

The Perspective of Administrative and Professional Staff on Succession Planning in a Tertiary Institution in Ghana

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Abstract

The study examined the perspectives of senior members of the administrative and professional staff of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi, Ghana, on succession planning in the University. A questionnaire was used to collect data and information from 136 randomly sampled administrative and professional staff of the University. Content analysis and descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data and information collected from the respondents. The results indicate that there is no well-structured programme or a policy document that guides succession planning in the University. Majority (71.4%) indicated that currently, the succession planning being practiced which is in the form of rotation and mentorship does not lead to significant staff retention among the professional and administrative senior members and the achievement of the University's goals. The results also revealed that most of the respondents did not appreciate the benefits of succession planning and, therefore, there is the need for education among this category of staff. The study recommends that the University should formulate and implement a succession planning policy to reduce staff attrition and prepare them for leadership positions.

Key words: Succession Planning, Mentorship, Staff Motivation, KNUST, Leadership Support, Staff Retention

Introduction

Succession planning is a proactive process that ensures continuing leadership committed to the organisation's values, mission, and strategies by intentionally developing employees' advancement (Jamye et al. 2013). It is a process of identifying critical management positions. It can start at the levels of a project manager, supervisors, and up to the highest position in the organisation (Rothwell, 2005).

Succession planning is a long-term preparation process for developing replacements for the key positions to ensure continuing leadership in an organisation (Jamye et. al. 2013). The probability of both short-term and long-term leadership continuity in an organisation can be increased if the organisation has established systematic and effective succession planning (Thompson, Joyce, &

Smith, 2006). Nowadays, higher education institutions face an impending leadership crisis, which is the lack of a future leader (Sharon D. Kruse, Donald G. Hackmann and Jane Clark Lindle, 2020). The issue of capacity building in the form of continuous professional development as well as staff motivation will entice prospective leaders within the organisation to stay and enhance productivity. There is a need to have formal succession planning to ensure organisational leadership continuity in the future (Ahmad & Keerio, 2020; Barden, 2009).

The main goal of the study was to examine the succession plan in the KNUST for professionals and administrative staff. This was achieved by collecting data from the administrative and professional staff of the University, analysing same by using descriptive statistics and discussing the findings out of which important recommendations were drawn. The study contributes to the literature on Higher Education administration by highlighting critical issues affecting succession planning including inadequate appreciation of succession planning by the administrative and professional staff and what needs to be done to ensure achievement of optimal benefits associated with succession planning in Higher Educational Institutions with specific reference to KNUST.

The paper has been structured into six (6) sections: the introduction, which sets the foundation and basis of the study, the literature review where related previous studies are presented and discussed including theories which underpin the study, the methodology which presents and discusses the method of data collection and tools used in analysing the data. The fourth section is the results and discussion section where the results of the data analysis and findings are presented and discussed. Conclusions are drawn and presented in the fifth section. Finally, recommendations are then presented for policy consideration based on the results and findings.

Literature Review

Rothwell (2005) introduced a succession-planning model which has seven steps for systematic succession planning and management: commit, assess present work, appraise individual performance, assess future work, assess future individual potential, close the development gap, and evaluate the succession planning programme. In the model, Rothwell (2005) espouses that promotion from within the organisation is very important because, for succession planning to be effective, the organisation must have some means of replacing key job incumbents as vacancies occur in their department. Promotion from within also provides some benefits. First, the employer can check the references of existing employees easily. Second, the cost of promoting from within an organisation is often lower than hiring from outside (Rothwell, 2005). According to the Knowledge-Based Theory, an organisation's ability to manage knowledge helps it to develop competencies and capabilities that contribute to its survival, growth and success (Miles, 2012). This theory advances the argument that knowledge (as it is created, stored and used) is the most strategically important of a firm's resources (Grant, 1996).

Newton (2017) indicates that businesses use succession planning more commonly today than in the past. This planning allows leaders to identify and coach those who may succeed them in the organization. Once identified, selected individuals get extra training and development that will help them to move into the new role. When done well, this can deliver a seamless transition from one leader to the next. Newton (2017) however asserts that succession planning allows leaders to focus on potential new managers who are employed by the organization but does not allow for candidates outside the company. In many cases, managers will consider only their direct reports as potential successors. This is good in terms of career development for those inside the organization, but it does not necessarily meet the company's best interests. In some situations, it is better to replace a manager with an external candidate to bring new skills to the team. Other times, there simply may not be a suitable candidate within the organization.

Fancher (2007) suggests that a company that fails to grow its successors needs to recruit people from outside. However, (Barden, 2009; Gonaim, 2019; Kamal, 2019; Keller, 2018) indicates that conducting an open search to fill leadership positions also has the risk of disenfranchising worthy internal prospective applicants. Companies need to identify a succession plan policy and implement it to prepare for effective and efficient leadership.

Organisational performance is very critical to organisations in the current competitive environment and it requires a very sustainable high quality and creative workforce. Hence, succession planning is important to avoid a power vacuum when an incumbent leader leaves the organisation. Studies have shown that factors such as succession plan, work environment, training and motivation positively affect the overall performance of educational institutions (Abdolshah, Khatibi & Moghimi, 2018). Njeri, Ngui, & Mathenge (2019) observe that companies with a planned effective succession plan process outperform those without it; employee morale is increased and performance enhanced. Despite these advantages, succession planning remains a challenge to most organisations, big or small, public or private (Onyango, Njanja & Charles, 2014; Wangombe & Kagiri, 2015).

Besides, a lot of research has focused on developed countries and not much on tertiary educational institutions in Ghana, thus leaving a knowledge gap in succession planning. This assertion is backed by Opong & Oduro-Asabere (2018). According to Opong & Oduro-Asabere (2018), succession planning and management in Ghanaian universities have still not received a face-lift since time immemorial. Yanney, (2017) opines that in Ghana, top managers mostly show reluctance in training and developing the careers of junior staff towards future human resource gaps. This is because those trained are seen as a threat to the very existence of senior management. This has endangered the efforts and spirit of succession planning in the organisations within the country (Yanney, 2017). Therefore, the current study aimed at assessing the knowledge of the professionals and administrative staff on a succession plan in the University, identifying how the

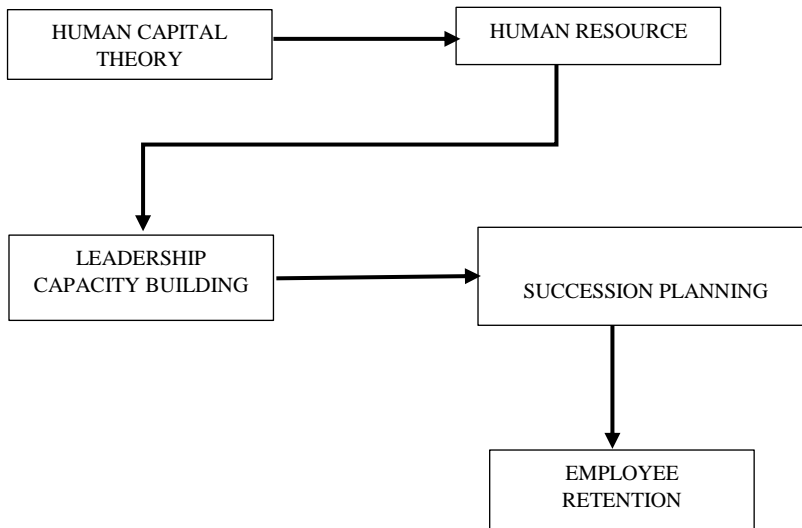
staff were prepared for succession and the impact of a succession plans on staff retention at the University.

The rapid growth of global knowledge economy requires organisations to be embedded with intellectual capital to increase sustainability and competitiveness. In today's knowledge economy, the influence of human capital indicates that investments in intangible resources are valuable (Muda, Ridhuan, & Rachman, 2016). Human capital refers to individual abilities, knowledge, know-how, talent, education, skills, and experience. Studies in the last five years have shown that internal social capital has a stronger level of influence in an organisation requiring innovation (Cuevas-Rodriquez, Cabello-Medina, & Carmona-Lavado, 2014). Intellectual capital is an essential component in ensuring that an organisation is sustainable (Patruti, 2013). The study was guided by the human capital theory (Schultz, 1961). Becker further developed the theory in 1964 (Blaug, 1976). According to the theory, education of employees and training in the organisation significantly raise the overall productivity by introducing new skills and knowledge to the organisation. The theory further postulated that expenditures on training and education are costly and an essential investment in the company. Therefore, the company should retain the trained people in the organisation to reduce other costs relating to hiring (Lauder, 2015). The theory further articulates that organisations maintain very motivated personnel and a talented workforce; hence, increasing the overall performance when there is a transition of power (Schultz, 1961). Therefore, in a situation where the required competence is available within the organisation, it would be much more relevant to replace the key personnel from within the organisation rather than seeking services from outside as this would reduce the cost associated with hiring.

According to Dessler (2008), the objective of human resource planning is to ensure that the organization has the right types of persons at the right time and at the right place. It prepares human resources inventory with a view to assessing present and future needs, availability and possible shortages in human resources. In this regard, human resource planning forecasts demand and supplies and identifies sources of selection. It also develops strategies both long-term and short-term, to meet the manpower requirement. This shows that with proper needs assessment by the human resource development department in an organization, the right caliber of staff from within will take up the leadership position.

One of the earliest scholars to mention the advantages of succession planning was Henri Fayol (1841-1925) cited in Rothwell (2010). Fayol believes that succession planning can help to avoid organisational missteps because it can ensure that the right people are put in the right positions at the right time (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Theoretical framework: Leadership Succession Planning



Source: Rothwell (2010) and modified by the author

Succession planning is important for an organization because there is the need to invest in training and developing individuals so as to be well equipped and have the qualifications to take over any leadership position as shown in Figure 1.

From Figure 1, the Human Capital Theory is key, since it espouses how equipping employees with essential knowledge through training can lead to improved skills. According to Kenton (2019), human capital refers to the economic value of a worker's experience and skills. Kenton, (2019) adds that human capital includes assets like education, training, intelligence, skills, health, and other things employers value such as loyalty and punctuality. Once an employee knows that capacity building is a preparatory ground for a leadership position, staff retention is certain and this leads to promote efficiency and effectiveness in their operations. With succession planning, the University will always have the right leaders in place should there be any sudden change. It also identifies and develops the internal talents of the institution with the potential to fill key leadership positions (Ceplenski, 2013).

Methodology

The population of the study comprised 207 in the Senior Member category (administrative and professional) serving in various capacities in the University. The University has grouped its staff into three divisions, namely, Senior Members (teaching and non-teaching), Senior Staff and Junior Staff. According to the Statutes of the University (KNUST 2004), Senior Members comprise both teaching and non-academic teaching staff. The non-teaching staff are the administrative and professional staff in managerial positions. The entry-level of senior administrative and professional positions are Junior Assistant Registrar, Assistant Registrar, Senior Assistant Registrar, Deputy Registrar, and Registrar

and their equivalents. With this, a total population of 207 comprising the number of non-teaching staff of the University was used. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table, which gave a minimum sample size of approximately 136. The study used the sampling frames and the respondents who are non-teaching staff of the University were used to sample the respondents using lottery method.

Data and information were solicited from randomly sampled respondents using a structured questionnaire, which was designed to solicit information and data from the respondents on their demographic characteristics and their perspectives on succession plans. The questionnaire was pre-tested to ensure its validity and reliability. The pretesting was done using 10 senior administrative staff of the Kumasi Technical University. Results of the pretesting were used to modify the questionnaire by removing vague questions and modifying controversial ones. The data collection was done by enumerators contract from outside the University so that the authors could not influence the data collection and the results of the study. The study design is quantitative in nature. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data with the help of SPSS version 25.0. The results were presented in tables and text.

Results and Discussions

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The results shown in Table 1 indicate that 66.7% of the respondents were males implying that the female to male ratio is 2:1. More importantly, 38.1% of the respondents were 51 years and above, indicating that they are very close to their retiring ages.

Ages from 51 to 55 years were the most among the respondents. In Ghana, the retiring age for public servants is 60 years. This indicates that most of the staff will be retiring in the next 10 years. This shows that management must as part of their strategic planning, begin to re-strategise to mentor the younger ones as early as possible through succession planning. The basis of the discussion is on the analysis as 23%+14% are likely to be on retirement in next the 10 years, hence, action should be taken to prepare the young administrative and professional staff for succession.

This will enable the young employees to build capacity and acquire managerial skills for their career advancement. In addition, it will promote the excellent and continuous functioning of young administrative and professional staff in the University. It shows that mentoring young and less experienced colleagues have been found to be effective, promoting interpersonal relationships and reducing stress (Philips et. al.1994). This is also a human resource development strategy to support staff development programmes at a higher level (Abbot 2002).

Table 1: Demographic characteristic

Respondents Characteristics	Categories	Frequency (n=136)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	45	33.3
	Male	91	66.7
Age	31-35years	9	6.3
	36-40years	19	14.3
	41-45years	30	22.2
	46-50years	26	19.0
	51-55years	32	23.8
	Above 55	19	14.3
	Education Level and Professional Qualification	Master's Degree	73
Master's Degree & Professional Qualification		41	30.2
Master's Degree & Professional Qualification & PhD		4	3.2
PhD		4	3.2
Professional Qualification		13	9.5
Audit		4	3.2
Counselling Centre		2	1.6
Development Office		4	3.2
Estate Organisation		2	1.6
Finance Office		13	9.5
Office or Department	Hospital	15	11.1
	Registrar's Office	84	61.9
	Security	2	1.6
	UITS	6	4.8
	Vice-chancellor's Office	2	1.6
	Less than 5years	17	12.7
	11- 15years	37	27.0
Years worked in the University	16- 20years	26	19.0
	6-10years	19	14.3
	Above 20 years	37	27.0
	Less than 5years	56	41.3
Years worked as Senior Member	11- 15years	28	20.6
	16- 20years	13	9.5
	6-10years	22	15.9
	Above 20 years	17	12.7
Rank of Respondent	Assistant level	28	20.6
	Deputy	32	23.8
	Junior level	28	20.6
	Senior	47	34.9

Regarding the respondents' level of education, it was discovered that 90.5% hold master's degrees, 30.2% hold both master's degrees and professional

qualifications, 3.2% hold master’s degrees, professional qualifications and PhD, 3.2% hold masters and PhD and 9.5 % hold a professional qualification. This implies that the staff have all the requisite educational qualifications that lay the foundation for good leadership and, therefore, with a good succession plan which entails mentorship and coaching, they will rise to become great leaders (Jamy, Johnson, Faught, & Street, 2013; Ahmad & Keerio, 2020; Barden, 2009).

From table 2 below it could be observed that 28.6% of the respondents responded “No” as against 34.9% who said “Yes” to leaving the university if a better offer elsewhere came up. This means that the condition of service of staff should be attractive enough, in order to retain them as stipulated by Rothwell (2005) that the cost of promoting from within an organisation is often lower than hiring from outside.

Table 2: Labour Turnover

Query / Statement	Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
The decision to leave the University if a better offer elsewhere comes up	No	39	28.6
	Undecided	50	36.5
	Yes	47	34.9

Table 3 indicates that 49.2% of the respondents responded that KNUST does not have a succession plan, 23.8% remained neutral and 27% agreed that the University had a succession plan.

Table 3: Response to Succession Questions

Query / Statements on Succession planning	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. KNUST has a Succession Plan	22.2%	27.0%	23.8%	25.4%	1.6%
2. The University must have a succession plan	7.9%	0.0%-	1.6%	25.4%	65.1%

SD- Strongly Disagree; D-Disagree; N- Neutral; A-Agree; SA- Strongly Agree

It could be seen from the responses in table 3 that some of the staff are not aware whether the University has a succession plan or not because during orientation for new staff, these are not explicitly stated. It is important, therefore, that these things are discussed during orientation for new staff. Also Heads of units could make their staff aware of the mentorship programme in place at their units. On the issue of whether the University requires a succession plan, 90.5% of the respondents responded in the affirmative, 7.9% strongly disagreed and 1.6% remained neutral, which is attributed to the few respondents who were not mentored and they are not obliged to mentor anyone hence they are not sure if mentorship is important. There is the need for KNUST and other educational institutions to have a succession plan

in place for developing and retaining staff as stated by Jamye *et al* (2013). This will help the institution to enjoy the benefits of a succession plan (Thompson, Joyce, & Smith, 2006). The finding of the study that the University must have a succession plan is supported by Ahmad & Keerio (2020) and Barden (2009) when they stated that higher educational institutions need to have a formal succession planning to ensure organizational leadership continuity in the future.

Table 4 is about the implementation modules for a succession plan which reveals that 39.7% of the respondents indicated that a succession plan is implemented in the University through mentoring. However, 26.9% of the respondents disagreed and 33.3% remained neutral because they were not sure if succession planning could be achieved through mentoring. Those who disagree probably due to the transfers as a staff may be mentored in one area and later transferred and will not have the opportunity to succeed the person who mentored him or her.

Table 4: Implementation modules for a succession plan

Query / Statements on Succession planning	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. Succession plan is implemented in my university through mentoring	7.9%	19.0%	33.3%	36.5%	3.2%
2. Succession plan is implemented in my university through job rotation	4.8%	14.3%	31.7%	46.0%	3.2%
3. Succession plan is implemented in my university through capacity building	4.8%	22.2%	33.3%	36.5%	3.2%
4. In my organisation, a succession plan is implemented at all levels or stages of management	11.1%	31.7%	31.7%	22.2%	3.2%
5. There is a formal succession plan in place in my organisation where employees are officially assigned mentors	12.7%	15.9%	23.8%	44.4%	3.2%

Okumu *et al.* (2021) also state that mentoring is a professional development tool that guides, encourages, and motivates individuals in organisation or institutions in their career development. This shows that the application of the Mentoring Policy in the University must be enforced to augment succession planning. It further calls for the need to emphasise the relevance of mentorship in an organisation.

On the issue of whether succession planning is implemented in the University through job rotation, 49.2% responded in the affirmative, while 19.1% disagreed and 31.7% were undecided. The number of respondents who disagreed and those who remained neutral summed up to 50.8% which is contrary to the position that Job rotation aims to broaden knowledge, skills, and experience by moving people from job to job or department to department (Delpsand, Raiisi, Begdely & Shahabi,

2010; Lindbeck & Snower, 2000; Olorunsola, 2000). Some of the respondents actually answered based on experience while others used their perspective as they did not experience some of the issues.

In table 4, on how succession plan is implemented in the University, 36.5% + 3.2% of the respondents indicated that it is done through mentorship while 33.3% were neutral and 19% + 7.9% (26.9%) disagreeing to mentorship. On whether succession plan in the University was done through job rotation, 46% + 3.2% (49.2%) of the respondents agreed while 31.7% were neutral and 14.3 + 4.8% (19.1%) disagreeing. Similar responses were recorded for whether succession planning in the University were done through capacity building, 36.5% + 3.2% (39.7%) responded in the affirmative while 33.3% were neutral. Those who disagreed were 22.2% + 4.8% (50%). The responses clearly show that there appears to be no clear policy on succession planning in the University and even if there were, these staff who form the middle management of the institution seem not to be aware.

Table 5 discusses the benefits that an organisation will derive from a succession plan. In this regard, 12.7% indicated that a succession plan leads to the promotion of staff who have been mentored. On the contrary, 44.4% disagreed with the statement while 42.9% remained neutral. Probably they might not have mentors but they were promoted and as indicated earlier, a staff may be mentored in one area and transferred to other areas. This implies that staff are not aware of the benefits of succession planning in an organisation. There is, therefore, the need for higher educational institutions to formulate succession planning policies and educate their staff about them (Onyango, Njanja & Charles, 2014). This relates to KNUST succession plan. In Table 3, only 7.9% of the respondents strongly disagreed, which might be due to their personal experience which does not negate the benefits of succession plan in KNUST.

To ensure effective succession planning, the researchers wanted to find out from the respondents whether they met regularly with their mentors to discuss their progress. Out of the respondents, 44.5% disagreed with regular meeting with the mentors, indicating that either they do not meet on regular basis, or they do not meet at all which was attributed to the workload at the office on the part of both the mentee and mentors without the University allocating specific time for meeting, while 28.6% of the respondents affirmed the statement. This implies that mentorship should be strengthened to lay the foundation for effective succession planning.

Under the effective implementation of succession planning in the organisation leading to staff working for long years, 31.7% of the respondents disagreed, 39.7% were uncertain and 28.6% agreed with the statement. This is contrary to the assertion by Thompson, Joyce, & Smith, (2006) and Ahmad & Keerio, (2020) that effective succession planning contributes to staff retention. This means that staff do not have much knowledge on succession planning and, therefore, required to be educated.

Table 5. Benefits of succession plan implementation

Query / Statements on Succession planning	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. In my organisation, succession planning leads to the promotion of staff who have been mentored	11.1%	33.3%	42.9%	12.7%	0.0%-
2. I meet my mentor on a regular basis to discuss my progress	15.9%	28.6%	27.0%	25.4%	3.2%
3. Due to the effectiveness of the succession plan implemented in my organisation, I see myself working in my organisation for longer years.	9.5%	22.2%	39.7%	25.4%	3.2%
4. A sense of being in management encourages me to stay in the organisation.	4.8%	12.7%	23.8%	47.6%	11.1%
5. The existing succession plan in my organisation motivates employees to consider working until retirement and not move out of the organisation.	6.3%	28.6%	39.7%	23.8%	1.6%
6. I am satisfied with the current state of succession planning in my organisation.	11.1%	38.1%	39.7%	7.9%	3.2%
7. There are formal training programs in my organisation that teach employees the skills they need to perform their jobs.	7.9%	23.8%	28.6%	33.3%	6.3%
8. I feel secure in my job due to the implementation of effective succession planning practices.	6.3%	30.2%	39.7%	23.8%	0.0%-

In respondents' responses to the statement that a sense of being in management encourages staff to stay in an organisation, majority (58.7%) agreed. This implies that formulating a succession planning policy and ensuring continuous education will enhance the leadership skills of the young staff.

On whether respondents were satisfied with the current state of succession planning in their organisations, 39.2% responded negatively while 39.7% remained neutral and 11.1% agreed. This indicates that staff are uncertain whether there is the existence of succession planning in the University and this calls for the institution of a policy and making the staff aware of it.

Conclusion

Succession planning is critical for talent management in every organisation. It provides bench marks for transition into leadership. It provides a holistic view about the future manpower needs of the organisation, the key positions, the type

of personnel needed and the skill-sets required for the various roles. It is critical for organisations to be intentional about succession planning, have a succession planning policy in place and properly educate their staff about it. This is because no organisation can achieve its goals without proper planning for the future. Every organisation must be aware of its aging staff and plan against this. Another reason why organisations must attach much importance to succession planning is to avoid the situation where they could lose their experienced employees to competitors as a result of employee dissatisfaction from stagnation and lack of progression into leadership positions.

This study aimed at examining the perspectives of senior members of the administrative and professional staff of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology on succession planning. The study has shown that many of the staff are unaware of any succession planning policy in the University. Among other findings, the study also shows that 34.9% of the respondents are ready to leave the University if they get better offers from elsewhere while 36.5% remained neutral, which means they could favourably consider any good opportunity that comes their way. Only 28.6% of the respondents responded in the negative to leaving the University for better offers. The implication is that many of this experienced middle-level staff could leave the University if Management does not address the problems associated with succession and leadership roles.

It can be concluded from the above discussion that succession planning in KNUST is done partially because the University does not have a structured programme or a policy document which guides succession in the University. Also, respondents had limited understanding of the importance of succession planning for both current operational needs as well as future strategic needs. The study serves as a good reference for conversation on the need for succession planning at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi and higher education institutions in general and the need to implement well-structured succession planning programme in these institutions.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the University should formulate a succession planning policy to prepare the staff for effective and efficient leadership. This should be led by the Quality Assurance and Planning Office (QAPO) of the University with support from the Human Resources Development Division of the University. A committee should be constituted by Management to coordinate the drafting of succession planning policy for the University. Majority of the respondents stated that they will leave the university if given a better offer elsewhere. This will lead to a reduction in the number of experienced staff and also financial loss to the institution. The institution should educate their staff on policies such as succession planning to equip them with knowledge and also, motivate and prepare them for retention and leadership. Additionally, the study recommends that management should develop career development guidelines with the help of Human Resources Development Division of the University and encourage employees to take on available options such as on-the-job training. Training and development

opportunities can help staff remain in the institution and not to look for other opportunities elsewhere. The main limitation of this study is that it was conducted in one university. However, the findings unveil the need for a succession planning policy to be instituted in the institutions. Further study is, therefore, recommended into the existence of succession planning policy in other higher educational institutions in Ghana.

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