

A framework for succession planning for school appointees in private higher educational institutions: The case of a higher educational institution in Baguio City

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Abstract

This study investigated the succession planning practices at the University of Baguio by examining existing policies and challenges affecting leadership continuity. The study utilized an exploratory sequential design, beginning with qualitative interviews involving three deans and one human resource personnel, followed by a survey administered to 66 appointees, including Program Chairs, Student Body Advisers, School Alumni Relations Coordinators, Extension and Community Outreach Services Coordinators, School Research Anchorpersons, and Assistant Principals. All current appointees were included to ensure comprehensive representation of leadership perspectives within the university. The findings indicated that while succession planning existed in written form, the absence of a systematic and institution-wide framework resulted in leadership transitions that relied more on availability than on competency-based selection. In response, the study recommended the implementation of standardized selection criteria, structured leadership development programs, and the establishment of a Succession Planning Oversight Committee to ensure a merit-based and institutionalized approach to leadership continuity. These measures were expected to strengthen succession planning at the University of Baguio by aligning leadership transitions with institutional goals and long-term strategic development. The study contributed to existing literature on succession planning in private higher education by highlighting the gap between formal policies and actual leadership appointments and emphasizing the need for a structured, transparent, and competency-driven approach.

Keywords: Higher Education, Institutional Continuity, Leadership Development, Succession Planning, Talent Management

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INTRODUCTION

Private higher educational institutions often face challenges in identifying and developing internal talent pools capable of assuming key leadership roles. Succession planning refers to the systematic process of identifying, developing, and preparing individuals to fill critical leadership positions when vacancies arise, ensuring leadership continuity and organizational stability. Closely related to this is talent management, which encompasses strategies and practices aimed at attracting, developing, retaining, and deploying

individuals who can meet both present and future institutional needs. In the context of private higher educational institutions, effective succession planning and talent management are essential for sustaining leadership pipelines and maintaining institutional resilience.

Unlike larger and more resource-intensive institutions, private higher educational institutions frequently lack formalized talent management and succession systems. This limitation can hinder the systematic preparation of potential successors, resulting in difficulties when

leadership vacancies occur and increasing reliance on discretionary appointments rather than planned leadership transitions.

Literature Review

Previous studies indicate that private higher educational institutions encounter unique succession planning challenges, particularly in balancing academic expertise and administrative competence. Academic leaders are expected to demonstrate educational vision, administrative capability, and a deep understanding of institutional culture, making leadership identification and preparation complex. Research also highlights those limited resources restrict investments in leadership development programs, mentoring initiatives, and structured training opportunities, further weakening succession planning efforts.

The relatively smaller size of private institutions amplifies the impact of leadership gaps. When key leaders depart, the absence of a prepared successor can disrupt academic and administrative functions. Existing literature emphasizes that while qualification requirements may be clearly defined, the absence of structured leadership development and evaluation frameworks often results in inconsistent and subjective appointment practices.

Conceptual Framework

This study was anchored on Talent Management Theory, which emphasizes the strategic identification, development, and retention of individuals with leadership potential, and Leadership Development Frameworks that stress the importance of structured training and mentorship in preparing future leaders. The Resource-Based View supports the notion that leadership capability is a critical institutional resource that contributes to long-term stability and competitive advantage. Institutional Theory further explains the need for formalized policies and standardized processes to embed succession planning practices within organizational culture.

These theoretical perspectives guided the examination of succession planning practices at the University of Baguio and informed the development of a structured framework for leadership continuity.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant in addressing the specific succession planning challenges faced by the University of Baguio, particularly in terms of leadership preparation, transparency, and consistency in appointment practices. The findings provide university administrators and decision-makers with evidence-based insights that can guide policy formulation, leadership development initiatives, and resource allocation.

Faculty and staff may benefit from improved leadership transitions and institutional continuity, while the broader academic community may draw lessons applicable to similar private higher educational institutions facing succession planning concerns.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to develop strategies for effective succession planning for key school appointees at the University of Baguio by assessing current challenges, evaluating existing policies and procedures, and proposing a structured framework aligned with institutional goals. Specifically, it sought to assess current succession planning practices and challenges and to propose an appointment and succession policy for continuous monitoring, evaluation, and improvement.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

The study employed an exploratory sequential design integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches. The research began with qualitative data collection and analysis, followed by quantitative data collection and analysis, which led to the interpretation of findings. In this design, the results of the qualitative phase were used to develop the research instrument for the quantitative strand. This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of succession planning practices and challenges at the University of Baguio, particularly among key school appointees such as Program Chairs, Student Body Advisers, Extension and Community Outreach Services Coordinators, School Research Anchorpersons, and Assistant Principals. The sequential integration of qualitative and quantitative methods ensured a comprehensive and context-sensitive

understanding of succession planning within the institution.

Population of the Study

The study involved individuals directly engaged in or affected by succession planning processes at the University of Baguio. A two-phase data collection approach was utilized. In the qualitative phase, purposive sampling was employed to select three deans from different departments and one human resource personnel. These participants were chosen due to their direct involvement in leadership appointments and policy implementation, making their insights essential in identifying succession planning challenges and practices.

In the quantitative phase, total enumeration was applied to include all key appointees in the university. Out of 77 identified appointees, 66 participated in the study. These respondents included Program Chairs, Student Body Advisers, School Alumni Relations Coordinators, Extension and Community Outreach Services Coordinators, School Research Anchorpersons, Review Coordinators, Assistant Principals, Sports Coordinators, and an Intern Coordinator. Inclusion criteria required that appointees had held their positions for at least one year to ensure sufficient exposure to succession planning practices. Individuals with limited or no experience in succession planning at the university and those who had already left the institution were excluded to maintain data relevance and accuracy.

Data Gathering Tools

Two primary data gathering tools were utilized: an interview guide and a survey questionnaire. The interview guide was designed to collect in-depth qualitative insights from deans and heads of offices regarding their experiences and perceptions of succession planning. It consisted of open-ended questions focusing on leadership identification, policy implementation, challenges in succession planning, and institutional support mechanisms. Confidentiality and voluntary participation were emphasized to encourage honest and detailed responses.

The survey questionnaire was developed based on themes that emerged from the qualitative phase. It consisted of three sections: demographic information, assessment of current succession planning practices,

and recommendations for improvement. The questionnaire measured key dimensions such as talent assessment methods, leadership competency frameworks, and the monitoring and evaluation of succession planning policies using a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

To ensure validity and reliability, the questionnaire underwent pilot testing among former appointees from different departments. Revisions were made based on feedback, and internal consistency testing using Cronbach's alpha yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.87, indicating a high level of reliability.

Data Gathering Procedures

Prior to data collection, the study underwent proposal evaluation and ethical review by the University of Baguio Research Ethics Committee and the Institutional Review Committee under the Research, Innovation, Extension, and Community Outreach office. Research instruments were subjected to validation by an appointed tool validator, followed by revisions and reliability testing.

Formal permission to conduct the study was obtained through a Letter of Intent submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs, along with a Request for Assistance to facilitate respondent participation. Informed consent forms were distributed to all participants to explain the study's purpose, voluntary nature, confidentiality measures, and the right to withdraw at any time.

The qualitative phase was conducted in October 2024 through semi-structured interviews. The quantitative phase followed from November to December 2024, during which the validated survey questionnaire was distributed and retrieved from the identified appointees.

Treatment of Data

Qualitative data from interviews were audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using inductive thematic analysis. This method allowed themes and patterns to emerge directly from participant responses, ensuring that findings were grounded in actual experiences. Coding, theme refinement, and validation were conducted through iterative analysis.

Quantitative data were processed and analyzed with the assistance of a statistician appointed by the Research, Innovation, Extension, and Community Outreach office. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize respondent profiles and perceptions of succession planning practices. The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings enabled a comprehensive interpretation of succession planning dynamics at the University of Baguio.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by anonymizing responses and securely storing all data. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study without consequences. Approval from the appropriate ethics review bodies reinforced compliance with institutional ethical guidelines and safeguarded the integrity of the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Effective succession planning is essential for ensuring leadership continuity and institutional stability. This section presents the findings of the study on the succession planning practices at the University of Baguio, focusing on existing processes, perceived challenges, and areas for improvement. The discussion follows the sequence of the study objectives and integrates both quantitative survey results and qualitative interview insights.

Perceptions of the Succession Planning Process

Table 2 presents the perceptions of key appointees regarding the succession planning process at the University of Baguio.

Table 2. *presents the perceptions of key appointees regarding the succession planning process at the University of Baguio.*

Perception of the Succession Planning Process	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Based on the discretion of the Dean or department head	37	56.92
Clear and well structured	7	10.77
Mix of structured and discretionary processes	4	6.15
Inconsistent in evaluating qualifications	4	6.25
No clear guidelines in place	2	3.08
Other (varied responses)	8	12.93
Total	66	100.00

The majority of respondents, comprising 56.92 percent, perceived succession planning as primarily based on the discretion of the Dean or department head. Only 10.77 percent viewed the process as clear and well structured, while 6.15 percent acknowledged a combination of structured procedures and discretionary decision making. Another 6.15 percent cited inconsistencies in evaluating qualifications, and 3.08 percent indicated that no clear guidelines were in place. The remaining 12.93 percent provided varied responses reflecting other influencing factors.

These findings indicate a strong reliance on discretionary decision making in leadership appointments. While the University of Baguio has established written qualification requirements for key appointees, the dominance of discretion suggests that these qualifications are not consistently operationalized through a formal and standardized framework. This reliance on discretion contributes to variations in appointment practices across departments and reinforces perceptions of subjectivity in leadership selection.

Challenges in the Succession Planning Process

Table 3 summarizes the challenges experienced by key appointees in the succession planning process.

Table 3. *shows the challenges encountered by key appointees in relation to succession planning at the University of Baguio.*

Identified Challenges	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Lack of training or development programs	14	21.54
Lack of training	11	16.92
Lack of qualified successors	7	10.77
Insufficient guidelines or framework	5	7.69
Inconsistency in the selection process	4	6.15
Lack of transparency	1	1.54
Other (varied combinations of issues)	17	25.39
Total	66	100.00

The most frequently identified challenge was the lack of training or development programs for potential successors, cited by 21.54 percent of respondents. This was followed by the lack of training opportunities at 16.92 percent and the lack of qualified successors at 10.77 percent. Other challenges included insufficient guidelines or frameworks, inconsistencies in the selection process, and limited transparency.

Interview responses reinforced these findings. Participants consistently noted the absence of structured leadership training and mentorship programs prior to appointment. Appointees often assumed leadership roles without formal preparation, relying on experiential learning rather than systematic development. Although

the university has written qualification standards for positions such as Program Chairs, Student Body Advisers, School Research Anchorpersons, and Assistant Principals, the absence of preparatory programs limits leadership readiness and effectiveness.

These findings align with previous studies emphasizing the importance of leadership development and mentorship in succession planning. Without structured training mechanisms, qualification requirements alone may not ensure successful leadership transitions.

Availability of Qualified Successors and Selection Practices

The study also revealed concerns regarding the availability of qualified successors. Respondents indicated that leadership appointments were sometimes driven by availability rather than readiness or leadership potential. Departments experiencing limited talent pools faced difficulties identifying candidates who met both academic and experiential requirements. This situation increased the likelihood of necessity-based appointments and reinforced perceptions of favoritism and inconsistency.

From a theoretical perspective, the Resource-Based View highlights leadership capability as a critical institutional resource. The absence of a structured leadership pipeline places institutional knowledge at risk when key leaders leave their positions. Institutional Theory further underscores the need for formalized policies and standardized processes to promote organizational stability and continuity.

Implications for Succession Planning at the University of Baguio

Overall, the results indicate that succession planning at the University of Baguio lacks a formalized, institution-wide framework that systematically identifies, prepares, and evaluates future leaders. While written qualifications and leadership initiatives such as the Reorientation of Managers Program and the Management Development Program demonstrate institutional commitment, these efforts remain insufficient without integration into a comprehensive succession framework.

The findings support the need for standardized selection criteria, structured leadership development programs, and continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Establishing a formal succession planning system can reduce reliance on discretionary decision making, enhance transparency, and strengthen leadership continuity in alignment with institutional goals.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings of the study revealed significant challenges in succession planning at the University of Baguio, particularly in the areas of leadership preparation, transparency, and structured selection processes. Although the university has established written qualification requirements for key appointees, the absence of formal mentorship programs, leadership training, and standardized evaluation criteria weakened the effectiveness of succession planning. Leadership appointments were largely influenced by discretionary decision-making, resulting in inconsistencies in selection practices and varying levels of leadership preparedness.

Despite these challenges, existing initiatives such as the Reorientation of Managers Program and the Management Development Program demonstrated the university's commitment to leadership development. However, these initiatives require integration into a formal, institution-wide succession framework to ensure sustainability and consistency. Strengthening succession planning necessitates the adoption of competency-based selection processes, structured leadership development programs, and systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms aligned with institutional goals.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that the University of Baguio institutionalize a formal succession planning framework guided by clear and transparent policies aligned with Commission on Higher Education and Department of Education standards. This framework should include standardized selection criteria, comprehensive leadership training and mentorship programs, and the establishment of a Succession Planning Oversight Committee to oversee implementation and continuous improvement. Through a transparent and competency-driven succession planning system, the university can enhance leadership continuity, institutional stability, and long-term organizational effectiveness.

Declaration of Generative AI use in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) utilized ChatGPT to assist with refining the structure of the manuscript, improving clarity and coherence, and aligning the content with journal formatting and submission requirements.

The content generated by the tool was carefully reviewed, edited, and validated by the author(s). The author(s) accept full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the final manuscript.

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