Preparing Future Leaders: An Ethnographic Study Exploring the Culture of Succession Planning and Leader Development in Christian Higher Education

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Abstract
The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to explore the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University, using the 5C's: Strategies for succession planning in the academy model. In the face of unprecedented disruption and complexity, the review of literature suggested the higher education sector in the United States is largely underprepared for the upcoming exodus and shortage of leaders. With religiously-affiliated institutions accounting for more than one in five colleges and universities in the US, there were no visible studies attending to succession planning and leader development in Christian higher education. Given the important contribution of these faith-based institutions to the educational landscape it is both important and significant to understand the culture of succession planning and leader development in this environment. The study identified nine themes related to the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University, a member of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities. These themes were 1) Developing future leaders is a clear priority of the president, 2) Historic cultural and religious traditional norms are influential, 3) Purpose of the programs are clearly understood by participant, 4) Exposure and interaction with other leaders is highly valued, 5) Participants associate deep value with their engagement in programs, 6) Intentional and ongoing efforts to connect with the Nashville community is important, 7) Clarity around ongoing plans for participants is challenging, 8) Board of trustees prioritize succession planning efforts, and 9) Intentionally developing leaders who understand the changing landscape of higher education is critical. The results of the study have significant implications for presidents and board chairs as they consider the need to identify, develop and prepare the next generation of leaders for their institutions of Christian higher education.

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Succession Planning: A Call to Action. Actually, here is a call to four actions: (a) measure predictive traits; (b) align on your strategy; (c) use multiple measures; and (d) consider bias. Align on Strategy. Company values and ethos are unique, so a generic selection model of leadership development will not suffice. Fernández-Aráoaz and colleagues remarked, “Potential is situational, and programs that manage it should be aligned with a company’s strategy... How would you instruct your scouting team to identify future leaders of your organization and not just any organization? Further, how would your instructions change over time as your organization evolves? Select high-potential employees based on strategic vision / planning and motivating / inspiring / leading others. The educational leader of the future, therefore, will increasingly be a system leader as well as a school leader. What do we mean by system leadership? Various contributions help us understand the nature and significance of this concept and strategy. Highly effective schools are often characterised by high leadership stability (James et al., 2006). Lasting improvement depends on planned succession, leaving a legacy, mentoring new leaders and creating great leadership density and capacity from which future high level leaders will come (MacMillan, 2000; Gronn, 2003; Hargreaves and Fink, 2004; Fink and Brayman, 2006) within a common vision of institutional and societal progress. 8. 2.5. Lateral leadership. Leadership, Succession and Search | Russell Reynolds Associates is a global leader in assessment, recruitment and succession planning for Chief Executive Officers, boards of directors, and key roles within the C-suite. With more than 300 consultants in 41 offices around the world, we work closely with both public and private organizations across all industries and regions. We help our clients build boards and executive teams that can meet the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital, economic, environmental and political trends that are reshaping the global business environment.