by an organization due to an unexpected vacancy (Peak, 1996). Succession plans, if in place and updated, can provide organizations with an action plan when life takes unpredictable turns.

THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY IN PLANNING FOR SUCCESSION

The unexpected loss of key talents or the failure to fill critical roles in a timely manner can quickly derail any institution's goals. Combine such situations with a growing skills shortage, aging workforce and growing competition for high performers and it becomes obvious why institutions must invest more time and more resources in succession management.

Traditional recruitment practices in higher education have slowed down the candidacy process and have made management of public universities in Ghana less efficient due to the economic down turn of government and her subsequent ban on employment. The time spent to approve requisitions, create interview committees and conclude compensation packages have all been reactionary to losing critical roles. It's time to allow the University Management Team (UMT) to be proactive in identifying individuals with high potential and the future leaders internally that can take the University farther.

The university for development studies has seen lecturers, heads of department and administrative staff retire at growing rates. To fill these roles, management must make strategic decisions to identify the key successors. When it comes to administrative staff, identifying existent staff with high talents and high performance rates is very key as the most strategic approach for the future growth and excellent management of the university.

In an event where a staff suddenly resigns or retires, the impact can significantly change the way the university delivers services and instruction to its employees and students. The university for development studies will face a unique challenge when it comes to talent shortage and this can significantly influence the management system and students' experience or affect the university's overall operation. However, the loss or absence of talent should not disrupt the educational process or individual outcomes.

The management of the university should focus on multiple areas of intellectual capital, administrative staff

and university operational services with strategies put in place for an effective and unified way to recruit for such diverse needs that will in turn lead to the development of specific skills. To win the war on talent and succeed in the future, the university needs to investigate new ideas and approaches to talent acquisition and succession planning on all its campuses.

The university for development studies need to design and implement an effective performance appraisal system. Many institutions who have implement performance management systems at some level, whether it's an automated process, or paper-based without integrating succession planning into the process have failed to identify the best performers and this will remain clueless about their career potential and development and leadership will not have the right insight into the talent pipeline.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Succession planning is seen as a crucial process by most major employing organizations" (Hirsch, 2000).The purpose of this study is to establish whether despite the perceived benefits of succession planning to organizations, the university for development studies nurtures sufficient 'home-grown' talent or resort to filling key principal officers positions from outside. The study therefore seeks to unveil the importance of succession planning, find ways of designing a coordinated approach to track high performers to specific leadership positions' and propose a conceptual succession planning model for the university for development studies.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As an employee of the University for Development Studies, my quest for succession planning might sound personal but it is absolutely necessary for the building of a continuous leadership pipeline. I often watch in wonder as senior management positions are filled within the university. Though aware of a search committee put in place and tasked with the responsibility of identifying people with a caliber of experience to fill in senior management positions. I am not preview to the criteria set for identifying these individuals as potential leaders. It therefore puts a constraint on me to seek the "how do I develop myself or other employees under my supervision into the type of employees who could attain a senior management position"?

It is therefore evidently clear that there is no well-defined, well-communicated and formal succession planning effort across the University. While there are a number of management and leadership development classes and opportunities offered by various professional

bodies, employees do not seem to truly understand where to look and who to look to in terms of upward movement and development.

In the University for Development Studies, there seem not to be any coordinated or communicated efforts to track high performers to specific leadership positions within the university. This lack of coordination and planning leads to confusion and speculation each time a senior leadership opening occurs. This trickles down to middle management and lower management positions too. The pool of candidates for senior leadership comes from these ranks, but there is no coordinated effort to develop lower-level employees to take up leadership roles in future. My fear is that if this trend continues, the university will see decreased job satisfaction and lose high potential talent individuals to other organizations.

FACTORS INFLUENCING SUCCESSION PLANNING

Succession planning is a vital process that public higher institutions in Ghana cannot afford to ignore. Public institutions lose workforce all the time. The workforce might be replaced in a short time, but what they are actually losing is a large quantity of institutional memory and essential skills (Mehrabani and Mohamad, 2011). There are many factors which influence succession planning to be successful and effective, even though each institution will be quite unique in its specific features.

Meharabani and Mohamed (2011) came up with the following factors as part of their research findings:

- i.) Training: Training plans help the employees to learn new skills and knowledge and therefore give them new abilities. Trained people are more empowered; therefore, training programmes should be made available for any effective succession planning.
- ii.) Management Support: In order to implement a successful succession planning system, there is a need for a lot of support from the managers.
- iii.) Clarifying the career path is another factor where an organization clarifies the career path that would eventually help employees to better understand the career objectives and also help them towards a better implementation of succession planning.
- iv.) Another factor is creating a positive vision which will help create a positive insight towards succession planning programmes thus removing fear in employees who think succession planning is a threat to their positions in the organization. Having a strong organizational culture which provides values, beliefs, standards and paradigms for all employees also affect effective succession planning. Employees can consider these values, beliefs, standards and paradigms as a guideline for their everyday performance. Therefore, if these values and standards support the succession

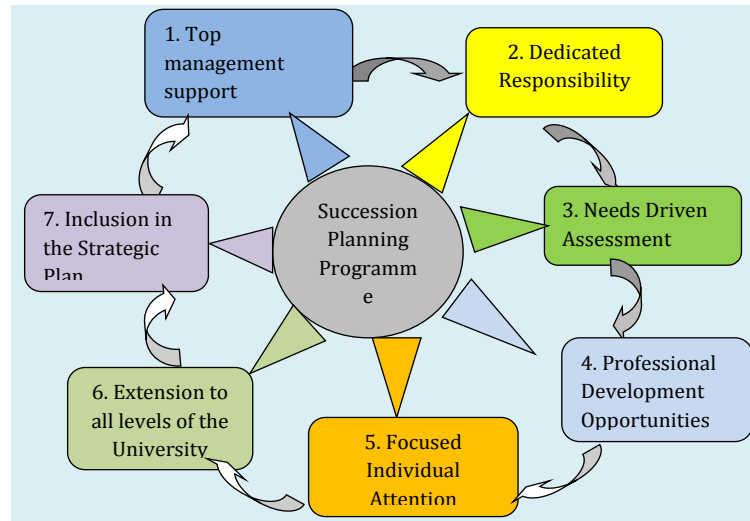


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Succession Planning.

planning system, employees would follow the system too. v.) Technological advancements also impacts the way of preparing workforce for new jobs. In addition, technology advancement makes it easier for employees to find opportunities elsewhere.

vi.) Flat structure is also a factor which influences succession planning since it allows better communication and easier knowledge sharing in the organizations, which are parameters that would greatly help in implementation of succession planning.

vii.) Financial conditions of the organization also affect implementation of effective succession plans. For example, having enough budgets for human resources is one of the most important conditions for training people.

DISCUSSION

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF SUCCESSION PLANNING PROGRAMMES

Specific succession planning programmes often vary depending on business and public agency purposes and goals. Careful review of the existing literature found that effective succession planning programmes have common elements, which can be organized as a practical ideal type conceptual framework. The elements of the framework are:

- 1) Top management support.
- 2) Dedicated responsibility.
- 3) Performance of a needs driven assessment.
- 4) Professional development opportunities.

- 5) Focused individual attention.
- 6) Extension to all levels of the university.
- 7) Inclusion in the strategic plan.

The ensuing part of the sub-section expands upon these characteristics and discusses the challenges the public private sector face to implement succession plans.

Figure 1 is the conceptual model of the succession planning framework structuring each of the elements in a cycle by explaining what is entailed in each element.

Top Management Participation and Support

The first step to develop an effective succession planning programme is to have the support and participation of the university's top management, which includes the Council, the Academic Board, Principal Officers, Deans and Directors and the entire Senior Management Team. Ideally, the University Council should support the programme by taking an active role at the center of the process through the approval of a policy that encourages succession planning (Rothwell, 2001). Additionally, the Council's participation and support in succession plans for the Vice Chancellor, sets the example for the university wide succession plan (Rothwell, 2001).

The backing of the Vice Chancellor is also essential to ensuring that the principal officers follow the lead and encourage succession planning. His participation also motivates programme participants because candidates see interest in their career growth from the top (Rothwell, 2001). In contrast, when executives view succession planning as a "tedious exercise," it seldom produces

good candidates (Walker, 1998). Furthermore, while larger organisations depend on middle management to promote the succession planning programme, smaller groups usually rely heavily on a strong executive to gather talent for the programme (Gratton and Syrett, 1990).

A third major component of top management participation and support is the interest of the management team (Gratton and Syrett, 1990). In fact, this criteria is so important that Shah et al (2001) assert, "For maximum success, strong commitment from senior management is necessary" (emphasis added). Buy-in from managers and supervisors are essential to create a feeling of shared ownership of the process before it is implemented (Spoor, 1993). While it is likely that if support exists from the council and the Vice Chancellor, then support will flow from the management team as well. The enthusiasm of the management team, however, can be enhanced through open discussion of the succession planning programme (Walker, 1998).

Management should discuss the plan during monthly or quarterly meetings to know which employees have the most potential talent across division lines to move up in the University (Schall, 1997). Further, this discussion allows the management team to discuss each succession planning candidate based on the strategic goals and competencies needed for particular positions. These same employees should then be a part of the applicant pool for positions of which senior managers have available (Getty, 1993). Nowack (1994) suggests that an open discussion with management through group meetings or structured interviews also allows the university to learn the required skill competencies for management positions. Further, when succession planning is open and the plan shared with management, it builds credibility for the process university-wide (Getty, 1993).

Problems occur when senior leaders are unwilling to participate in succession planning. These individuals become a barrier to the programme because they often feel threatened and view the programme as "replacing oneself" rather than "strategic positioning". This resistance to change is caused by individuals who are unwilling to relinquish past beliefs or dislike sharing information about their position's competency skills. Negative attitudes fail to provide a supportive culture to succession planning and must be addressed at the outset by the board or executive office in order for the programme to be effective (Shah et al., 2001).

Dedicated Responsibility

Top management support needs driven assessment, professional development and focused attention are all aspects of succession planning that require skilled

coordination. While the registrar of the university is ultimately responsible for establishing and continuing the programme, a designated programme coordinator preferably a Deputy Registrar in charge of training and development should be assigned to develop the programme and stay in touch with top talent, and manage training opportunities (Rothwell, 2001). This person, most likely in should have human resources background, also monitors and evaluates the progress of candidates to determine their readiness to advance to leadership positions. Coordinators have found it helpful to maintain a database tracking system that ensures the occurrence of training and development. Senior management can then review the database when possible promotions come under consideration (Nowack, 1994).

Rothwell (2001) also found a succession planning programme needs a dedicated operating budget. The budget should provide funds for training and development opportunities. While public higher education institutions are often under strict budget guidelines, partnership opportunities can exist with local colleges for educational programs in order to cut costs (Shah et al., 2001).

An assigned coordinator also ensures that the programme will remain organized with a systematic approach. The coordinator can keep management focused on succession planning as a goal for the organization through the use of performance evaluation forms that must be returned to the coordinator (Rothwell, 2001). Further, the human resources staff can serve as "agents of change" (Gratton and Syrett, 1990) by recognizing the necessary development programmes. Regular meetings with senior management require the coordinator to keep the plan up to date and encourage management to follow the progress of employees (Peak, 1996). Getty (1993), also supports a coordinator who will treat succession plans as living documents through regular plan use. Aside from performance evaluations and training monitoring, the coordinator can keep a recorded timeline of likely retirees in order to anticipate future replacement needs. Once the timeline is known, the coordinator can better prepare executive management for upcoming vacancies and track the developmental needs of potential replacements to guarantee candidates reach the necessary skill level (Rothwell, 2001).

Needs Driven Assessment

The Vice Chancellor and management support is important for determining the skills necessary for particular positions. Without this support, a needs driven assessment, an effective succession planning programme becomes difficult, if not impossible (Nowack, 1994). The literature on needs assessment is explained by Holton et al (2000) through the work of three experts

in the field. First, McGehee and Thayer's 1961 three-level conception of needs assessment continues to serve as the core framework to follow. McGehee and Thayer define the three levels of needs assessment as "organization analysis, operations analysis and man (individual) analysis" (Holton et al, 2000). The most effective assessment addresses all three levels. Second, Rossett explains the purposes of needs assessment includes finding information about optimal performance, actual performance, how key sources feel, what is causing the problem, and solutions to close gaps between optimal and actual performance (Holton et al, 2000).

Finally, Holton notes Kaufmann and his associates for distinguishing the difference between needs assessment and needs analysis. Assessment purposes are, identify gaps between current results and desired ones, to prioritize gaps, and to select the most important ones to be addressed". According to Kauffman, needs analysis, on the other hand, "is the process to analyze the causes of the gaps" (Holton et al, 2000).

Holton et al (2000), however, point out that no single model of needs assessment exists, but rather the literature consists of guidelines, principles and tools for the process. One needs assessment tool is to determine the core competencies of positions identified in the succession planning programme.

According to Nowack (1994), there are three steps to a job profile and analysis for targeted succession planning positions. These are review organizational strategic and business plans to understand future vision and challenges, perform structured interviews with senior management to learn the required competencies for jobs and conduct competency studies of employees. The information gathered in employee competency studies identify the training programme participants need for future management positions. The employee's participation can then be connected to performance evaluations to monitor the results. A training needs assessment must be measured and evaluated because increased emphasis on organizational outcomes means human resource development and training must be more accountable for delivering performance results (Holton et al, 2000). According to Rothwell (2001), another element of the needs assessment should incorporate an examination of organizations that have implemented effective succession planning. On-site visits or benchmark surveys that show which practices work best in particular organization cultures are useful steps in succession planning programme development. Benchmark surveys are performed by sending out questionnaires to organizations with similar missions and goals as the organization/company considering implementation of a succession plan. This allows the organisation to draw comparisons based on similar needs and challenges. Rothwell (2001) also suggests that

Councils of the university should make succession planning part of the performance evaluation for the Vice Chancellor as an incentive to encourage the programme.

Provide Formal Professional Development Opportunities

A needs assessment identifies the specific job skills required for top management positions. Therefore, the third step in succession planning is providing formal professional development opportunities, addresses employee-training needs by developing the skills necessary for leadership promotions. The literature often notes that any effective succession planning programme provides numerous opportunities for professional development. Due to a changing global environment, Foster (2000) notes that Higher Educational Institutions will have to develop leaders with new and enhanced skills from those recognized today. The future will still need leaders with strong moral and ethical values, but these will be joined by a greater understanding for diversity. Leaders must know how to network and build relationships to develop teams and have an expanded knowledge of information technology.

Succession planning programmes should include leadership development programmes that address these needs. Leadership development planning, also known as executive resource planning, should primarily address the question, leadership for what? (Foster, 2000). Once this is done, the programmes should meet the social context and needs of the agency involved and provide a clear philosophy on what leadership is and how it can be sustained (Foster, 2000). Leadership development programmes should focus on the skills and abilities of a leader rather than setting out a series of general steps to follow. Such steps are not always helpful because they fail to transfer to the complex realities of the workplace (Barker, 1997).

Leadership development programmes, though, lack significant popularity across the globe. In the Training Magazine survey, Delahoussaye (2001a) notes that under half of the responding organisations had increased the number of employees participating in some form of leadership development compared to five years ago. Also, 42% of organizations are doing no more leadership development today than they did in 1996. The survey found, however, that the greatest influence on a candidate's selection to participate in a leadership development programme is their organisation work experience. The survey concluded that supervisors rarely considered educational background a deciding factor for leadership development programme participation (Delahoussaye, 2001a).

According to Rothwell (2001) and Foster (2000), professional development opportunities in succession plans can also include formal mentoring programmes.

Bard and Moore (2000), explain that mentoring is highly productive because it combines work experience with development opportunities by matching novices with senior staff members who serve as trusted advisors. Bard and Moore (2000), acknowledge that mentor programmes benefit the organization, mentor and mentee. The organization benefits by motivating old and new staff through a broader understanding of organization issues. Likewise, such programmes challenge and reward the mentor because they use their experiences to educate the newer employee and develop their own management skills. Finally, the mentee becomes more acquainted with senior staff and the vision of the organization, and is able to seek advice from the mentor on career paths.

Focus on the Individual

Part of the needs assessment, according to McGehee and Thayer, is individual analysis, or individual training attention (Holton et al, 2000). Leadership development and mentoring are important tools for professional development, however, the needs assessment results will also lead succession plans to focus on the specific training needs of employees in the programme. According to (Nowack, 1994), individual attention means the selected candidates work with management to prepare career development plans that are consistent with an employee's career goals and expectations. An effective programme that identifies talented individuals and provides career development to enhance skills by using focused attention will ensure that the candidates are willing participants who see the succession planning programme as an opportunity to grow and advance their goals (Nowack, 1994).

Focused attention benefits the University by increasing employee motivation. Spoor (1993) explains the importance of keeping employees challenged through the Roop's Theory, which states that "talented and motivated people pass their point of maximum contribution in a position sometime between 18 and 30 months." Therefore, to guard against stagnation, the scope and responsibilities of a position must change or a person must change jobs. Further, the time to peak and plateau (Spoor, 1993) depends on the employee's initial readiness for the position, goal orientation, opportunity for growth and creativity. Employers should expect to see growth in skills and experience as the individual attention benefits the employee (Rothwell, 2001).

Training programmes that address the goals of individual candidates are usually well received by succession candidates. Shah et al (2000), report that in a July 1999 survey of the American workforce by the Nierenberg Group, 86% of employees see self-improvement as important to success while 97% see up-

to-date skills as crucial. Only 72% reported they get enough training from their company. Shah et al (2000) also suggest that training and interest in an employee's future can instill commitment by designing and promoting long-term career paths through employee development programmes. Organizations will therefore, improve the succession planning programme through focused training attention because the employees will more likely commit to the organization. When employees receive individual attention, they usually appreciate the opportunity to communicate and establish with management their respective career goals (Rothwell, 2001). Gratton and Syrett (1990), however, warn maintaining individual attention is a challenge to the programme because employees constantly grow and change career goals. Therefore, Gratton and Syrett suggest annual management review for succession programme participants to ensure plans reflect the changing needs of both the organization and the candidates. Given top management support and participation, a regular review will be more easily accomplished.

Extends to all Levels of the University

The needs assessment and training opportunities have benefits for all positions and employees, and thus an effective succession programme will extend to all levels of the university for a complete evaluation. The executive staff identifies talent at the level directly below and the process continues down the chain of command (Schall, 1997). The system allows the entire university to consider its overall mission and determine the skills and managerial abilities needed to extend that mission into the future (Schall, 1997). An open programme also recognizes, as Sogunro (1997) found in a study of leadership training programmes, that all employees are capable of becoming leaders.

A university-wide process also improves communication of the programme (Walker, 1998). In the past succession programmes were often clouded in secrecy because employers worried about the loyalty of those not included in the plan (Getty, 1993). Leaders also feared that employees identified in the plan would develop unrealistic expectations or feel entitled to particular positions (Getty, 1993).

In recent years, though, organizations have recognized the problems with non-transparent succession plans. For instance, managers were unaware that they needed to develop leadership skills in their employees and therefore failed to challenge potential talent to grow or offer leadership development opportunities (Getty, 1993). Also, it left information gaps regarding individual employee strengths, development needs and career aspirations (Getty, 1993). As a result, talented employees left the organization fearing little opportunity

for advancement or continued education. Rather than create rivalries, firms discovered that employees who saw other employees advancing in the organization developed hope for their own advancement, and morale improved (Getty, 1993).

Coordinates with Strategic Plan

Embedded within each of the previous practical ideal type of components has been an assumption that the succession planning programme fits the strategic plan of the organization. Top management support, needs assessment, professional development, dedicated responsibility, and inclusion in all levels of the organization all rely upon the underlying existence of a strategic plan that acknowledges the importance of retaining and developing top talent for leadership positions. This section explains the essential importance for an effective succession planning programme coordinated with the strategic plan. Gratton and Syrett (1990), cite IBM and other large conglomerates as classic models for succession planning programmes. They note, however that one universal approach to succession planning programs is impossible but rather each programmes should be matched to an university's business strategy and strategic vision. Leadership should consider whether the university specific executive needs to meet and how the organizational culture will affect the programme. Spoor (1993), further explains that, while succession planning was a luxury for large companies, today every organization must make succession planning a part of the strategic plan.

According to Rothwell (2001), succession should have a place in the strategic plan so that generations of leaders share the vision and goals for the firm that the current leadership endorses. Management should examine the succession plans written purpose statement and ensure the programme has measurable goals that correspond with the strategic plan (Rothwell, 2001). In difficult economic times, succession plans can also help university's strategic plan by determining how the agencies should restructure the workload after layoffs. It is a tool to help management determine which workers to lay off without damage to the organization's future. It allows managers to make strategic decisions and reduce the number of employees, when necessary, to only those essential positions identified in the succession plan (Rothwell, 2001).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Succession planning is not only important for the university and its current employees, but also for the leadership, the community and the employees. Every

organization talks about the succession planning, and its proven to be beneficial, yet the University for Development Studies is doing nothing about it when it comes to implementation. Succession planning is one of those initiatives that many public higher institutions don't find the time to start until it's too late. If the university fails to address issues concerning succession planning at the right time, it may end up facing the burden in the middle of a crisis. Success comes to those who have the foresight and the ability to counter unexpected challenges. Though the whole process of training future leaders is evidently time consuming and requires a lot of additional resources, but in the long run it is a worthwhile investment that is essential for the survival of any organization.

Identifying candidates is not just a matter of sitting down with an organization chart. It requires meetings and discussions with leaders and if possible a representative from human resources. The presence of chances does not necessarily suggest that there will not be a perfect match for each position, but this discussions will give employees an idea of what is needed, who is available and allow management to put a plan in place to bridge any gaps. Based on the literatures on succession planning and my own experience show that when these approaches are linked to the university's strategy and integrated with other human resource processes, the university can benefit. At the center of these programmes is strong leadership support, focusing on developing a pool of future leaders and a strong focus on performance. Succession planning does not have to be a complicated, time-consuming endeavour. Understanding the key principles of an effective Succession Planning and Management initiative and working with experienced staff who have a proven track record ensures that this critical initiative meets all of the organization's objectives.

Based on the conclusions drawn above the following recommendations have been made:

- i.) A succession plan should be customized to the needs, vision, and mission of the university and should form a part of its strategic goals. It must however, meet the needs of and be accepted by all staff of the university.
- ii.) To ensure a successful implementation of the plan, the university should: have the commitment and support from top management; be guided by human resources; be embraced by principal officers; middle management staff; focus on shared responsibility for employee development; include individual development plans for each employee; focused on development opportunities with the greatest impact; and ensure that employees take ownership of their development, with strong management support.
- iii.) Once competencies have been identified, they should be clearly communicated to all employees in order for the understanding to occur. In this context, there should be honest and regular dialogue with employees

with regards to their performance. Those that are high potential or exceptional performers must be told of their status and steered to development programmes, if they so have the desire. Those who do not meet the leadership competencies should also have open, honest feedback and be counseled on better career options within the university or be encouraged to find opportunities elsewhere.

iv.) A well-developed programme should be designed offering training and education to employees. This could be internal, external or a combination, but they need to be offered across the university giving all staff the opportunity to participate in order to attain promotion.

v.) In other to maintain leadership continuation, the university should set aside time to identify and mentor successors. It can be anticipated that the transition has the potential of being smooth regardless of the method used to identify the next leader to the employees and stakeholders of the institution; it makes them cognizant of the new leader and gives time to acclimate to the idea of that person taking the helm of the organization.

vi.) The university should place greater emphasis on coaching and mentoring, both internally and externally resourced builds the skills of dialogue and raises all sorts of career-related issues (both specific to the individual and more general to groups within the university), which might otherwise remain hidden.

vii.) The University should not plan successors in secret. It is important for the university and employees to know that the leadership team takes employee development and succession planning seriously. Although leadership may not want to tell an employee that he/she is a definite replacement for a particular role, it may be necessary to ask the candidate what his/her career aspirations are and work with him/her to develop the skills necessary to fill the identified role. Once a successor is identified and a conversation has taken place to ensure he/she is interested in such a promotion, put a step-by-step plan in place to develop this individual. Training, more responsibility, more autonomy, a broader understanding of the business are some potential areas to identify and create plans to address. Providing feedback and encouragement to potential successors is an important step in the whole planning process.

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