

## Ineffective academic deans in public universities in Ghana: A case approach

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### Abstract

*This paper sought to find out the reasons why in the view of faculty members and officers, some academic Deans in public universities are ineffective leaders. Faculty members and officers of some faculties and schools in University of Cape Coast were requested to first say why in their view; some Deans in University of Cape Coast turn out to be ineffective leaders. Second, they were also requested to give their views on the consequences of leadership failure. Using a qualitative design, the investigators sampled eight (8) faculty members and four (4) faculty officers purposively from four Faculties in University of Cape Coast. Interviewees were asked to consider their own Deans first. A thematic narrative analysis was used to analyse data from the interviews and reported. The results showed that Deans fail due to poor posture, poor interpersonal skill, unclear vision and direction and communication failure. The paper has shown that the consequences of a Dean's failure affect individual members within the faculty, and create disaffection thus, affecting organisational output. It was therefore recommended that the University Council and Management should consider reviewing the current policy of voting deans into office if it even calls for amendments in the 2016 Statute of the University.*

### Key words

*Deans,  
leadership failure,  
faculty members,  
faculty officers,  
organisational  
goals*

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### Introduction

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterized by rapid changes in higher education delivery even in developing economies. In this regard, academic deans serve as a critical human resource that play major roles in the overall transformational agenda in many universities. This is so because academic deans serve as catalysts which push universities to advanced levels (Williams-June 2014). The dean of a faculty/school is a senior member of the university's academic administration and is somehow directly responsible for the recruitment, retention, and development of faculty. The dean oversees departments and programmes in the divisions within their college or university (Otara, 2015). In many universities in Ghana, as it pertains in other universities worldwide, the Dean of a faculty has a significant impact on the University's intellectual life and academic future through hiring decisions, faculty support, and strategic initiatives (Pretorius, 2009). Among the many roles they play is to supervise and approve all faculty searches and departmental hiring plans. Deans also work with university governance committees to hire, reappoint, and promote staff. Deans of faculty convene and chair small discussion groups of department and faculty

on academic issues and initiatives and serve as the faculty's advocate within the university. Criteria of appointment to the dean's position vary from county to county and even from one university to another. In the University of Cape Coast, the deanship position is elective even though elsewhere, they are directly appointed through a competitive interview process. A person to be elected for, as a dean, must be of the rank of a Professor or an Associate Professor. In the absence of a Professor, a Senior Lecturer is eligible. These individuals must possess with leadership qualities because deans are classic middle managers.

### **Academic Leadership**

Leadership is a multifaceted phenomenon that requires the use of certain skills and tact. Leadership work seems to hold a hidden power in organisations (Squires, 2001). Any time people are at peace and happy, there is barely any necessity for leadership. On the other hand, when the human conditions are at risk and the situation requires an urgent action to step forward and initiate change, there is a need for leadership. Often with a vision for the future, leaders bring up strategies that help them to achieve their vision. Poor leadership styles adversely affect the direction and lack of purpose of an organisation. Being in a leadership position requires that a person possesses effective communication skills. A leader with practical communication skills gives him or her authority and makes their directions easier to people. According to Allio (2007), failed leadership can have disastrous consequences (Longenecker, Neubert & Fink, 2007). Evidence points to the fact that leadership operates within the framework of purpose: vision, shared values, and common cause. A leader must not necessarily create the vision, but there must be one that should be shared by others who willingly commit themselves in common cause (Diamond, 2000). Academic leaders need to be the transmitters of ideas and knowledge that shape managerial thought and practice. Deans are the ones through whom universities and their faculties obtain direction and knowledge necessary to adjust to the changes that they are undergoing. It is however sad that too often, university faculties rather look to industry for direction rather than the reverse. Deans have no option than to reclaim the intellectual edge if they are to demonstrate continued leadership in the learning domain and provide value to students and the faculty, they seek to serve. Leadership is therefore critical if faculties have to make a change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Leadership from deans play pivotal role in ensuring that universities put strategic measures in place to translate into action, faculty aspirations. Deans as senior managers should work closely with programme leaders. Effective academic management uses communication tools, organisational culture, and shared values to fulfill shared trust.

Therefore, the interests of faculty, staff, and leaders congregate at common organisational goals. Academic leaders must not only ensure direct reciprocal communication but must also provide an effective communication network inside and outside their institutions. There must be mutual trust and respect to provide an appropriate context and move the organisation toward the attainment of individual and collective ends. Academic leadership should be transformational and collaborative, and should emphasize participation, delegation, and teamwork driven by a desire to achieve organisational objectives.

Effective deans often advocate for both faculty and administrative goals and are able to gain reasonable trust of their faculty to bring about the desired change. Additionally, they work to strengthen the academic programmes being run in their respective schools/faculties and collaborate with other deans both within and outside their university to apply best practice innovations (Williams-June, 2014). Coll et al. (2018) posited that academic deans have unique opportunities to make substantial and sustainable structural and/or transformative changes within their areas of responsibility because of the fact that they guide and oversee many departments, faculty, and academic programmes. The extent of success in their role is dependent to a large extent, on how they are able to team up with faculty members and faculty officers to realize the dreams of the faculty. In many cases, university managements and the other academic community partners look up to academic deans to bring success to their university.

### Statement of problem

There appear to be a shift in business to focus on worker knowledge and expertise to gain competitive advantage. This shift has made it obligatory for academic managers to possess hard and soft skills (Windsor, Douglas, & Harvey, 2012). Deans as managers also assume office with written visions to accomplish for their faculties/schools before the end of their tenure in office. To be effective, academic deans need to closely work with and through others (faculty members and administrators) and other technical staff in the faculty or school to succeed. To succeed, the dean needs to possess some soft skills to enable them work with these actors to achieve their vision. However, according to Hurrell (2016), 50% of employers including academic deans surveyed globally identified workers with a deficient gap in soft skills. It has been observed in many public universities in Ghana that some academic deans are unable to achieve their visions because they lack the necessary leadership skills. As a consequence, there is organisational disharmony leading to threatened attainment of organisational goals. The disharmony usually leads to the exodus of staff (faculty members and faculty officers) and in some cases, voluntary request for transfers which cumulatively affect work output of staff within a particular academic faculty or school. Despite the importance of this subject, little research has been conducted on it in Ghana in the public university context. Many questions such as, why do some deans fail as leaders? what are the consequences of these failures? and what lessons can academic deans and administrators learn from managerial failure at this level? remain unanswered. The desire to get answers to these questions motivated the investigators to conduct this study.

### Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- to explore reasons why academic deans, fail in their work as leaders.
- to describe the consequences of managerial leadership failure of deans on the individual members of the faculty, the faculty itself and the institution at large.
- to find out recommendations faculty members and officers have to offer to help improve the dean's leadership effectiveness.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were posed:

- what reasons account for the failure of deans as leaders?
- what are the consequences of managerial leadership failure of deans on the individual members of the faculty, the faculty itself and the institution at large?
- what recommendations do faculty members and officers have to offer to improve dean's leadership effectiveness?

### Literature Review

Generally, leadership theories try to imbibe what makes a good leader and how to identify people who are capable of leading an organisation towards achieving its set out goals (Northouse, 2013). The current study was undergirded by the skills-based leadership theory by Katz (1955) which posits that good leaders have a set of skills that they develop over time. He identified three skill areas that leaders should have in common and use on a regular basis to be successful. They all complement each other by providing different views on leadership from the skills perspective. The three skills identified by Katz are technical, human, and conceptual skills. Technical skills refer to the knowledge and capability essential in a specific type of work or activity. This may include the need for specialised knowledge in order to apply specific methods, techniques, processes, and procedures. For example, to use certain computer software packages such as Microsoft Office, Systems application, and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

(SPSS) is a technical skill. A leader can develop this skill type through vocational training and on-the-job training programmes. Many a time, when leaders fail to learn on the job, they fail to apply these skills in the exercise of their managerial duties.

The human skills refer to the people skills necessary to work successfully with followers, peers, and superiors. This includes verbal, written and other communication skills, the capacity to inspire others and create a positive team spirit. Leaders with good human skills are usually aware of their own behaviour and how their behaviour also tends to affect others within a working ambience (Katz, 1955). In contrast, lack of good human skills by a leader often results in their failure to achieve organisational goals. The last of the skills is conceptual skills which, refer to the skills that allow the leader to think through and work with ideas, hypotheses, and concepts. Leaders with good conceptual skills are good at working with abstract ideas and hypothetical situations (Mumford et al., 2000). Some important conceptual skills include deep strategic thinking, creativity, decision-making and problem-solving.

Based on the theory, we constructed a conceptual framework within which the study was situated. The model posits that every academic dean needs, in addition to other skills, technical, human, and conceptual skills that will ensure work efficacy that is usually concomitant to the achievement of faculty goals. In contrast, absence of these leadership skills could have consequences on the individual staff (faculty members/faculty officers) and other players within the institution (Longenecker, Neubert & Fink, 2007). If this is so, are there any lessons that deans, prospective deans, and faculty officers (in particular) can learn to prevent the occurrence of some of these challenges. Figure 1 illustrates the model based on which the study was conducted.

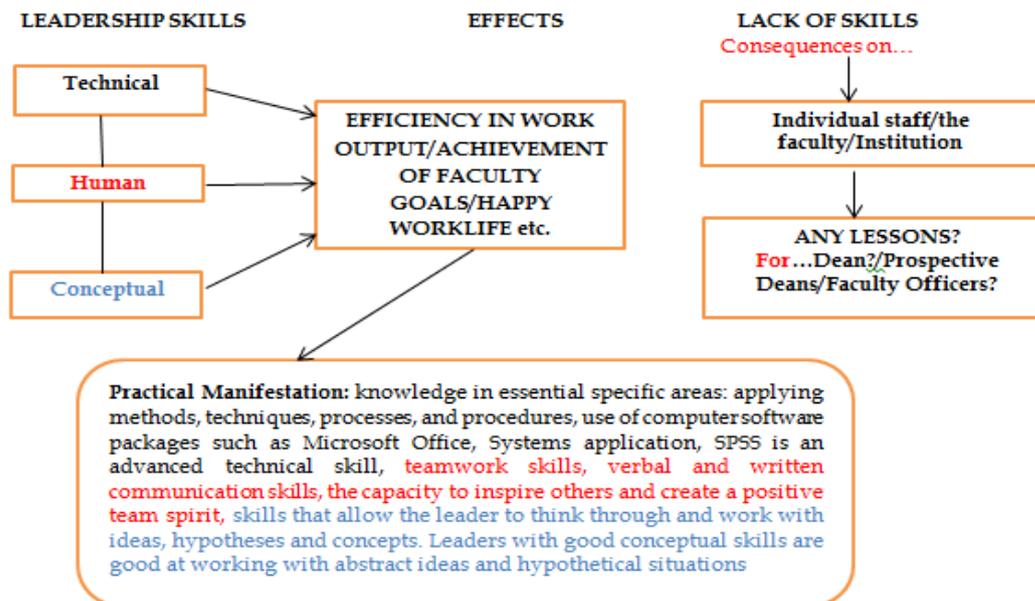


Figure 1. A Conceptual Model of the Study Source: Katz, 1955 (Adapted)

### Empirical studies

Many people have conducted studies to find out more about the causes of managerial failure and the impact it often has on organisation's progress. In 2005, Longenecker and Ariss conducted a study in the USA on managerial failure, exploring why managers fail to get desired results in rapidly changing organisations. They conducted their study using both phone and face-to-face interviews and focus group

discussions. That study found among other things, that the primary causes of managerial failure included ineffective communication skills/practices, poor working relationships/ interpersonal skills, person—job mismatch/skills, and failure to set clear direction/clarify performance expectations (Longenecker, Simonetti, & Sharkey, 1999; Longenecker & Ariss, 2005). The rest includes failure to break old habits and adapt quickly, delegation and empowerment breakdowns, lack of personal integrity and trustworthiness, and failure to develop cooperation/teamwork. Lastly, the interviewees cited poor planning practices/reactionary behaviour, failure to monitor actual performance and provide feedback, ego and attitude problems, lack of or misuse of critical resources, and failure to remove performance roadblocks as factors that cause. All the interviewees also reckoned that these factors negatively impact on the work of managers (Longenecker, Simonetti, & Sharkey, 1999).

Ineffective communication skills/practices were found to stifle the sharing of critical information with employees. In addition, this can result in failure to listen to the concerns of those around them, with potentially disturbing outcomes. They also indicated that the situation could encourage increased gossips, rumours, and turnover. It makes it difficult for employees to ask questions and understand new job responsibilities and interferes with the ability of managers and employees to make informed business decisions (Longenecker & Ariss, 2004). Inability to develop cooperation or teamwork was found to rather promote personal agenda of self-defence and self-glorification to the detriment of collective performance efforts. Being unable to lead and motivate others was found also to cause managers to be in jeopardy since in a dynamic environment, employees search to follow someone who can help them determine the proper course, stay on track, and successfully traverse through "hard moments" associated with fast change. It was clear for the responses that managers who failed to bring out the best in their followers will not succeed in rapidly changing organisations since they do not gain the respect and support of employees in all matters pertaining to the development of the organisation (Longenecker & Ariss, 2004). Poor planning practices were found to create disorderly crises that damage employee performance and morale. Failure by managers to monitor actual performance and provide feedback was seen to eliminate employee ability to use feedback to enhance work performance and prevents managers from improving performance timeously. Ego problems were found to be career killers because managers with oversized egos and accompanied bad attitudes alienate the people, they need the most to succeed. (Longenecker & Ariss, 2004). Lastly, it was found that lack of or misuse of critical resources could result in needlessly wanting of scarce physical, financial, or human resources (Longenecker & Ariss, 2004).

Again, it came out that the inability to ensure effective working relationships alienates managers from the informal network of knowledge and resources that they require to lead successful change efforts and creates barriers or obstacles to getting things done. The consequences of these, they mentioned included failure to set clear direction/clarify performance expectations, poor planning, reduced employee motivation, ineffective resource allocation, and the denigration of the ability of people to navigate through uncertainty (Longenecker & Ariss, 2004; Longenecker, Neubert & Fink, 2007).

From the foregoing, it is obvious that systems and institutions need to put in place measures to adequately prepare academic deans before they assume duties. Earlier, Katz (1955) suggested that an effective administrator or a manager requires certain skills which are technical, conceptual and human in nature to function well and therefore need to be schooled to acquire these skills. Squire (2001) advocated for management to be viewed as a professional discipline requiring that people prepare adequately before being appointed as managers. In the same year, Longenecker and Simonetti (2001) also posited that getting high performance results would require doing some things differently. Eight years later, Pretorius (2009) also outlined certain measures that when put in place, could ensure that appointed managers assume their positions fully prepared to reduce the leadership liabilities associated with the appointment of new and naïve managers. Recently, Belet (2016) tried to find ways in which organisations or

management institutions could come out with various approaches to sharpen the skills and competencies of managers, leaders and to looking for ways to improve their leadership offerings using the World Institute for Action Learning method to develop leadership skills of managers and future managers.

One common strand that ties the results of these studies is the need for managers or leaders to be prepared for the position, given training and orientation as part of the preparation process in order to become efficient and accountable to their followers. Once people get appointed, they should be prepared to do their jobs. This can be achieved through a well-structured orientation and training process. Orientation helps to provide new appointees employees with elementary information about the employer and their new jobs. Training programmes enable the new person to have the basic knowledge necessary to perform their job satisfactorily (Belet, 2016). Orientation and training programmes are vital ingredients in the process of developing a committed and highly flexible potential workforce. In addition, training programmes can help save employers money by providing big returns to the organisation, because an organisation which invests money to train and equip its employees leads both the employees and the organisation enjoying the dividends. Unfortunately, many organisations, especially public universities in Ghana and on the African continent appear often to overlook orientation and training programmes. In many instances, simply hiring and placing people in managerial positions have proven counter-productive in many business and educational organisations (Belet, 2016). That is why even tenured employees may need some level of training to be abreast because of the changing business environment. It is only when organisations put in place these measures that they could have the moral basis to hold the new appointees accountable.

## **Methodology**

### *Study Design*

The study employed the qualitative single case study research design to collect and analyse non-numerical data to understand why some academic deans in a public university in Ghana are often ineffective.

### *Population*

The population consisted of all faculty members and faculty officers in three public universities in Ghana.

### *Selection of Participants*

The sample consisted of a total of eight (8) faculty members and four (4) faculty officers in four faculties in the setting. In all, investigators selected a total of 12 interviewees using purposive sampling based on years of experience as staff in the University. The reason for the selection of few participants is valid and justifiable. For instance, according to Crouch and McKenzie (2006), picking less than 20 participants in a qualitative study will help a researcher build and maintain a close relationship and thus improve the "open" and "frank" exchange of information. This can help mitigate some of the bias and validity threats inherent in qualitative research. In support of selecting few participants in qualitative studies, Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) also intimated that saturation often occurs with the use of around 12 participants in homogeneous groups, hence the need for the 12 interviews. To anonymize participants, investigators assigned interviewees pseudonyms such as FM1-A (Faculty Member 1 in Faculty A), FO-A (Faculty Officer in Faculty A), FM2-B (Faculty Member 2 in Faculty B), FO-B (Faculty Officer in Faculty B), FM1-C (Faculty Member 1 in Faculty C), FO-C (Faculty Officer in Faculty C) etc.

### *Instrumentation*

The study employed an interview guide to explore the reasons why some deans are unsuccessful from the view of faculty members and Faculty Officers. Using an interview guide allowed the researchers to investigate the matters and get the participants' opinions and feelings on the topic. The instrument was

divided into three main sections: the introduction, the actual interview, and the post interview section. The introductory part provided the researchers the opportunity to know more about participants. Their permission was sought to audio tape the interview and they were assured of confidentiality. The actual interview section was classified into three categories touching on a number of issues. The first category contained seven items that explored the profile of the interviewees. The second category consisted of nine questions which found from participants, the causes of failure of deans as leaders. The third category comprised eight questions which sought to find out the consequences of managerial leadership failure of deans on the individual members of the faculty, the faculty itself and the institution at large. The fifth category of questions comprised three questions that elicited responses on the lesson(s) that deans of faculty/school, prospective deans, and faculty officers can learn from the pitfall of managerial failure at this level. The last section comprised three questions which focused on post interview issues and questions that the interviewees may want to ask.

#### *Ethical issues*

Prior to the interviews, informed consent forms were given to all participants and their rights and responsibilities made clear to them. The investigators took time to explain the study protocols to them, spelt out to them all the details on the rationale for the study and requested their full cooperation. These were to ensure that no ethical breaches were committed in the data collection process.

#### *Data Collection Procedures*

The researchers had face-to face interview sessions with the participants after they had booked appointments with them. It took the investigators two weeks to collect data from the interviewees. Each interview session lasted about 45 minutes and one month was used to transcribe the data. Since there was the outbreak of COVID-19 during the interview period, both the researchers and the participants adhered strictly to all the COVID-19 protocols of temperature checks, hand washing, nose masking, and sanitizing.

#### *Data Analysis*

Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, the researchers employed the inductive process to identify underlying ideas, patterns and assumptions that were expressed by the selected participants in order to answer the research questions posed: Why do some Deans fail as leaders? What are the consequences of a dean's failure, and what can be done to make deans better leaders?

We used thematic analysis which is a six-phase process that is both iterative and reflective. The process involves a constant moving back and forward between phases, as suggested by Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) to organise and prepare the data for analysis; as well as to describe/interpret the themes aimed at ensuring that accurate information is validated (Newby, 2010). Data analysis process involves a rigorous process of data familiarisation, data coding, theme development and revision. We read through the entire data set once before beginning coding (Nowell et al., 2017). Our next step was to acquaint ourselves with the data by reading and re-reading the data and becoming absorbed and personally familiar with its content. Patterns and meanings were searched for, which led to the process of manual coding using numbers. These were collated to identify broader patterns of meaning together with all relevant data extracts, for later stages of analysis (Nowell et al., 2017).

At the phase two, we produced codes from the data, and we kept revisiting the data, reflecting on it, interacting, and thinking about it as well as focusing on specific aspects of the data (Wong, 2008).

In phase three we arranged and collated important coded data extracts into ten themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Creswell 2014). The themes were described to draw on their interrelatedness. They were then interpreted in relation to the context of the study. Themes that seemed to depict similar explanations were combined at Phase 4. We then deleted themes that seemed not to have valuable information regarding the research question (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 4). By doing this, we were able to reduce the initial

ten themes to four themes: (i) posture (ii) poor interpersonal skills, (iii) no vision and direction, and (iv) communication failure. In Phase five, we determined what aspect of the data each theme captured and identified what was of interest about them and why (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). In the last phase, we reviewed the themes. We concluded that the four identified themes would enable us to produce our report (Braun and Clarke, 2006). By following this logical procedure, we are guaranteed a grasp of the presentation and the findings.

### **Data Credibility**

Notwithstanding the degree of bias, we ensured trustworthiness, credibility, applicability, and consistency of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We made sure that the report contained a rigorous procedural description, which delineated its purpose, how it was conducted, the processes that led to the various decisions, and how data was generated and managed to guarantee explicit transparency and trustworthiness (Kitto, Chesters, & Grbich, 2008).

To ensure the study was credible, we made sure that the results of the study results offered adequate imageries of the context and that these imageries were familiar to study participants who shared their experiences. We were not unaware of the possibility of our influence on the research and thus constantly reflected on it. Using exact excerpts, we provided an account on the interpretation process from the data supplied by the interviewees to explain and sustain our interpretations through meaningful deductions. We ensured transferability of the findings via making sure that the findings were applicable to similar contexts outside the case study situation. We also ensured that given the same data, other researchers would have obtained similar patterns of meanings to guarantee consistency or dependability, (Hislop, 2003).

## **Results**

### **Research Question 1: Why do some deans fail?**

This research question sought responses from 12 interviewees (8 faculty members and 4 faculty officers on what they feel are the causes of failure of academic deans. The under listed themes represent the participants' responses on why some deans fail. Poor posture, poor interpersonal skills, unclear Vision or Direction, and communication failure emerged as the main drivers that are responsible for the failure of deans.

#### **Theme 1 - Poor Posture**

The first theme that emerged from the many interviewees was the posture of deans. Posture refers to the way a dean inspires the people in the faculty by his/her actions.

Interviewees used this to refer to how their Dean treated members of the Faculty. Interviewees were of the view that some Deans employ divide and rule tactics which makes them unsuccessful. One respondent said, "*Some deans use divide and rule tactics which does not help at all. They rally people through political and ethnic lines... it means, if you do not belong to his tribe or political party, your views do not matter'. It is very sad how politics in entering our universities'* [FM2-A]. Another respondent put it this way, "*if you did not support the person during his campaign for deanship, he/she does not involve you in activities of the School/Faculty, and some even sometimes go to the extent of victimizing you in promotion issues"* [FM2-C].

#### **Theme 2 - Poor Interpersonal Skills**

The second theme that emerged was poor interpersonal skills of deans. Interpersonal skills involve the ability to communicate and build relationships with others. These skills tend to incorporate both the leader's innate personality traits and how he/she has learned to handle certain social situations. How the leader interacts with his followers, from a verbal and/or non-verbal perspective; they are non-technical in nature.

Interviewees used this to refer to the social skills deans use to interact with them at work (Mumford, Zaccaro, Connelly & Marks, 2000). Most of the interviewees attributed the unsuccessfulness of some deans to their lack of people's skills. In the opinion of a Faculty Officer, *'... some of them show no interest in the people they work with; they don't trust people and lack good manners. They don't greet you when they see you. You greet them and they will not respond'* [FO-D]. [FM2-D], a Faculty Member put it this way, *'Personally, I think some deans are unsuccessful because they do not trust the people they work with in the faculty. They are always thinking that someone is plotting something against them. If you don't trust them, how can you work with them? As a leader, I think you should have some level of trust in your members.'*

### **Theme 3 – Unclear Vision or Direction**

Vision is an essential means by which the leader focuses attention on what matters most; what he/she wants to accomplish as a leader. It permeates the workplace and is manifested in the actions, beliefs, values, and goals of the leader.

Interviewees used this to refer to the dean's vision and how he/she is able to convince members of his faculty to buy into the vision. How he communicates and clarifies the vision and how he is able to bring about change and produce results.

Most of the interviewees attributed the unsuccessfulness of some deans to their inability to communicate their vision and convince their followers to buy into the vision. For example, one faculty member indicated that *'Some of them are just visionless ...sometimes, I think the vision they provide is not what the School really needs ... what I see is that most deans do not share their vision with members of the faculty'* [FM1-C]. A Faculty Officer had this to say *'yes, it is true that deans provide a statement of vision to the Vice-Chancellor when indicating their acceptance of the deanship offer, but most of them do not really strive to achieve this vision'*[FO-B].

### **Theme 4 – Communication Failure**

Communication failure emerged as the fourth theme. Communication consists of those messages from a leader that are rooted in the values and culture of the organisation and are of significant importance to key stakeholders. Interviewees used this to refer to failure of the dean to frequently and effectively share critical information with individual employees and/or work teams. They also used it to refer to his/her failure to listen to the concerns of employees/staff.

One Faculty member put it this way *'some deans put their ideas above others. When they call for meetings, they virtually do all the talking'* [FM1-D]. In the words of Faculty Member [FM2-B], *'They go for Academic Board and other important meetings and they will not share information that need to be disseminated'*.

### **Research Question 2: What are the consequences of these failures?**

This research question sought responses from the interviewees on what they feel are the consequences of a supposed failure by an academic dean. Interviewees expressed their views on the consequences of deans' failure. From the responses, the interviewees indicated that when there was leadership failure on the part of the dean, followers become demoralized and dispirited. A Faculty Member [FM2-C] said *'Sometimes, you are not enthused to be part of the school/faculty; you feel demoralised, irritated and angry...'* A Faculty Officer put it this way *'You simply develop a low spirit...'* also, they intimated that followers backbite and are less productive when there is leadership failure. Faculty Officer [FO-A] said *'Faculty and staff sabotage because they do not understand happenings.'* [FM1-B], a Faculty Member said, *'You just perform your schedules as a lecturer and watch'*. Interviewers again pointed to the fact that when there is leadership failure, the goals of the school/faculty and the university are not achieved. For example, [FM1-A], a Faculty Member indicated that *'We appear to be doing something but not achieving anything concrete in relation to the vision of the school/university.'* [FM2-D]. on how they act when there appear to be dean failure, their views were similar. For instance, one said, *"you practically become inactive ..."*

[FM2-C] and another Faculty Member said, 'Faculty members focus on how to get promoted rather than contribute to achieving the vision of the school/university'. They all agreed that dean's failure has consequences on the individual, team, the dean himself/herself, faculty/school and the university as a whole. For example, [FM1-B] said, "when a dean is ineffective, I am afraid the whole university system suffers..." Another interviewee said, "Hmm, ...when a dean fails, everyone bears the brunt of the failure..." [FO-A]. Then FM1-A stated that, "The staff, the team, the Dean himself, the Faculty or School, and the University as a whole suffer the consequence".

From the responses of the interviewees, investigators developed a failure-consequences framework. The framework depicts how followers feel and act in a situation of dean failure. These emerged from the interviews of the faculty members and officers. This is shown in Figure 2. Participants reported many different feelings that they believe lead to all kinds of actions (or inactions) as well as direct or indirect consequences to the individual (I), T (Team), University (U), and the Dean (D). The model classifies these feelings, actions, and consequences to meaningfully interpret the results.

Figure 2: Consequences Framework for Dean's Failure

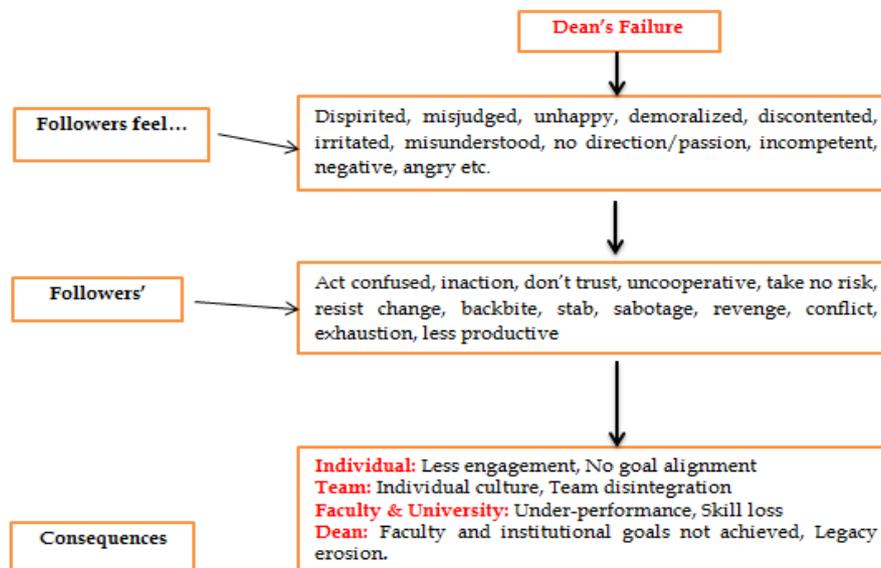


Exhibit 2: Consequences of dean's failure – Author's Construct.

### Research Question 3: What can be done to help make deans better leaders?

This research question sought the views of the interviewees on how deans can be made better leaders. The interviewees shared their views on how to make deans better leaders/managers.

To improve deanship performance, we asked interviewees to suggest ways and the responses were thematised into preparation for the position, training and orientation, and accountability. The majority of interviewees held the view that deans needed to be prepared for the position. One faculty officer in this regard remarked that, *I think faculty members should be prepared for the position. This is why I am personally against voting for deans. 'So, if you get someone who has no preparation at all but is liked by the masses, so he/she is voted for and then there are problems'* [FO-B]. In similar manner, FO-D, reiterated the point saying, *'in my view, prospective deans should be mentored, coached and prepared for the position'*. In their view, preparation is critical for their success on the job and so the system should make sufficient provision for the transition. The common theme that emerged among faculty members was that training was critical to the success of

deans. This position became clear in the responses of faculty members. In the words of FM2-A, *'the University, should from time to time, organize leadership training programmes for all faculty members because it is one of these who will eventually occupy the position'*. Another also said that *'university managements should organize periodic training programmes for deans on the tools of being a good manager'* FM1-B. Orientation for newly appointed deans became another theme which emerged from many of the views of interviewees. One of them said, *'orientation programmes for deans should be comprehensive ... should cover areas such as leadership styles, conflict management, delegation, accountability ...'* [FO-A]. In support of this view, a faculty member intimated that, *'the content of orientation programmes for deans must be relevant to the work they do'* [FM1-B]. Another theme that came up was accountability. On accountability, the many of the interviewees were of the opinion that deans should be made to account for their stewardship in the various schools and faculties. In the words of one faculty member, *'University Management should find a way of assessing them. As it pertains now, whether they achieve their vision or not is nobody's business'* [FM2-D]. A faculty officer shared a similar view when he said, *'deans must be assessed from time to time by their faculty and staff. The feedback will help them to improve upon their leadership'* [FO-B]. From the responses, it is clear that steps can be taken to reduce the tendency for a dean to fail.

### Discussions

A number of factors account for the failure of academic deans in a public university context. The first theme that emerged from the many interviewees was the posture of the Dean. Among the factors include their posture (how they inspire the people in the faculty by into action), poor interpersonal skills, and general communication failure, among others. Sadly, deanship position is an elective one in many public universities in Ghana. Therefore, popularity of a person could scale him through to become a dean without necessarily possessing the required skills to perform creditably on the job. The finding of this study concurs with an earlier one by Longenecker, Simonetti, and Sharkey (1999) and Longenecker and Ariss (2005) which also found ineffective communication skills/practices as the primary cause of managerial failure. In a similar study by Longenecker Neubert and Fink (2007) focusing on the causes and consequences of managerial failure in rapidly changing organisations, human skill deficiencies were among, like this study main causes of failure. As we see from this study, the majority of interviewees mentioned that human skill deficiencies are responsible for failure of deans though little mention of technical skill was made despite the follow up questions.

The Research Question 2 sought views of participants on the consequences of dean's failure. When there is a deanship failure, there is non-alignment of personal goals with the goals of the faculty/school and so, there is non-achievement of organisational goals and extensive non-engagement among faculty members and other staff of the faculty/School (Mumford, Zaccaro, Connelly & Marks, 2000). It is clear that team participation decreases in such cases leading to the development of a "me-first" culture. The faculty and the university as a whole also have their fair share which is seen in decreased productivity as a result of non-participation. Generally, when individuals stop offering themselves up to work, the dean's effectiveness reduces. This finding in this study is similar to earlier ones by which also found among other things that dean failure is evident in the negative feeling and actions (behavior) of faculty and staff which impedes the achievement of the school/faculty goals (Longenecker, Neubert, & Fink, 2007; Otara, 2015).

The Research Question 3 sought suggestions on the way forward to minimise the rate at which Deans fail in their faculties/schools. The problem must be tackled from the three main themes: preparation; training; orientation; and accountability. In this regard, university management has a major role to play. The finding of this study resonates with previous ones which all suggested strategies to prepare leaders or managers to be efficient on the job (Katz, 1955). In a similar manner, Squire (2001) viewed 'management' as a professional discipline requiring adequate preparation before an appointment as a manager. Also, the study by Pretorius (2009) which also outlined certain measures to be put in place

to ensure managerial efficiency to reduce the leadership liabilities is in line with findings of this study. However, the finding of this study does not really support the earlier one by Belet (2016) which tried to use the World Institute for Action Learning method as a strategy to sharpen the leadership skills of managers and future managers.

From all the foregoing, it is clear that systems and institutions need to be put in place to prepare academic deans before they assume their duties. The reason is that as earlier noted, an effective manager requires certain skills which are technical, conceptual and human in nature to function well (Katz, 1955). As has been suggested by Longenecker and Simonetti (2001), institutional desire to get high performance results from their appointees necessitates doing some things differently: What are the eligibility criteria for these appointees? How do they get appointed or elected? These issues have implications for policy and practice in the public university system in Ghana.

### **Conclusion**

The role that academic deans play in the attainment of faculty goals cannot be understated. Indeed, as representatives of the Vice-Chancellor in Schools/Faculties, they are required among other things, to initiate programmes that market their faculties and make them attractive to the demand public. In many public universities in Ghana, deans are unable to live up to the task for which they get appointed by Vice-Chancellors. In such instances, they disappoint not only their appointing authorities but also their immediate staff with whom they work. It is evident that a number of factors render many academic deans in many public universities ineffective. Some of these factors relate to deficiencies in their technical, human, and conceptual skills. It therefore becomes reasonably imperative that public institutions put in place mechanism to mentor, coach and prepare prospective deans for the position because their inefficiencies have dire consequences on the individual, the team, the faculty/school, the university, among others. On the individual, they are unable to align their personal goals with the goals of the faculty/school. This results in the non-achievement of organisational goals, a situation that often leads to extensive non-engagement among faculty and staff. On the team, participation in the affairs of the faculty decreases. The consequence of which is the development of a "me-first" culture. In the end, the faculty, and the university both suffer lower performance and lower productivity when members of staff do not wholeheartedly participate using all their skills. Undoubtedly, when individuals stop taking initiatives, the dean's effectiveness reduces. Thus, making it more difficult for him/her to share the vision and work through faculty and staff to their implementation. The loss of trust may be a consequence of their inability to achieve the ultimate goal of achieving their vision.

By inference, this study has shown that academic deans provide critical leadership roles without which their schools and faculties cannot function effectively. The study has brought to the fore that at the University of Cape Coast, various factors contribute to the ineffective leadership of deans as academic leaders. These include poor posture of the dean, poor interpersonal relationship, unclear of vision or direction and communication failure. It is evident most of the factors are human skills factors. The consequences of this failure reflect in the negative behaviour and actions of faculty and staff which is inimical to the achievement of the school/faculty goals within the University (Longenecker, Neubert, & Fink, 2007; Otaru, 2015).

### **Recommendations**

In view of the above findings, we recommend that the following measures be put in place to enhance the work of academic deans in the University of Cape Coast in particular and in public universities in Ghana in general.

It is being recommended that the University of Cape Coast Council should review the current policy of electing deans to one of appointing them into office. Deans should be appointed to ensure that

only suitable and well-prepared individuals get appointed. If this move calls for a review of the existing University of Cape Coast Statutes on the appointment of deans, the necessary legal amendments should be made to make the position elective.

The Directorate of Human Resource of the University should provide comprehensive orientation programmes on annual basis for newly appointed Deans to usher them into office. The topics for such orientation programmes should focus on human relations, conceptual, and technical skills.

Lastly, the Directorate of Human Resource should periodically organize leadership, coaching, and mentorship programmes for all faculty members as a way of developing them to be well prepared for deanship positions in the future.

### Limitations of the study

The use of the qualitative single case study design constitutes a fundamental methodological limitation to this study simply because the chosen design is deficient in procedural propriety. Case studies have been criticized for being synonymous to “freeform research” where little attention is given to methodological rigour. This study, therefore, is deficient the systematicity of procedures which many researchers have raised concerns about due to the relative absence of methodological guidelines. Secondly, single case designs are deficient relative to issues of construct validity, reliability, and replicability. Thirdly, as a single case study, the conclusions drawn from this study lack external validity and can only be generalised to contexts similar to the study setting. Furthermore, the use of non-random procedures to select few participants is not objective enough. In fact, the use of this sampling procedure does not allow for representation of elements within the population. The use of non-random sampling, unlike random sampling, makes it unfeasible to calculate confidence intervals and margins of error. The interview sessions focused directly on issues relating to the study topic on deans’ inefficiency and this poses as a limitation. A study of this nature can also suffer from the drawback of response biases due to poorly constructed interview questions since interview was the main method of data generation. Poor recall of issues could result in response inaccuracies which affect the results and conclusions of the study. Finally, the current study, being qualitative, is subject to interviewee giving what interviewer wants to hear and these do not guarantee quality data. These limitations may therefore affect the final results and subsequent conclusions that are generated based on the results of the study.

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