

## Academic Leadership Succession Planning Practice in Nigeria Higher Education Institutions: A Case Study of Colleges of Education

**Authors :** Adie, Julius Undiukeye

**Abstract :** This research investigated the practice of academic leadership succession planning in Nigerian higher education institutions, drawing on the lived experiences of the academic staff of the case study institutions. It is multi-case study research that adopts a qualitative research method. Ten participants (mainly academic staff) were used as the study sample. The study was guided by four research questions. Semi-structured interviews and archival information from official documents formed the sources of data. The data collected was analyzed using the Constant Comparative Technique (CCT) to generate empirical insights and facts on the subject of this paper. The following findings emerged from the data analysis: firstly, there was no formalized leadership succession plan in place in the institutions that were sampled for this study; secondly, despite the absence of a formal succession plan, the data indicates that academics believe that succession planning is very significant for institutional survival; thirdly, existing practices of succession planning in the sampled institutions, takes the forms of job seniority ranking, political process and executive fiat, ad-hoc arrangement, and external hiring; and finally, data revealed that there are some barriers to the practice of succession planning, such as traditional higher education institutions' characteristics (e.g. external talent search, shared governance, diversity, and equality in leadership appointment) and the lack of interest in leadership positions. Based on the research findings, some far-reaching recommendations were made, including the urgent need for the 'formalization' of leadership succession planning by the higher education institutions concerned, through the design of an official policy framework.

**Keywords :** academic leadership, succession, planning, higher education

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