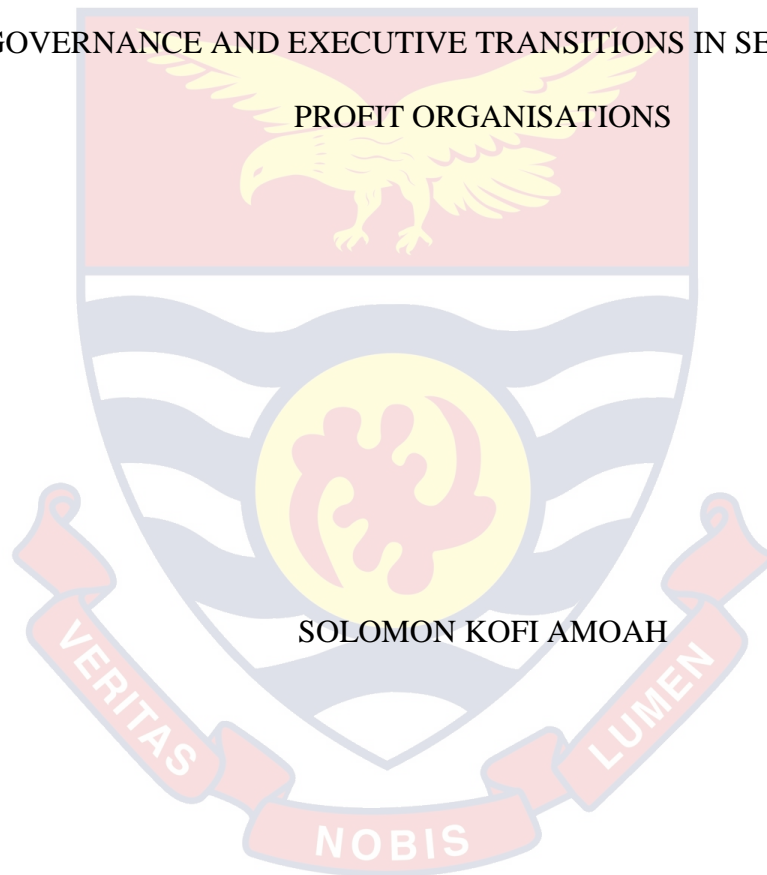
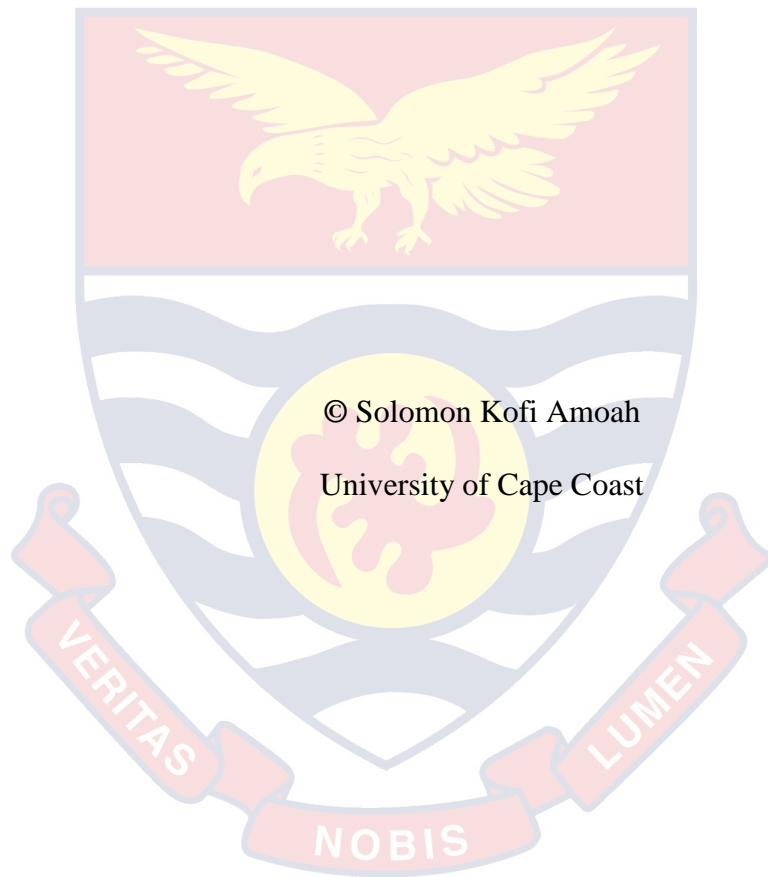


UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

CIVIL SOCIETY SUSTAINABILITY IN GHANA: A STUDY OF  
GOVERNANCE AND EXECUTIVE TRANSITIONS IN SELECTED NON-  
PROFIT ORGANISATIONS



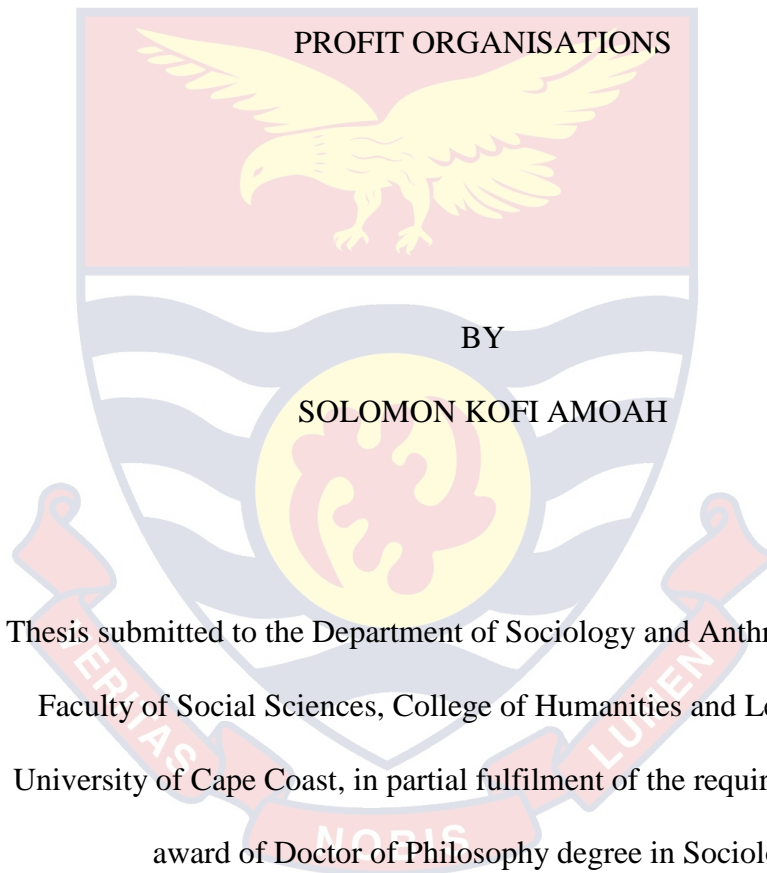
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CIVIL SOCIETY SUSTAINABILITY IN GHANA: A STUDY OF  
GOVERNANCE AND EXECUTIVE TRANSITIONS IN SELECTED NON-



JULY 2019

## DECLARATION

### Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: ..... Date: .....

Name: SOLOMON KOFI AMOAH

### Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature: ..... Date: .....

Name: DR. WILLIAM BOATENG

Co-Supervisor's Signature: ..... Date: .....

Name: DR. STEPHEN AFRANIE

## ABSTRACT

In Ghana, very little attention has been given to civil society sustainability, particularly, with regards to leadership and governance. Whilst previous studies have sought to understand the phenomenon from either a general viewpoint or emphasise only the financial dimension, the aspect of governance and leadership remains largely ignored. This present study therefore examined the governance systems of selected civil society organisation (CSOs) in Ghana and their effectiveness in managing executive transitions. It involved a cross-section of CSO practitioners, board members and experts of the sector in the Greater Accra Region. Underpinned by social systems and structuration theories, the study adopted a cross-sectional exploratory research design. It relied mainly on questionnaire administration, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and observation in the collection of the data. Governance systems were found to be poorly instituted in many cases and participants' assessment of their effectiveness was equally less than satisfactory. The poor institutionalisation of governance and particularly, ineffective management of executive transitions, abrupt departures and the lack of succession plans and roadmaps were identified as key threats to the sector's sustainability. The study recommends a regulatory regime for non-profit organisations, education of the citizenry about their stewardship and legal responsibilities for accepting to serve on non-profit boards, institution of comprehensive orientation programmes for boards. Also, boards should step up and own the management of executive transitions through the development of formal succession plans with clear exit strategies, compensation packages, and plans for managing post succession events.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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To all the participants, I say thank you for letting me into your organisations, and in some cases, private communications, for a comprehensive appreciation of the non-profit sector in Ghana.

Finally, my ultimate praise is to God for his grace and mercy throughout this work. He is, indeed, a faithful God.



## DEDICATION

To my dear wife, *Linda*, and my lovely daughters, *Magdiel* and *Anne-Merab*,  
for their love, unwavering support, and sacrifices.





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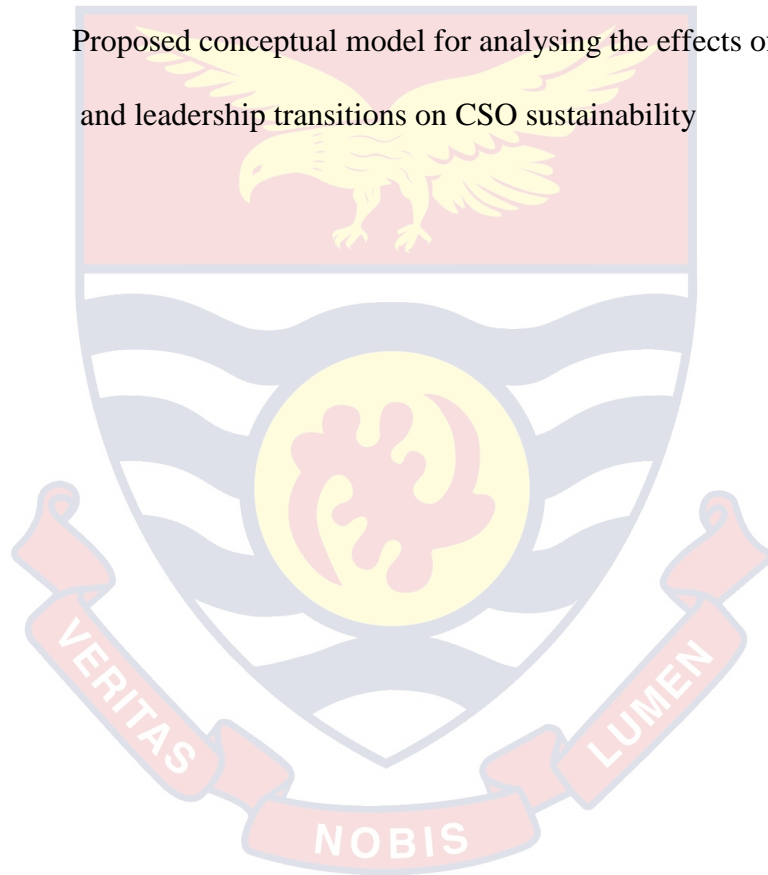
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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	Meaning
AAA	Accra Agenda for Action
ACINTaD	Africa Centre for International Trade
AONE	American Organisation of Nurse Executives
ARPS	Aborigines Rights' Protection Society
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CNO	Chief Nursing Officer
COO	Chief Operating Officer
CS	Civil Society
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSPS	Centre for Social Policy Studies
CSSI	Civil Society Sustainability Index
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ED	Executive Director
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GCYC	Gold Coast Youth Conference
GSAC	Governance Self-Assessment Checklist
HDI	Human Development Indicator
INTRAC	International NGO Training and Research Centre
ISO	Intermediary Civil Society Support Organisation
ISTR	International Society for Third Sector Research
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NCCE	National Commission for Civic Education

NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NPO	Not –for-profit Organisation
RDT	Resource Dependency Theory
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSA	Sub Saharan Africa
ST	Structuration Theory
STAR-	Ghana Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and

	Responsiveness, Ghana
TSL	Tata Sons Limited
UCC	University of Cape Coast
UCC –IRB	University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board
UGBS	University of Ghana Business School
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WACSI	West Africa Civil Society Institute



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Governance and leadership are recognised as key components of the sustainability of civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-profits in general (Jiang & Peng, 2011; West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI), 2015). Despite this recognition, existing analyses of civil society sustainability have either looked at the phenomenon generally without a comprehensive appreciation of the contribution of governance and leadership (WACSI, 2015; United States Agency for International Development (USAID), 2018), or emphasised the overarching significance of CSOs' finances for sustainability (Pratt, 2016; Arhin, Kumi & Adam, 2018). Unlike these studies, the present research explores the roles of non-profit organisational leaders, their governance responsibilities, and how these affect CSOs' sustainability in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. It examines the effectiveness of governance in CSOs, and how executive level transitions are managed in them.

This study's outcome is relevant to problem-solving in CSOs and the non-profit sector. The experiences shared by the study participants are important inputs for organisational theory. The knowledge also provides a theoretical base of propositions that are useful for understanding and dealing with organisational governance and executive transition challenges.

#### **Background to the Study**

The significance of civil society in Ghana's development cannot be overemphasized. As a third sector, civil society through its many projects and initiatives, has contributed so much to improving the country's Human Development Indicators (HDIs). These efforts notwithstanding, there remains

an avalanche of challenges in Ghana clearly proving that much more needs to be done. It is for this reason that there have been calls for civil society to engage in critical self-examination of its role and reflect on concerns about its long-term existence, impact, and value (WACSI, 2015). It has been a great concern to many that the sustainability of the sector is threatened and indeed this can partly be blamed on the decades-long erroneous equation of civil society sustainability with CSOs' robustness and ability to raise funds (McDonald, 2007; Weerawardena & Mort, 2006; Nicholls & Cho, 2006; WACSI, 2015; Weerawardena, McDonald & Mort, 2010) The unending pursuit of financial resources has been the driver of plans and strategies in the sector (Weerawardena et al., 2010) reducing its interest in introspectively asking the difficult questions.

The continuous existence of CSOs is not threatened in Ghana by the regulatory environment. Paradoxically however, it would be erroneous to think that the sustainability of CSOs in Ghana is not threatened. Whereas CSOs in the country continue to articulate citizens' demands, rights and interests, provide goods and services to population mostly unreached, the sector's continuous existence and vibrancy is not guaranteed if they are poorly governed, and do not have the resources (both financial and human) to pursue their social objectives. Lack of accountable and transparent systems and the dwindling trust levels in the sector have been identified by key institutions like WACSI and STAR–Ghana Foundation as threats to organisations in the sector.

Peoples' engagement in voluntary and civic activities in Ghana dates back to the pre-colonial era. However, the emergence of formal civil society

organisations is quite a recent phenomenon. The context of the present study is of great importance because civil society organisations are to a large extent shaped by the legal, socio-political, and economic character of their societies. To fully appreciate the discussion on non-profit leadership and governance in the present study, one must understand the evolution of the sector and how the sector has been shaped by other social institutions and circumstances within its operating environment. The discussion here concentrates on the evolution of the sector and the key drivers of the various changes the sector has experienced. The political, legal, and regulatory environment within which the CSOs have operated over the years is discussed along with how the organisations have responded at various times to the challenges and opportunities they have had both locally or nationally and internationally. It also discusses the civil society landscape in contemporary times in a bid to understand recent growing interest in the sector's sustainability. It further draws attention to the present study's interest in governance and executive transitions.

### **The political economy of CSOs in Ghana**

It is important to understand that the political economy of countries have an inextricable relationship with the political economy of organisations including civil society organisations. This relationship has further ramifications for the kind of leadership and management processes to be found in the organisations. It is for this reason that the subject of this section is considered important for the contextual appreciation of the subsequent sections of the thesis.

Ghana's history cannot be written without civil society and its key roles. The sector's presence in the country predates the nation's independence struggle. Its history dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century but began to crystallise around the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One can point to the Aborigines Rights Protection Society (ARPS) of 1897, the Fante Confederation of 1868 and the Gold Coast Youth Conference (GCYC) of 1929 as some of the formidable CSOs in Ghana before independence. These bodies were all formed with some public interest – the protection of the rights of the vulnerable and justice for the marginalised in society at the time. Quite interestingly, the political and legal environment at the time made sure that some of these groups were taken over by governments and political parties. A case in point is the co-optation of some farmers, women, and youth groups in the 1960s by the Convention People's Party (CPP) government (Tsikata, Gyekye-Jandoh & Hushie, 2013).

The period following the independence of Ghana saw further curtailing of the rights and freedoms of men which resulted in a further weakening of civil society. In the early post-independence period of 1957-1970, attempts to build a unitary state devoid of divisions also muted the activities of civil society until the return to parliamentary democracy (Tsikata et al., 2013). While the different socio-political environments had different ramifications on the civil society landscape in Ghana, for purposes of this study, I find the 1980s through to the late 90s particularly revealing for CSOs. Within this space of time a lot of changes happened locally and globally all of which affected the CS sector differently.

Ghana's socioeconomic and geopolitical state in the early 1980s spurred on a certain kind of civil society activism while silencing others. The



economic challenges of Ghana led to an increase in and accommodation of NGOs who were into service delivery working to bridge the gap of poverty and destitution across the length and breadth of the country. These organisations worked mainly at the district and community levels and often supported the state by providing basic amenities and social needs of the people. Quite clearly, their importance at the time fostered their accommodation. Considering that Ghana at that time was still under military dictatorship, one can understand why the advocacy type of civil society was less heard of (McGough, 1999).

Globally also, towards the end of the 1980s, there was an upsurge of civil society activities spurred on by happenings on the international scene. There was what could fairly be described as a hunger for civil society activities following the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, and the end of the Soviet Union. Around that time, there was a return to democratic rule in many developing economies following long years of dictatorship. Ghana was one of these countries returning from military dictatorship at the time.

After 1992, there was a boom in the activities of civil society organisations with several of them emerging in advocacy. Key CSOs played diverse roles towards democratic reforms and the subsequent adoption of the 1992 constitution and the return to parliamentary democracy (McGough, 1999). The constitution had a bill of rights which gave impetus to the work of these CSOs in the country (Atuguba, 2015). As such, the organisations were, and have been quick to resort to the Supreme Court for redress any time they felt they had cause to be concerned. There was indeed a constellation of events which acted as fertile grounds for the emergence and growth of civil society

organisations in the country in the 1990s. The poverty levels were high and rising, while there was greater drive for international trade and globalisation at the same time.

These aside, new lenses for monitoring and measuring economic growth were introduced; key among them was the Human Development Index (HDI). The understanding of civil society and its role changed in the 1990s. Civil society became partners of economic growth by facilitating the delivery of goods and services, mobilising the citizenry to participate in poverty reduction, and other socioeconomic and political activities in the country. Civil society began to be heard, talked, and written about more around this time (WACSI, 2015).

It is important to recognise also that international support for the activities of CSOs grew exponentially at this time with the involvement of the international community in African affairs. Reports say donors' frustration at the slow pace of change in the emerging economies, including those in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) despite heavy investments, influenced their direct involvement in civil society broadly (WACSI, 2015).

Following years of CSO activity in this democratic era of the fourth republican constitution in Ghana, attempts were made by the state to regulate the sector through some forms of reforms and legislation. These efforts were however opposed by the CSOs vehemently. The CSOs argued that the Bills (e.g. the 1995 NGO Bill and the 2006 Trust and NGO Bill) attacked the autonomy of civil society. In particular, the opposition to the 2006 Bill stemmed from the concern that it did not in essence flow from an earlier National NGO policy developed by the Kufour government in 2004.



One can safely say that the challenges of narrow civic spaces faced by many CSOs across Africa and Latin America cannot be claimed to be the case in Ghana (USAID, 2018). Civil society has been free to operate at least during the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic. It is even instructive to note as acknowledged by Atuguba (2015) that recent past attempts and the present calls for a regulation of the sector are all calls stemming from the thinking that these organisations enjoy too many freedoms needing an abridgment. Civil society operates freely and is part of the country's democracy and related successes. They have become indispensable partners in Ghana's democratic experiment (Atuguba, 2015).

A 2018 data available at the Department of Social Welfare places the number of duly registered CSOs in good standing with it at 2,873. It is worthy of mention however that there are so many other CSOs which are not registered with the Department. This is precisely so because earlier observations by STAR – Ghana revealed that a majority of CSOs in the country are informal, self-financing, voluntary associations based on a number of interests be they ethnicity, common hometown, faith or occupations (Tsikata, Gyekye-Jandoh & Hushie, 2013) without formal NGO status which only the DSW could give. This suggests therefore that formal sector CSOs which are largely donor funded with formal structure of operations are still in the minority.

This notwithstanding, the number and activities of these formal CSOs can be said to have seen some great expansion since the year 2000. The same period has seen a shift from purely service delivery organisations to public policy advocacy CSOs. These became so because of the demands of some key global initiatives adopted in Ghana. They include notably the poverty

reduction strategies, the Millennium Development Goals – MDGs (now Sustainable Development Goals –SDGs) and the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) among others. These key initiatives while encouraging the participation of civil society in the governance process, also defined what the interface of government, CSOs and donors should be. The initiatives renewed the strength and legitimacy of CSOs as important actors and partners in the development process. Further, the contributions of these CSOs began to be valued and sought for. They are now sitting at consultative tables and have been the originators of some policies and laws in Ghana. CSOs are invited to key national policy dialogue meetings in the country.

#### **Calls to enhance CSOs' sustainability**

There has been a consistent and sustained interest in civil society sustainability in Ghana, and this, as has been mentioned earlier, has resulted in a few discourses and in some cases, research projects by the sector itself (USAID, 2018; WACSI, 2015; Arhin, 2016). Key among these studies is the study commissioned by WACSI with support from STAR-Ghana. The outcome of this study which was titled “the state of civil society organisations’ sustainability in Ghana” was published in 2015.

The study was a broad assessment of CSOs sustainability in Ghana. It explored the state of the sector’s sustainability from the financial, operational, identity and intervention dimensions, painting the overall picture of the sector’s sustainability. The verdict of the report was mixed. While some CSOs were thriving, the majority in Ghana were either striving, or just surviving. This in part informed WACSI and Star –Ghana’s efforts to convene meetings

with CSOs three (3) years after the publication of the report to discuss strategies towards the sustainability of the CSOs.

The WACSI (2015) research identified the challenges and threats to the sector's sustainability to include the over-reliance on donors and the changing landscape of donor funding across the globe. It also identified the limited utilisation of ICT materials, and the limited communication about the impact and results of their activities and projects as key challenges of the sector. The report also mentioned low investment in accountable and transparent systems, perceived corruption, and lack of trust in the organisations as key threats. The challenge of recruiting and maintaining a competent human resource with expertise in their area of operations was also named as an important problem of the sector.

Among other things, the report bemoaned the continuous politicisation of the sector and partisan labelling as key challenges and threats. While the research and its conclusions touch on some governance challenges of the sector, a critical review of this portion (of the literature) reveals a dearth of information on the governance processes of these organisations in the country. Moreover, the WACSI (2015) study failed to emphasize the importance of leadership transition challenges for the sustainability of organisations in the sector by the sheer attention given to it in the report. Quite clearly, while practitioner interest in CSO sustainability is not in doubt, one notices a consistent focus on the never-ending pursuit of funds. Following its findings therefore, the study recommended much loudly, diversification and the setting up of subsidiary profit –based enterprises and other sustainability strategies through social entrepreneurship.

As would become clear in the outcomes of the meetings convened by WACSI and STAR-Ghana with CSOs in the country to reflect on their sustainability, financial soundness is almost always equated to sustainability in the sector by practitioners. However, good governance in the organisations is equally important as (if not important than) its finances. Indeed, poor governance practices have the potential to derail any gains made in other dimensions of the sector's sustainability.

Indeed, no one and no legislation officially threatens the existence and growth of CSOs presently in Ghana. In fact, Ghana has for several years been among the leaders of states that enable and safeguard the enjoyment of civic space for all peoples in sub-Saharan Africa only consistently behind Cape Verde (WACSI, 2018; USAID, 2018). Thus, the challenge of the country's CSOs are not much about the civic space nor their freedoms to operate. The present concern of the sector after a careful review of the discourse is mainly with cuts in donor funding and what Atuguba describes as "huge problems with internal democracy and organisational effectiveness" (Atuguba, 2015, p.88) to all of which organisational governance may be at the heart. Others may include the unhealthy politicisation and partisan labelling of some organisations and individuals in the sector and the capacity shortfalls in the areas of policy analysis and strategic thinking.

Questions regarding the civil society sector's long-term existence, the credibility of the institutions, their impact, efficiency, and effectiveness are not being raised from within as would have been expected considering how self-critical the sector is. That notwithstanding, the civil society sector in Ghana like many others across the globe, is at a time that its sustainability concerns

are taking centre stage (Arhin et al., 2018; Weerawardena et al., 2010; Gyimah-Boadi & Markovits, 2008; Hailey & Salway, 2016; Pousadela & Cruz, 2016; World Economic Forum, 2013; Vandyck, 2014). While there have been discussions on this, much of the discussion has been focused on financial sustainability (Arhin et al., 2018; Gyimah-Boadi & Markovits, 2008; Hailey & Salway, 2016; Vandyck, 2014).

It is, for instance, instructive to note that the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) with support from STAR-Ghana foundation assembled well over 100 CSOs across Ghana to reflect on strategies to adopt to make them self-sustaining organisations in the era of reduced foreign support. WACSI and STAR-Ghana convened about four (4) such meetings between September and October 2018 alone giving a fair idea of how important the problem of CSO sustainability is considered among CSOs themselves. Quite clearly however, one notices how skewed the discourse on sustainability is, even at such forums. Access to funding which is acknowledged to be only one aspect of sustainability has remained the dominant issues of interest. That is to say that the subject of financial sustainability continues to be the primary focus of the sector's discourse, which indeed remains the most pressing social problem of the sector. It is therefore not surprising that many of the research led by practitioners in the sector tend to be skewed towards financial sustainability issues. Academically however, there remains a gap in this sustainability discourse, which is the limited data on governance and leadership as a sustainability dimension.

Where researchers have given some attention to operational sustainability of civil society organisations in the country (Lewis, Boateng, &

Hayman, 2015; Darkwa, Amponsah & Gyampoh, 2006), it has been to the neglect of the critical role of governance and leadership even though it is now widely accepted that sustainability goes beyond just being financially vibrant (WACSI, 2015). It has everything to do with how organisations are governed which also includes the management of transitions organisations go through when one executive director must leave for another to take over. Leadership transition has particularly been described as a defining responsibility and one of the critical roles of governing boards of organisations. These changes which often accompany structural growth of organisations have great challenges that have the potential to threaten the existence of these non-profit organisations.

Indeed, all around the world, small businesses and particularly non-profits, which become successful, often encounter the challenge of replacing a one-man or family-run with more institutionalised structures. It is often difficult for example to have these organisations create independent governance systems with expert roles to help them thrive. While this problem is not peculiar to organisations in the non-profit sector, it is crucial nonetheless in civil society organisations because of their “public nature”. Civil society organisations use public funds (whether internal or external, it is funds from *some public*); and they are intended as organisations to influence public business as has been the case for decades. Nevertheless, many civil society organisations have failed to effectively sustain their identity, activities, and influence in the third sector of the economy largely due to the problems of structural growth and accompanying changes.

Many of these organisations have not been able to survive transitions, especially at the executive level of leadership in Africa and beyond. In simple



language, a leadership transition is basically about the processes leading to the departure of one leader and the arrival of a successor. This may sound guileless on the face of it, however, as has been acknowledged in the literature (James, 2017; Froelich, Mckee, & Rathge, 2011; Chapman & Vogelsang, 2005; Golensky, 2005), any change in leadership represents a huge adjustment in the life of an organisation. This change comes with great organisational risks. While it could be the end of an organisation's existence, it could also mark a positive new beginning.

Even though many reports exist with regards to the demise of organisations due to executive transitions, there is also documented evidence of organisational qualities that buffer against turnover disruptions. These qualities are often found in the existence of appropriate governance structures, systems, and processes (Stewart, 2016). In Ghana, a key number of not-for-profit organisations (NPOs) have significantly worked to develop long-term strategic plans, administrative and financial policies, with clearly defined roles. This, notwithstanding, governance and leadership continues to be an important gap in the NPO sustainability discourse because of the not so good experiences of leadership transitions in the sector which are footprints of poorly governed sectors. Leadership transitions have been described as taking an organisation through the furnace because of the uncertain outcomes it is clothed with. It is indeed a kilning process with a fifty-fifty outcome. While agreeing that leadership transition is an essential part of organisational development, some have likened it to 'a heart transplant' (James, 2017; Linnell, 2004; Allison, 2002; Stewart, 2016) requiring great care and skill to be successful and healthy.

### **Why is non-profit governance such a big deal?**

Non-profit organisations are invaluable in the daily lives of the communities they serve and support. In the third sector also known as the social economy (which is theorised to include non-profits and charities), the traditional external disciplinary mechanisms in other economic sectors are often absent or muted to say the least. There is a weakened market for corporate control which is often a check on managerial slack. For instance, in the financial sector, the threat of corporate takeovers has been a driver of good performance from managements and effective governance from boards. This is not the case with the social economy.

The social economic sector dominated by non-profits also lacks institutional investors who often serve as disciplinary checks on management under the threat of divesting their shares. Moreover, the block holders or investor activists we hear about in the corporate world are absent in this universe, hardly does anyone petition for a seat on a non-profit board.

Another factor offsetting the deleterious effects of weak governance is product market competition (Giroud & Mueller, 2011). This is however acknowledged to be a limited commodity in the social economy of non-profit organisations. These organisations are often in very specialised fields or services which disincentivise the existence of any competition whatsoever.

It is important to note that the measures identified above, are all market –based (external) disciplinary mechanisms which have been found to be more effective than statutory regulations per se. The much talked about regulation of the non-profit sector may be a very blunt instrument if not well carved. It may



be poorly tailored for certain non-profit situations and hence fail to regulate or limit managerial malfeasance in the non-profit sector (Kalodimos, 2017).

In an economy where many of the external disciplinary mechanisms are missing, and where they exist, muted and weakened, the value of internal organisational governance for the sustainability and effectiveness of organisations in that social economy cannot be overemphasised.

It is worth mentioning that there is even evidence to the effect that financial issues of non-profit organisations have direct relations with governance practices (Becker, 2018; Feng, Gordon, Neely & Slatten, 2016; Harris, Petrovits & Yetman, 2015). A case in point is Harris et al's (2015) study in which they examined the influence of quality governance on donor decision making across 10,846 organisations spanning the period of 2008 to 2010. Using seven (7) non-profit governance dimensions identified through factor analysis and integrated into the standard donor's model, they found evidence to the effect that government grants and donations were positively associated with six (6) out of the seven (7) dimensions of good governance included in the study. Harris et al. (2015) mention some key governance characteristics that influence financial flows of these organisations to include conflict of interest rules, audit committees and independent audits, board oversight and independence, review and approval of executive compensation, accessibility of financial information and management characteristics such as the absence of related parties in organisational operations. Similarly, Becker (2018) and Feng et al. (2016) draw attention to the great dividends of voluntary accountability in the non-profit sector. Voluntary accountability is found to improve NPO's trustworthiness, quality, and good public reputation.

### **The present focus**

Research shows that executives in non-profit organisations are central to organisational operations and so organisations overly reliant on their executive heads become more susceptible to disruptions brought about by their turnover (Stewart, 2016). It has also been acknowledged that organisations with the right governing structures of a properly constituted board and following well-designed governance processes, can become better, stronger, and eventually sustainable through leadership transitions (Allison, 2002). It is partly for this reason that the subject of CSO internal structuring, leadership, and especially executive transitions has gained great attention among practitioners around the world; but as has been proven above, not much of this exists in terms of research on the subject in Ghana.

In other words, there remains a dearth of empirical data on organisational governance and leadership (especially with respect to successions) in Ghana's non-profit sector. The present study is, therefore, an exploration of the governance systems of selected civil society organisations in the Greater Accra Region and their effectiveness in managing executive transitions. The research's interest in sustainability seeks to draw attention to governance and leadership as key components of CSO sustainability with the hope of satisfying some conceptual and theoretical gaps in existing knowledge.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Do non-profit organisations in Ghana have the institutionalised structures and practices of good governance to support the effective planning and management of leadership successions in the sector? This question is yet

to be answered. At least, it has not been empirically explored. However, in all sectors of public service and interest, governance practices remain important in safeguarding safety, routine feedback, strategic involvement, monitoring and improvement in quality (Jiang & Peng, 2011; Jiang, Lockee, & Fraser, 2011; Jha & Epstein, 2010; Freeman, Millar, Mannion, & Davies, 2016). As bodies with oversight responsibilities in statutory organisations, governing boards are saddled with the ultimate responsibility of upholding the quality of the activities and entire behaviour of the organisations they serve including its agents (Freeman et al., 2016). They are to define and manage the objectives, strategies, priorities, and the control systems of their organisations. This fundamental expectation is even greater when we speak of non-profit organisations. This is partly because of how the sector is funded and because of its socio-political significance.

Recently, there have been cuts in funding and voluntary individual donations for the civil society sector (Arshad, Razak, & Bakar, 2014) vis-à-vis a growing public relevance of the organisations in the sector. There is continued growth in demand for services in the non-profit sector (Cornforth, 2012) in the face of new and advanced challenges requiring the sector to respond effectively to these emerging and numerous challenges confronting it.

CSOs in the global south are presently operating in a less luxuriant environment characterised by increasing cuts in funding. Within this resource strain, there is a growing discourse on how organisations dependent on external resources can survive and thrive (WACSI, 2015; Lewis et al., 2015; Pratt, 2016; Appe & Barragán, 2017; Hailey & Salway, 2016; Arshad et al., 2014). Indeed, within this discourse, there has been a concern about

organisations' stability and commitment to social objectives as a key factor for survival and ultimate sustainability. The age-old resource dependency theory (RDT) for instance has held that organisations operating in resource-strained environments will only survive by their ability to reduce uncertainties with the operating environment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Meanwhile, organisations' ability or otherwise to remain stable and committed to their social objectives by reducing uncertainties in the environment is highly contingent on their governance and leadership.

Good governance in non-profit organisations is responsible for transparency, compliance and overall efficiency and effectiveness of organisations (Cornforth, 2012; Ostrower, 2007; Carpenter & Westphal 2001). Unlike other sectors of the economy (e.g. market and state) however, responsibility for good governance at organisational levels in the non-profit sector is almost solely borne by governing boards who serve as trustees of the public in the organisations. This is why governance and leadership have been recognised as an important component of civil society sustainability (WACSI, 2015; Vandyck, 2017; Bernstein, Buse & Bilimoria, 2016) and as such critical to the success of non-profit organisations all over the world.

In the discussion of CSO sustainability therefore, some have underscored the need for leaders who are mindful of change to make their organisations adaptable and future-facing to be sustainable (Lewis et al., 2015; Pratt, 2016). This includes the effective management of the processes leading to the hiring and firing of chief executives of the organisations (Carver, 2006; Linnell, 2004; Allison, 2002; McKee & Driscoll, 2008). As evidence suggests, this responsibility becomes even more definitive of a non-profit's governance

system when founding managers or long-serving chief executives are leaving and replacements are to be sought (Golensky, 2005; Mckee & Froelich, 2016). This recognition makes the turnover of the sector's top executives a key sustainability concern. Meanwhile, collectively, there is this agreement in the non-profit sector that leaders (founders and long-serving executive directors inclusive) whether good or bad, eventually leave. The departure of these executive directors and founders is potentially disruptive for organisations and in some cases emotionally charged for the people involved (Linnell, 2004). Eventually, the qualities of the leader are lost to the organisation for lack of proactive management of the inevitable change (Santora, 2004; Golensky, 2005).

The recent growth of non-profit organisations in Ghana in size and number is leading to an equally growing concern for their sustainability. This is partly because many of the early generation CSO leaders (the majority of whom are founders) are fast reaching retirement age thereby creating a possibility of a litany of executive turnover in the sector. Meanwhile, as stated earlier, lessons from elsewhere show that the envisioned turnover of these leaders could be disruptive for the CS sector depending on how they are handled (Linnell, 2004; Golensky, 2005; Stewart, 2016; McKee & Froelich, 2016; Santora, 2004). The possible future changes in the executive leadership of civil society organisations in the face of growing economic and socio-political significance of the sector in Ghana is an issue of great research concern. This inspires again the question of whether non-profit organisations in Ghana have the institutionalised structures and practices of good

governance that support the effective planning and management of leadership successions in the sector.

The extant literature does not provide much insight into this important question in the Ghanaian context. At best one finds a fleck of articles and opinions on these matters from some academics and mainly practitioners in Europe and America including those of James (2017), Froelich, McKee and Rathge (2011), Linnell (2004), Chapman and Vogelsang (2005) and Golensky (2005). Considering that all these studies have been conducted in countries with different legislative and geopolitical contexts compared to Ghana, a contextual understanding of CSOs governance, and leadership transitions, would be invaluable. It is important also to note that many of these writings were led by practitioners, and as such, many have been opinionated, proscriptive, and rich in data, but with little or no theoretical expositions underpinning them.

While WACSI (2015) and the USAID (2010; 2013; 2018) have both reported on CSOs sustainability in Ghana in separate studies, these reports have failed to offer a comprehensive assessment of how organisations in the sector are governed. The reports have also jettisoned an important governance function being the management of executive level successions in the sector. To fill these knowledge gaps, the present study examined governance and leadership transition practices in the civil society sector with a focus on executive successions and the leadership role of governing boards during transitions.



## **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the study was to examine the governance systems of selected civil society organisations and their effectiveness in managing executive transitions.

### **Specific objectives**

To attain its main goal, the study specifically:

1. Investigated the extent of institutionalisation of management structures and practices of good governance in the organisations;
2. Assessed the effectiveness of existing systems and internal mechanisms for ensuring executive control and accountability in the organisations;
3. Explored how executive transitions and successions are managed in the organisations;
4. Analysed the implications of executive transitions for the sustainability of civil society organisations in Ghana.

### **Research Question**

The study generally asks about the governance systems that exist in the selected non-profit organisations and how effective are these systems in managing executive transitions?

### **Specific research questions**

In line with the main question of the research, the following specific questions are posed:

1. To what extent are management and governance structures institutionalised in the selected organisations?

2. How effective are the existing systems and internal mechanisms in ensuring executive control and accountability in the selected organisations?
3. How are executive transitions and successions managed in the organisations?
4. What implications do executive transitions have for the sustainability of the non-profit sector?

### **Relevance of the Study**

While there have been a couple of studies in which the problem of boards and executive transitions has been given attention, many of these have been carried out in Canada, the United States, United Kingdom and other European countries all of which have different legislative and geopolitical contexts from those of Ghana. By international standards, the U.S. and Canada, for instance, have large and long-standing non-profit sectors (Herman & Associates, 2005) reflecting the character of their societies and their political, legal, and socioeconomic environments.

The present study, thus, provides contextual baseline data on CSOs' governance and especially leadership transitions for Ghana. The study makes contributions to knowledge on the ways organised civil society govern themselves including how their transition processes are managed. It is important also to state that much of the existing knowledge on governance and transitions in the non-profit sector has been largely *atheoretical*. These studies, many of which were led by practitioners in the sector have lacked the theoretical angle on which the data should rest. The present study is underpinned by theories thereby filling this intellectual void.



Moreover, the study makes fresh contributions to knowledge in terms of its methodological approach and novel findings. The methods employed here are expected to serve as a guide to academic researchers and practitioners with interest in navigating the difficult arena of civil society studies that seek to turn the spotlight on the institutions themselves. Also, the findings and its recommendations could guide the conduct of governing bodies in the third sector with lessons for state and other for-profit institutions in Africa. It could further serve to guide policy in the sector considering the renewed interest in NGO (self) regulation in Africa.

The study's findings also provide some insight into the challenges of founder transitions. This is particularly a dynamic area that has lacked research in Ghana but considering that many CSO founders in Ghana are reaching retirement age, the findings relating to their transitions are expected to be of a great contribution to our understanding of the process and how it is managed.

### **Context, Scope, and Limitations of the Study**

The present study focused specifically on civil society organisations in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Within the broad range of CSOs, the study limited its focus to the study of organisations that were registered and certified by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) to operate as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the country. The researcher recognises that the civil society sector is broad and encompasses many other organisations that were not registered with the DSW. However, these other groups and associations lacked the very organisation, structures, and systems that were the focus of the present research.

Two broad categories of civil society exist in Ghana. They include the loose groups termed the “organic civil society” that are mostly driven by interests and urgency. There is also the “organised” type of civil society with formalised operational structures and systems (Vandyck, 2017). The organic groups were not the focus of the present study. This was because, the study fundamentally explored governance systems and practices, which are mostly absent in the organic type of civil society. The focus of the research was on not-for-profit organisations (NPOs) under the organised civil society with emphasis on their governance systems and leadership transition practices.

While there are many definitions of organised civil society, Lewis (2001) articulates a structural and operational definition given by Salamon and Anheier (1992). This definition highlights many important characteristics exhibited by many CSOs. The characteristics include volunteerism, independence, organisation, and non-profit distribution (Lewis, 2001). It is generally expected that the organisations which make up organised civil society should have some degree of formality. These organisations must be formally established with a coherent governing document, display transparency, and generally conduct themselves in a manner that is ‘consistent with high standards of management’ (Garton, 2009). It is this kind of organisation that helps in distinguishing organised civil society from acts of altruism that are often undertaken by individuals on a less formal basis. As emphasised by Garton (2009) therefore, it is “desirable that CSOs are not merely organised but organised according to principles of *sound management*” (Garton, 2009, p.37 emphasis added). Some authors recommend an ‘adequate governing structure’, as others talk about ‘organisational integrity’ when

speaking of properly organised civil society, which is distinct from the informal sector. Without these key distinctions, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to carry out a study such as this current one in the third sector.

In line with the interest of this study, organisations with some level of formality were considered. Therefore, the minimum selection criterion was that an organisation must have first and foremost been formally registered, with some level of operational structure, and given an NGO status by the DSW. The study was limited to these kinds of organisations, and therefore, inclusion in the study population was purely criterion-based. For one aspect of this study (the qualitative), sample selection was limited to certain organisations based on either their experiences with leadership transitions, or the length of stay of their present executive leader. Beyond those organisations (which constituted the primary population of interest), the perspective of some other experts (non-practitioners), knowledgeable on the subject matter, were also sought.

Also, to guide its methodological focus, the study excluded faith based organisations (FBOs), trade unions, and professional associations. Like many of the organic forms of civil society (Vandyck, 2017), many FBOs, trade unions, and professional bodies are not registered with the DSW and often operate in ways different from traditional CSOs.

At the level of the organisations, the study focused on leadership, and largely on the perspectives of managerial personnel.

One significant limitation of the present study was its difficulty of generalisability. This was mainly due to sampling constraints. The Greater Accra Region was selected purposively for the study. In addition, the study

used systematic random sampling and purposive sampling techniques in the selection of the study organisations. The limited selection of samples made the sample non-representative of the vast population of CSOs in the region. While aware of the limitation of generalisation with this approach, within the category of organisations and individuals considered, respondent representativeness was sought.

### **Operational Definition of Terms**

The section defines some key terms and concepts used extensively in the work and how it has been used in the context of the present thesis. I offer these definitions cognisant of the fact that their usage in other contexts may be different. Some of these are dealt with in detail under chapter two.

#### **Non-profit sector**

The definition of the non-profit sector in this study is adopted from Anheier (2005). It refers to the totality of “private, voluntary, and non-profit organisations and associations” (Anheier, 2005, p.3-4). It describes a conglomerate of organisations and actions next to the institutional bureaucracies of governments, states, or the “public sector on the one hand, and the for-profit or business sector on the other (Anheier, 2005, p.4). When referred to as the “third sector” (Atuguba, 2015; Anheier, 2005), in this thesis, the reference sets the government and its public administration agencies apart as the first, and the private sector or the world of business and commerce as the second.

#### **Civil society**

In recent decades, as key political and social debates tend to focus on ways of limiting both the profit logic of the market and the authoritarian/

bureaucratic logic of the state, civil society is conceptualised as a “third sphere”, as a space of voluntary, non-profit organisations performing vital functions by following a logic of solidarity (Cohen & Arato, 1992).

In contemporary discourse, civil society is typically viewed as the “third sector” of society, separate from the public and the private sectors (Atuguba, 2015). In that sense, it is easier for the purposes of this study and in line with existing knowledge (Pagoulatos & Kastritis, 2013), to provide a negative definition of civil society, in terms of what it is not (neither government nor market) than a positive one in terms of what it is. In the context of this study therefore civil society refers broadly to “voluntary associations and groupings for collective action to influence public policy around shared interests, purposes and values, without seeking to take over the reins of government” (Atuguba, 2015, p.83). It is defined here to include registered and unregistered service delivery NGOs, charities, advocacy groups, community based organisations, faith-based organisations, professional bodies, business associations, trade unions, social movements, self-help groups, and all such related non-governmental and non-profit groups (Atuguba, 2015).

### **Organised civil society**

Organised civil society is used in this study to refer to civil society organisations that are formally established with a coherent governing document and bound by the company’s code. Such an organisation is required to have some degree of operational formality. These organisations exhibit the five (5) key characteristics proposed by Salamon and Anheier (1992), namely that they should be *formal* (institutionalised to regular meetings, having office

bearers, and some form of organisational permanence); *private* (institutionally separate from government, even if it receives some support from government) as has been described under the concept of civil society itself; and *non-profit distributing* (where financial surplus is not distributed among the owners or directors). These organisations should also be *self-governing* (having the ability to control and manage their own affairs) and *voluntary* (at least some degree of voluntary participation in the conduct or management of its affairs).

### **Governance**

Governance in the civil society sector refers to the way in which power, authority and key responsibilities are exercised. It is particularly concerned with how decisions are made, the predominant values and ideologies of the sector and the institutional or regulatory framework. It extends to all the key processes of organisational policy making, planning, management, financing, service delivery, and regulation. Explanation of governance of CSOs requires a fair understanding of their contexts and stakeholders.

The term governance has a Latin origin which means to steer or give direction (Cornforth, 2012). Gill (2001) defines governance as “the processes, structures, and organisational traditions that *determine* how power is exercised, how stakeholders have their say, how decisions are taken and how decision-makers are held accountable” (2001, p.1, emphasis added). Similarly, Cornforth (2004) defines organisational governance as “the systems and processes concerned with ensuring the overall direction, control and accountability of an organisation” (Cornforth, 2012, p.8). The process is described by Hughes (2010) to mean making collective decisions about



important issues, including the purpose of collective action, strategies for achieving purpose, and oversight and accountability mechanisms. While acknowledging that governance described here could take place at several levels, the present focus is on governance at the organisational level.

### **Governance structures and systems**

Structure basically refers to the repetitive behaviour of an institution. Governance structure would then mean the repetitive behaviour of agents of an organisation in relation to how power, authority, and responsibilities are exercised by the organisational actors.

Governance structure in the present study is taken from the perspective of Gill (2001) to mean a distinctive set or cluster of 'systems', responsibilities (functions) and processes (practices) that are logically consistent with one another (Gill, 2001, p.10). From this perspective, structures and systems are applied interchangeably in this study, only based on their logical consistency and not to argue that the two are [always] one and the same.

The body with the main responsibility to carry out the governance functions of an organisation is the board or whatever that body of the organisation may be. That said, the governance system goes beyond just the board to include the general framework of responsibilities within which an organisation operates. This is defined here to include the regulatory, audit and reporting requirements and relations with stakeholders of the organisation. It also includes other actors within the organisation who contribute in various capacities towards carrying out the governance functions (Cornforth, 2012, p.9). These actors may include managers, staff, members, and other advisory groups within and outside the organisation. In the present study, they include



but not limited to the fiduciary and oversight roles of the board, how a board manages its own activities, managerial actions, and processes, as well as planning in an organisation.

### **Board**

The term board is used in this study to refer to the governing body which serves as the trustee of the public in a non-profit organisation. It connotes the council or board of directors depending on the creation of the particular organisation.

### **Sustainability**

There are several definitions of sustainability some of which are very technical. The concept of sustainability is used in this study to refer to the ability of an organisation to cope or adapt to changes and ensure the effective use of resources to maintain its mission and relevance now and in the future.

### **Network organisations**

The term network is used in this study to refer to CSOs made up of subscribers or a coalition of individual (unitary) organisations created based on their thematic area of operation.

### **Organisation of the Thesis**

The thesis is organized into seven (7) chapters. Chapter One serves as the introductory chapter. It provides the background and sets the tone for the thesis as has been done here. The chapter contains the statement of the problem, the objectives and research questions. It also provides a justification for the present study and defines some key terms used in the thesis and the context within which they are applied here. The chapter then ends with an overview of the entire thesis and how it is organised.

Chapter Two presents the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the study; it reviews the literature relevant to the present study. Here, the main theories and concepts used in the study are presented and their application in the present study is explained. The chapter also contains a critical review of existing knowledge related to the problem of interest. It contains both conceptual and empirical literature on the subject matter. The Literature Review section of the chapter is further divided into subsections to reflect the interest of the review in relation to the objectives of the study.

In Chapter Three, a detailed methodology for the study is presented. The chapter explains the main philosophy behind the researcher's choice of research design and the ensuing methods of research. It gives a brief overview of the target population and the sampling strategy employed. Here, the key methods of data collection and the rationale for choosing these methods are explained. The chapter also discusses all the ethical considerations taken in the conduct of the study.

Chapter Four presents the first part of the results and discussion of the findings of the present research. The chapter focuses attention on organisational governance systems' institutionalisation, and governance effectiveness in the selected organisations in line with the first and second objectives of the study. Chapter Five is dedicated to a discussion of executive transitions and succession planning and presents findings on the fourth objective of the study. It thus discusses the implications of governance and executive transitions for CSO sustainability.

In Chapter Six, attention is paid to a very important and growing concern in the civil society sector which has so far defied grand solutions –the

phenomenon called founder syndrome. The seventh and final Chapter of the thesis summarises the entire work and reaches conclusions based on the findings. The chapter also contains key recommendations proffered based on the key findings. Here, some suggestions are provided regarding directions for further research.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### Introduction

This chapter as was described in the preceding chapter is dedicated to a review of literature relevant to the present study. There are some important studies related to the present discourse that are extensively reviewed in this chapter to first provide a context and guide to some extent, the conduct and discussion of the study's findings. The literature review includes both theoretical and empirical reviews. The chapter also outlines the theoretical framework within which the study was conducted, and the outcome discussed. It discusses two (2) key theories and conceptual models which serve to guide the theoretical focus of the present study. The Social Systems Theory and Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory are the main theories underpinning this study. The Managerial Hegemony theory and Policy Governance model by John Carver serve as supplementary theories in this study. The conceptual model employed is the Civil Society Sustainability Framework. These theories and models are presented together with explanations of their application in understanding the study contextually and placing it in perspective.

#### Review of Related Literature

This section reviews literature that is largely research –based on or related to civil society governance and leadership. The review broadly analyses literature related to civil society organisations, but the analysis focuses particularly on three (3) key themes with the first being works on civil society and its sustainability issues. The second theme of literature is corporate/organisational governance-related research. In the final third,

attention is narrowed on a systematic review of studies which have paid attention to executive turnovers and transitions.

### **Civil society sustainability**

Within the NGO sector itself, there have been great concerns about the sector's sustainability even back in the days of the sector's explosive boom in funds and related growth (Moore & Stewart, 1998). As self-critical as the sector is, there were and remain concerns about the possible effects of this financially motivated growth on ethical values and institutional competence of organisations in the sector. The other concern which is more easily classified under sustainability concerns had been how these organisations were going to adapt to what Moore and Stewart term "a less luxuriant future" characterised by drastic cuts in funding (which obviously is playing out now). This problem has been given attention in the existing literature howbeit incomplete.

Amid the varied solutions articulated in relation to the above problems is a suggestion of collective self-regulation for the restoration of public confidence in the sector (Moore & Stewart, 1998). Moore and Stewart argue that four (4) generic problems of NGOs in less developed economies heavily dependent on foreign funds could be near solved with self-regulation. They identify the four (4) key problems to be structural growth, accountability, economies of scale and evaluation problems. While these problems and their suggested solutions here may be applicable in several countries, the known contextual differences must be appreciated and addressed through context-specific research.

The importance of civil society sustainability has been demonstrated in the amount of research and editorial traction the concept has enjoyed within

the past decade. The concept has attracted interest from practitioners and academics alike. Among the related studies reviewed include but not limited to works by WACSI (2015), Hailey and Salway (2016), Lewis et al. (2015), Arhin (2016), Pousadela and Cruz (2016b), Hayman, James, Popplewell, and Lewis (2016), World Economic Forum (2013), Vandyck (2014; 2017), and USAID (2011;2013; 2018) among others.

Generally, a sustainable organisation is one with the ability to respond effectively to and strategically deal with change and continue in the service of its commitments to key constituencies. From this holistic perspective, a lot of work including primary research has been done on CSO sustainability. Many of these studies have identified that there are different dimensions of sustainability. The dimensions have been identified to include legitimacy, leadership, mission and values, resourcing, space and context and a host of others (Lewis et al., 2015; WACSI, 2015; Vandyck, 2017; 2014; Pratt, 2016).

The USAID CSO sustainability index conceptualises CSOs sustainability along seven (7) dimensions – legal environment, organisational capacity, financial sustainability, advocacy, service provision, infrastructure, and public image. The present study is more in line with the organisational capacity dimension of the USAID’s sustainability index howbeit with some differences. A sustainable CSO sector will contain a critical mass of CSOs that are transparently governed and publicly accountable, capably managed, and exhibit essential organisational skills. The organisational capacity dimension of the index addresses the sector’s ability to engage in constituency building and strategic planning, as well as internal management and staffing practices within CSOs. Finally, this dimension also looks at the technical resources



CSOs have available for their work (USAID, 2012). While this index has churned out some good data for assessing the sustainability of Civil Society in selected countries, its neglect of the process and outcomes of governance and the important governance function of managing leadership successions is an important research gap.

Similarly, the West Africa Civil Society Institute's 2015 assessment of the general state of civil society sustainability in Ghana used four (4) similar dimensions. The WACSI Civil Society Sustainability Index (CSSI) was computed along the dimensions of finance, operations, identity, and the impact of interventions and came out with an overall composite score of 2.7, a score they described as far from satisfactory. Again, in this study, no particular attention is given to governance and leadership transition even though it is identified as key to CSOs sustainability in the same study.

Hailey and Salway (2016) on their part discuss the global financial challenges to civil society and describe some of the emerging options as described by Arhin (2016). Like the WACSI study, they note particularly, social enterprises, social investing, and for-profit subsidiaries of NGOs as proposals to ensure the sector's sustainability. Hailey and Salway (2016) agree however that, before looking at the purely financial nature of sustainability, it is important to analyse other organisational and contextual indicators relevant to CSO sustainability: everything from organisational objectives to relationships and the strength of a CSOs' internal structuring. This is an important recognition in literature. Quite curiously, however, this is essentially what is scanty in the discussion of civil society sustainability around the world. The literature as is evident in the few cases cited here is fraught with



studies predominantly focused on financial sustainability to the neglect of other aspects of sustainability.

Appel (2018) recommends a South–South Development Cooperation (SSDC) with CSOs' participation as a viable development alternative with the potential to dealing with the challenges of civil society in the present aid environment. This cooperation she argues has the potential to challenge and possibly divert the power asymmetries and present dependencies found in the traditional North–North aid relationship (Appel, 2018). In Appel's proposal, there is a diversification in the actors of aid relationships and the kinds of resources often involved with a possibility of altering the development discourse.

While Appel (2018) uses an insightful case of SSDC and CSOs' participation in Latin America to make a case for her proposal, the argument again jettisons an important aspect of the discourse on responding to sustainability concerns which is the internal structuring of CSOs, which is known in literature to improve organisations' resilience in changing environments. Reshaping the international aid relationship is a wonderful idea and it is working for states and even the private sector. However, what is clear about the future is that even where this works well, the SSDC international aid environment is also bound to change only at a deferred date. In this discourse, the question of the state of organisations' internal structuring and ability to respond effectively to changing environments has still not been well addressed.

Verbrugge and Huyse (2018) follow the same trajectory and in the end refers to diversification of income resources, collaboration and consortia

building and what they term internal renewal as the panacea for CSOs to remain sustainable in the changing aid environment. While Verbrugge and Huyse's (2018) internal renewal includes changes in organisational structures and activities, they here again were referring to decentralising CSO operations to middle and low-income countries. This according to them offers funding opportunities to CSOs in the global south. They also refer to building in-house capacity and the professionalization of CSOs into some sort of project implementation agencies (Verbrugge & Huyse, 2018).

Contributing to this discourse on CSO sustainability, Arhin (2016) notes the identity changes of civil society in Ghana. This is happening not just because of funding and capacity challenges, but because the whole nature of civil society in Ghana is being realigned from NGO delivery to a civil society that is engaged in local contexts and issues, putting a greater emphasis on local political, economic, and social issues. Similar to Appe (2018) and Verbrugge and Huyse (2018) Arhin's study noted the drastic shift from being a very aid-dependent country (10% of GDP) to being a middle-income country and how this is changing the face of funding for non-profit organisations as well. Available funding as has been noted elsewhere is now being more tied to specific projects. This according to Arhin (2016) is weakening the overall capacity of civil society in the country. As a result, many of these bodies are evolving into social enterprises working on certain income generating projects to keep an income stream. A variety of organisations that exist on paper are inactive (not showing promise of sustainability) and this is not necessarily a Ghanaian problem. Such organisations provide only minimal benefits to their members or constituencies/ societies they represent. The reasons put forward

for the inactivity of these organisations are as varied as the organisations themselves. They include inadequate funding, inhospitable and hostile political climates, poor organisational governance, and these organisations' own misunderstanding of their roles.

In what appears as a similar context to Ghana, Pousadella and Cruz (2016) worked on “the sustainability of Latin American CSOs” and acknowledged the dramatic shift in the Region’s position within the international aid architecture. Pousadella and Cruz pointed to decrease in funding to Latin American CSOs owing to the Region’s “increasingly consolidated middle-income” status (2016, p.606). They offer a detailed account of the nature of funding and funding relationships in Latin America using country –level data. The study identified and bemoaned the reliance (or rather, over –reliance) of the Region’s CSOs on international cooperation funds, government contracts and what has been described as a mixed funding with minimal private sector participation.

Particularly, their differential assessment of the impact of the funding landscape on organisations engaged in advocacy compared to service delivery and the possible erosion of the autonomy and advocacy capacity of CSOs was an important contribution to the literature. Compared to Arhin (2016), Hailey and Salway (2016), Arhin et al. (2018) and many other studies in which CS sustainability has been the focus however, the attention of Pousadella has also been on financial sustainability in the face of changing international resource landscape with virtually nothing on the importance of other operational factors for the survival of CSOs.

Quite clearly, Pousadella and Cruz (2016), Pratt (2016) and Arhin (2016) all addressed the issue of CSO sustainability from the same perspective. In fact, for Pousadella and Cruz (2016), they argue, howbeit subtly, that finances remain the most important sustainability concern in Latin American CSOs.

In the case of the WACSI (2015) and USAID (2011; 2012; 2013) studies however, attempts were made to give a rather general assessment of CSO sustainability but these studies inexorably tend to also suffer a skewness to finances of organisations because that has indeed been the main concern of the practitioner. Clearly, there has been research interest in CSO sustainability in several countries of the world including Ghana. It is worrying however to note that nearly all the research and articles have skewed attention to the resource dimension of sustainability to the neglect of other important dimensions acknowledged by many of these authors themselves. This limits the appreciation of the other dimensions of sustainability. In the sustainability literature, operations and identity dimensions are noted as important components of non-profit sustainability, empirically however, very little attention has been paid to these components. A possible explanation for this dearth in the literature is that many of these studies have been practitioner-led and for that reason their problems of interest have been more social than academic.

Thus far, the question of civil society sustainability is indeed on the front burner and has been a primary concern to activists and researchers alike. The traction of the subject over the past four or so years shows its importance. Many of the authors on the subject have been concerned, and genuinely so,

with one thing: understanding how the future of civil society in low and middle-income countries would be. This concern is shared by WACSI (2015), Pousadella and Cruz (2016), Pratt (2016), Appe and Pallas (2018), Hayman (2015; 2016), Appe (2018), Hayman and Lewis (2018), Arhin (2016), Arhin et al. (2018) and Appe and Barragán (2017) among others. While they each address the problem of aid reduction and how it affects the civil society sector from different perspectives and contexts, one notices a theme running through these works. One gets the sense that aid reduction is a global phenomenon even though different regions are experiencing it differently. The response of the sector to this situation as can be gathered from the literature is equally similar across several regions. They have ranged from recommendations for a consideration of new relationships between international aid actors (Appe, 2018) to a diversification of attention to profit generating ventures like social entrepreneurs among others (Verbrugge & Huyse, 2018; Pousadella & Cruz, 2016; WACSI, 2015; Arhin et al., 2018).

Thus, while the funding challenges and hostile political environments of NGOs have received sustained research attention from academics and the practitioner community, the challenges within the domains of these organisations; being the governance systems and practices and the organisations' own understanding of their roles have received very little attention. Hence, the present study focuses attention on one of these important yet scantily researched factors of civil society sustainability which is the governance and leadership dimension.

## CSOs and organisational governance

In their book on leadership and governance, Gandossy and Sonnenfeld (2004) chronicled numerous scandals and “white collar” criminality recorded in the two decades in the lead up to their publication. While recognising these scandals and crimes as stemming from the failure of corporate governance, they significantly attribute partly the lack of awareness or ignorance of their occurrence to succession politics. They wrote in their preface while chronicling some of the scandals that “everyone seemed to be so distracted by succession politics and internal political sabotage, no one seemed to know about the complicated top –level scheme” (2004, p. xii-xiii).

The corporate mis-governance of that time drew a lot of attention to how institutions are governed and the responsibility of governing boards for executive oversight. Great lessons were indeed learnt from the scandals of WorldCom, HealthSouth, Adelphia, Arthur Andersen, Global Crossing, and almighty Enron in the early 2000s, all of which Gandossy and Sonnenfeld (2004) label as corporate governance scandals. Indeed, in the case of Enron, it had to take one woman to blow the whistle on the explosion. She was uncomfortable with Enron’s off –the –books activities, questionable accounting practices and excessive executive compensation packages (Gandossy & Sonnenfeld, 2004). Many of these scandals and related issues can be laid squarely at the doorway of the governing boards of these organisations. Gandossy and Sonnenfeld (2004) cite cases of poor board recruitments, ineffective boards and alludes to the now known challenge of hiring names rather than knowledge. In many of these failed organisations,



they argue, that there was the absence of individual accountability and open dissent.

The happenings discussed above have drawn a lot of attention to corporate governance in organisations, but research proves that the many recipes recommended by governance experts in these studies have not been the panacea for governance problems in organisations. The failure of the many recommendations for good governance is motivating interest in the human side of governance –a shift from the structural approach which focuses on rules and procedure to an understanding of human behaviour in organisations often seen in the unique complex interaction between structure and agency.

It cannot be overemphasised that good governance in organisations remains one of the most important means of safeguarding the safety and long-term existence of institutions of public interest. While governance is broad, boards and councils often are expected to bear the ultimate responsibility of ensuring that governance at institutional levels are done right.

This fundamental expectation is even greater when we speak of non-profit boards particularly because of the cuts in funding and voluntary individual donations for the sector (Arshad et al., 2014). While this is happening, demand for services in the CS sector has witnessed a continued growth (Cornforth, 2012). Some have maintained that, for the sector to respond effectively to the emerging and numerous challenges confronting it, there is the need for good governance. As Cornforth (2012) and Ostrower (2007) both emphasise, good governance in non-profit organisations is responsible for transparency, compliance and overall efficiency and effectiveness of the organisations. It is based on this that many studies have



sought to link the effectiveness of non-profit boards to overall organisational effectiveness (Carpenter & Westphal 2001; Arshad et al., 2014). Within the resource strain, there is a growing discourse on how organisations dependent on external resources can survive and thrive. Within this discourse, there has been a concern about stability and commitment to social objectives as key factors for survival and ultimate sustainability. The age-old Resources Dependency Theory (RDT) for instance has held that organisations operating in environments such as mentioned will only survive by their ability to reduce uncertainties with the operating environment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). This is a governance function.

The literature on CSO governance reviewed here include empirical and theoretical literature on non-profit boards and policy governance models. Boards' impact on performance, their composition, role in executive recruitment and related activities in the sector are comprehensively assessed. Many of these studies as would be appreciated here have been largely focused on boards and board activities. They range from research on board size, composition, competencies, effectiveness, and compensation to those on remuneration as well as board-management relationships.

For a while now, a spotlight has been focused on the governance arrangements in non-profit organisations and whether these systems are adequate to ensure the overall effectiveness, responsibility, and accountability of actions of these organisations. In line with this attraction, governance of non-profit organisations has received a considerable attention in third sector research recently. The issue has become topical in publications in especially the three (3) leading non-profit journals (i.e. Non-profit and Voluntary Sector

Quarterly, Non-profit Management and Leadership, and Voluntas). Despite the interest it has generated over the past decade or so, the concept of governance is hardly ever explicitly defined in the non-profit literature (Ostrower & Stone, 2006; Cornforth, 2012).

In fact, the concept has become a concept of interest to a variety of disciplines and practicing circles including public administration, management, economics, social policy, and politics. This makes the definition of the concept varied. In this thesis however, the focus is on organisational governance and how non-profit organisations are governed. In this respect, corporate governance, organisational or simply, governance is used interchangeably. Like the broad concept of governance, corporate governance has no single agreed upon definition (Hodges et al., 1996). The consensus however is that the concept concerns generally “the direction and control of the enterprise and ensuring reasonable expectations of external accountability” (Cornforth, 2012, p.8). At the level of organisations, the governing body or board of directors is the body with the legal mandate to ensure that the governance functions of the organisation as referenced by Cornforth are carried out.

The concept and practice of governance in non-profit organisations as has been noted earlier has received some amount of research attention (e.g. Ostrower & Stone, 2006; Hoegl, 2005; Gbedzo, 2005; Osborne, 2010; Cornforth, 2004; Cornforth & Spear, 2010; Van Puyvelde, Brown, Walker & Tenuta, 2018; Lipton & Lorsch, 1992; Kreutzer, 2009; Gill, Flynn, & Reissing, 2005; Peter Jäger & Rehli, 2012; Harrison & Murray, 2012;

Bradshaw, 2009; Ning, Davidson & Wang, 2010; Hartarska & Nadolnyak, 2012 and others).

For instance, using available data sourced from several surveys, Hartarska and Nadolnyak (2012) explored the link between the performance of boards and size and diversity. This study found that board efficiency improves with increase in board size. Interestingly however, this efficiency was found to be relative in the sense that board efficiency decreases when board size goes beyond 13 members. Hartarska and Nadolnyak attribute the decreases in board efficiency to social loafing. In fact, the admission in this 2012 study was that benefits accrue to larger boards. These benefits however get exhausted at about a membership strength of 10 and worsens beyond 13 members. On this finding, they concluded that boards that have between 10–12 members tend to be more efficient in the service of their constituencies and seeing through their mission. It is important to indicate that these findings while providing us with evidence that indeed diversity affects efficiency of boards, also confirm earlier findings by Lipton and Lorsch (1992) and Jensen (1993) all of which recognised larger boards to be less effective compared to smaller boards. Like Hartarska and Nadolnyak (2012), these earlier researchers were also of the view that big boards suffered the problem of free riding on the part of some directors.

While Hartarska and Nadolnyak's study is very insightful in terms of its revelations on board size and diversity (in terms of gender and race) and its effect on performance, the study's primary focus on the financial sector limits the applicability of its results. Running somewhat contrary to the above findings is a research in the judicial sector by Halberstam (2016). Halberstam

developed a framework which connects court decision reversals to panel size; the results of which suggests that increasing the size of judicial panels led to reduction in the quality of decision-making in high courts. What this means therefore is that it may not be advisable to increase the number of decision makers sitting in a court of law.

Contributing to the above line of literature, Hoegl (2005) in a publication titled “smaller teams –better teamwork: How to keep project teams small”, explains why large team size will often hinder effective teamwork and recommends ways to keep teams small. This study was basically a conceptual and empirical analysis of teamwork based on earlier research by Ziller (1957) and Steiner (1966) and some laboratory studies on the performance of teams (Bray et al., 1978). One clear finding was that technical and coordinative information sharing becomes more difficult with increase in team membership. The study recognised that growth in team size results in dramatic increases in the complexity of communication structures between all members.

Indeed, confirming Halberstam (2016) and Hartarska and Nadolnyak (2012), Hoegl (2005) reiterates the view that individual efforts decreases with increase in group size leading to social loafing. Hoegl (2005) found that it becomes more difficult for members to contribute to their full potential in terms of knowledge, skill and experience as team size increases. Other governance research works which have towed this line include the work of Liden, Wayne, Jaworski and Bennett (2004), Mueller (2012) and Staats, Milkman and Fox (2012) just to mention a few. Particularly, the studies of Mueller (2012) and Staats et al. (2012) confirm largely positions of the findings discussed in this session so far. They agree basically on the point that

individuals in larger groups almost always perform worse than those in smaller teams.

Contrary to many of the results cited above, a study by Cummings, Kiesler, Bosagh Zadeh and Balakrishnan (2013) revealed that smaller groups were less productive compared to larger groups. The caveat however is that this productivity was only marginal, and this even declined as group heterogeneity increased. The additional variable of heterogeneity makes this study an improved one. This longitudinal study examined the relationships between group size, heterogeneity, and productivity of group in 549 research groups. While this study's sample is quite sizeable, it would have been important to examine other tasks to be able to improve the findings' generalisability. Cummings et al.'s (2013) study also failed to look at the processes of managing group heterogeneity and size.

It is essential to note that the above findings notwithstanding, a number of studies have run parallel and argued strongly that board size does not really matter (Ning, Davidson & Wang, 2010; Coles, Daniel & Naveen, 2008; Jaskyte, 2014).

In an empirical analysis of the determinants of board size and composition, Boone, Field, Karpoff and Raheja (2007) concluded among other things that the structure of boards reflects firms' managerial team and competitive environment. They found that board size and independence increase with the growth of firms. The authors found for example that the independence of corporate boards related negatively to the influence of the manager and positively with constraints on this influence. The study found larger, more diverse, and seasoned firms to have a corresponding larger and

independent governing boards. Less independent boards were found in organisations whose managers had substantial influence and in which constraints on managerial influence are weak.

This study's use of multivariate regression with panel data methods to test the scope of operations, negotiations, and monitoring hypotheses is quite impressive. The hypothesis yields testable predictions about the forces that shape board size and composition and indeed the reliance on panel data of 1,019 organisations is quite unique in quantitative organisational level research.

While Boone et al.'s (2007) study differs in terms of the dataset from studies previously discussed, because of their focus on young companies, their findings confirm earlier studies by Cornforth and Simpson (2002) to have much larger boards. One can however notice some key limitations with the study by Cornforth and Simpson (2002). The study first relied on two surveys as a source of data. While this is scientifically good, there existed five (5) years between the two surveys and this could imply substantial differences or changes in one of them. The size of boards may have grown over this 5-year period. There is also the possibility of statistical errors occasioned by discrepancies in the two studies, and the differences in methodologies employed in the surveys used as data sources.

### ***Board composition***

A couple of studies within the broad spectrum of organisational governance have given attention to board composition and looked at diversity and performance of governing boards. First among these studies to be discussed here is that of Harris (2014). Harris investigated the impact of board



characteristics on the performance of non-profit boards. His study used survey data collected from 554 non-profit universities and colleges in the U.S. and linked these data with institutional and financial data for its analysis. It was revealed among other things that some specific characteristics of board members are key in determining the financial and non-financial success of the institutions. According to Harris (2014), board diversity and expertise are associated with better –performing institutions. Another important revelation of this study is that minority directors and directors who served on other boards had effects on organisational performance. The challenge with this important finding however is that the direction of the relationship was inconsistent across the different performance measures. In fact, apart from the size of the sample which can be considered as small, Harris’ (2014) study is one of the comprehensive studies on non-profit board composition. The study is particularly unique in how it analyses diversity and expertise of board of directors with both financial and nonfinancial performance measures which is a rare analysis.

In a related study, Aube, Rousseau and Tremblay (2015) examined the role of perceived shared understanding with regards to team performance. The authors investigated considerations of the motivational mechanisms of group effectiveness and team effort. Their study primarily addressed why and under what circumstances perceived shared understanding enhances motivation and team performance. The relationship between team effort and team performance is moderated by task routines. When members share the same understanding concerning the task to be accomplished, they tend to believe in



their collective ability. This according to Aube et al. (2015) in turn makes the team members exert greater effort and increase the performance of the team.

The mediation model used by Aube et al. (2015) was built on the postulations of Social Cognitive Theory. That is, where members of a team feel they share the same understanding of what is required of them, they tend to believe more in the team and are thereby willing to make contributions to its success. Methodologically, the study has many positive sides. Particularly, the sample size of 101 teams of 381 members and their corresponding 101 immediate superiors was very large. The limitation however is the fact that all the 101 teams were from the same organisation thereby limiting the study's generalisability. The study's replication in other contexts/environments will be very helpful.

Bradshaw (2009) writes on the contingency to non-profit governance. While all boards ought to fulfil some critical roles and responsibilities, choices can be made strategically regarding the adoption of different governance patterns to go about these roles and responsibilities. Bradshaw makes the point that these choices can be informed by organisational contingencies namely age, size, structure, and strategy. Bradshaw (2009) extends the contingency thinking beyond its traditional focus on an alignment of the organisation's structure to focus also on the organisation's governance configuration with its structure and environment. In this study, Bradshaw (2009) makes an interesting suggestion to the effect that some non-profit organisations could strategically choose to remain small to keep its structure flexible and non-bureaucratic.

Whereas the suggestion by Bradshaw (2009) appears plausible, there is little on contingencies and organisational effectiveness in terms of empirical research. Even in Bradshaw's own research, it is acknowledged that in times of conflict, both staff and boards of these non-profit organisations attributed the primary causes of the conflicts to the personalities of those involved in the problem. Thus, small organisations and small boards may offer flexible and less bureaucratic structures, but the lack of impersonality and elaborate structures also has its own challenges as can be realised in Bradshaw's report.

Meanwhile, O'Regan and Oster (2005) had earlier revealed that the structure and composition of boards indeed matter. The study through a cross-sectional analysis of some non-profit organisations provides some evidence on the broader role of non-profit boards in their organisations and offer some key suggestions based on the results about the relationship between the structure and composition of boards, and the performance of individual boards members. O'Regan and Oster's (2005) article insightfully explored the differences that exist in the behaviour boards of non-profit and for-profit organisations. Quite profoundly, the study found board size and independence to be associated with differences that exist in individual level monitoring and financial giving in non-profit organisations. That is, large boards were associated with generous giving.

Curiously however, level of formal individual monitoring of the organisation reduces with large boards in the same study (O'Regan & Oster, 2005). In terms of performance, large boards and executive control were both found to be associated with key positive performance indicators. Clearly from these results, board size matters. The challenge with this study however is that

it focuses mainly on the accounting sector to the neglect of other sectors. This limitation notwithstanding, O'Regan and Oster's (2005) contribution to the section of governance literature on board size and its effects cannot be underestimated.

A section of the governance research has tended to assess the effects of boards' performance on organisational performance. One of these was by Brown (2005) in which the association between board and organisational performance in the non-profit sector is explored. Brown explored six (6) dimensions of board performance as they relate to theoretical explanations being agency, resource dependence and group /decision process theories using cross-sectional designs. The study examined board governance activities and how they influence organisational performance. Brown (2005) found organisations with higher financial performance to have boards which are more robust and made strategic contributions to the organisation compared to low performing ones. Organisations judged in this study to have higher performance were also found to have high –performing boards across all the six (6) dimensions. Like other studies, Brown's analysis showed large organisations to have better-performing boards and exhibit better financial performance.

Brown's (2005) study, unlike others about board size and performance, had reasonable heterogeneity. The data was from non-profit board members and executives across two wide geographical regions of Phoenix metropolitan area and greater Los Angeles in the US. Even though the sample was large (538 organisations), it presents some methodological limitations mainly because the sample was not randomly arrived at. Thus, the sample could be

biased towards large organisations in the area which in turn may have informed the study outcome disclosed above. Moreover, as is common with many cross-sectional studies, one cannot be certain about how consistent and long lasting the effects found in this study might be, since it was not observed over a long period of time. Besides, other measures of board performance and or effectiveness may yield different outcomes.

Van Puyvelde, Brown, Walker and Tenuta (2018) explored how perceived interactions in the boardroom are associated with perceptions of Board effectiveness in non-profit organisations. Their study investigated the relationship between some board dynamics and the perceived effectiveness of the board in its governance roles and responsibilities and found that interactions in the boardroom did influence the perceptions of chief executives and board chairs about the effectiveness of the Board (Van Puyvelde et al., 2018). This finding does not sit in isolation. It finds a place in earlier studies in the corporate governance literature (Pugliese, Nicholson & Bezeme, 2015; Bailey & Peck, 2013; He & Huang, 2011). They argue in one way or the other that the extent to which a board can function effectively as a group affects the board's effectiveness in performing its strategic roles and functions. That the boardroom environment determines the board's effectiveness in delivering on its strategic functions. These findings have sparked equal interest in boardroom interaction research in the non-profit sector as well (Cornforth & Brown, 2014; Van Puyvelde et al., 2018).

Board effectiveness like other social constructs is judgmental. As such, different people /stakeholders judge effectiveness differently. For example, studies show that board members, chief executives and funders all have

different judgments of board effectiveness (Brown, 2005; Herman & Renz, 2004). Some of these studies have reported board members to judge the effectiveness of boards slightly higher than chief executives. This considered, it is more valuable to have the perspective of multiple stakeholders in judging the effectiveness or otherwise of boards.

In a study in Ghana, Gbedzo (2005) described the nature of corporate governance in non-governmental organisations in Ghana as inadequate. Gbedzo's (2005) research examined the governance and accountability practices of NGOs in Ghana with a specific concentration on financial accountability. The study involved 30 multinational NGOs, 22 Ghanaian NGOs, 12 donor organisations, and eight (8) audit firms. The study carried out an assessment of the corporate governance practices and, financial reporting in the NGOs. Gbedzo's (2005) study revealed among other things the inadequacy of financial reporting systems and corporate governance practices in the study organisations even though many of these organisations had some basic financial accounting systems.

It is encouraging to find that so many researchers have worked on governance in the non-profit sector in such a short space of time. Many of them have however focused only on the board. The works have spanned board size, composition, structure, diversity, performance, relationships, and compensation and so on. The concentration is however too narrow an approach to organisational governance. Cornforth (2012) for instance raises three criticisms against many of these non-profit governance research mentioned above. He argues that, implicitly equating governance to what boards do, overly narrows the conceptualisation of non-profit governance. The

approach, according to him, ignores the influence of the wider governance system which includes the role of internal actors such as the executive and staff, members, regulators, inspection and audit bodies and other advisory groups, who all contribute to carrying out governance functions.

A point can also be made that most of these studies reviewed have focused on unitary (individual) organisations and neglected the governance of organisations with more complex structures because of their share composition. The third challenge identified with these studies according to Cornforth (2012), has been methodological. The studies have been largely reliant on cross-sectional designs and have been very positivist in orientation. They have looked generally at principles and relationships in relation to boards and therefore paid little attention to the governance processes, how structures and practices change over time and how contextual and historical factors influence governance in the sector.

The organisational governance system is wider than just what the board does. The system includes a “framework of responsibilities, requirements and accountabilities within which organisations operate, including regulatory, audit and reporting requirements and relations with key stakeholders” (Cornforth, 2012, p.9). This system as described by Cornforth widens the scope of actors, who carry out the governance functions beyond what the board does which is why a governance research focused only on the board can be considered as narrow in scope.

Even though neither the present study nor any single research can adequately satisfy all the criticisms raised against governance research, attempts were made here to satisfy many of these genuine concerns raised.



First, the focus of the study was not on boards per se. It involved executive roles, as well as those of external actors, including “regulators” of the sector. Also, in selecting the organisations for the present analysis, effort was made to select organisations of different kinds. Individual organisations, networks, and coalitions were all included in the sample to bring on board their different perspectives on governance in theory and practice. The study also combined research designs and triangulated methods to understand the issues in a wider and flexible context for a comprehensive appreciation of the problem of interest. While this study cannot be described as a longitudinal one, its depth and rigour was bound to reveal rich information, some of which have historical and contextual significance.

### **Executive turnover and transitions**

As has been mentioned in this thesis already, there are indications that a sizeable number of non-profit CSO founders and long serving executive directors are nearing retirement age in Ghana. This awakens a need for research towards the appreciation of the unique and complex nature of executive turnover as this is known to be critical to the sustainability concerns of the civil society sector in the country. Indeed, as Gothard and Austin (2013) affirm, executive departures and the accompanying processes of leadership succession often present unique challenges and opportunities for organisations. It has its own risks coupled with a limited pool of plausible applicants and organisational changes that are forever inevitable. There are indeed cases in which these departures at the top executive level have thrown organisations into turmoil with very minimal recoveries (McKee & Driscoll, 2008; Stewart, 2016; Linnell, 2004).



Hailey and Salway (2016) argue that before looking at the purely financial nature of sustainability, it is important to analyse other organisational and contextual indicators relevant to CSO sustainability. In line with Hailey and Salway's (2016) concern, there have been some studies that have given attention to the problem of boards and executive transitions., Many of these studies have been cited in this thesis (see for example: Allison, 2002; Chapman & Vogelsang, 2005; Mckee & Driscoll, 2008; Froelich, Mckee & Rathge, 2011; Stewart, 2016 and others). It is important to note however that many of these studies have been carried out in Canada, the U.S., U.K., and other European nations all of which have different legislative and geopolitical contexts compared to Ghana. Some of these existing studies have also been approached in ways conceptually different from the present effort. As earlier stated, this section reviews literature on this unique phenomenon of executive exits and ensuing transitions and the attention it has received over the years and establishes the contextual knowledge gap in the extant literature.

Golensky's (2005) study of a non-profit organisation's executive transition was reviewed comprehensively. Golensky's (2005) case study focused on the executive selection process employed by the board of directors of a non-profit organisation. In spring 2001, the organisation's executive head who had served for 16 years announced her plans to retire the next year and a few months. Golensky's report was based on the opportunity he got to study the change this organisation was experiencing. Golensky described this transition as a very successful one and attributed the success of the transition to the length of lead time which allowed the board members the luxury to develop a transition plan consistent with good institutional governance.

In a related study, Froelich et al. (2011) carried out a survey in which they explored the details of succession planning of executive directors of 501(c)(3) charitable non-profits and CEOs of 501(c)(4) cooperative organisations prominent in agricultural, utility, and finance sectors. The authors found that, planning and preparation in those organisations did not match the level of interest and concern for executive successions in the sector. According to their report, although the replacement of long-serving leaders is acknowledged as difficult, few proactive steps are undertaken in the organisations studied with regards to that.

Similarly, Stewart (2016) studied executive turnover in the non-profit sector using the perspectives of executives who experienced turnover. Stewart's (2016) work revealed among other things that events of executive turnover happened according to the size and capacity of non-profits. The study could however not confirm what happened after the turnover and whether these events also related to the size and capacity of the organisations. While noting that retirement predictions dominated expectations about executive turnover, Stewart's (2016) noted that reasons among the study sample revealed the predominance of forced transitions. Stewart's (2016) study gives some insight into executive turnover in the non-profit sector, methodologically however, its focus on current executives who have experienced recent turnover limits the perspectives of other informants who may likely hold useful "outsider" viewpoints.

As has been acknowledged by Arhin (2016), Hailey and Salway (2016), and others, the discussion of civil society sustainability in developing countries like Ghana is taking centre stage in the face of dwindling

international donor funding. One unquestionable fact is that most civil society organisations in the developing world have largely depended on grants from the international donor community. This has been the dominant model, especially in Africa. There is however evidence to the effect that this funding option is fast changing. In line with this change, there is a renewed interest in how to get beneficiary communities involved in keeping civic activity alive in these countries.

In Ghana, the graduation from lower income to middle income status has resulted in some curtailment of previous international aid programmes to the country. Indeed, as Pratt (2016) notes, “some donors have a legal obligation not to provide funds in middle-income countries” (2016, p. 527). The USAID (2018) sustainability index report avers that financial viability remains Ghana’s weakest CSO sustainability dimension and states that organisations in the sector report that funding is increasingly becoming difficult to come by informing the decision among many of them to turn attention to local funding sources. This situation pushes discourse on civil society sustainability to the table and raises concerns about internal, lateral, and downward accountability for a thriving third sector. These are governance roles and responsibilities and therefore having a baseline data on the state of CSO governance and executive transitions as factors of sustainability in Ghana will serve to illuminate our understanding of the non-profit sector and their leadership prospects and challenges.

Thus, despite efforts by these authors, there are several reasons why the context of Ghana is important in the stated problem. In the developed world, where much of the earlier studies were conducted, there are initiatives

of self-appointed watchdogs within the non-profit sector (Gordon, Knock & Neely, 2009; Sloan, 2009) which exert some level of influence on the functioning of CSOs. These aside, there are external and independent efforts to hold all registered non-profit organisations accountable in those jurisdictions (Schmitz et al., 2012), which is a rare commodity in Ghana. Even though many of these external independent control mechanisms have been criticised as ensuring upward accountability at the expense of internal and lateral accountability (Ebrahim, 2005), their existence have yielded some effective governance systems and structures over the years (Schmitz et al., 2012).

### ***Successions and succession planning***

The turnover of chief executive officers (CEOs) in all organisational types is a concern because of the impact it has on both the organisations and the individuals involved. The process of transition as can be gleaned from the preceding section where one CEO leaves a position and another CEO assumes that role has clearly yielded both successful and unsuccessful stories around the world. Studies show however that effective succession planning can be the antidote to the major disruptions that often accompany the departure of top-level executives in these organisations. It has therefore been touted as a key business strategy for assisting corporate organisations in facing the future (Watson & Houlahan, 2009).

Leadership succession planning has been defined to mean a purposeful, formalised assessment and development of individuals for future leadership positions. According to research reports, if organisations are going to be able to effectively manage the anticipated leadership turnover/ crisis, there would

be the need for succession planning with a focus to identify, develop and retain top talent. Quite interestingly, the practice of succession planning has been a key part of the succession literature of market –oriented organisations since the 1960s compared to the non-profit sector which is relatively new. The review begins with succession planning generally before turning attention to succession planning in the non-profit sector.

There are different types of succession in the literature and attempt is made here to summarize the very common types of succession as they appear in the non-profit literature:

- *Relay succession* involves identifying a member of senior management in an organisation as heir apparent well in advance of the actual transition, providing a period of overlap for the outgoing executive to transfer knowledge and power to the successor (Vancil, 1987).
- *Non-relay inside succession* occurs when the successor is promoted from inside the organisation, but through a competitive process involving several key internal candidates (Friedman & Olk, 1995).
- An *outside succession* is one in which the successor is hired from outside the organisation (Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2006).
- A *coup d'etat* occurs when stakeholders other than the incumbent organise to make swift succession decisions (Friedman & Olk, 1995).
- Bringing back a director from a previous era is known throughout the for-profit literature as a *boomerang* (Dalton & Dalton, 2007b).

Though studies have sought to compare the succession models, debate continues over whether internal or external hires are more successful (Khumalo & Harris, 2008; Gandossy & Verma, 2006; Garman & Glawe,

2004; Giambatista, Rowe & Riaz, 2005; Kesner & Sebor, 1994; Santora, 2004; Santora, et al., 2007; Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2006). Outside succession has been found to produce stronger results than internal non-relay succession when overall instability in the sector is high (Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2004). In contrast, Gandossy and Verma (2006) report that internally groomed CEOs brought in higher shareholder returns (1.9%/year) than externally hired CEOs. Bower (2007) argues for hiring an “internal outsider,” someone who has a deep understanding of the company’s history and its key stakeholders, yet is not overly attached to the status quo and possesses the skills and desire to lead the organisation through a change process.

In other studies, relay succession was found to improve performance when compared to outside succession or internal non-relay succession, especially when pre-succession organisational performance was low, as well as when post-succession instability in the industry or sector was high (Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2004, 2006). Despite these findings, some researchers are cautious about relay succession because of the resulting loss of flexibility, the risks associated with losing the candidate, the potential to select the wrong candidate, or the prospect of igniting internal power struggles is recognised in the literature (Dalton & Dalton, 2007b; Groves, 2006; Santora, et al., 2007; Wolfred, 2008). Shen and Canella (2003) found that stakeholders react negatively to the departure of an internally groomed candidate, but positively to successful promotion of such a candidate through relay succession (as cited in Giambatista, et al., 2005). If relay succession is to be used, the organisation needs to allow time for selecting, training, assessing, grooming, and creating a transition timetable (Santorin, 2004; Korn, 2007).



While extensive grooming can produce the best results in the for-profit sector (Santora, 2004; Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2004; 2006), the non-profit literature notes that too much overlap in the transition can diminish an incoming executive's authority (Adams, 2005; Austin & Gilmore, 1993; Wolfred, 2008). Adams (2005) for one suggests that when a founding ED transitions out of the organisation, an "on-call" approach for the outgoing executive tends to work best, as opposed to a more "hands-on" or "hands-off" approach (2005, p.19). If it is projected that the staff and various stakeholders in a non-profit will experience significant challenges related to the "letting go" of the exiting ED (common when founders depart), the organisation may want to consider hiring an interim ED before selecting a long-term replacement (Adams, 2005; Wolfred, 2008). Dalton and Dalton (2007) note a caution that there are risks in an interim approach if the interim is also a candidate for the long-term position.

The literature provides several useful frameworks to guide succession planning and management, reflecting promising practices in multiple sectors: for-profit, non-profit, public, private, and public health. The following practices are consistently cited as key elements for effective succession management across sectors namely: 1) leadership development and retention, 2) organisational assessment, 3) clarification of agency direction, and 4) alignment between strategy and goals (Adams, 2005, 2006; Axelrod, 2002; Collins & Collins, 2007; Gandossy & Verma, 2006; Gersick, et al., 2000; Greer, 2008; Herrera, 2002; Jones, 2007; Lynn, 2001; Wolfred, 2008). The non-profit literature emphasises acute emergency planning, as well as developing overall organisational stability and alignment in order to guide pre-



planned departures (Wolfred, 2008; Jones, 2007; Adams, 2005, 2006; Axelrod, 2002).

One aspect of succession management is emergency succession planning for all key staff and board members, in the event of unexpected departure (Adams, 2005, 2006; Bell, Moyers & Wolfred, 2006; Jones, 2007; Wolfred, 2008; Shaw, 2017). This plan anticipates unplanned departures by identifying action steps that lead to the search and selection period of succession. In small organisations, volunteers or board members often implement the emergency succession plan (Wolfred, 2008). Specifying current job roles and lines of authority based on up-to-date and accessible information is needed to determine priority areas and workload shifts needed during emergency periods (Wolfred, 2008). Planning for clear and thoughtful intra- and inter-agency communication is essential (Wolfred, 2008). Boards need to have a clear understanding of the organisation and anticipate its future needs to define and guide the search and selection process.

According to the management literature, pre-planned departure-based succession planning occurs when departing executives are certain about when they plan to leave an organisation, allowing a more gradual and purposeful process and timeline to drive the succession process. The effectiveness of this approach relies on a commitment to the process from organisational leaders (Gandossy & Verma, 2006). Careful analysis of the agency's goals and strategic plan can inform executives and their boards, as together they define the specific leadership competencies that are necessary to bring their organisation's goals to fruition, as well as identify targeted areas for internal capacity building (Adams, 2005, 2006; Herrera, 2002; Wolfred, 2008). As

with emergency succession, planned and deliberate communication is critical, in addition to creating a climate that assists staff in managing the various components of the transition (Wolfred, 2008; Axelrod, 2002).

Adams (2005) documents that the activities of pre-planned departure-based succession planning for founders can depend on the amount of time that remains prior to departure: 1) departure planned for two to three years away allows time for substantial strategic planning initiatives; 2) departure planned for one to two years away calls for a more focused organisational assessment and the use of existing strategic plans to inform planning; and 3) departure planned for less than a year away calls for expedited planning and decision making related to the structure of and approach to the transition.

When EDs are also founding directors or have been in their positions for long (10 years or more), Wolfred (2008) recommends beginning to plan 2–3 years prior to the executive's departure. Adams (2005) identifies two critical factors that should influence the timing of the departure:

1. the founder's engagement and ability to make a positive contribution to the transition (considering burnout and/or the board's level of trust in the executive), and
2. the level of succession planning and training in which the organisation has engaged prior to the departure announcement.

Wolfred (2008) notes that, when resources allow, EDs can take a leave of absence (1–3 months) well in advance of a departure date as a way of testing the management team's skills and succession readiness.

Managing the transition is a critical component of succession, regardless of whether the change in leadership was planned or as a result of

emergency-based succession. The incoming executive, the outgoing executive, the staff, the board, and other stakeholders all experience the transition in different ways. Planning to honour the outgoing executive and his or her legacy in specific and tangible ways is an important element of this transition, providing an opportunity for closure, signifying a new beginning, and simultaneously promoting continuity are all important (Adams, 2005; Austin & Gilmore, 1993). Once the new ED steps into the role, it is important to help stakeholders begin to embrace the new leader (Austin & Gilmore, 1993; Wolfred, 2008). Organisations need to plan for an incoming executive's learning curve, regardless of whether the hire was an internal or external candidate (Giambatista et al., 2005). If the hire is external, Marshall (2007) emphasises the importance of orientation sessions for the new executive to acquire an understanding of the organisation's culture and history.

Organisations engaged in leadership succession often find themselves confronted by process issues (e.g., unclear roles and responsibilities) or people issues (e.g., resistance to process and conflicting expectations about change) (Gandossy & Verma, 2006). organisations can address these issues during succession planning by taking opportunities for organisational introspection, selecting search committees carefully, allowing the process to be dynamic, developing internal buy-in to the overall succession process, and evaluating the process and outcome to inform subsequent transitions (Beeson, 1998; Khurana, 2001; Leibman, Bruer, Maki, 1996).

Quite clearly, the literature above shows that succession and for that matter succession planning is quite a unique activity that is affected by many factors. There is no one rule that fits all when it comes to executive

succession. The circumstance of the particular organisation is what guides a successful transition. It is this observed fact that makes the proscriptive nature of many of the existing literature on succession planning quite problematic.

Watson and Houlahan (2009) report of a 2006 study by the American organisation of Nurse Executives (AONE), which raises concerns of Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) turnover in healthcare organisations. The three – phased study revealed alarming turnover in the CNO role. Approximately 38% of the respondents of the study reported having recently left a CNO position; 13% had left within two (2) years before the survey, and 25% within five (5) years before the survey. Out of these, approximately one-quarter had lost their jobs involuntarily, 50% left their positions to pursue other CNO positions, and 30% left for career advancement. One disturbing finding of the study was that some 62% of respondents anticipated making a job change in less than five (5) years, slightly more than one-quarter due for retirement (Jones, 2008).

Executive recruiters during the survey according to Watson and Houlahan (2009) described three trends that influenced CNO turnover. They included increasing complexity of the role of CNOs, financial management issues, and chief executive officer (CEO) and chief operating officer (COO) leadership transitions. This finding further buttresses the overarching importance of leadership transitions. It can rattle a chain of changes and exits in organisations of all kinds.

Informed by existing literature on executive exits in for-profit, public, and non-profit sectors, Gothard and Austin (2013) carried out an analysis in which they identified the key elements of succession planning with implications for non-profit human service organisations to be self-leadership,

executive-board relations, and comprehensive succession management, and underscored the importance of aligning succession-based efforts with strategic planning similar to earlier arguments by McKee and Driscoll (2008).

Gothard and Austin (2013) maintain that many non-profit executives used self-leadership as launch pads to advance to the top positions they occupy and argue that in much the same way, an executive's personal clarity about his or her own departure (particularly related to timing and role), is critical to the success of his or her exit (Adams, 2005; Gothard & Austin, 2013). Following earlier positions advanced by Hardy (2005) and Austin and Gilmore (1993), Gothard and Austin hold the view that employing self-leadership strategies helps outgoing executive heads develop organisational climates of trust which foster easy and open navigation of the otherwise difficult conversations that often accompany leadership change in organisations.

There is near consensus that the subject of leadership succession in all forms of organisations could stir up emotions, considerable fear, questions and stress with the potential to create conflicts between executives and their boards. Research meanwhile shows that board –executive relationships are shaped by class and ideological differences (Kramer, 1965) and these differences have often manifested themselves in the form of misunderstandings, power struggles and other forms of conflicts in organisations. In some cases, these differences and their associated conflicts impede the open discussion of both the personal and professional aspects of executive successions at board meetings (Gothard & Austin, (2013). Meanwhile, it has been long acknowledged that effective and purposeful

collaboration between executives and boards is critical, for the success of every leadership transition (Axelrod, 2002; Benton & Austin, 2010).

The exit of an executive provides the board with an opportunity to reposition the organisation by considering its history, its present needs for leadership, and its future in the community. Gothard and Austin (2013) while agreeing that such a reassessment/ repositioning could or should take place before launching an executive search process, note that a leadership change provides the board with an opportunity to make decisions that would serve the best interests of clients and staff of the organisation.

Even though the validity of their findings is limited due to a lack of firsthand sources and the use of convenience samples, Garman and Glawe's (2004) review of existing literature found that only an estimated 40%–65% of organisations have formal succession planning processes in place. Similar to Garman and Glawe's findings and the 2006 CNO study by AONE discussed earlier, a survey of 1,932 non-profit executives in 2006 reported that 75% of EDs plan to leave their jobs in the next five (5) years and only 29% of the executives surveyed had discussed a succession plan with their boards; of those leaving within one (1) year, only 47% had discussed a plan with their boards (Bell, Moyers, & Wolfred, 2006).

The consensus in the literature is that leadership succession planning is ultimately the board's responsibility, yet boards often rely on their executive director (ED) to initiate the planning processes and this practice abounds in the non-profit sector (Bell et al., 2006; Dalton & Dalton, 2007a; Khumalo & Harris, 2008). The delegation is due, in part, to the desires of board members to be sensitive to the needs and autonomy of the ED, resulting all too often in



the avoidance of the conversation altogether (Gandossy & Verma, 2006). As McLaughlin and Backlund (2008) confirm, the reluctance to discuss leadership succession planning is further exacerbated when the exiting director is also the founding director of the organisation.

For Bell et al. (2006), Dalton and Dalton (2007a), and Adams (2006), although succession planning is a critical element in the role of the board, agencies can benefit if the ED offers support and guidance to the board's process. The ED can facilitate opportunities for the board to gain exposure to high-level talent inside the agency (Dalton & Dalton, 2007a) and can guide the board in identifying the ideal competencies for a successor related to the organisation's future direction and goals (Adams, 2006). Boards need to examine their own composition in the succession planning process, as board diversity can affect both the selection and success of the new ED (Adams, 2006; Bell et al., 2006).

In addition to working with the board, the exiting ED is also responsible for helping the organisation prepare for succession by allowing adequate time for planning, updating organisational documents, managing the transition of internal and external relationships, delegating partially completed projects, and attending to staff needs throughout the transition process (Adams, 2006; Austin & Gilmore, 1993). Exiting executives can help to ensure organisational momentum by identifying an advocate for each key issue on the organisation's agenda (Austin & Gilmore, 1993).

Studies show that formal succession planning can increase enthusiasm for work, reduce anxiety, and guard against selection bias during hiring processes (Greer & Virick, 2008). It can also help organisations assure



continuity, engage senior leadership in a review of the agency's talent, give more attention to diversity, encourage the re-examination of organisational systems and structure, and align various units within an organisation (Gersick, Stone, Desjardins, Muson, & Grady, 2000; Leibman, Bruer, & Maki, 1996). While conversations aimed at formalised planning may seem premature or awkward to initiate, post-succession challenges are often magnified without the presence of a formal succession plan (Gandossy & Verma, 2006).

A common pitfall among non-profit executives is the practice of beginning to groom potential successors without board knowledge or approval, often leading to problems once the official executive search begins (Adams, 2006). In the absence of existing succession policies and plans, non-profit executives are encouraged to open conversations with their boards (Wolfred, 2008). While acknowledging that the active involvement of Executive Directors in the succession process is invaluable (Bell et al., 2006; Dalton & Dalton, 2007b; Adams, 2006), the practice whereby executives in non-profit organisations without the blessing of their boards set out to groom individuals within the organisation as potential successors ahead of their exit has been noted as a big problem in organisations (Adams, 2006; Wolfred, 2008). The challenge often is that when the board officially begins a search for replacement, the groomed potential successor often becomes only a part of the people to be considered and in worst cases, it is not even considered in the search at all. That is, while relay successions are known widely in the non-profit sector, attempts at it have sometimes not been successful because of the lacuna in knowledge of the fact between boards and their executive directors.

Allison (2002) in his work shared the experience of the Presbyterian Church of Northern California, which had in place a formal pastor transition programme. In the church's view, a transition is a window of opportunity for renewal and it is a unique way of supporting transitions with skilled interim leadership. The church unlike many organisations observed in the non-profit literature, understood transition as a long-term process as opposed to change, which usually is external to individuals and organisations (Bridge, 1991). In William Bridges three-stage model, the emotional process of transition is well described. It is the emotional process people go through because of a change. The process includes ending, neutral zone, and new beginnings (Bridge, 1991).

According to Allison (2002, p.343), the Presbyterian church "treats leadership transition as a naturally occurring event in the life of a congregation [rather than an unanticipated crisis to be avoided]". It is this realisation that led the church to adopt a national transition programme aimed at supporting congregations that undergo transition. In the church's example, a cadre of interim pastors are usually trained and readied for temporal leadership and guidance in recruiting a new pastor while the congregation is allowed the space of up to a year to reflect on its goals and the kind of leadership it will appreciate in the next pastor.

### ***Succession planning in non-profits***

In line with the work of Herman and Heimovics (2010), Mckee and Froelich (2016) describe the pivotal role of the chief executive of a non-profit organisation to include mainly the CEOs' role in framing and nurturing the organisation's culture while delivering on activities related to the mission in

order to ensure that the organisation enjoys an ongoing legitimacy with its public. They argue as has been severally noted that the chief executive's selection has "far –reaching consequences" for the non-profit organisation, which is why it remains one of the most important functions of every non-profit board of directors. This fact notwithstanding, studies that are targeted at executive succession in the non-profit sector remain scanty (Mckee & Froelich, 2016; Allison, 2002; Santora et al., 2007; Ritchie & Eastwood, 2006).

With both external and internal labour markets presenting challenges for non-profit organisations, a prudent course of action would be a careful planning for the important event of executive succession. Yet, the few research done in the global north repeatedly shows that the bulk of non-profits do little towards succession planning and preparation for executive successions (Mckee & Froelich, 2016; VonBergen, 2007, Santora et al., 2013), with many boards reporting not even discussing succession planning (Froelich et al. 2011). The Charlotte study raises a compounding concern about many boards' lack of recent experience with leadership transition, in view of long-serving top executives (Carman et al. 2010). An earlier study also highlighted boards' general unpreparedness to undertake succession-related tasks, their under-estimation of risks and costs associated with bad hires, and perhaps discouragement from focusing more on executive hiring problems rather than opportunities (Allison 2002).

Looking at the prevalence of formal succession plans, smaller scale studies over the years have found 66–90% of non-profits do not have formal plans (Santora & Sarros 2001, Santora et al., 2011); somewhat broader studies

found 77–80% without formal plans (Carman et al., 2010, Froelich et al., 2011); large scale surveys similarly found 71–83% of non-profit organisations lacking formal succession plans (Bell et al., 2007, Cornelius et al. 2011). Even where such plans exist, they are often viewed as ineffective (Bernthal & Wellins, 2006). More positive findings include consensus on executive transition as a core board responsibility and viewing board training and succession planning as desirable to facilitate effective accomplishment of this key task (Carman et al., 2010, Santora et al., 2011).

Clearly, studies in the above literature and many others point to a gaping dichotomy between the importance of succession planning as expressed by practitioners and the coincidental widespread minimal efforts towards the practice. Some of these studies have found that while a great number of non-profit organisations are anticipating executive turnover within the next 10 years, the majority of them are not prepared and therefore ill-equipped for the envisioned transition (Santora et al., 2011; Gothard & Austin, 2013; Von Bergen, 2007; McClusky, 2002).

Mckee and Froelich's (2016) study sought to contribute to the understanding of the apparent dichotomy described above. Using multiple regression, they carried out an exploration of the factors that influence succession planning at the executive level of non-profit and cooperative organisations in the USA. The results of their study pointed to some barriers and in some cases substitutes for executive succession planning for which reason a dearth of succession planning is witnessed in the sector. Mckee and Froelich (2016) pointed to a penchant for continuity as one key barrier to executive succession planning. At the same time, the lack of succession

planning is further reinforced by the existence of elements of good governance and internal development, which turn to serve as effective substitutes for formal executive succession planning in their survey of 242 non-profit and cooperative organisations.

As has been mentioned earlier, one finds that a considerable body of literature has given attention to executive succession in for-profit organisations over the past two decades (Giambastista et al., 2005; Kesner & Sebor, 1994) than to the non-profit organisations (Mckee & Froelich, 2016). Even within this for-profit body of literature, there is less research focused specifically on planning for succession. Earlier studies on succession planning as have been presented above were mainly devoted to the key components of succession planning and the processes involved. They were also very prescriptive. These studies acknowledge the significance of succession planning and prescribe how it should be practiced, while showing how the practice is linked to high organisational performance (Kesner & Sebor, 1994).

Following this period, a number of studies emerged on succession planning carried out in a variety of contexts which generally found a lack of formal succession planning in organisations (Giambastista et al., 2005; Gothard & Austin, 2013; Mooney et al., 2013; Trepanier & Crenshaw, 2013). Compared to for-profits, while research on non-profit executive succession planning has started growing, scholars argue that we are still at the early stages of research when it comes to the practice in the non-profit sector (Mckee & Froelich, 2016). Presently, four (4) major themes have emerged in this section

of the non-profit literature, and Mckee and Froelich (2016) have classified their conclusions as follows:

- a. extensive top executive turnover is eminent
- b. executive turnover at the top has special ramifications for the non-profit sector.
- c. there are distinctly high challenges and obstacles to executive replacements.
- d. generally, non-profit organisations have not adequately planned for executive leadership transition.

While useful, these conclusions should be taken or appreciated with some curiosity in relation to their contexts. And in that regard, it is important to state that many of these studies on which Mckee and Froelich (2016) draw their conclusions were carried out in the UK, US, and Canada.

Unlike other sectors, the non-profit sector and its management is uniquely thin in ranks and supported by a lean staff to accomplish their enormous administrative and mission related goals. Leadership in this sector is therefore quite special, value –laden and often requiring great passion for success. This therefore makes it difficult for successors to simply ‘step in’ from other sectors successfully, ‘step up’ from an operational role, or even share the role as an average transient volunteer (Bush, 1992; McFarlen, 1999). The list here (internal –external, operational staff, etc) howbeit diverse is not always likely to “adequately fill the shoes of a departing non-profit executive” (Mckee & Froelich, 2016) especially when a founding director is involved. This according to the literature has the possibility of doubling the risks often



associated with executive successions in market-oriented organisations when it comes to non-profit organisations.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Theoretically, the study uses an integrated approach. The application of theories in the study is quite pragmatic to the extent that it does not take an entirely structural approach to the problem of study. As would become clear in the subsequent sections of this chapter and the next, the study's arguments and methods combine both structure and agency in an integrative way. The conduct of the study and the discussion of its findings are done in the context of the theories discussed in this section.

The study is within the general framework of systems theory but due to the limitation of the structural perspective to adequately address issues of agency and change, the Structuration Theory (ST) of Anthony Giddens is employed as well in explaining the unique interaction and interplay between the structural demands of organisations and the actions of their agents. The civil society sustainability framework (WACSI, 2015; Vandyck, 2017), the managerial hegemony theory (Mace, 1971), and the Policy Governance model of John Carver (Carver, 2006) all of which have structural leanings are considered under the structural approach of the systems perspective. Although some have argued that Giddens' structuration theory was typically developed against the views of Parsons on power, system, and action, the employment of the two theories in the present study is because of their utility and how they complement each other in the present context.

### **The systems theory**

The Systems Theory is a structuralist approach to the analysis of phenomena. Structure is used to refer to “patterns of social arrangements which underlie the immediacy of experience” (Walters, 1994, p.12). System theorists as structural theorists treat collective social arrangements as having a certain logic and direction independent of the subjective actions or intentions of participants. These social arrangements take the form of integrative wholes which receive the description of system” (Walters, 1994, p.12). A system is any set of mutually interdependent elements. Every system is composed of subsystems (several parts) and is itself a subsystem (a part) of a larger system (Parsons, 1937; 1951a; 1951b). In line with structural functionalist arguments, system theorists perceive the parts of a system as fitting together in such a way that every part contributes to maintaining the whole system (Parsons, 1951b). That is, all the parts of the system function for the survival of the whole (Amoah, 2013). Changes in one part of the system are likely therefore to cause changes in other parts and a system’s boundaries are defined by the relative number of interactions among a set of people or units.

The above notwithstanding, each part of a system as described earlier could be treated as a (sub)system of the larger system with its own constituting elements which can itself be studied or analysed further.

According to Talcott Parsons who is the originator of this theory, a system meant a set of parts or elements with the following characteristics:

1. The parts are interdependent with one another so that variation in one has consequences for the others.

2. Rather controversially, this interdependence is orderly, that is, its general tendency must be towards the self-maintenance of the system as a whole. This is what is called the tendency towards equilibrium. Equilibrium may, however, in Parsons' theorising, be dynamic in character. That is, it may change in an orderly way over time. Certain events will be incompatible with the system's equilibrium described and should they occur, processes will be set in train within the system itself in order to re-establish equilibrium.

3. However, such equilibrium as discussed in point two above need not be definite and will only occur within a set of boundaries. So, where there is variability in the environment of a system, effective internal arrangements and processes will operate to protect system equilibrium from this variability. Such processes might consist of the exclusion of disruptive elements or their modification to conform to internal conditions.

The parts of Parson's action system are held to be three (3) subordinate systems namely: the personality system, the social system, and the cultural system (Parsons, 1951a). In Parsonian analysis, the personality and cultural systems encounter or grapple with each other within the social system. This is the arena in which an individual, seeking to gratify him or herself by the realisation of wants, confronts, and negotiates with other actors who might also be seeking their own self-gratification (Walters, 1994). This produces, in the social system, a tendency referred to as a strain towards consistency. Here, actors are continuously oriented to order and predictability by seeking to share

understanding with others, which stabilises the situation by establishing mutual expectations through constant interaction.

It is important however to understand here that the interaction described above does not take place between personalities but rather between roles. A role hence becomes the intersection of personality with a social system. With time, interaction patterns are stabilised between a set of roles and a set of goals come to be shared between these roles of members of a social system leading to the establishment of some boundaries around this system (and its members). As this happens, the system itself can be said to be a collectivity or a collective actor (Walters, 1994). In much the same manner, collectivities can equally enter into interaction with one another. Thus, while there are interactions between system parts (subsystems), the system can equally interact with other systems and with a larger system of which the system is itself a part (Parsons, 1951a).

The social system consists mainly of two (2) interconnected and interdependent elements –behaviour and attitudes. The main directly observable aspect of the system is the behaviour of members of the system. This is of great importance to this work. The behaviour consists of an interaction between attitudes and activities. The behaviour categorised *activities* include all that people do while they are with the group or organisation (Amoah, 2013). They range from planning, organising, directing and/or controlling (or simply, governance and leadership roles). The other constituent of the system would form the *attitudes* category. These may entail perceptions, feelings, or values (Cohen, Fink, Gadon, & Willits, 1995). When all the three aspects of the attitude mentioned here (i.e. perception, feelings

and values) are combined, the outcome is seen in the unique way in which the individuals of a particular group or organisation perceive a given situation and or how they react to others. Practically, social systems and personalities are shaped by shared ideas, which are to be rooted in individuals and social relationships.

In a social system, three sets of problems, which create three types of roles through the orientation of interaction towards those problems, can be identified. They include instrumental problems, expressive problems, and integrative problems. The instrumental problem has to do with securing, processing, and allocating material resources and rewards of the system. The expressive problems concern the establishment of emotional relations, and the integrative problems are those that have to do with the solidarity of the social system, which often gives rise directly to leadership and governance roles. These patterns of interaction in the system are not given free reign. They are channelled and limited by institutionalised value orientation. For instance, there are regulative institutions which ensure that the pursuit of interests in a system is a collective endeavour and not the enterprise of personal motivations.

One of the meaningful ways to study organisations is to study them as systems with parts. This thinking helps to look at an organisation as “an integrated whole” (Scott, 1961, p.33). Organisations, while part of a system, are understood here as total systems, which are configurations of subsystems. Such a system (organisation) is a subordinate unit of a larger system and has itself subsidiary systems. In analysing the system in the present context therefore, the study organisations are treated as systems, and subsystems of a

larger system of society (Cohen et al., 1995). From this systems perspective, an organisation is seen as constituting units, so in considering the organisation as a system with units, one may ask what conditions keep the system together and make it sustainable in the face of turbulent environment (e.g. changing environment and leadership turnover). How the parts of the system serve the requirements of the whole (Parsons, 1951a; 1954; Coser, 2010), is an important aspect of the present analysis. The argument is that two main conditions must be met for every system's survival and eventual sustainability. The system must, first, relate effectively with its environment, and also, maintain its own internal integrity (Parsons, 1951b; Coser, 2010). The present study's focus was to examine how well CSOs are structured to help them meet these two important conditions of the system.

Civil society organisations are generally open systems and for that matter, they take in inputs, transform them into outputs, and exchange those outputs with the environment for new inputs for their survival. They also seek to maintain equilibrium by resisting undue changes in their environment, while also adjusting to others (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972; Cohen et al., 1995). Thus, each part (i.e. subunit) of the larger system plays its unique role to ensure that the organisation is balanced for its survival even in the face of a turbulent environment. So, as would be seen in the framework used in this study, several factors, near and remote, affect the sustainability of CSOs. Then again, what makes an organisation resilient, is its ability to stay through to its commitments to its constituencies.



### *Carver's policy governance model*

Within the general framework of the systems argument advanced above, attention is turned here to a discussion of organisational governance from the perspective of the policy governance model as proposed by John Carver (Carver, 1990). This discussion is considered central to the theme of the present research. Considering organisations as systems, Carver concentrates on the leadership core (i.e. the board and the executive) of organisations and discusses how these interrelated parts could work harmoniously for the organisation to remain in dynamic equilibrium. Carver does this by emphasising how organisations as systems could move towards greater differentiation, elaboration, and a higher level of organisation. He proposes that, while working together, the two (2) halves of the leadership divide could effectively deliver on their mandates without interference from either side.

The basic theoretical intent of Carver's model is for boards to be guided to deal with the depth and breadth of policy without becoming mired in operational minutiae of their organisations. The policy focus is four-fold and involves the determination of: 1) the ends or outcomes to be achieved by the organisation; 2) the means, or how the ends are achieved, which involves setting limits on the executive to ensure staff conducts business in a prudent and ethical manner; 3) the board-staff relationship, which clarifies the link between the two halves of the leadership core, and includes both the delegation of authority and meaningful oversight of executive performance; and 4) the process of governance itself; that is, the manner in which the board manages its own time and actions as set forth in its job description. This

translates into the board's roles of policy formulation, decision making and oversight in ensuring that the organisation as a system, relates well with its environment while maintaining its own internal integrity not to be overtaken by its environment.

### *Managerial hegemony theory*

The core proposition of this study is that CSO sustainability has everything to do with governance and leadership. Therefore, Mace's managerial hegemony theory (Mace, 1971), and its arguments, are relevant in the present discourse. Managerial hegemony is discussed here within the general framework of hegemony as advanced by the Hegelian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (Gramsci, 1975). The concept of hegemony dates back to the works of Gramsci. It was Gramsci's central concept which reflects his Hegelianism (See Ritzer, 2008, p. 139-144). Gramsci defined hegemony as a cultural leadership exercised by the ruling class. His concept of hegemony contrasts the coercion "exercised by legislative and executive powers, or expressed through police interventions" (Gramsci, 1975, p.235). In its original application, Gramsci used the concept to explain how some intellectuals, working on behalf of the capitalists, achieved cultural leadership with the express approval of the masses.

Unlike Gramsci's application of the concept to capitalism (Ritzer, Gramsci, 2007; 2008), the present study uses it to explain institutional governance and leadership. Managerial hegemony theory throws light on governance and leadership as key factors in the sustainability of CSOs. The theory from Mace's perspective, holds that, due mainly to the voluntary nature of CSOs governing boards, and the subsequent constraint on the time of board

members, the power of CSO boards are *practically* limited, thereby ceding control to executive directors and their staff (Kreutzer, 2009). This situation, according to the theory, consequently, renders governing boards symbolic, and makes their roles those of “rubber stamps” (Kreutzer, 2009, p.119). This hegemony is argued to threaten the sustainability of CSOs considering the pivotal nature of governance and leadership to civil society sustainability.

The argument in other words, is that, many of the roles of non-profit boards including that of hiring and firing the chief executive as laid out in the Carver model (Carver, 1990), may be ceded (as Mace argues) in some cases to the executive and staff of the organisation, thereby rendering the board’s existence only figurative. This situation raises the CSOs’ susceptibility to disruptions occasioned by organisational changes (including leadership changes).

### **Structuration theory**

There have been many efforts in sociological theorising to integrate structure and agency. Among these efforts, one that has been described as very well-articulated is structuration theory by Anthony Giddens. In Giddens’ theorising, he rejects the long existing polar alternative theories that lay primacy on and emphasise the society or structure and the individual or agent and rather argues for recurrent social practices as the starting point (Giddens, 1989). Giddens argues that the basic domain of the study of the social sciences should neither be individual actor’s experiences nor the pre-existence of any form of what he terms social totality, but rather ‘social practices ordered across time and space’ (Giddens, 1984, p.2).

The structuration theory by focusing on social practices, basically attempts to shed light on the duality, and (what Bernstein calls) the dialectical interplay of agency and structure (Bernstein, 1989, p.23). Structuration presents agency and structure as two sides of the same coin to theorise on the relationship between the two. Indeed, Giddens presents the two as a duality arguing that all social action involves some structure and all structure involves some social action. To Giddens, structure and agency do not exist apart from each other.

In ongoing human activity, the two are in a sense inextricably interwoven. In this ongoing practice, he argues that social actors do not bring in activities. Rather, activities are recreated continually by these actors through the very means by which they express themselves as actors. In and through their activities, social agents are able to produce the conditions that make these activities possible. These activities are therefore not produced by consciousness, the social construction of reality nor the social structure as claimed by some theorists. Rather, as actors express themselves, they engage in practice, and it is through this practice that both consciousness and structure are created or produced.

On the recursive nature of character of structure, it is argued that “structure is reproduced in and through the succession of situated practices which are organised by it” (Held & Thompson, 1989, p.7). In much the same way, Giddens concerns himself with consciousness or what is better termed in this context reflexivity but differentiates reflexivity from mere self-consciousness. The human actor in being reflexive is also engaged in the exercise of monitoring the ongoing flow of activities and the structural

conditions. In this lies the ability of actors to monitor and vary their future actions based on their self-assessment of activities and the accompanying structural conditions.

When it comes to organisational research and sociological theories, Giddens' structuration theory is one of the most referenced and widely applied. My choice of structuration theory is influenced by the field and problem of interest and the challenges associated with the systems argument advanced earlier. Also, in line with what has been termed Giddens' main message to the organisational discipline (Albano, Masino & Maggi, 2010), I sought a theory that is based on my epistemological view of overcoming the objectivist/ subjectivist dilemma –a theory that does not give primacy to agency nor structure. Giddens' theory primarily sits well with this ontology and epistemology of the study. The theory therefore as a frame of reference provides the required methodological features for a comprehensive appreciation of the research problem. The structuration theory helps me to conceptualise the phenomenon of governance and transition in a truly alternative sense to mainstream objectivist and subjectivist perspectives to organisation and organisational behaviour.

Traditionally, objectivist approaches would usually in their application to organisational studies draw attention to structures of organisations, which are conceived of as formal configurations of activities, while treating action as being subservient to the aprioristic structural constraints of the organisations. On the other hand, subjectivists focus on motivations, personal/individual experiences, and sense –making of actors in interaction. These are two extremes. I therefore sought a theory that incorporates both structure and

agency/action within one theoretical framework to properly explain how governance structures are institutionalised in non-profit organisations and how the process of transition is handled within them.

In this study, a conscious effort is made to avoid the unhelpful contrasting of structure and action. Many sociological theorists reify structure and action (Abalno et al., 2010). But as Giddens notes, “knowledgeable agents produce and reproduce structure within the praxis of their social life, and that structural properties are at the same time the constraining and enabling media of action” (Abalno et al., 2010, p.7).

Structuration theory provides a higher level of synthesis that permits us to see the connection between ongoing human activities, social processes, contexts of use, and enduring social structures” (Orlikowski & Robey, 1991). The theory is therefore not seen as an alternative approach; it is rather a sort of irenic reconciliation of the two opposing traditional conception of structure. Structuration does not substitute for objectivism as has been espoused in the social systems theory nor subjectivism as variously advanced by many symbolic interactionists. It assists in rather accepting and connecting the two at a higher level of analysis/abstraction. The application of the theory therefore as a unified methodological and theoretical frame helps to incorporate quite uniquely a few ostensibly disparate perspectives and methodologies.

Structuration tries to reconfigure in a unique sense the hard-edged dualism often portrayed of structure and agency. Agency has had to do with how individuals decide to shape relationships with others and that individuals have some degree of autonomy when it comes to their actions (i.e. some self-determinism or control of a sort) presupposing that the individual has the



power to do otherwise. On the other hand, structure in the traditional sense refers to rules and resources governing the scope of human agency. That human actions are shaped by larger forces of society – be they organisational, cultural, social, political, or religious in their nature.

While many of the theories stressing agency do well in explaining individual behaviour, and in some cases mutually interactive behaviour, their explanation of the “apparently external, objective and constraining realities of society writ large” has not been clear (Walters, 1994, p.46). There is some shared general acceptance howbeit arguable that the most successful attempt at combining agency and structure has come from Giddens’ structuration theory. Unlike his counterparts who believe in agency, Giddens in his structuration theory explicitly attempts to link the sociology of constructionists with structural and functionalist arguments advanced by the likes of Marx, Durkheim, Parsons, and Habermas.

In these theoretical lenses, actors are seen to be taking pre-given resources and using them to produce interaction patterns overtime, thereby lending structural quality to their behaviour (Walters, 1994). Giddens offers some nine (9) new rules of sociological method which helps in the understanding of his propositions. First, on the subject matter of sociology, the point is made that society is not a pre-given objective reality but it is created by the actions of its members and that the act of creation of society is necessarily a skilled performance. He also comments on the limits of human agency. According to this theory, actors are not free to choose how to create society but are limited by constraints of their historical location which they do not choose. It notes that structure has the dual capacity of both constraining

(limiting/checking) and enabling (providing resources for) human agency. The focus of sociology is therefore on the processes by which structures are constituted through action, and action is also constituted structurally. Every human action or structure according to this theory involves three (3) aspects: meanings, norms, and power.

Methodologically, Giddens believes that sociologists cannot avoid using their own experiences as basis for the understanding of social life and indeed should embrace the necessity of interpreting research in the light of their own experiences. Sociologists are to immerse themselves in the situations they analyse.

Giddens' eighth and ninth rules bother on the formation of sociological concepts. Concept formation according to Giddens involves a double hermeneutic. He admonishes sociologists to guard against slippage in the precision of their own concepts as they become appropriated for use in everyday life. In sum, the primary tasks of sociology are the re-description of social settings in a scientific metalanguage and the confirmation of the principle that society is the product of human agency.

As some scholars acknowledge, much of sociological literature position structure and agency as fixed categories. Structuration therefore tries and indeed successfully reconceptualises the two as instantiations of each other (Pozzebon, 2004). The so-called societal forces should not be seen as always dictating human activities/actions. The theory condemns the reification of structure or agency in explaining human activities as done by the systems argument. In Giddens' thought, while agreeing that it is structure which gives form and shape to social life, structure in itself is not that form and shape and

therefore there is no need to treat structure as all-encompassing and self-sustaining. Structure only exists in and through the activities of human agents.

### **Connecting the dots**

Governance systems in the context of this thesis exist as rules, and resources instantiated in and through human interactions in organisations. Within the interactive space, there is no inert transference of values. Rather, human interactions create meaning and understanding as opposed to a pre-constitution of values in the minds of individuals for inert transference as some system theorists would argue.

The structuration theory reconceptualises the traditional agency (individual) and structure (systems) divide as a mutually interacting duality. The daily actions and interactions of organisational members and leaders fold up and then roll into the larger systems (rules and structures) which then simultaneously play out in the daily interactions and activities of these actors. Thus, as argued in systems theorising, there is the need always for effective coordination between systems' parts. Where one part of the system fails to function effectively, this could result in an imbalance or some deficiency in the system.

Boards and executive arms of organisations are all parts or subsystems of the larger system and they each play their unique, yet complementary roles for the effective functioning of the system. While an organisation or system could function even in the event of a dysfunctional board or executive, the ineffectiveness of either of these two could lead to an imbalance with the potential for making the organisation less sustainable. As has already been stated, the activities of boards protect organisations against the deleterious

activities of executive agents. The system however is clothed with the inherent ability to restructure itself and return to equilibrium which would often result from the reflexive power of its agents as argued by structuration theory. This is even more so in the Ghanaian non-profit organisational context, where external control is argued to be very weak; and many of the developments in the sector is said to have been the initiative of the sector's agents (Gyimah-Boadi & Markovits, 2008).

### **Conceptual framework**

#### ***The civil society ecosystem and sustainability***

A conceptual framework has been defined to refer to a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that support and inform one's research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The present framework conceptualises civil society sustainability in line with the theoretical arguments presented in the preceding session of this chapter.

Civil society sustainability is a concept that has defied a uniform definition in literature. Despite the many existing efforts to define the concept (Benton & Monroy, 2004; Weerawardena et al., 2010; CIVICUS, 2016; WACSI, 2015, Vandyck, 2017; USAID, 2018), it appears that civil society sustainability is better explained in the context of its usage and application than universally defined. Within the non-profit sector generally, sustainability basically connotes the ability of an organisation to survive to continue its service to its community. According to Weerawardena et al. (2010), the sustainability of non-profit organisations means that those organisations are going to be able to meet their commitments to beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

In the present study, an adapted version of a framework for understanding sustainability presented in the work of Vandyck (2017) was used. Vandyck's original framework, agrees largely with conceptual positions earlier offered in WACSI (2015), which examined from four (4) different dimensions namely: financial (the continuous availability of financial resources), operational (capacity, technical resources and administrative structures to operate programmes), identity (the long-term existence of organisations themselves) and interventions (the continuity of results, impact of specific projects after its completion or funding ends). As put forward by these authors (WACSI, 2015; Vandyck, 2017), a look at civil society sustainability involves focusing on their financial soundness, functionality of operations, institutional health and sustenance of impact from interventions, all of which are, (in the informed position of this thesis), affected by governance. Vandyck's construct conveys a holistic representation of the various factors influencing the sustainability of civil society and their various interactions within the civil society ecosystem.

The model as developed in this study (Figure 1), closely aligns with the model presented by Vandyck (2017) as a framework to guide the analysis of factors of civil society sustainability in his 2017 praxis paper. Vandyck's (2017) framework is a straightforward model which presents the key factors of sustainability in the civil society sector. The civil society ecosystem is made up of two (2) key constellations of civil society: the *organic* and *organised* civil society. The organic civil society, according to Vandyck (2017), are those loose groups and activists with very minimal formal organisation. These groups are interest –driven and operate with great urgency. Such civil society

groups arise out of circumstances, with movement mentality, and are often easily disbanded after the reason for their congregation is satisfied. It is important to reiterate that the present study does not include the organic groups described above.

Organised civil society is within the same ecosystem. These are formalised/institutionalised bodies, which operate with some structure and systems. They are more lasting and yet, lack the urgency of the organic type of civil society. These are often appropriately referred to as civil society organisations. Even though in different degrees, the two (2) broad forms of civil society are affected by similar factors. These factors, as enumerated earlier, comprise the legal and regulatory environment, civic space and foreign policy. Others include, resources (finances), relevance, legitimacy and accountability, intervention scalability (ability to scale up interventions) and replicability (ability to replicate projects and activities), and governance and leadership. While all these factors combine to determine the sustainability of the sector, Vandyck (2017) argues that, those factors closest to the civil societies (highlighted in green in Figure 1), have the most direct effect on their sustainability. Quite ironically, these immediate factors are the very factors the civil societies have direct control over.

It is essential to state that the present study unlike others, does not carry out a blanket assessment of the sustainability of the civil society sector. It rather categorises, and examines an important factor of CSO sustainability, which is the governance and leadership dimension. The twin concept of governance and leadership is argued to have overarching implications for the overall sustainability of CSOs.



The argument is that an organisation’s governance and leadership is as important as its financial, material, and technical resources. The success of the other immediate factors including material, financial, and technical resources, identity and representation, and societal impact, could be greatly impacted by the governance and leadership dimension of every non-profit organisation.

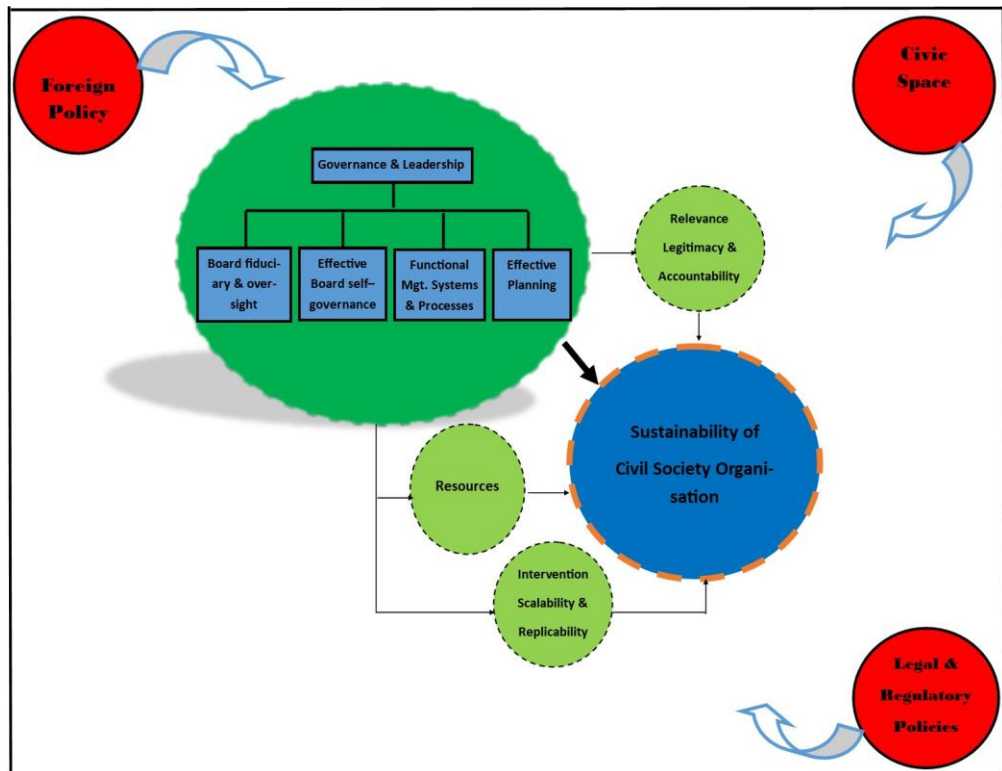


Figure 1: Implications of Governance and Leadership for CSO Sustainability in the CSO Ecosystem

Source: Author’s construct based on literature (Vandyck, 2017; WACSI, 2015)

While the remote factors of sustainability (Figure 1), including the nature of civic space (whether it is open, closing, or closed), legal and regulatory policies (are they enabling or restrictive?), and foreign policy (national priorities and global geopolitical positions), are important, the present study focuses on the immediate factor of governance and leadership.

Within this governance and leadership dimension, the key indicators measured include the existence of functional management structures, systems and processes, board fiduciary and oversight, board self-governance and the existence of effective planning. These indicators were further translated into specific questions in a structured questionnaire to help assess the health/state of organisations' governance and leadership.

The basic argument the model advances is that, where there are functional management systems, structures and processes, the board excises its fiduciary and oversight roles and governs itself well as a body while making sure that there is effective planning, these would translate into effective governance and leadership outcomes with positive implications for the sustainability of the organisations. It is important to note also, as indicated in the model, that, good leadership and organisational governance improves the resource fortunes, legitimacy and accountability of the organisation and also ensures that interventions are scalable and replicable, which ensures in part the ultimate sustainability of the organisations (See Figure 1).

Boards' work in determining the mission and purpose of the organisation, selecting new CEOs, supporting and evaluating the performance of CEOs, monitoring and strengthening programmes and services of organisations, exercising financial oversight, planning effectively for executive successions and the management of their own activities as boards, are used as key governance measures in this study. Further, by way of management, the model considers the existence of functional management systems and processes as important to good organisational governance. It looks at the application of transparent management processes, transparent

decision making, members' involvement in decision making and value for money considerations. These in addition to the board's roles and responsibilities enumerated earlier, are used to make judgements about the governance effectiveness of the organisations in the study. The institutionalisation and/or effectiveness of these governance systems could however be moderated by some organisational characteristics such as the type of organisation (whether it is a solitary organisation or network and whether it is local or international), funding sources, size, reach, and so on.

While acknowledging that civil society organisations' sustainability is affected by other key external factors such as the civic space, foreign policy, and other regulatory and legal policies, these factors are considered as remote in the framework and therefore their effects may not be as direct as the other dimensions, which are internal and apparently controllable by the organisations.

As per the theoretical arguments of this thesis, even though these factors appear as subsystems of a larger system, they do not create themselves. They are created and recreated by the very agents of the institutions they tend to impact. The institutionalisation of these factors is as a result of the interactions of the agents and parts of the system. Thus, even though they form a structure, the agency is not subservient to this structure in any way. Agents of these systems are actively engaged in the creation and recreation of its sustainability factors.

Governance and executive transition are treated as measures of organisational sustainability in the study. The focus here is on the institutional health and long-term existence of the organisations. The WACSI civil society

sustainability index (CSSI) treats governance and leadership together with the relevance of mission, legitimacy, and accountable systems as well as policy and regulatory environment as one dimension of sustainability (WACSI, 2015). In the present construct however, the dimensions of sustainability follow Vandyck's (2017) usage, and appropriately delineates governance and leadership as a defined category, different from relevance, legitimacy, and external accountability, policies and regulatory environment. In the construct in Figure 1, policy and regulatory framework is treated among the remote factors and therefore excluded from the present analysis. Since governance is used to assess the institutional health (i.e. sustainability) of the organisation, a sustainable organisation in the present discussion is one that has effective governance and management systems, and processes.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The Chapter has discussed the trends in existing literature (both conceptual and empirical), on the subject under investigation. The review broadly looked at civil society sustainability and identified as a shortfall the unhealthy attempt to equate firms' sustainability with their ability to raise funds. It underscored the value of governance for CSO sustainability, reviewed key studies on governance and narrowed the focus in the final third, to executive leadership transitions. The existing literature, as examined in this chapter, clearly reveals the paucity of contextual knowledge about governance and executive transitions in the non-profit literature in Ghana. Considering that governance is always very context specific, a study on governance, and especially, executive transitions, was to be invaluable. It is in this quest that the present effort at studying at first-hand, the governance systems of selected

CSOs and their effectiveness in managing executive successions was initiated.

In the subsequent chapter, the entire research process is discussed to prepare

the grounds for the ensuing data.



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The chapter describes the process that guided the research from the formulation of questions through to the drawing of conclusions. It contains mainly the decisions and actions taken towards generating useful information for understanding the topic of interest. The chapter also discusses among other things the philosophical assumptions underpinning the conduct of the study. The main decision in this study was about the approach to be used to study the topic. That important decision was guided by the philosophical assumption behind the study. The study's philosophy informs basically the procedures of inquiry and specific research methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The selection of research approaches was also based on the nature of the research problem and my own experiences as a researcher.

#### Research Philosophy

My perspective to research combines a realist ontology with a constructivist epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Mertens, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The real world exists independent of our beliefs and constructions and at the same time, our knowledge of the world is inevitably our own construction (Creswell, 2013). Thus, the philosophy underpinning the present research is pragmatism. There are multiple realities in the world. As such, there must equally be different ways of interpreting the world and conducting research in the real world. Here, the focus is not the methods per se, but, the problem of interest and the questions that have been posed about the problem (Rossman & Wilson, 1985). The study combines



both positivist and interpretivist positions in a single research plan to address its research questions. The methods, techniques and associated procedures that well meet the needs and purposes of the present study were those chosen. As Cherryholmes (1992) and Murphy (1990) rightly note, pragmatists in their research do not see the world as an absolute unity. In much the same way, many approaches were used in the collection and analysis of the research data rather than a subscription to a single approach.

This philosophy guides the employment of research methods, strategies of inquiry and the analysis of the ensuing data. Reality here is what is useful, practical and works and this is made known using multiple tools reflecting both the objective and subjective evidence available. Consequently, the research process involved both qualitative (interpretivists) and quantitative (positivist) approaches in the collection and analysis of data.

It is worth noting that aside the simple differences in the application of the main approaches to data collection and analysis, there exists epistemological differences in the two methodological approaches adopted in this thesis (Creswell, 2013; Gray, 2009). There are three (3) key characteristic differences in qualitative and quantitative methodologies for which reason their combination in a study such as this, gives unparalleled benefits. These differences include differences in orientation, epistemology, and ontology.

First, quantitative research uses a deductive approach to testing theories. Epistemologically, this is based on the positivist approach with leanings to the natural sciences while the ontology is more of objectivism in the sense that social reality is regarded as an objective fact out there, which could be observed objectively. On the other hand, the qualitative method is

more inductive in orientation towards theory generation. In terms of epistemology, the approach rejects positivism by relying on individual interpretations of social reality. The ontology is therefore more subjective. Social reality here is seen as constantly changing according to changing perceptions. This means that, meaning in this study is jointly constructed by the researcher and research participants even as methods and data are also heavily triangulated.

It is worth mentioning that the attributes of the two (2) approaches employed are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Creswell, 2014). There are polarisations (Walliman, 2006). In the present study, the two approaches are combined to examine different aspects of the research question. The researcher was mindful as Bryman (2004) cautions, that assuming too dogmatic differences between qualitative and quantitative methodologies was not helpful. Bryman (2004) opines in agreement with Silverman (2011), Creswell (2013), and Newman and Benz (1998) that research methods are not determined by epistemology or ontology and that the contrast between natural and artificial settings for qualitative and quantitative research is frequently exaggerated (Bryman, 2004; Walliman, 2006). Considering the observations of these blurring lines of distinction between these approaches, it is prudent to take full advantage of the individual and collective strengths of these approaches by employing them in one unified research plan.

### **Research Design**

Research designs provide the general framework within which the collection of research data and the subsequent determination of the appropriate methods of analysis to be employed are done. In line with its theoretical

traditions of integrating positivism and interpretivism, the present research was a mix of methods that employ both qualitative and quantitative approaches under a cross-sectional exploratory design. The qualitative bit employed interviews and other (qualitative) approaches while the quantitative approach used the survey method.

The cross-sectional design entails the collection of more than one case, generally using a sampling method to select cases in order to be representative of a population (Bryman, 2004). The design collects data at a single point in time which provides snapshots of ideas, opinions, and information. By way of data collection, both qualitative and quantitative methods could be employed appropriately under the cross-sectional design as was the case in this study (Walliman, 2006). The design was believed to be the most appropriate strategy to guide the research in terms of its context-specific focus on getting detailed information (Blaikie, 2010) regarding the governance and leadership of a particular set of organisations (i.e. CSOs) while being able to broadly understand the patterns across the sector as well.

Bryman (2004) argues that in employing quantitative methods under the cross-sectional design, variations in the data can be systematically gauged according to specific and reliable standards. Another key characteristic of the design is that patterns of association between variables could be examined to detect associations. The design also allowed for the employment of qualitative approaches in line with the study's interest in studying organisations and their agents in detail within certain contexts. Here, there was no effort at laying claims to generalisability. The focus was on the quality of theoretical analysis

based on intensive investigation into issues of governance and executive transitions in the CSOs using inductive and deductive reasoning.

### **Data sources**

The main source of data for this research was primary. It relied on both qualitative and quantitative sources. The primary data included questionnaire responses, interview transcripts, and observational notes. Some secondary or documentary sources of information were also utilised to complement the primary data collected.

The secondary data were selected carefully based on their nature, reliability, and the sort of analysis that they lend themselves to. Aware of the fact that this kind of secondary information is often less abundant and has the possibility of coloration depending on how they are sourced, its usage was sparingly done. The secondary data were from minutes of meetings, strategic plans, annual reports, formal succession plans, historical records, memos, and other such reports and documents where available. It is important to mention that the data as described here could be measured only at the nominal and ordinal scale levels as has been the case with many theoretical concepts in social science research. It is important to acknowledge that this restricted the kinds of statistical analysis that could be carried out.

### **Study area**

The research was conducted in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Even though the Region is the smallest of all the 10 regions of Ghana, it is a strategic region for many reasons. It has the city of Accra which is the nation's capital. Despite its size, the Region has the second highest human population in the country with truly diverse groups and statuses. Data available from the

2010 population and housing census (PHC) by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) places the population of the Greater Accra Region at 4,010,054, which is 16.3% of the entire population of the country, and second to the Ashanti Region's population of 4,780,280, which represents 19.4% of the country's total population (GSS, 2012).

Due mainly to its diversity and strategic importance, the Greater Accra Region has been the centre of civic engagements in Ghana, both historically and in present times. The region houses the highest number of registered civil society organisations in the country. Indeed, of the five (5) highly CSO-concentrated regions in Ghana, the Greater Accra Region was preferred for this study because of its special diversity in terms of the organisations registered and operating within it. The Region has a diverse composition of CSOs constituting networks and coalitions, individual local/national CSOs, international and multinational organisations, as well as international foundations.

In terms of concentration, the total number of CSO's in the Greater Accra Region alone (1,686) far exceeds all CSOs registered and operating in the other nine (9) regions of the country (1,187) put together as the data in Table 1 depicts. The Region has 499 more registered CSOs than all the nine (9) regions combined, presenting more than a fair representation of the CSO population in the country. That said, a key number of the CSOs operating in the other regions are also headquartered in the Greater Accra Region. These and other considerations made the Greater Accra Region an ideal context for a study of this nature.

### Target population

The organisations making up the population of organised civil society in Ghana are all registered by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and granted NGO status to operate in the country. As at 2018, the number of organisations on the register of DSW stood at 2,873 across the 10 regions of the country. The Greater Accra Region of Ghana was purposively selected for the present study as it better served the interest of the study compared to the other regions. According to the data available at the DSW NGO office, Greater Accra, Central, Ashanti, Eastern, and Northern Regions have high concentrations of both rural and urban CSOs in Ghana. Table 1 shows the regional concentration of the registered organisations as of 2018.

**Table 1: Number of CSOs Registered with the DSW in Good Standing as of December 2018**

S/N.	Region	Number
1.	Greater Accra Region	1686
2.	Central Region	264
3.	Ashanti Region	252
4.	Eastern Region	176
5.	Northern Region	157
6.	Volta Region	136
7.	Upper East Region	62
8.	Brong Ahafo Region	60
9.	Western Region	49
10.	Upper West Region	31
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,873</b>

Source: DSW, NGO Office in Accra (2018)



It is important to note that the organisations making up the numbers presented in Table 1 do not represent an exhaustive list of all civil society organisations in the country. As was noted earlier, there is evidence of many more civil society organisations and other associations who for lack of registration with the DSW have not been granted NGO status and therefore not included in the DSW list referenced above. For the purposes of this study however, the DSW list was relied upon as the sampling frame because it remains the most reliable source of data on CSOs in Ghana.

### ***Study population***

It is worth clarifying at this point that while the unit of analysis and unit of sampling differ in different situations, the civil society organisations were the main unit of analysis for this study. The individuals were therefore only units of observation (Kumar, 2018). The study's conclusions are therefore drawn based on the organisations as the unit of analysis.

The study had as its interest four (4) categories of research participants from different organisational settings. The participants included mainly actors from the population of non-profit civil society organisations in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. This population included the civil society organisations themselves with non-governmental status with offices in the region including mainly Ghanaian NGOs with operations in Ghana and International NGOs (INGOs) in Ghana with operations in Ghana and other countries. Others in this population included multilateral donor agencies operating in Ghana and their affiliates with offices in the Region, the DSW's NGO office in Accra and some academic institutions offering programmes in NGO management and social policy in the region. Aside the main research

participants, being the CSO practitioners, the other component of the study population (constituting non-practitioners) offered an external perspective on the problem of study. In the subsequent sections, I discuss the key research strategies employed. The presentation begins with the qualitative methods, followed by the quantitative approach and how each of the datasets were handled in the present study.

### **Primary Data Collection**

The study employed multiple qualitative and quantitative methods in arriving at its data early on. It used questionnaires, different kinds of interviews, observation, and some unobtrusive methods (using organisational records, episodic documents, and some digital archives) in collecting the primary data. This section describes in detail the various approaches and strategies employed (including the recruitment participants) in the collection of the primary data. It contains a description of the qualitative method and the various instruments employed under it, followed by the quantitative approach. The text also discusses how each dataset from these methods was analysed.

#### **The qualitative approach**

The consideration to use qualitative approaches in this research was hinged on several important reasons. First, very little information exists about CSO governance and executive transition practices in the Ghanaian context. Exploration was therefore needed as a way of uncovering variables that cannot easily be measured and be able to hear the silent voices on the subject.

The researcher decided to have a detailed understanding of executive transitions and how these were handled or managed within specific contexts. The setting within which the organisations and the principal actors address the

challenge of leadership transitions is very key to a fuller appreciation of the research problem. As has been the case in previous research in Ghana related to the present problem (USAID, 2016; WACSI, 2015; Vandyck, 2014), general trends, associations and relationships are often provided. However, this general picture often does not tell the whole story as they jettison the processes, experiences of actors and the context within which actors' actions are situated. The aim therefore of the qualitative approach was to gather in a more holistic way, the experiences, deeper thoughts, and behaviours that underpinned the general patterns in the responses generated.

Like human beings, to level all organisations to statistical averages in my educated view, and those of scholars like Creswell (2013), and Denzin and Lincoln (2011), overlooks the individual uniqueness of the various cases in the study, hence, the resolve to carry out a qualitative inquiry. Using the qualitative approach also helped me to gain access to how the participants construct their social and cultural 'realities'. There was thus the need to do an in-depth exploration of the research field before any attempt to speculate about the elements that may be most relevant to the study's focus, and how these may be related. Also, the approach is used with the understanding of the challenges posed by the sole reliance on quantitative methods. In using surveys for example, the understanding of questions posed by a researcher may not exactly be shared by respondents on the other end, and even where same responses are given, interpretations of these responses may differ from one respondent to another; these are some of the challenges only qualitative approaches are able to assuage.

In this respect, a key number of qualitative methods were employed under the cross-sectional design. They included in-depth key informant interviews (KIIs), a focus group discussion (FGD) and observation. Before proceeding to explain these methods and how they were utilised in detail, a description of the strategies employed in reaching the qualitative samples is given.

### *Sampling strategy*

In selecting participants for the qualitative interviews and focus group discussions, the non-probability technique of purposive sampling was utilised. In the selection of organisations for instance, different organisational types and experiences were considered. The criteria included experiences with leadership changes, long stay of present executive directors, and organisational type (with representations from individual organisations as well as networks and coalitions). The reason behind the broad selection of organisations is because the organisational types have different characteristics that were envisioned to have the potential of affecting how the organisations were structured and the governance practices to be found in them. A few board members were also reached purposively for interviews.

The sample also included some experts who were not necessarily in civil society practice. The interest in this set of non-practitioner participants (including academic, researchers and officers from the DSW) was inspired by efforts to improve the validity of the findings. These participants were selected for purposes of external validation. They were treated as external observers familiar with the civil society sector in the region to provide expert opinions about the research problem.

One can admit that selecting respondents purposively does not guarantee an exhaustive scope of perspectives on the subject. However, interviewing different participants of different institutional backgrounds, gave the study multiple perspectives of agreements and disagreements on the subject. The wide and varied selection of the participants was expected to enhance validity and reduce biases. The problem researched into, required identifying participants who could provide information about the subject of interest and the context within which it was being analysed. So, while the actors within the civil society space are numerous, there were still people who were key and deemed better informed about the present study. Hence, their purposive selection. In its present form, the findings may have limits of generalisability beyond the Region, but it certainly provides a contextual understanding of the research problem.

#### *Recruiting the participants for the qualitative study*

As has been mentioned in the preceding section, two (2) categories of participants were selected for the qualitative field interviews. Thirty (30) participants were reached and interviewed in-depth. The sample included a civil society practitioner group, made up of mainly executive directors, programme officers, and board members, on one hand, and a non-practitioner group, on the other. Emails were sent to CEOs and board members of some 52 identified CSOs, inviting them to participate in the study. Responses were received from 25 organisations within a period of one (1) month. Five (5) of these responses came from board members and 20 from executive heads. From these organisations, 20 successful interviews were conducted with executive directors (past and present), and in some cases, their deputies (some of whom

were programme officers). Aside that, five (5) interviews were conducted with board members across five (5) other organisations.

The non-practitioner category of the sample on the other hand, was constituted by academics, researchers, and officials from the DSW, who provided the study with valuable external/ expert perspectives. In all, five (5) participants were interviewed from this category. The academics/ researchers were selected and contacted based on their research and publications, which were related to the sustainability and functioning of CSOs in Ghana. The DSW official's selection was mainly because the NGO office of the Department has oversight responsibility, under the present regulatory regime, over all non-profit and non-governmental CSOs in Ghana.

*Selection of focus group discussants*

In the selection of discussants for the Focus Group, guidelines in line with what the USAID recommends for its implementer survey for the CSO sustainability index were followed. To the extent possible, for a proper in-country appreciation, the USAID advises that at least 70% of participants or participating organisations in a study of this nature should be local. Attention was given to CSOs in advocacy and service delivery because they happen to be in the majority in the Region and across the country. Attempts were also made to have rural –urban representation with some gender considerations in constituting the group.

The focus group discussion was made up of nine (9) members drawn from the following sources:

- i. Representatives of a diverse range of civil society organisations and other stakeholders including:



- a. Local CSOs support centres, resource centres or intermediary civil society support organisations (ISOs): one (1) member;
  - b. Local CSOs involved in a range of service delivery and /or advocacy activities: four (4) members;
  - c. Academia with expertise related to civil society: 1 member
  - d. CSO partners from the state: one (1) member from DSW's NGO office;
  - e. Think tanks working on the area of civil society development: one (1) member;
- ii. International donors who support civil society or local partners: one (1) member.

Emails were sent to the organisations and in some cases individuals (e.g. academics) mentioned above, requesting them to attend or send representatives to the discussion. The emails provided a background information and the key themes to be explored by the focus group discussants. Individuals representing the above interests and organisations who consented to the meeting were given the meeting date to attend. This meeting (i.e. FGD) was held at a West Africa Civil Society Institute conference facility at East Legon in Accra. Three (3) categories of people constituted the group. They comprised executive directors and senior programme officers of the selected organisations, an academic and an agent of the state from the DSW. Details of how data was collected during the FGD have been provided under the next session.

### *Qualitative data collection methods*

The qualitative data was collected using in-depth interviews, FGD and field observation with guides that were developed beforehand. The method used a carefully selected number of leaders and staff of the civil society organisations, academics, and other experts for an in-depth understanding of the problem of research.

#### *The use of interviews*

A major part of this study was exploratory and required the use of a data collection method that lent itself to explorations. It is on this basis that the interview method was selected. Some of the research objectives were largely exploratory (especially objectives 3 & 4) and also involved the examination of some feelings and attitudes regarding transition practices and experiences in the civil society sector. The method helped in probing further for more detailed responses to certain questions and phenomena. The interview approach also helped to know the meanings the participants attached to the phenomena of governance and executive transitions and accompanying practices in the civil society sector.

Many of the issues covered in the interview were issues the researcher believed participants would rather want to talk about than filling them out in predesigned research questionnaires. The method afforded both the research participants and the researcher the opportunity to immediately seek clarifications on questions and responses that were not clear. As would become clear in subsequent chapters of this thesis, the interview method distinctly helped to gather useful information on the knowledge, values, preferences, and attitudes of especially the chief executive officers (CEOs)

regarding their transitions in the non-profit sector. Also, the interview method, in combination with the survey, granted the researcher the opportunity to follow up on key issues of this research.

Even though this method is operationally time consuming in terms of arranging interviews, travels and the establishment of rapport, it offered a greater advantage of exploring narratives and the perspectives of participants in-depth while at the same time allowing for nuances to be captured, and questions clarified. In most instances, the method permitted some diversions into pathways which were originally not considered in the planning stage of this research. These new pathways were however very helpful in meeting key objectives of the study, and in providing clarity.

#### *The FGDs and observation*

Aside interviewing key informants selected from across the sector, a focus group discussion and some field observations were done using FGD guide and an observation checklist developed prior to that. Following the guide developed, the researcher made four (4) visits to some of the organisations for purposes of observing the organisational settings and a few events and the meanings the sector's actors made of them. Notes were written after each of the visits. These were solely meant to improve my appreciation of the context of the data from the main methods of interview, survey and FGD. The notes also served as a guide during the qualitative data analysis.

The FGD focused mainly on the emerging themes of the study after most of the interviews had been conducted and transcribed. It also sought to validate the individual accounts in interviews that were conducted. It is important to emphasise that the real intent of the focus group discussion was

not to draw inferences but to rather get a comprehensive understanding of the problem of the research. As such, the outcome of the focus group sought to give a range, or the extent of the issues given in the individual accounts and not for the purposes of any empirical generalisations as mentioned early on. The approach and its data did not seek to make statements about the non-profit population but sought to rather provide key insights about how group members perceived the varied situations they were presented with in relation to their experiences.

The main data collection methods employed during the focus group were audio-taped recordings, observation, and note-taking. These multiple methods were used following the recommendation of Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook (2007) with the intention of enriching the resulting data. Also, non-verbal behaviours and actions of participants before, during and after the discussion were observed and recorded. Fonteyn, Vettese, Lancaster and Bauer-Wu (2008) argue that non-verbal data provide much more detailed and apt description and interpretation of focus group discussion compared to the sole reliance on verbal data. In this regard, four (4) data sources of non-verbal communication outlined by Gorden (1980) were taken into consideration. They included the proxemics (use of interpersonal space to communicate attitudes), kinesics (behaviour reflected by body displacements and postures), chronemics (temporal speech markers such as gaps, silences, and hesitations), and paralinguistics (variations in volume, pitch and quality of voice) of the group members.

Aware of the sensitivity of the subject of leadership transitions within the non-profit sector in Ghana, the deliberate diversity of the participant

selection for the interviews expressly was believed to offer some validity for the findings.

### *Use of organisational documents*

Referred to as ‘running records’ by some authors (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz & Sechrest, 2000; Hakim, 2000), these are organisational and administrative documents produced and kept for operational activities (Gray, 2009). One advantage of relying on this kind of record is its non-reactivity. While well aware that this kind of information may be inaccurate and in some cases incomplete, such data is usually not manipulated by those who produce them, this is because they often do not know that the material is going to be studied at the point of production (Gray, 2009). It is worth noting however that a sole reliance on this kind of information in research is usually not helpful because of potential bias. The documents, materials, or records that are to be archived and the process for doing so, are often at the discretion of the organisations’ policies and employees’ adherence to implementing such policies.

Some of the documents may also have been destroyed by the organisations for various reasons. It is for these and many other reasons that this method is only employed as a complementary method. While it aids the discussion, the use of these documentary sources was done with a lot of caution because of the subjective ways in which they may have been prepared. Even though a lot of information exist in the sampled ORGANISATIONS, for purposes of this research, only two (2) types of documents were relied upon in this exercise. They included annual reports and strategic plans of the present

strategic cycles where they existed. In all, seven (7) annual reports and two (2) strategic plans were obtained from seven of the CSOs.

Aside these organisational documents, some research participants (chief executives, board members and staff) granted me access to some personal documents and conversations in line with the interest of the present research. These episodic records aided my appreciation of some of the key narratives of the research participants. Some of these documents were used by participants as evidence of their narratives during the interviews. As Gray (2009) acknowledges, episodic records are often private and discontinuous and therefore rare in research, but very useful in appreciating the research context.

#### ***Handling the qualitative data***

The analysis of the qualitative research data began during the data collection stage to help organise the emerging themes for examination as they appear in the subsequent data. The data collected from the key informant interviews and the focus group discussion were transcribed verbatim for further coding and analysis. Considering that qualitative research generates a huge amount of data (some of which was not useful in the present discussion), a data reduction exercise was carried out. This was done to determine which part of the data was meaningful and significant in the context of the present study. During this exercise, the raw data was organised and transformed into simplified data formats that could be well appreciated in the context of the objectives of the thesis. The initial organisation and data reduction were done with the assistance of the Nvivo qualitative data analysis software.

The data analysis was done using thematic analysis. The thematic analysis started with data from the in-depth interviews. It started with a



familiarisation with the emerging data and a close examination of the data to identify the ideas, topics and key patterns of meanings that were coming up repeatedly across interviews. These topics and ideas identified were categorised and assigned preliminary codes that described their contents. Once this was done, the codes were used to search for patterns across all the interviews as they emerged. The themes were further examined and reviewed. Examination of the patterns and how their interpretations fit into the general framework of the research problem was done through pattern matching (Silverman, 2011).

Pattern matching (Campbell, 1966; Silverman, 2011) was an abductive analysis done through a continuous, iterative comparison of emergent themes to theoretical frames and concepts defined priori in this study. This helped linking theoretical patterns in the study with operational or observed patterns to develop a coherent presentation. In this case, the theoretical patterns were provided by the conceptual framework (and other CSO sustainability frameworks in the literature (WACSI, 2015; Vandyck, 2017; USAID, 2016; 2018), the Carver governance model (Carver, 1996; 2006) and the managerial hegemony theory (Mace, 1971) as discussed within the general framework of systems theory as well as the Structuration theory. The operational pattern on the other hand was provided by the field responses in the form of interviews, observational notes and other insights drawn from documentary sources.

The common issues, topics, ideas, and patterns that emerged in the text of the data were examined to see how they shed light on the research questions. Patterns and relationships observed within and across organisational types or groups were presented and discussed along with the results of the

quantitative data analysis. Where deviations existed, factors responsible for those atypical responses were examined and presented as well.

While the episodic documents mainly were used for purposes of illuminating the narratives, the public documents collected were carefully reviewed and assessed through thematic content analysis. The documents were checked for themes that addressed issues of governance and/or sustainability and how these were approached by the organisations concerned. The outcome of this has been organised and presented in Table 13 (titled ‘Key Themes on Sustainability’) to aid particularly in the discussion of sustainability of organisations in the sector.

### **The quantitative approach**

The quantitative approach employed the survey as the main methodology with the aim of collecting quantifiable information that offer descriptions of certain governance practices and explain key attitudes and behaviours regarding the governance systems and processes of the CSOs. It was towards the generation of some standardised and significant amounts of data on several organisations to aid the vivid description of the themes and patterns observed. The survey approach used was both descriptive and analytical. The key methods employed under this approach is explained further after a description of the sampling approach used.

### ***Sampling strategy***

In the selection of the sample for the survey, a systematic random sampling technique was employed in the selection of the participating CSOs. The systematic random sampling method involves the selection of units in a series according to some predetermined system (Walliman, 2006). A list of

organisations with NGO status in the Greater Accra Region was obtained from the DSW as stated earlier to serve as the frame for the sampling. A sampling interval was determined by dividing the population size (of 1686 CSOs) by the desired sample size (of 323). Following this, every 5<sup>th</sup> organisation (case) on the list was selected (following a random start) until the sample size was attained. The process continued until the desired sample size of 323 was obtained. Letters were sent to these organisations inviting them to participate in the research. The CSOs which responded positively to the invitation were further contacted with predesigned questionnaires to be completed by one personnel. Nonresponsive organisations were sent a maximum of two (2) reminders before the close of the survey.

At the institutional level, the selection of the individual respondents was purely purposive. The CSOs were informed that the questionnaires had to be completed by executive directors or other managerial personnel. This was so because, the respondents required a certain level of institutional knowledge, and access to information to participate meaningfully in the survey. Thus, the participants had to necessarily be people who occupied management positions or were part of management meetings of the organisations. They ranged from chief executive officers and their deputies, to senior programme officers. The identified officers from each of the organisations were invited to participate in the study by answering the questionnaires.

The initial intention was to cluster the organisations based on some organisational characteristics as a way of improving upon the representativeness of the sample while increasing the validity of the data. This proved practically difficult because of the state of the data obtained from the

DSW on the organisations. The list kept by the department lacked the variables that could have been used in clustering (or stratifying) the organisations. Hence, the resort to the systematic random sampling technique despite its known challenges with proportional representation.

#### *Sample size determination*

In all, 323 respondents from a sample of 323 organisations in the Greater Accra region were taken for the survey. This sought to provide a broad understanding of the extensiveness or otherwise of the issues being explored. The sample size was determined using a simple formula provided by Yamane (1967, p. 886):

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where  $n$  is the unknown sample size,  $N$  is the population size and  $e$  represents the level of precision. The researcher used a confidence interval of 95% with a  $p$  of .5. Feeding the formula produces the following equation:

$$n = \frac{1686}{1 + 1686(0.05)^2} = 323.29$$

Rounding it up, 323 organisations were sampled from the list of 1686, which represented 19% of the CSO population in the Greater Accra Region. The identified organisations and officers were contacted and invited to participate in the survey through emails and telephone calls.

#### *Quantitative data collection methods*

The main method of data collection under the quantitative approach was the survey method. The method made use of a structured questionnaire

which was self-completed by the participants. The questions were largely close ended with a few open-ended questions, which made way for some detailed explanation of some of the responses. The predesigned questionnaire covered issues bordering on governance systems institutionalisation, the essentials of good governance, board responsibilities and effective governance practices including an assessment of the state of succession planning as defined by good practice. It incorporated questions on the key governance function of succession planning. The thematic areas of the questionnaire were derived from a combination of the data emerging from the qualitative phase of the research, the research objectives, and the existing literature. Particularly, the section of the questionnaire that measured governance effectiveness was developed with themes from the qualitative data, together with questions adapted from Gill, Flynn and Reissing's (2005) governance self-assessment checklist (GSAC).

The GSAC was originally designed by Gill et al. (2005) as an instrument to be used by non-profit and public sector organisations to assess the strengths and weaknesses in their organisational governance and to educate board members about the essentials of good governance towards improving governance practices. The GSAC consisted of items that were organised into subscales and tested by the designers. The GSAC was found by Gill et al. (2005) after testing, to have excellent internal consistency reliability, exhibit good criterion-related validity, and able to discriminate between stronger and weaker aspects of governance functions in organisations.

In line with the GSAC, the items of the present survey instrument on governance and executive transitions were developed generally in the form of

positive statements meant to assess the effectiveness of governance in the sampled organisations. These items were placed on a six-point Likert scale and scored 5,4,3,2,1, and 0 with 5 marking the highest and 0 marking the lowest score. The four key components of the questionnaire were board fiduciary and oversight responsibilities, board self-governance, management systems and processes, and effective succession planning. For each of the components, the average (mean) score was computed by adding up participants' score of each item and dividing it by the number of items in that section. In the same vein, the composite score was attained by combining the means of the four key components of the questionnaire and finding the average score.

The questionnaire was pilot tested across organisations selected from the Central, Ashanti, Eastern, and Northern Regions of Ghana. These regions, which happened to be the remaining four (4) of the five (5) regions (excluding the Greater Region which was the site for the actual study) with high NGO concentration in the country. Essentially, the pre-test of the questionnaire involved 31 respondents from 31 organisations representing nearly 10% of the actual study sample. The main purpose of the pre-test was to check the reliability of the instruments and the relevance of key questions for possible improvements. After the pre-test, some items on the roll received some minor modifications and questions found to be redundant were removed.

The questionnaire was found to be very reliable after the pre-test, even though the feedback helped in reframing a few questions on the roll as indicated above. The internal consistency analysis of the instrument (excluding some auxiliary items) yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91, which



was indicative of very high reliability for the instrument. Also, there was intercorrelation between the subsections of the instrument. The first part of the scale which presents an overall picture of the extent of institutionalisation of key governance measures correlated with the remaining subsections of the instrument yielding a Pearson R of 0.62 (effectiveness of management systems and practices), 0.75 (board self –governance), 0.65 (board fiduciary and oversight roles), 0.88 (other functional responsibilities of the board), and 0.82 (planning for succession).

The target respondents of the survey were mainly top managers in executive positions and their deputies (many of whom were programme officers). It is worth mentioning that most of the organisations were modest in size and structure, as the existing records and the findings suggest, therefore, the managerial personnel often possessed nearly exhaustive knowledge of the functioning of their organisations and were also privy to activities of the board. The questionnaires were sent out to the participants identified and contacted across the sampled organisations from the list of registered NGOs kept by the DSW. The questionnaire administration was by hand delivery in addition to web-based and mailed questionnaires. The questionnaires were self-completed by the participants and returned. Aware of the nonresponse challenges with data collection in research that involves organisations (Fulton, 2018), the combination of the computer assisted approach and manual distribution of questionnaires was meant to widen the coverage and improve on the response rate while reducing cost of data collection across the region (Dillman, et al., 2009).

At the time of the research, the register of NGOs kept by the DSW offered the most complete and reliable list of CSOs in good standing in Ghana. It is important to note however that the operational definition of CSOs in the present study (which guided the selection of the sample), was not exhaustive of all CSOs in the country. For example, for purposes of effectiveness in data collection, CSOs were conceptualised to exclude trade unions, professional bodies like Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools (CHASS), Ghana Medical Association (GMA), University Teachers Association (UTAG), Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), etc., and faith based groups such as the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC), Ghana Catholic Bishops Conference (GCBC), etc. Other exclusions included organisations which were on the DSW list of CSOs but were not operational at the time of the study. Such organisations were excluded (or replaced where sampled) upon discovering that they operated no more.

#### *Analysing the quantitative data*

The data was cleaned, checked for content validity and missing values were assigned specific codes. The quantitative data from the field were analysed using the IBM SPSS Statistics, a data analysis software. The analysis was mainly descriptive and estimated statistical averages. There were some crosstabulations to differentiate the performance of different organisational types and other variables to understand their significance in the present analysis.

In addition to the crosstabulation, a few inferential statistical analyses were done with the hope to appreciate and establish the nature of association between and among some of the variables. These made use of nonparametric

Chi-square and Pearson correlation tests. It is important to clarify here and again that the use of these inferential statistics was not in any way meant to make any empirical generalisations since that was not part of the aims of the present research.

Even though this study's emphasis was not on the quantitative representativeness of the participants, it must be admitted that the responses received through the survey was low. Of the 323 survey responses sought, only 156 were received of which, 148 were found usable in the analysis. The questionnaires that were excluded from the analysis were those found to be incomplete with too many unanswered questions. These questionnaires were thought to have a possibility of unduly influencing the outcome of the quantitative analysis. The valid questionnaires received represents a valid response rate of 46% which is a low response rate. While several factors may have accounted for the low response rate, it appears the study's limitation to managerial personnel of the organisations was highly responsible. These are people with very busy schedules and therefore getting them to respond to the surveys proved difficult. That said, it is important to note that the non-response was random. It can neither be said to have resulted from any particular 'type of organisation' or groups of individuals, nor occasioned by any special happening(s) during the survey. The challenges of low response rate in organisational research is often further exacerbated when organisational leaders were the focus of studies. In Cycyota and Harrison (2006) for example, a meta-analysis of response rates for published studies that sampled organisational leaders found a mean response rate of 34%. Baruch and Holtom (2008) in a similar analysis of research papers found that studies that typically

collected individual level data, had an average response rate of 52.7%, while those collecting data from organisations was 35.7% on average. The employment of incentives was not related to response rates and, for studies of organisations, the use of reminders was rather associated with lower response rates than higher (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). Considering the unique challenges with studies in organisational settings (Fulton, 2018), and especially in the non-profit sector (WACSI, 2015), the present survey could still be described as successful.

Fulton (2018) for instance reports of an acute challenge when it comes to response rates in organisational studies that rely on key informants. This study reports a declining mean response rate of 50% in published studies in organisational settings. In agreement with earlier studies by Baruch and Holtom (2008), Fulton (2018) again argued that response rates vary by respondent's position in the organisational hierarchy and emphasises that the higher the position, the less likely a person will respond to survey within organisations. In a recent publication by Hendra and Hill (2019), scant relationship was found between survey non-response bias and response rates. Their results also indicated that the pursuit of high response rates lengthens the fielding period, which could create other measurement problems. Hendra and Hill (2019) argue based on their findings that the costly pursuit of a high response rate may offer little or no reduction of nonresponse bias.

Affirming response rate challenges in non-profit research in the context of Ghana, WACSI's (2015) study of civil society sustainability across the country recorded a survey response rate of 38%. While there seem to be systemic challenges with response rates in research of this nature, that is not

enough justification to stop using survey in organisations. Besides, in the present research, survey was not the sole method of data collection used. The survey responses were only meant to complement data from the in-depth key informant interviews, and the focus group discussion employed under the qualitative approach. Moreover, the response rate recorded could not be said to be fatal as the study’s focus was not on empirical generalisation.

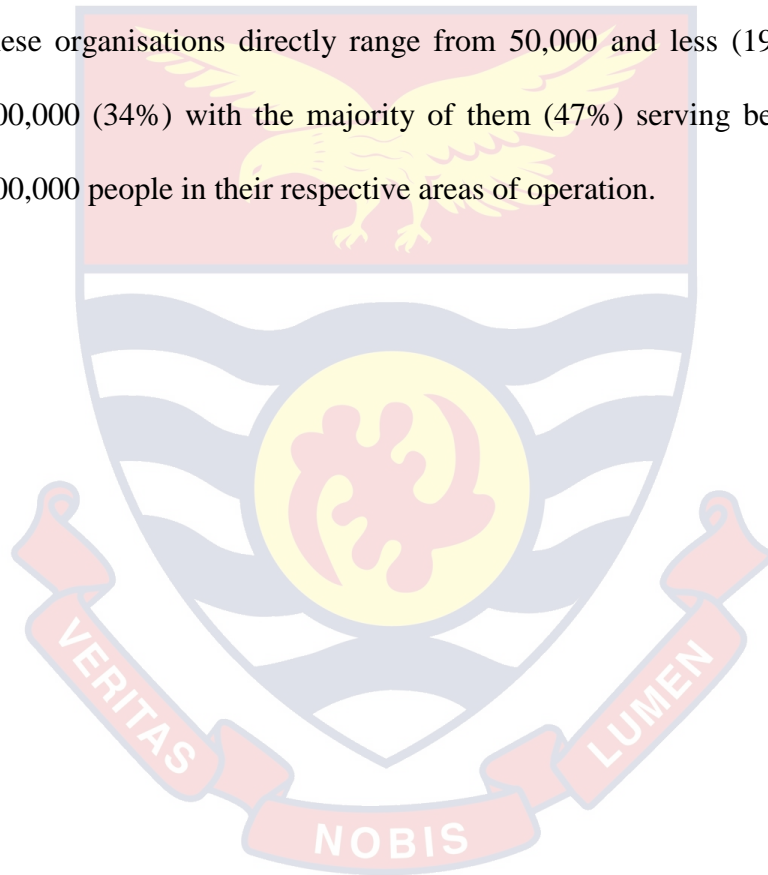
The study’s responses were received mainly from executive directors, their deputies, and some senior programme officers of the CSOs. The respondents had on average, CSO sector experience of nine (9) years, and six (6) years mean length of service with their respective organisations. Of the 148 organisations, 85% were categorised as local CSOs and 15% as international with operations in more than one country. Participants’ organisations could further be classified into networks or coalitions with subscribers (14%), and individual (86%) organisations as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Type of Participating Organisations**

Type of organisation	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Local</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>85</b>
Individual	106	72
Network	19	13
<b>International</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15</b>
Individual	21	14
Network	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)

Considering the thematic area of work, majority (49%) of the sampled organisations engaged in advocacy with the remaining in human services (24%), youth development (7%), neighbourhood development and support (7%), Education (5%), health (4%), and institutional support and capacity development (4%) as presented in Table 3. The organisations have operations at the international (14%), national (49%), regional (16%), district (7%) and community (14%) levels. The number of people typically reached/ served by these organisations directly range from 50,000 and less (19%) to well over 100,000 (34%) with the majority of them (47%) serving between 50,000 to 100,000 people in their respective areas of operation.





**Table 3: Background Characteristics of Participating Organisations**

Type of organisation	Thematic area of work	Operations	Budgets	Yrs in operation	Staff strength	Major funding source
Local CSOs (85%) International (15%)	Advocacy (49%)	International (14%)	< GHS 100,000 (35%)	<5 years (14%)	<6 paid employees (52%)	Individual donations (32%)
Individual (86%) Networks (14%)	Human services (24%)	National (49%)	GHS 100,000 – 349,999 (23%)	5 – 9 years (42%)	6 – 10 (32%)	International donor agencies (68%)
	Youth development (7%)	Regional (16%)	GHS 350,000 – 1,500,000 (18%)	10 – 14 years (8%)	>10 (16%)	
	Neighbourhood dev. & support (7%)	District (7%)	>GHS 1,500,000 (24%)	20 – 24 years (20%)		
	Others (13%)	Community level (14%)				

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)

While the annual operating budget of 35% of the organisations was less than GHS 100,000 (Table 3), 23% operated with up to GHS349,999, 18% with GHS350,000 –GHS1,500,000, and 24% with well over 1,500,000 aside project funding. Of the 148 organisations, 42% had operated from 5-9 years, 14% operated less than 5 years, 16% have been 10-14 years in operation, 8% (15-19 years) and 20% operating 20-24 years since their formation.

Regarding staff strength, majority (52%) reported that their organisations employed less than six (6) paid staff. While 32% had between six (6) and 10, only 16% had more than 10 paid staff. It is worthy of note, that of the 16% with more than 10 paid staff, 14% employed between 21 and 30, which gives credence to an earlier assertion made in this thesis that many NGOs in the country are known to run lean paid-workforce supported mainly by volunteers and interns.

In terms of funding sources, the data in Table 3 shows, 32% of the participants indicated individual donations as their main source of funding whereas the majority (68%) reported international donor sources. This revelation is quite significant when understood in the context of the dwindling external donor funding to CSOs in the country (Arhin et al., 2018), and other accountability concerns (Atuguba, 2015). The general thought that CSOs in the country have not been very accountable to their communities and that their accountability if any, has often been to foreign donors is worrying considering that many stakeholders believe the new path to financial sustainability is to turn to local funding sources.

The background data on the CSOs were sought to help with an understanding of the size, reach and circumstances of the organisations. Unlike for-profit organisations whose sizes could be appreciated from their clientele, assets and staff strength, the size of non-profit firms is difficult to judge. As such, one required a couple of indicators in the circumstance to glean and comment on their size and possible influence. Indeed, in the non-profit literature, classification of organisations into big and small is common but benchmark indicators of those judgements often elude researchers. Understandably, classifying civil society organisations does not come easy. The use of “small” and “big” in classifying these organisations in the present study is not exactly based on any commonly accepted benchmarks but on the researchers own interpretation of what the reach, and influence(s) of these organisations are. The usage is done loosely and can therefore not be considered sacrosanct.

#### **Justification for using mixed methods**

The study was conducted using mainly, structured, and semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion, and some observational methods. These methods were used sequentially. The qualitative study was done first and was followed by the quantitative component. This was due to the need to explore the problem of research in-depth for a comprehensive appreciation of the issues. Following this, aspects of the problem that were most relevant and how they may be related one to another were also explored. It is important to mention that even though the intention was to finish the qualitative exploration before rolling out the survey, it so happened that by the start of the survey, a few qualitative interviews remained to be done. That is to say that the

quantitative method was rolled out at a time interviews and observational visits were yet to be completed. This was due mainly to rescheduling of interviews with some of the CSO leaders. At the time of rolling out the survey however, well over 90% of the qualitative data had been transcribed and analysed to provide the relevant themes to guide the survey.

Aside the earlier reason given, another important reason for employing the multiple research methods in the present study is that the study included different research questions. As such, a research method ideal for one question may not be appropriate or sufficient for addressing other questions. Therefore, the different methods helped to address different aspects of the main research question.

The combination of methods also allowed for triangulation of the resulting data. As can be seen here, attempts were made to collect data from different sources. Towards methodological triangulation, there was the use of a combination of interviews, surveys, and focus group discussion which improved the validity of responses sought. Understanding that all research methods have their respective strengths and weaknesses, their combination helped to compensate for the potential weaknesses in each of the methods. It is important to note however, as Oakley (1999) advises, that the application of the methods in the study was done in a consistent manner with possibility for replicability by other researchers.

### ***The use of triangulation***

The study tried different approaches to arrive at the information that is well triangulated. The first was data triangulation. Data was collected from two different sources and were brought together to form one body of data.

Theoretically, more than one theoretical perspective is advanced in framing the study and interpreting the results. Methodologically also, the study used triangulation at two levels. First, the methods were triangulated, and second, the data collection techniques were themselves triangulated. Beyond these, both qualitative and quantitative techniques of data analysis were utilised and effectively triangulated.

The employment of these different approaches in this research was an attempt to crosscheck the data, find confirmation and get some completeness in the findings. This approach enhances the credibility and validity of the study's results. The convergence of different perspectives in the end offers confirmation and validation of individual accounts of the information used. Combining theories, data sources, methods, and materials as well as analytical techniques was to overcome the problems and weaknesses or biases that may have arisen from the use of a single method and/or theory.

Clarity at this point with regards to the study's approach to triangulation is vital. Indeed, some developments in the philosophy of science within the past decade have led to the argument that the empiricist and constructionist approaches should interactively be treated as having equal status in research (Olsen, 2004). Even though this argument is well appreciated, the heavy qualitative leanings of the present study must be made clear. The use and application of quantitative and qualitative methods in this study was not done equally. The study in mixing methods, used more qualitative methods and analysis than quantitative. This position was influenced by the nature of the problem of interest and the study environment. To get quality information, there was the need to build rapport and put a face

to the study. This confidence could not have been engineered by merely relying on a pen and paper survey. Even though collecting quantitative data is relatively easy in the NGO sector in Ghana, the potential of the approach to generate quality real-time data is sometimes limited. Hence the heavy reliance on qualitative methods.

It is important to emphasise here and again, that triangulation as employed in this thesis does not merely aim at validating the methods and data collected. It was most importantly aimed at widening and deepening the researcher's comprehensive understanding of the problem of interest.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The value of research depends as much on its ethical veracity as on the novelty of its discoveries (Walliman, 2006). There is therefore the need for researchers to anticipate the ethical issues that may arise during their studies and address them (Blaikie, 2010). In this respect, the basic ethical principles of research were adhered to in the planning, execution, and report of this research. The ethical issues in this research were viewed from two main perspectives: first, upholding the values of honesty, frankness, and personal integrity, and ensuring ethical responsibilities to the research participants.

Beyond the primary issues of honesty in this work, participants' rights to decision and protection from harm were safeguarded under the project. First, the central intent and purpose of this study was well communicated to all the participants before securing their consent to participate in both the interviews and FGD, and before tape recorders were used during the data collection. A "consent form" developed was filled and signed in duplicates by each of the research participants and the researcher before each interview, and



before the FGD. The form spelt out the central purpose of the research, the responsibilities of the researcher and the rights of the participants.

Aside from seeking the verbal consent of the survey participants, the questionnaire had a section that reminded each of them about the purpose of the study and their rights as participants. Respondent confidentiality and anonymity was protected as well in this study. In this regard, no information given was (or will be) released to any third party. This assurance was given to all participants to increase the validity of their responses. Names and positions of respondents and their organisations were excluded from the text of the study's report including all subsequent communication of its findings. In cases where names were necessary for impact, pseudo names were used to keep the ethical standards of anonymity while ensuring that no participant suffered any harm from his/her participation in this study.

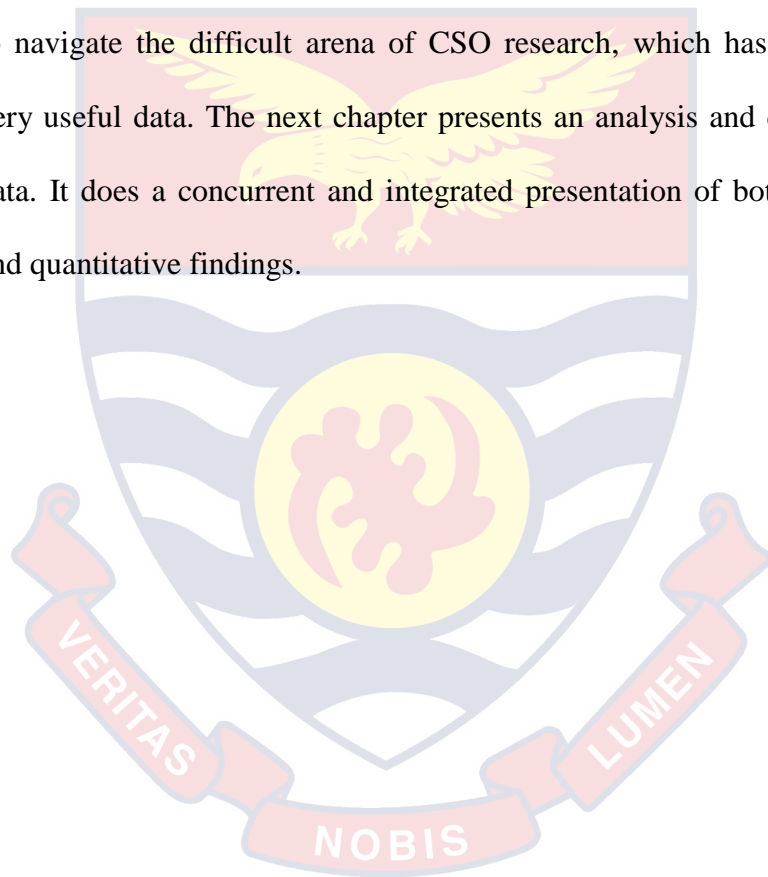
Ethical approval for this study was sought from the University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board (UCC-IRB) for the conduct of the study. The proposal, instruments, and other research protocols were assessed by the UCC-IRB before the approval with reference number "UCCIRB/CHLS /2019/12" was given.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Doing research that involves organisations can be difficult. Such research requires a lot of skill and tact in navigating those fields. One such challenge identified is the complexity of organisations and the fact that the people within them are often busy. This often makes it difficult for researchers to gain access to people who have the desired information. Within these fields, participants often have agendas that run parallel to those of researchers. Gray

(2009) has observed that organisations work in the real world, where there is competition, financial constraints and other influences which make them quite opposed (for want of a better expression), to research which originates from others rather than themselves. Organisations are often apprehensive of the fact that these researchers could unearth some organisational inefficiencies.

In the face of those obvious challenges and constraints, the present study through the employment of multiple and novel strategies has been able to navigate the difficult arena of CSO research, which has unearthed some very useful data. The next chapter presents an analysis and discussion of the data. It does a concurrent and integrated presentation of both the qualitative and quantitative findings.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS INSTITUTIONALISATION AND EFFECTIVENESS

#### **Introduction**

Governance and executive leadership are probably the two most critical components that explain the success or otherwise of non-profit organisations (Carothers, 1999; Froelich, Mckee & Rathge, 2011). This is basically because non-governmental organisations are generally not exactly subject to the rigorous regimes that other state or public sector agencies are subject to. For this reason, CSOs are by themselves supposed to develop effective internal standards and systems to ensure control and accountability (Trivunovic, 2011). It becomes imperative therefore for CSOs to have governance structures and systems that specify accountability, internal conflict of interest rules, clear operational policies and financial management systems that are in line with good practice.

This chapter addresses mainly the first and second objectives of the study. It presents and discusses findings about governance systems and structures and the extent of their institutionalisation and effectiveness across the organisations. The analysis and presentation are done at two (2) levels. The level of “the social organisation as a system and the level of the sub-systems” (in this case, the human participants) within the organisation (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972, p.456).

## Governance Structures and Systems' Institutionalisation

The study had as one of its objectives, to explore the institutionalisation of governance structures and systems in the sampled organisations. Within the civil society sector, internal accountability mechanisms are institutionalised through effective governance structures. There are a set of standards within civil society that are agreed to be the main indicators of effective governance structures (Trivunovic, 2011; Gill et al., 2005); and in many jurisdictions, these standards exist as self-regulatory mechanisms. These self-regulatory mechanisms may include a clear governance structure in terms of the role of the principal governing body (in this case, the board or governing council) with clear separation from executive management.

Organisational governance is defined by Cornforth and Brown (2014) to include broadly “the systems and processes concerned with ensuring the overall direction, control, and accountability of the organisation” (Cornforth & Brown 2014, p.4–5). This means that the governance system goes beyond just the board to include the generality of responsibilities within which an organisation operates. The extant literature, especially those from practitioner circles, have a convergence on the characteristics that make up good governance in organisations. These characteristics, they agree, fulfil the fiduciary and legal responsibilities that promote effective board performance based on board roles and responsibilities.

Bernstein, Buse and Bilimoria (2016) state the good governance characteristics to include the board's responsibility in setting the organisation's mission and purpose, selecting the chief executive, supporting

and evaluating him/her, engaging in strategic planning, oversight of programmes and services of the organisation, and ensuring financial, ethical, and legal oversight. Others include fundraising outreaches and the recruitment of new board members which is an important part of the board's management of its own affairs. The present study's conceptualisation of governance and sustainability was done in line with the literature as outlined here and in chapter two.

This study sought to find out the extent to which CSOs institutionalised the structures and systems that are thought to specify accountability, internal conflict of interest rules, clear operational structures and policies, financial management systems, clear governance structure in terms of the role of the board, clear separation of board from management functions, and clear leadership succession plans.

It was clear from the interviews that many of the sector's leaders tended to equate the board and what the board does to organisational governance. While Cornforth (2012) disagrees with that assumption, it is also clear from the literature and practice that the existence and effectiveness of a governing board is fundamental to all other governance processes and practices. Governing boards are known to often assume responsibility for the general health, sustainability, and operational efficiency of organisations by working on policy, planning and other fiduciary and oversight responsibilities. The data show that all the organisations studied (small, big, local, and international), had at least, in theory, governance structures and systems epitomised fundamentally in the constitution of a board or governing council. This is however not so because the boards and accompanying systems were in

all cases and in all organisations established true to the real purpose boards serve. The ‘structures’ are actually requirements for registering organisations under the companies code of Ghana and as not-for-profit organisations (NPOs) limited by guarantee even before getting to register with the DSW for an NGO license. So, for a considerable number of the organisations, these registration requirements drive the ‘institutionalisation’ of boards:

*So, you see my brother, for about four (4) years after registering the organisation with social welfare, it was more or less like a -one -person NGO. I was a lone ranger. Every other thing was only on paper. It was in my fifth year that I began to get some recognition and a team to work with but still the issues of board hasn't been so important now, sincerely, no! (Abedi, a 62-year old founding manager of a CSO in Ningo-Prampram).*

As Abedi makes clear in the above quote, for some of the CSOs, what have been referred to as fundamental governance structures and systems only exist on paper. *Mensah Baa*, who founded and registered his NGO six (6) years ago also, had this to say when asked to describe the organisation’s governance arrangements:

*In our case, the registration required that we have a board of directors so we made sure there was that list but that is just it. It's been exactly six (6) years now and still the challenge is how to have that board function. There's been like two (2) meetings but even that was difficult to put together (Mensah*



Baa is executive director and founder of an NGO in Education).

Interestingly, this is something that the office with the responsibility to issue and renew the NGO licenses is perfectly aware of. This is something one *Dag* of the DSW office in charge of NGOss, said in an impuissant way:

*... But they are also in the majority. Really, their boards don't function. It functions when there's a need for funding issue or something that's coming in then quickly boards come along. But as I said it's just for the registration purposes, it's for the registration purposes so you don't, there's a named board but they don't work. As I said, it's more of like one man having the whole NGO in his bag and is going round doing his work and so when is time for charley we need to have a board before this thing could be done, then the board comes in play and so the board is more like friends or family you know members you know whose names are there, when there's need for them to come, that is it and these are the things that really is not helping*  
(Dag, staff of DSW NGO office).

The statement above has implications for strict compliance with DSW's NGO regulations and attendant issues, albeit flexibility in ensuring the same.

Others gave indications to the effect that the 'theoretical existence' of structures in many cases aids in their sourcing of funds and reporting to external donors as claimed by the officer in the quote above rather than aiding the operations of the organisations:

*We try to explain to them that if they do not help us by meeting and those things to show that we have a system, getting funding for our projects will be hard and that will also mean a collapse of everything we have stood for all these years. They understand and so they meet when we have projects that require these things... (Voran, an Executive Director of a Development NGO in Tema).*

The above notwithstanding, there are other organisations with governance structures and systems that can be described as functional and most of these are well known organisations headquartered in Accra and ran professionally. One manager of a development NGO described the governance system of operation in his organisation in the following quote:

*We have an elaborate system because we are a company limited by guarantee; by law there are certain things that you have to have in place so you have to have a governing council like a board, so we've had our board, then we have a chief, executive director and then we have an executive committee and then we have a management committee before you come to specific heads of departments. You can talk about three; three heads of departments, one for finance and administration, another does programmes and research and then one handles research mobilisation and other related HR and so on. So, and then you have when you go to particular departments like the programmes department which is the largest, you have team leaders and so on. So there is quite an elaborate you know*

*structure for dealing with whether it is financial management, and dealing with the overall governance of AAA but also programme delivery, performance and so on (Mertly is Deputy Director of a CSO in Accra).*

The same can be said about *Asempa's* organisation. This organisation, like the one cited in the preceding paragraph, is also a well-established and a full-fledged CSO which had been working in the Region, and indeed nationwide in the advocacy space for several years.

*In terms of the functioning of the structures: the board approves the programmes as well as oversees the reporting activities. The management team briefs the staff about periodic programmes, and which forms the basis of fundraising and to report to funders for the contracts that are given to us. The dimension of institutional governance is that we have periodic evaluations of the work that we are doing. So, in February last year for example we had our institutional review functions and that has become the basis of a plan to kind of try and improve our institutional setup. We believe the governance and how you participate plays an important dimension you know of our accountability vis-à-vis you know our peers as far as the programme delivery is concerned. So, this is the way of the system here works (Asempa, is a long serving ED of ABC, a Pan African research and advocacy organisation).*

Some of these positive cases exist but as would be proven by the statistical averages from the quantitative data, organisations that have the minimum required governance systems in place were in the minority. These organisations were mainly those with a considerable number of paid employees, sizeable operating budgets, and in most cases, some international operations, or affiliations. Organisations in the category of Mertly and Asempra's CSO display an important quality of open systems, which is internal elaboration. Unlike closed systems, open systems like CSOs are to move in the direction of increased differentiation, elaboration, and greater levels of organisation (Luhmann, 1995) as seen in the governance practices these participants described above.

The survey also explored the extent to which governance systems and structures were institutionalised in the participants' organisations. Generally, the survey instrument had subscales, the first of which had seven (7) items assessing the performance of CSOs in institutionalising governance systems and practices as organisations. The second set dealt with issues of succession and the extent to which the organisations engaged in succession planning. The remaining subsections were sets of measures of governance effectiveness in the organisations. In line with the non-profit literature, the governance system measures were on the fiduciary and oversight responsibilities of boards, self – governance of boards, management systems of the organisations and specifically succession and succession planning (Gill et al., 2005; Vandyck, 2018; Van Puyvelde, Brown, Walker, & Tenuta, 2018, Coule, 2015).

The institutionalisation of governance systems was measured by the extent to which a CSO implemented seven (7) key structures and systems. The

answer categories were ratings from 0 (very low) to 5 (very high). The mean score for this and other subscales were attained by combining all the means for the items in the category and finding the average.

Confirming much of the revelations from the key informant interviews, the 148 survey respondents generally rated the sector's organisations' performance in institutionalising governance systems below average with a mean score of 1.72 which is far less satisfactory with a standard deviation of 0.83 (see Table 4). Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics on the extent to which CSOs have institutionalised governance systems showing the mean scores and standard deviations of the seven (7) measures. Of the measures in the governance institutionalisation subscale, organisations' performance in institutionalizing clear operational structures and policies was scored slightly higher (with a mean score of 2.18) while institutionalisation of leadership succession plans was scored 0.87, the lowest score of the category and indeed, of the entire scale.

**Table 4: Respondents' Ratings for the Extent to which their Organisations Institutionalised Governance Systems**

<b>Governance systems indicators</b>	<b>Mean rating</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Structures and systems that specify accountability	1.6014	.78887
Internal conflict of interest rules	1.7770	.90216
Clear operational structures and policies	2.1824	.99000
Financial management systems	1.8784	.67919
Clear governance structure in terms of the role of the board	1.9865	1.03007
Clear separation of board from management functions	1.7432	1.13762
Clear leadership succession plans	.8716	1.42514
Mean rating for subsection	1.7201	

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)

As the statistics show, with regards to social systems, many of the organisations lack internal elaboration which is seen in the structures and systems that specify accountability, internal conflict of interest rules, effective financial management systems, and clear separation of the board from management:

*In our case, the chairman of the organisation is my boss, but he chairs the board as well. There have been workshops where that has been condemned so we are working to change it but the point is, we do virtually everything here so that's why there's no urgency. That will change soon. That I'm sure* (Kafui, a Senior Programmes Officer).

*You see, Solomon [referring to interviewer], these financial management whatever you are referring to is important to many of the donors but you see, that comes at a cost and some of us [laughs..], as you can see, we are only sacrificing. The organisation doesn't have much* (Taffa, is a young CEO of an environmental advocacy NGO in Accra).

Kafui is the deputy chief executive of his organisation and as his quote affirms, the organisation is one of those that have not instituted systems which separate activities of the board from that of management. In this case, the two bodies exist, but the agents, especially in terms of leadership, are one and the same. These potentially conflicting roles, according to the narratives, are common phenomena in some of the CSOs and this is probably due to the voluntary nature of the sector and its non-profit distribution status. Quite clearly, in many such organisations, there is less systems differentiation and

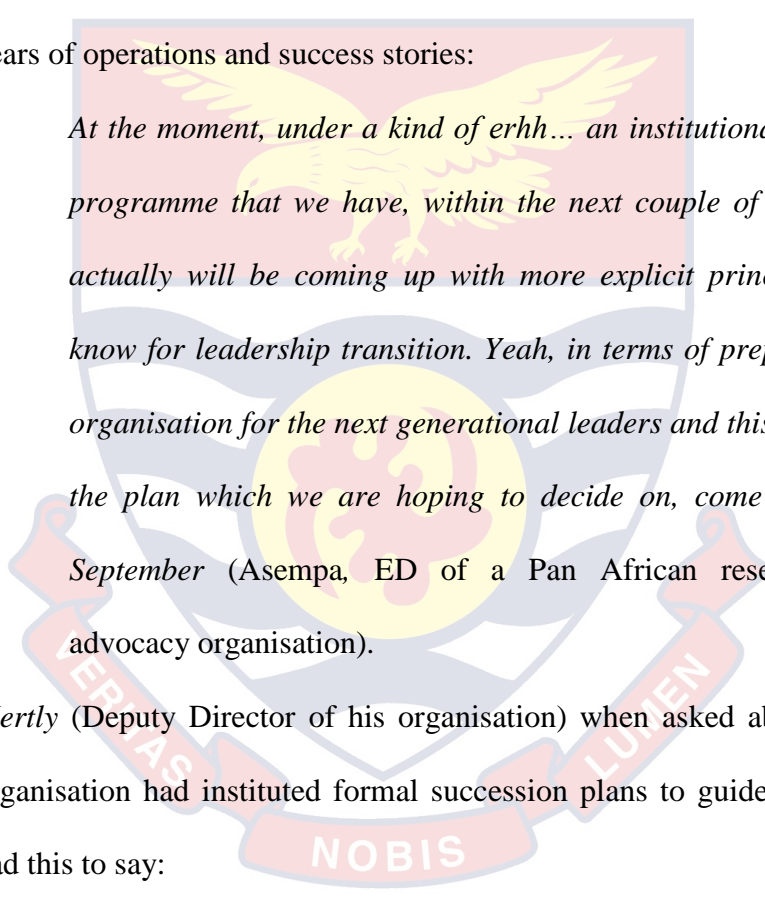


therefore the lines between the two halves of the leadership core, gets blurred. Consequently, the delegation of authority and meaningful oversight of executive performance by boards, get affected by this lack of differentiation. As one of the participants affirm in the following quote, for some of the CSOs, getting committed people to play key roles on the board without pay is sometimes difficult. The quote is from an interview session with a CSO founder, Olivia (not real name). She leads a women's empowerment organisation, which engages in capacity building through skills training. The organisation operates more like a social enterprise. What is produced at the centre through training is sold and the proceeds used to train other women.

*It is not for lack of trying oo. We have people I have spoken to myself; they believe in what we do but I think getting the time to do this pro bono thing is the problem. For two (2) years, all I get are promises. I am also passionate about the women; the work has to move on (Olivia, a CSO founder-leader).*

So, quite in line with the earlier discussions, this organisation obviously has a named board which enabled it to be registered but the board's functionality is where the challenge is. Like many of her contemporaries, Olivia is running her organisation with or without the board's inputs. The challenge with this kind of organisational arrangement is that the social system now runs like a closed system in which its ability to transform resources is impaired. When this happens, the state of equilibrium attained by the organisation is often not dynamic and therefore moves towards disorganisation or what systems theorists term negative entropy (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972).

Going back to the data in Table 4, the rating of succession planning (.87) particularly arouses a lot of curiosity. The institutionalisation of clear leadership succession plans which is seen in the existence of formal succession plans was poorly rated by the respondents. It appears to be one item whose institutionalisation is not happening in all sizes of the organisations. For example, in many of the well-structured CSOs earlier referred to, succession plans are now being considered despite their many years of operations and success stories:



*At the moment, under a kind of erhh... an institutional renewal programme that we have, within the next couple of years, we actually will be coming up with more explicit principles you know for leadership transition. Yeah, in terms of preparing the organisation for the next generational leaders and this is part of the plan which we are hoping to decide on, come August – September (Asempa, ED of a Pan African research and advocacy organisation).*

Mertly (Deputy Director of his organisation) when asked about whether his organisation had instituted formal succession plans to guide their transitions had this to say:

*I would say that erhh at least we are in the process of institutionalising that because we going through at least at errh the main level of either replacing heads of departments; now we have a process in place to do that, I mean it would become institutionalised I guess when we've done these transitions a couple of times but I think some of the key aspects*

*of it is done as much as possible you know. You need to draw on I think..., outside help is good (Mertly, Deputy Director).*

So quite clearly, even in the fairly structured and ‘well-managed’ CSOs, the process of transition at the executive level is yet to be given consideration. It remains a hope for many. It is therefore not surprising at all that many of these organisations in the survey reported of not having formal succession plans.

As the results presented shows so far, many of the civil society organisations in the Greater Accra Region lack effective governance structures and systems. Apart from a few organisations (many of which are headquartered in Accra), the majority of the CSOs lack the very basic of all, which is, effective governing boards. As one participant puts it in the expert interviews, what exist in the sector are largely “decorative boards”:

*So, most of the time, I say we have a lot of decorative boards. They are not functional, just decorative; but for me I think one of the things people are forgetting is that, you are not doing this for registration. People have to understand the board will help your organisation grow (interview with Razat, in Accra).*

In the light of the above quote, participants of the key informant interviews and indeed the FGD, agree that many governing boards in the sector are not functional boards and this is a fact widely known and shared by practitioners. Consider the following comments some participants shared during the FGD about the board’s activity in their organisations:

*Using my organisation as an example, there is an existing board; it’s a five- member board. Now, basically, what I notice is that*

*there is that lack of flow of information between the board and the organisations. This board, I would describe them as a group of elites because they are will I say, gurus in specific fields that have been brought together and once a while they put in their inputs, especially when it comes to the implementation of aspects of the strategic plan. However, what I've noticed is that the connection with the organisation is not that regular. As indicated in the plan, there is supposed to be the board meeting at least twice in a year. However, I have noticed that does not happen. Yes, they are existing in my case but have not been able to meet at even once in a year (Damten, a focus group discussant).*

*Well, in terms of the existence of the board, I think generally, I mean you could find that there are boards. They are on paper, and physically, the challenge is how effective they are, and I think Damten has been raising that and the challenge is the effectiveness (Aba, a focus group discussant)*

They described the boards as decorative in the sense that, a list of its members often exists and may even be on the organisation's website but the function of the board in the organisation, never really takes off.

The dominant situation in most 'small' organisations as regards governance structures is that executive directors (and mostly founding directors) assemble a few friends and relations as directors for purposes of registering their organisations and this often remains without any real board activity. This theme is reinforced in the following response given by one

executive director during the key informant interviews when asked about how the current governing board of his organisation was constituted:

*As I stated earlier, we had not really thought so much about what even goes into putting together a good board, but this was a requirement for the initial registration. So, you know, we produced a board and for several years we've sincerely been struggling to keep them together and doing what should be done. It's been almost five (5) years and the list hasn't changed. There's been only one (1) addition but that hasn't changed anything much (Boi, a CSO founder).*

Clearly, in the above quote, and like many such admissions in this study, the foundation is often weak. Quite conspicuously, the board in this case was 'assembled' for purposes of registration. Many of the leaders who participated in this study admitted, even though in various degrees, that the governance structures and systems in their respective organisations were not really thought through and therefore it is reasonable to surmise that the accompanying processes would become deficient as the analysis in the sections that assessed governance systems effectiveness would prove.

Significantly, majority of the CSO leaders while discussing the relevance of institutionalising governance systems, emphasised the importance of their governance structures for effective control and accountability. Quite curiously however, while discussing these systems and how they work in the organisations, they tended to emphasise the overriding importance of the systems for being accountable to or meeting the expectations of external donors rather than ensuring internal control and good governance practices. As

such, while admitting that engaging in good governance practices ensures accountability, the organisations mainly used reports (annual reports) as their accountability tool and in most cases, it does appear as if it is only when clients and beneficiaries read the annual reports of these organisations that one finds some downward accountability taking place and this is proudly articulated by *Agawu* as an important feat achieved in the sector:

*I am the Vice-chair of ... Ghana {mentions name of organisation}; {repeats full name of organisation} yes, I am the vice chair and I know that we even publish our annual financial statement in the dailies. We don't just keep it in the files somewhere. It is published nationally, so anyone can read.*

Agawu is a Vice Chairman of a popular network in Ghana with operations beyond the country. He continues to recount how delighted he is about the fact that other organisations have started making their annual reports accessible:

*Now I'm happy to say that some of our people even though they might not even publish it in the dailies like we have started doing at the Network, but you will find it in their annual reports. If you go there, you will find these things there, but I think that if you make it public, you put it in the dailies, then no questions are asked (Interview with Agawu in Accra).*

To donors and funders, CSO leaders admit they have remained accountable using quarterly reports and other project performance assessment tools:



*We adhere to all the reporting protocols of our funders and we sometimes use different tools and styles to render accountability. You know, depending on the quarters your resources are coming from, the reporting protocols are different and we try as much as possible to amend to each one of them (Sam, ED of an NGO in Accra with international operations).*

*You know, anything we get from donors, we account for it. Most of the time some tend not to value it and even in accounting for instance, it becomes problematic so anytime you get money from a donor, in some sense people think its free money. Here, it's not like that; it's a donor grant given to you to do a project and so we report to them. Some people feel that "mako ye project naba" so it's done. No. (Harry, Senior Programme Officer of a capacity development CSO).*

It is also clear that speaking of what these organisations account for, finances remain high if not the sole object. A further interrogation of the narratives reveals that the indications of good governance in the organisations were induced by funding requirements and the threat of losing out on external donor support. Like the earlier issue raised by the preceding position on registration-induced structures, the responses of many of these organisations are not strategic. Presently therefore, there remains an issue of compliance to the letter of regulatory statutes/ requirements with short-term effects to the neglect of the spirit which goes to the core of organisational sustainability:

*My brother, putting information out there and so on and so forth in the name of accountability; that's not the legal requirement. That's an ethical, political choice that the organisation may make about a participatory system that they want to promote. Some organisations have a corporate governance operation that arise under the companies' code and you have to decode and define the terms with the registrar general; it has nothing to do with us. The law requires that of them. You can be an authoritarian chief executive, and nothing stops that (Asempa, ED).*

Academics and other non-practitioners speaking on the same subject, noted strongly the need for broader accountability practices that involve all stakeholders including beneficiaries, staff and members of the CSOs themselves even if the present legal regime does not compulsorily require that from them:

*What they say is that, for those who support them, they are accountable to them, so as to how to how accountable they are to them and as long as the those supporting are not complaining of accountability, then you cannot say that, so their accountability structures are more or less governed by those who are supporting them and how they want them to operate. As long as they satisfy people supporting them, they believe they are accountable but that is ridiculous to say the least (Rayat is an academic with previous experience in NGO management).*

Another non-practitioner shared a similar view on the same subject of accountability within the non-profit sector:

*You see, these are not private sector led organisations as private sectors who are seeking profit for what they do. These are individuals who are serving society in their own right but they must be accountable because in most cases they are being supported one way or another; so they must be accountable for the resources that they are using to all stakeholders. They cannot run governance structures like the private businesses do (Mass, an academic and social policy researcher).*

Comparing the two (2) encounters, one finds what appears to be the communication of governance ideals by academics and other stakeholders against the stark realities confronted by practitioners in the field. But whatever the challenges of practitioners may be, the value of an appearance of accountability and particularly voluntary accountability for non-profit organisations is well known in the literature (Harris et al., 2015; Feng et al., 2016; Becker, 2018).

### **Assessing Governance Effectiveness**

As was mentioned in the preceding section, even though governance goes beyond the activities of boards, governing boards assume responsibility for the health and operational efficiency of organisations with a focus on policy, planning and oversight responsibilities and a significant investment in improving management systems and structures (Vandyck, 2018). Towards answering its second research question, the study carried out an assessment of

governance effectiveness in the organisations of the sampled research participants. In line with the conceptual model of this study, the governance effectiveness assessment covered mainly board fiduciary and oversight responsibilities, self-governance of boards, effective management systems and planning. The planning component was measured using the organisations' engagement in succession planning. In the following sections, the various subthemes of the scale are presented, after which, the general assessment of the sector's governance effectiveness quotient is discussed.

### **Board fiduciary and oversight responsibilities**

In the non-profit management literature, there is a consensus that an effective board determines the mission and purpose of its organisation, selects a new executive director, supports, and evaluates the executive director, and ensures effective planning while nurturing the building of effective management systems and processes (Vandyck, 2018; Cornforth, 2012). These are in fact the most important indicators of a board that is effective in delivering its fiduciary roles and ensuring oversight in an organisation. However, as one of the key informants iterated during the interview session, the sector's boards in most cases, fall short of this fiduciary responsibility:

*The boards, those with functional boards and with serious people on those boards are ok but even there, there is such a close relationship. The closeness of the founders and executive directors who select the board members ensures that there is not really very deep enquiry into the affairs and governance of the CSOs. You get what I mean? We are yet to have like world class international boards governing*

*Ghanaian CSO's (Razat is an academic and former CEO of a CSO in Accra)*

Some strong views were taken of boards' performance of fiduciary functions at the focus group as well:

*Let's not sit here and pretend. From the many cases and experiences group members have shared about their organisations and the boards in this meeting, it would even be pretentious to go into the details of how they are performing this your fiduciary thing. If we are struggling to have them just meet once all through the year, then what input are they making into the organisations? (Damten, a focus group discussant).*

*Mr. moderator, you know what, all I am saying is that I perfectly agree with them. Where I sit, I can do anything. The board doesn't know anything unless we tell them. I don't think boards have that time to be that professional with us. Is it their involvement in planning, or evaluating senior management? That doesn't go on (Aba, a focus group discussant).*

As can be deduced from the two (2) quotations above, at the focus group discussion, there was a shared view that given the opportunity, many would rate the boards of their organisations low in terms of their effectiveness in determining the missions and purposes of their organisations, selecting new executive directors, supporting and evaluating the executive director while contributing to effective planning for succession.

Largely confirming views from the qualitative data, Table 5 shows participants' rating of boards of their organisations in the performance of the key functions in the survey.

**Table 5: Respondents' Rating of Board Fiduciary and Oversight Responsibilities**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Determining mission and purpose of organisation	2.2365	1.49540
The selection of new executive director	1.7703	1.71069
Supporting and evaluating the performance of executive director	2.1216	1.66968
Managing the compensation of executive/management	2.1284	1.46747
Monitoring and strengthening programmes and services of the organisation	2.0541	1.86549
Ensuring adequate financial resource mobilisation	2.0743	1.70669
Providing financial oversight	1.9865	1.36520
Ensuring effective planning for executive succession	1.2162	1.41200
Managing its own activities as a board	2.6486	1.69780
Boards' active involvement in planning the direction and priorities of the organisation	2.1351	1.75603
Valid N =148	Average: 2.0372	

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)



Quite significantly, the board's active involvement in planning the direction and priorities of the organisation and its role in supporting and evaluating the performance of the ED/CEO by measuring results against objectives received respective low ratings of 2.14 and 2.12. On the other hand, the point must be made that the reputation of board members in the sector per the outcome of the present study is not in doubt. According to the participants, the boards have high credibility with key stakeholders (including funders, donors, beneficiaries, collateral organisations or professionals, community, and staff). In scoring the board in terms of its credibility therefore, the survey respondents gave a score of 3.60 which is incredibly high in the context of the present data. According to the respondents, board members demonstrate a fair understanding of what their own roles and those of the CEOs should be (see Table 16 in appendix G for details of these descriptive statistics). However, when it comes to supporting and evaluating the performance of executive directors by measuring results against objectives as indicated in Table 5, the boards are rated far below average (2.12) in performance and 1.98 in its role of providing financial oversight.

There are particularly no proper financial control mechanisms in place in the much smaller CSOs according to the research participants, which signals possibilities for arbitrary use of financial resources by founders, executive directors, and other key members of the organisations. Indeed, some participants shared cases of financial impropriety they had encountered with researcher during some of the key informant interviews. One typical case is that of Simon stated below:

*The president had some axe to grind, money was coming; we bought cement here and there to help some schools in the community. Then we didn't give all the cement to the school, he [the president] used the school, the cement to make block for himself and I thought that was bad and he will make a divide and rule operation with money left, right, centre and there is no system to check that. He will see me, give me 20 cedis for my effort, buy bicycle, buy fuel and so and so forth. He will do the same for other people without my knowledge. And what he did for me, people didn't know, so when this cement issue came, I called the attention of the other board members to it and we all rebelled against him (Simon is board member of a community development NGO).*

As Simon admits, when funds come for such projects and they are diverted, no system in some of these organisations checks that. Thus, in cases where some officers would share in the idea of misapplying funds, that becomes the practice. For some of the organisations, the challenge is their inability to afford these financial and accounting systems and the personnel that come with it while in many other cases it was due to the ineffectiveness of their governing boards. The inability to afford proper financial management systems and personnel in part informs the financial constraints some of the organisations face. For many of such organisations, they are unable to bid for lofty grants and projects in their sector since many of these grants require the proven existence of effective governance systems and institutions.

Some of the organisations described in the preceding paragraph survive on subletting (sub-contracting) projects and services from big organisations operating from the capital, Accra. For many of these CSOs mostly operating at the community level, it is always a fortune to have the big guys want to partner them for community level project implementation since these big organisations often do not require of them any structural conditions. This practice particularly encourages a certain kind of systems differentiation epitomised in the relationship between CSOs in the sector. One would have thought as *Dag* desires in the quote below, that the bigger organisations would use the opportunity of partnership to require the smaller organisations to institute effective governance systems:

*I think what will help is where the development partners or donors or funders are also looking critically at the structure before they provide the funding you see then people will sit up. Now most at times if you see most of the time the big NGOs here in Ghana, when they get the work, they seed some to the smaller ones. Do they also look at the structure before? No, most of them they don't because so far as you are in there, this district oh this is an NGO in health or NGO in education, this kind of things oh we want to come in, do this for me, you see, so there should be the need also for that also from the top we can also let them know that without this, we cannot network with you. So that they will sit up (Dag, staff of DSW NGO office).*

Abedi in the KII gave an example of such partnerships between his organisation at the community level and others in Accra:

*Sometimes those big organisations get us to implement projects for them and those are also opportunities to get something to run your own activities. My organisation works with ABC a lot. Even last year, there was this project I joined as partner and they brought to us and trained us for. Even today, I am expecting a letter from them. We are supposed to go for a workshop on local government. So we engage local people, market women, drivers, taxi drivers, you know, people who sell oranges, local downright grassroots people, many of them know that they have problems, but they cannot articulate the problems and get them resolved by duty bearers. So, we help them* (Abedi, a 62-year-old ED at Ningo -Prampram).

In Interrogating this finding, one thing was clear; the so-called counterpart (big) organisations only are interested in implementing their projects and not thinking about the long term institutional sustainability of the organisations that often serve as local partners mainly in project implementation. This unique relationship between CSOs within the CSO ecosystem, is typified by the systems argument of Niklas Luhmann (Luhmann, 1986, 1995).

Luhmann's (1986) systems differentiation theory proficiently describes the modern enterprise as one that organises production, which is carried out on its behalf by others, which partly explains why these organisations are able to operate very lean workforces. It is indeed common practice in modern society

for organisations to keep lean workforce with highly skilled personnel and sub-contract their labour-intensive operations to others. These organisations in this effort, coordinate sub-contracting operations which do not necessarily form part of their structure and yet are wholly dependent on it (Castells & Portes, 1989). Thus, in the chain of operations, conditions (be they wages, conditions of service, securities or governance) deteriorate or even disappear as one moves further away from the centre towards the periphery of the complex system of modern production and distribution.

Luhman's (1986, 1995) functional differentiation theory is applicable to both environmental level analysis and that of the social system. Functional differentiation which is part of internal elaborations of systems is the most complex and most dominant differentiation in modern society. Here, every unit of the system is ascribed a function. If one (sub) system fails to fulfil its task, the whole of the system will have great trouble surviving (Ritzer, 2008). Interestingly however, if each of the sub-systems fulfils its function, the different (sub) systems can attain a high degree of independence. Luhmann's functionally differentiated systems are a complex mixture of interdependence and independence (Ritzer, 2008). For instance, while NGO A is dependent on another NGO at the periphery (community level) for the success of its project implementation, as long as the projects get implemented as planned, 'NGO A' headquartered in the capital can be blissfully ignorant of exactly how the local NGO is ran and the conditions within which the actors operate. In the light of this exposition, the relationship between big CSOs in the capital and local counterparts operating within the districts and communities is worthy of further exploration.

It is refreshing however to notice as in the case of Simon in the previous quote, that in the absence of systems, there are still strong men who keep others in check in some of the organisations. The examples abound in the sector and may transcend organisational size, but for obvious reasons, this was observed to be much common with networks and coalitions than with individual CSOs. Even though a few of these cases result in resignations and some bad blood, they point to a sector in which wrongdoing is not widely accepted even in the absence of robust institutions to check impropriety. In the following excerpt, Bobo (an executive director of an NGO) shares with the researcher his feud with his board chairman a few weeks to his transition from the organisation he headed for years:

*Now the main problem was that during that period, in December, just about the time I was supposed to leave, the board chair came out with a memo purported to be written with me... written by me recommending that he should be paid some monies for certain things that he had done; certain assignments that he had done. Some of them were reviews of some policy documents. One (1) was done by a consultant and paid. I had initially approached him; 'that's your field, do you want to do this? We will pay you as a consultant. He said no, they should do it, he would look at it. Terms of condition of service. He took it and revised it. He could have been told by the board to do it, but the board accepted his revisions. He even came out with a list and then the retreat I'm talking about which was to come after I had left. He included it that these are*



*things that... they were five (5) ... he had done that were beyond the work of a board chair, so he wanted, I should make a recommendation for him to be paid some compensation. I said no.*

*One, there are conflict of interest issues here. Two, I am leaving; why should I come eh-eh commit my successor to somebody especially when you have not, one of the reviews, he hadn't yet finished it. Why should I commit my successor to this? I won't do it. So he took it back, went and removed my name, put his own name as now the one recommending that the board pays him for that compensation (Interview with Bobo, a retired ED of a subscriber -based organisation).*

Like all human institutions, the civil society sector faces some of the financial and accountability challenges mentioned in the preceding quote. They are indeed bound to happen, and this is not peculiar to the non-profit sector. The challenge however is when we have to trust that someone within the system will rise up against the ills of others. There should rather be systems instituted so that in the absence of 'a strong man', the institutions will still stand and perform.

The survey results in Table 5 affirm several issues in the qualitative findings about the fiduciary responsibilities of governing boards. Many boards in the sector do not seem to be doing well when it comes to ensuring adequate financial resource mobilisation in their organisations (2.07). Meanwhile, in acknowledging the financial needs of the sector, Vandyck (2018) makes an important point that "today more than ever, boards of African CSOs are

expected to mobilise significant amounts of resources” in support of their organisations (2018, p.3). It however appears many of the boards remain ‘founding boards’ and therefore are unable to get to become what has been described in the literature as ‘resourcing boards’ able to lead fundraising efforts of their organisations.

Curiously, many of the managerial executives were of the view that when it comes to managing its own self as a board, the boards perform satisfactorily. In the next section, attention is turned to look at how boards fare in managing themselves.

### **Self –governance of boards**

As was spelt out in the conceptual framework, in examining governance and leadership in organisations, the board’s management of itself is a key indicator aside its oversight and fiduciary functions. This was measured along seven (7) indicators in the survey. Table 6 shows the descriptive means of measures of the board’s management of itself for 144 valid responses.

**Table 6: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of Boards' Self-governance Indicators**

Measures	Mean	Std. Deviation
Board members comply with requirements outlined in key elements of the governance structure (bylaws, policies, code of conduct, conflict of interest, traditional/cultural norms, etc.)	2.8194	1.34139
The board's capacity to govern effectively is not impaired by conflicts between members	3.5694	.69617
There is a productive working relationship between the board and the ED/CEO (characterised by good communication and mutual respect)	2.8581	1.35028
I am confident that the board would effectively manage any organisational crisis that could be reasonably anticipated	1.8041	1.28655
Board meetings are always held according to schedule	1.8514	1.74327
Board meetings are well-managed	2.2568	1.65830
The board uses sound decision-making processes (focused on board responsibilities, factual information, efficient use of time, items not frequently revisited, effective implementation)	2.3784	1.38213
Valid N =144	Average	2.5051

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)

Overall, the board is judged 2.50 in governing itself. While according to Table 6, boards can be said to comply with key requirements, keep a good relationship with the ED/CEO, and its governance capacity not impaired by internal conflicts, their meetings are not always held according to schedule and

are generally not well managed. Sound decision making processes are not exactly followed, and the boards' ability to deal with crisis cannot be vouched for. Mutable reasons for these outcomes are better known when discussed with the other sources of data which were more detailed.

### Management systems and processes

The subscale that sought to explore management systems and processes and their effectiveness had five (5) items. The measure was scored 2.56 which is slightly above average performance (see Table 7 for details).

**Table 7: Respondents' Rating of the Effectiveness of Management Systems and Processes in their Organisations**

Attributes	Mean	Std. Deviation
This organisation has a good balance between organisational stability and innovation	2.5556	1.12677
There is the application of standard and transparent management processes	2.3403	1.52445
There is a management structure in charge of ensuring a transparent decision-making process	2.9375	1.46387
Members and volunteers actively take part in the decision making process	2.2431	1.35485
The organisation is using available resources effectively and in line with original objectives	2.7014	1.39970
Valid N= 144	2.5556	
Average		

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)

Looking at the figures in Table 7, it appears the organisations are deemed effective in terms of their management systems and processes by the respondents. While there is a temptation to think that the slightly higher rating of management systems indicators is attributable to the fact that the survey participants were executive agents, this thought is not supported by the existing literature. This is because non-profit organisations often have strong executive agents with direct effects on the strength of their management systems (Gyimah –Boadi & Markovits, 2008; McKee & Froelich, 2016), which in part informs the managerial hegemony often found in the sector. For instance, many of the participants describe their organisations as being financially viable and stable by giving the indicator a satisfactory score of 2.61. Curiously, and despite the poor financial oversight of governing boards (which they admit), the organisations’ resources according to the respondents are being used efficiently (3.16) and in line with the organisations’ original objectives (See appendix G, Table 16).

While these revelations in relation to the general performance of organisations in institutionalising governance systems raises one’s curiosity, going to the extant literature makes this less surprising. According to earlier observations by McKee and Froelich (2016), it does appear that in the non-profit sector, strong managements most often come as substitutes for effective board governance. McKee and Froelich (2016) made similar observations in their study of the barriers to, and substitutes for executive succession planning. In their study, the penchant for continuity was found to be a barrier to succession planning while quality internal developments or management

systems served in most cases as substitute for key governance functions like planning for succession (McKee & Froelich, 2016).

### Effective planning

Effective planning as was discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis report is one of the most important factors of governance and leadership that have great implications for the sustainability of organisations. By design, the study sought to measure the planning function of organisations as specified in the model by looking at planning activities related to succession. Table 8 presents the statistical means and standard deviations of each of the seven (7) items used as indicators of succession and succession planning in the survey. This set of measures received the lowest rating showing that majority of the organisations in the sector are not planning for succession.

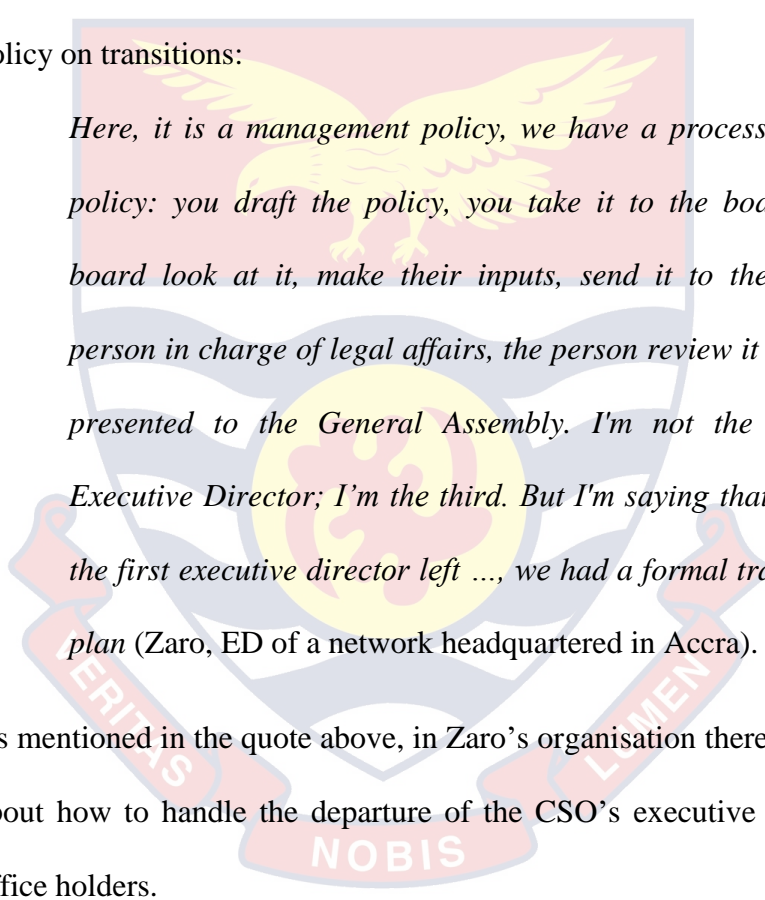
**Table 8: Succession and Succession Planning in Organisations**

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation
My organisation has a clear leadership succession plan	.8716	1.42514
Executive transition/succession has been an important discussion at my organisation	1.9730	1.39458
My organisation has a tenure for its executive head	1.4392	.97049
My organisation engages in effective succession planning	1.5135	.92204
The organisation has a roadmap on how to handle the resignation or retirement of the executive head	2.1216	1.36479
The board plays an active role in the selection of new executive directors	1.8446	1.65251
The board would be able to handle any crisis occasioned by the turnover or resignation of the executive director if that should occur	1.8041	1.28655
Valid N =148	1.6525	
Average		

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)



Despite its relevance, executive transition and its related activities appear to be receiving very limited attention in the CS sector across the Region. It will be erroneous though to assume that because of the negative reports on succession planning there are no remarkable examples. As was mentioned earlier, there were a few odd cases. For example, *Zaro* (a research participant) referred to his organisation's succession plan when he was interviewed on these matters with documentations to prove the organisation's policy on transitions:



*Here, it is a management policy, we have a process of our policy: you draft the policy, you take it to the board, the board look at it, make their inputs, send it to the board person in charge of legal affairs, the person review it and it's presented to the General Assembly. I'm not the second Executive Director; I'm the third. But I'm saying that before the first executive director left ..., we had a formal transition plan (Zaro, ED of a network headquartered in Accra).*

As mentioned in the quote above, in *Zaro's* organisation there were clear plans about how to handle the departure of the CSO's executive director and key office holders.

### **General governance effectiveness outlook**

Figure 2 below outlines a representation of the governance effectiveness of the organisations rated by the 148 respondents from the 148 organisations. In this Figure, it could be observed that while some governance indicators are rated high, others are rated low. For instance, boards' performance of their fiduciary

and oversight responsibilities and the function of planning for succession received low ratings of 2.3 and 1.7, respectively.

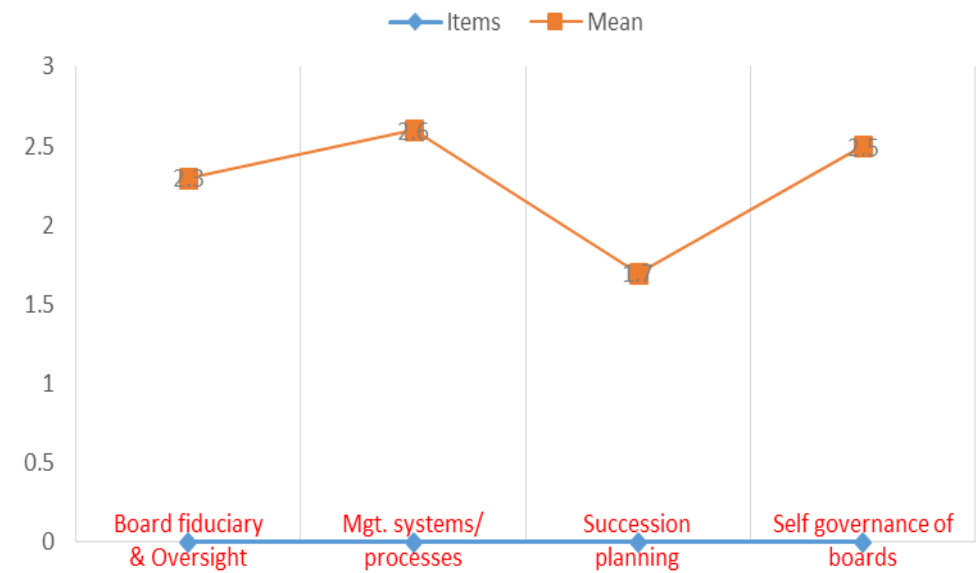


Figure 2: Mean distribution of governance effectiveness quotients

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)

Reflecting the segregated ratings, the governance effectiveness quotient which is the final composite score was 2.3 which is below the average performance painting a gloomy picture of the way the sector’s organisations are governed. It is computed by combining the four (4) sub-scales and striking the average.

While many of the organisations have governing bodies in the form of boards of directors, the governance systems as generally described by the various indicators lacked the required effectiveness in most of the organisations. At best, it can be described as lopsided in the sense that management systems and the boards’ self-management were rated average and these ratings are slightly higher compared to the other equally important issues of board fiduciary and oversight responsibilities, as well as planning. In

discussing issues surrounding governance and the role of boards, participants cited many instances which offered deeper explanations for the reasons behind the survey ratings above. A case in point is the following contribution from a participant of the FGD on the effectiveness of the boards of CSOs:

*Because we have to make sure that we are adhering to the law, the yearly [requirement] you know; making sure that they look at the accounts and sign off and that kind of thing, audit and stuff, it's done. Beyond that, then the challenge begins. Meetings set up, it doesn't come on; somebody is gone here, ok let's have [an online] meeting... you know what I mean. Various challenges, but they do try to meet. So, it's the effectiveness of it that's the problem (Williamson, a focus group discussant).*

In a related situation, Yale admitted in an interview that his organisation's governance systems were ineffective:

*I know what organisational governance is but for me, I won't describe the system we have here as an effective one. It is not. Even if the governing board thing was functioning well, that is a different matter. There are no real checks and balances (Yale, Programme Officer).*

The ineffectiveness of many of these governance systems and structures was found to largely originate from the initial constitution of the boards as explained earlier. While the board and its activities may not be the only measure of governance in an organisation as has been made clear in this thesis (Cornforth, 2012; Cornforth & Brown 2014), the existence of a board

and its effectiveness can be considered the most important determinant of good governance practices in any organisation (Vandyck, 2018).

Whereas many of the items or indicators of governance and leadership were rated below average, a closer interrogation of the indicators in the light of the qualitative data from the interviews and focus group paints a particularly curious picture of what may actually be happening in the sector. One observation confirmed by the focus group discussants as the reality on the ground was that in cases where there were long-serving executive directors or founders, they almost solely determined the programmes and direction of the organisation rendering the need for structures almost useless:

I have worked with a number of you guys [referring to two (2) founders in the group] and *what I have realised is that they think they possess all the knowledge there is to make things work in the organisation. They end up vetting every single thing and directing the focus of everything* (Damten, a focus group discussant).

*I do not think that is a very fair assessment of the behaviour of founders there. See, that behaviour, I would say, is true but it's often borne out of a desire to have things done right* (Jake is a founder and focus group discussant)

*The point has to be made that indeed, sometimes founders hijack organisations and all but not founders a lone. Those guys who have served for very long also exhibit that thing. They often do not notice the organisation has grown and they*

*themselves have brought other subject matter experts in to help* (Aba, a focus group discussant).

In most cases, as can be noticed in some of the quotes above, the founder possesses much of the knowledge base and the institutional memory of the organisation. This situation further limits the opportunity for other members and staff of the organisation to develop their own leadership abilities and potentials through participation. So, as would become clear in latter parts of this thesis, not only were succession plans for example, absent in most of the CSOs studied, but also, there were no effective structures and systems in place to sustain the organisations if their current leadership left. On the other hand, the governing boards which would be saddled with the responsibility of managing the leadership transition responsibilities if the time came, were either “non-existent” or ineffective in most cases.

In sum, many of the structures, systems, and procedures in most of the organisations remain undeveloped. In effect, there are no safety nets put in place and therefore in the event of a crisis (such as occasioned by the sudden departure of a leader or founder), these organisations will be hamstrung. The study discovered among other things that some executive directors of these organisations hold close to their chests all the key information regarding the organisation, key documents on contracts, accounts and investment details and in some extreme cases, even computer passwords. These organisations are presently functioning and vibrant alright but may cease to operate by the mere absence of their present personality-driven leadership.

The data attained particularly from the interviews point to two (2) different kinds of boards which may fairly be described as dysfunctional. The

first is “so busy, uninterested, and uninvolved” from the perspective of the key informants. The other extreme is “the overly involved and meddling board”. While the first presents a challenge of producing a hegemonic management, who together with staff clothes itself with the powers of the board, the second situation of board governance breeds conflicts between the management and staff on one hand, and the board on the other.

*We don't actually meet. For a whole year and the board hasn't met. Okay, and so you have to resort to online meeting, using the internet for meeting and those things. You realise that and even with that just like the input she made earlier [referring to another discussant], someone will tell you, oh, I have a meeting you know, at this particular time, and you realise that it's a five (5) member board, yet, you have three (3) people meeting and that is online as well. So, you realise that it is not so effective and if it's not so effective, you don't want to ermm..., like, look at, spend so much time looking at what the board brings on board. You tend to run things alone (Mag, a focus group discussant).*

The quote below is from an academic and a former leader of an important CSO in Ghana. It tends to affirm the position arrived at during the focus group discussions:

*So, while the board members should continue deciding on matters like 'who do we need to bring in, and who amongst us is tired and needs to go?', this is not the case. It is not happening; and that is the reality. I have been in this space for*



*long and I can assure you that you won't find 3 out 10 who really do that. They are too busy with their lives so to speak*  
(Interview with Razat).

Many participants in this study agree that CSOs need effective boards that keep renewing themselves with a vision and mission of the organisation. They admit however that this has often not been the case. These boards should have been bearing the responsibility of taking key governance decisions for their organisations but that, according to the evidence available, is rather the rare occurrence.

In the latter, the boards, according to the participants, meddled in the day to day management of the organisation and therefore clash with executive directors; and in some cases, with the staff of the organisation over how certain processes should run. These were concerns expressed particularly by the participants at the FGDs:

*I've seen instances where our board members end up being engaged in the management of the organisation itself. So, board members are into the accounts of the organisation, getting into the nitty-gritties of how programmes are run and all. For me, those are instances I find a bit problematic. Like what are the limits that the board members should have in terms of like let's say where does their role end and where does the management's role end? (Dosu, a focus group discussant).*

*Mine is not a personal experience but I have come across cases where the board members are like he mentions, engaged in hard-core management issues. They are into programming, signing things for example executive director should sign and so forth. I can imagine how frustrating that will be (Damten, FGD transcript).*

In one such case encountered in this study, the situation ignited a feud between the executive director and the board chairman which eventually led to the premature departure of the executive director. It is important to note however that while the earlier case of board behaviour exists in most of the organisations observed, the latter is a rare case. It appears the likelihood of conflicts between boards and the executive leadership as has earlier been referred to are only common in networks and membership-based organisations as compared to individual organisations. The reason is obvious. In many of the individual organisations, the board is often appointed by the executive director or founding leader and therefore everything is according to the whims and caprices of the leader. So even where there is a disquiet in an individual non-profit, the likelihood of disagreements escalating is very low.

One important deduction that can be made from the data is that one of the key reasons for which some CSO leaders enjoy weak governing boards and systems is for flexibility. As managers, they sometimes want to be able to change their focus whenever they find it needful. This observation in part informs the demand of some stakeholders of the sector for a regulatory framework. This in their view, will ensure a strong requirement for CSOs to remain true to their vision and mission. In such a framework, if an

organisation were to change its vision or mission, it had to go back to the registration authority and change it. In the view of these stakeholders, an organisation which is a governance NGO cannot for instance, start distributing maize just because there is free maize coming from the United States of America for distribution. Unfortunately, however, this is the common behaviour of many of the organisations in the Region and possibly all through the country. Many participants make the point the most CSOs are project dependent. The focus of these organisations changes according to the wind of aid flow. Consequently, many such organisations and their leaders are not supportive of effective governing boards and board processes.

It must be admitted that in some of the big national CSOs headquartered in Accra, and in networks, sound governance structures and systems were found to exist. However, the point must be made again that these CSOs are in the minority in terms of the number of CSOs in the Region. The same applies in the case of CSOs with international operations or affiliations. In such organisations, the likelihood of governance systems institutionalisation as well as their effectiveness was high. Both the quantitative and qualitative data support this fact and indeed among all background characteristics of organisations, type of organisation (whether international, local, individual or network) was the most likely predictor of governance systems' institutionalisation and governance effectiveness.

Table 9 presents details of a cross-tabulation of types of organisation and governance systems institutionalisation. Participants' rating of governance systems' institutionalisation in the CSOs while generally low (below average) in local CSOs with operations in-country, the poor performance is particularly

abundant in individual organisations (86.8%) compared to networks (52.6%). The difference between the networks and individual organisations according to the chi-square test is statistically significant ( $\chi^2$  statistic = 12.52, df (1), p-value = 0.0001 < 0.05). The same can however not be said of international individual CSOs or networks.

**Table 9: Relationship between Levels of Governance Structures and Systems Institutionalisation and Organisational Type**

Type of organisation	Individual/Network	Levels of Governance Structures and Systems Institutionalisation		Total
		Low	High	
Local	Individual	92	14	106
		86.8%	13.2%	100.0%
	Network	10	9	19
		52.6%	47.4%	100.0%
	Total	102	23	125
		81.6%	18.4%	100.0%
<b><math>\chi^2</math> statistic = 12.52, df (1), p value = 0.0001 &lt; 0.05</b>				
International	Individual	12	9	21
		57.1%	42.9%	100.0%
	Network	1	1	2
		50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	Total	13	10	23
		56.5%	43.5%	100.0%
<b><math>\chi^2</math> statistic = 0.38, df (1), p value = 0.85 &gt; 0.05</b>				
Total	Individual	104	23	127
		81.9%	18.1%	100.0%
	Network	11	10	21
		52.4%	47.6%	100.0%
	Total	115	33	148
		77.7%	22.3%	100.0%
<b><math>\chi^2</math> statistic = 9.06, df (1), p value = 0.003 &lt; 0.05</b>				

Source: Field data, Amoah (2019)

As can be appreciated from Table 9, the differences in averages across these organisational types were not statistically significant ( $\chi^2$  statistic = 0.38, df (1), p value = 0.85 > 0.05).

Overall, comparing individual organisations (local and international) to networks (local and international), networks were more likely to institute effective governance systems (47.6) than individual organisations (18.1%). As the chi-square test shows, the difference observed is statistically significant. Table 15 in Appendix G describes the organisational characteristics of estimated annual budget, staff strength, and population reached by the CSOs and how those characteristics are related in some detail.

Similar to the statistics described in Table 9, the boards' effectiveness in performing their fiduciary and oversight roles in their respective organisations was rated low (below average) among local organisations in the Region (74.4%) compared to international organisations. Table 10 describes the association between the extent to which participants believe that the boards of their CSOs performed well in their fiduciary and oversight roles, and type of organisation. As the Chi-statistics in Table 10 show, the difference between individual CSOs (30.1%) and networks (66.7%) as regards board's performance of their fiduciary and oversight roles was statistically significant.

**Table 10: Cross-tabulation of Organisation Type and Boards' Performance in Fiduciary and Oversight Responsibilities**

Type of organisation	Individual/Network	Fiduciary and Oversight Responsibilities		
		High	Low	Total
Local	Individual	20	86	106
		18.9%	81.1%	100.0%
	Network	12	7	19
		63.2%	36.8%	100.0%
Total		32	93	125
		25.6%	74.4%	100.0%
<b><math>\chi^2</math> statistic = 16.59, df (1), p value = 0.0001 &lt; 0.05</b>				
International	Individual	17	-	17
		100.0%	-	100.0%
	Network	2	-	2
		100.0%	-	100.0%
Total		19	-	19
		100.0%	-	100.0%
Total	Individual	37	86	123
		30.1%	69.9%	100.0%
	Network	14	7	21
		66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
Total		51	93	144
		35.4%	64.6%	100.0%
<b><math>\chi^2</math> statistic = 10.50, df (1), p value = 0.001 &lt; 0.05</b>				

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)

The results suggest that boards of CSOs that are networks or coalitions were more likely to perform better in their fiduciary roles than individual CSOs.

The general performance of organisations in the governance effectiveness assessment, which covered key areas of the framework (board



fiduciary and oversight, board self-governance, management systems, and planning), was less than satisfactory. Only 33.3% of the participants rated their organisations above the average score of 2.5. Table 11 presents results on the overall governance effectiveness performance and the type of organisation.

**Table 11: Overall Governance Effectiveness Performance and Type of Organisation**

Type of organisation	Individual/Network	Overall governance effectiveness performance		
		Low	High	Total
Local	Individual	86	20	106
		81.1%	18.9%	100.0%
	Network	10	9	19
		52.6%	47.4%	100.0%
	Total	96	29	125
		76.8%	23.2%	100.0%
<b><math>7\chi^2</math> statistic = 7.35, df (1), p value =0.007 &lt;0.05</b>				
International	Individual		17	17
			100.0%	100.0%
	Network		2	2
			100.0%	100.0%
	Total		19	19
			100.0%	100.0%
<b>Not Applicable</b>				
Total	Individual	86	37	123
		69.9%	30.1%	100.0%
	Network	10	11	21
		47.6%	52.4%	100.0%
	Total	96	48	144
		66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
<b><math>\chi^2</math> statistic = 4.01, df (1), p value =0.045 &lt;0.05</b>				

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)

Consistent with the segregated performance, individual organisations were rated low in the composite rating of CSOs’ governance effectiveness (30.1%) compared to networks (52.4%). While 47.6% of the respondents from networks rated their organisations’ governance effectiveness below average, the 22% difference in the average ratings of these respondents (individual - 30.1% & networks -52.4%) was statistically significant ( $\chi^2$  statistic = 4.01, df (1), p value =0.045 <0.05). This suggests that, generally, networks and coalitions were more likely to have effective governance systems compared to individual organisations without subscribers.

According to leaders of some smaller NGOs (especially, those with community level operations), they do not have the financial resources to support effective governance systems, even though they recognise in most cases, their significance. While association is certainly not causality, the statistics appear to support this financial argument made by a section of the CSO leaders (Table 12).

**Table 12: Estimated Annual Operating Budget and Respondents’ Rating of Governance Effectiveness**

Estimated annual operating budget	General performance		
	Low	High	Total
Less than 100,000 GHs	34 66.7%	17 33.3%	51 100.0%
GHs100,000- GHs349,999	34 100.0%	0 0.0%	34 100.0%
GHs350,000 - GHs1,500,000	18 66.7%	9 33.3%	27 100.0%
More than GHs1,500,000	10 31.3%	22 68.8%	32 100.0%
Total	96 66.7%	48 33.3%	144 100.0%

**$\chi^2$  statistic = 35.06, df (3), p value =0.0001<0.05**

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)

Significantly, about 66.7% of the survey respondents who rated their organisations low on governance effectiveness (as depicted in Table 12), also reported that their organisations' annual operating budget was less than GHS 100,000. Meanwhile, almost 69% of the 32 respondents who reported more than GHS 1,500,000 as their organisation's operating budget, also rated their organisations high on governance effectiveness. As Table 12 shows in the chi-square statistic, the difference observed here is significant at the 95% confidence level.

Related to the statistics above, the study found statistically significant, the associations between other organisational characteristics and respondents' rating of governance effectiveness in the organisations. For example, the estimated number of people reached or served by these organisations, and the number of paid employees they employed, were found to have a significant association with the governance effectiveness of respective CSOs. Details of the cross-tabulation with accompanying results of test of associations have been displayed in Appendix G (Tables 17 and 18).

The point has to be made that the above observation notwithstanding, aspects of the qualitative findings show that leaders, and especially founding managers, demonstrate absolute control over their organisations to the extent that they usually would want to continue to hire and fire staff at will and control access to financial accounts. Meanwhile, good governance structures driven by a functioning board would usually not permit this. It can be argued on the basis of some of the evidence, that this situation largely accounts for the lack of governance structures and systems in many of the organisations other than the lack of capacity as often argued by some practitioners.

The need, or desire for structures and systems, usually, per the field observations and some interviews, create challenges within organisations; especially between passionate old members or staff and newcomers who in most cases are less fiercely passionate:

*When I joined the network, after a careful observation I felt the organisation was just running with very loosely defined roles and structures. I thought that was not good enough so I tried to call for restructuring but I was told I was new and therefore didn't understand how things worked (Kofi is founder of an NGO who had exited a network he previously worked for).*

Some of the so called “newcomers” who are mostly subject matter experts often demand amendments to some organisational systems and structures. In Kofi’s case, he revealed that he had to eventually resign from the organisation:

*The chairman especially disagreed with me so vehemently, so my stay there wasn't comfortable. I eventually had to resign, and I thought to start my own organisation afterwards (Kofi, founder of an NGO who had exited a network he previously worked for).*

According to the participants, some executive directors, especially founding directors, do not understand why one should question their organisational structures and the loosely defined roles of actors when that is what in the founders’ view ‘has always worked for the organisation’:

*Sometimes the structures, the structures are stiff. They are stiff and not democratic. They don't support present day advocacy,*

*but some leaders don't want them to be discussed. Some take the NGO as their creation or their own possession and they don't want people to really talk about them, otherwise, you take their bread out of their mouth (Yale, is a 44 year old Programme Officer).*

While this does not particularly look like a frightening situation, there is evidence in the literature to the effect that these seeming 'little disagreements' have in recent past, launched certain organisations into what Linnell (2004) describes as "all-out battles between the champions of mission and the champions of systems" (2004, p.10). Recognised in the literature, there are the founder-type personalities who bully staff and members under the guise of the "mission or cause" of the organisation or movement. This was an observation made in a few of the organisations visited by the researcher during the field work. Sometimes, the leaders appear to feel that what they demand is politically right, or their way is always the right way. Some of these leadership attitudes were noticeable through careful observation at meetings and conferences without asking questions.

Unlike other jurisdictions where there is proper supervision and higher expectations of public accountability, many of the CSOs in this study cannot claim that they are responsible and accountable even to the state and its people:

*Well if you, you look at the whole evolution of the civil society organisations in Ghana, you realise that this most of the time is not something that begins with well-structured governance system. Either they are individual visions and they are*

*structured based on the way the person wants to achieve that vision, so you see them identify with the founder or you have co-founders and then you see them, so it is not as sophisticated as you may want to see in the formal organisation. So, accountability issues become problematic in terms of the way they run themselves and the checks and balances within their governance systems (Mass, an academic with several years of experience in civil society research).*

Similar concerns were shared in other expert interviews. Particularly, Kwame notes that:

*It appears our NGOs have a lot of accountability issues to deal with. For me, it's more about being accountable to the state and its people particularly concerning their mission which is not really happening. Every NGO must have its vision and mission and it must stay true to its mission. If you must change it, go back to the registration authority and change it. You can't be a governance NGO then all of a sudden you start doing something else because there is funding for it. Are you seeing it? Presently, there is no focus. There is no focus (Kwame is a renowned lawyer and a researcher in the NGO space).*

This view was shared by many of the participants of the focus group discussions as well, and there was indeed a consensus at the meeting (FGD) that:



*The NGOs ought to report annually on how they use the money they get and whether the monies are used for their objects, but many are not doing it. NGOs cannot keep asking governments and private sector to be accountable when they are not accountable. The reporting here is not to control them and control what they use the money for. The reporting is for transparency purposes and that must be clear to all of us (A consensus shared by focus group discussants).*

Again, these claims find justification in the practitioners' own rating of the sector in institutionalising systems and structures that specify accountability and conflict of interest rules. In these two respects (systems and structures that specify accountability and conflict of interest rules), the sector was rated 1.60 and 1.77 respectively. In the researcher's conversations with the sector's leaders about the widespread accusation of lack of accountability against non-profit organisations in Ghana, the argument advanced by some was that they [CSOs] in most cases do not benefit directly from state funding and since organisations' accountability is often to their funders, the hue and cry about public accountability was unfounded:

*I think in general the members of the organisation have access to all the key information, where we raise money from, how much we raise, which programmes they are used for, the financial health of the organisation at any time. When we have meetings, people ask questions and we have meetings regularly. We account to those whose resources we use so in a sector where people ask questions and debate and*

*disagree and I have to account to the, to the, to the executive council for, for my leadership, I don't get this hue and cry about accountability (Asempa, ED).*

Assuming without admitting that this claim is so, these practitioners often forget however that CSOs unlike the private sector are public organisations from which high accountability and corporate responsibility is expected whether their funding source is the state or not. Besides, it is based on their public nature or interest that certain privileges and tax exemptions are granted CSOs by the state. That aside, studies show some great dividends of voluntary accountability in the non-profit sector (Becker, 2018; Feng, Gordon, Neely & Slatten, 2016). So, while it does not hurt to be accountable upward, downward and laterally, doing so is said to prove an NPO's trustworthiness, quality and good reputation. This is a position some of the CSO leaders share:

*Even in cases where accounting publicly is not a legal requirement, I think it is good for our own existence. Now, if there is transparency, then when you work with an agency like ECOWAS and its structures, AU and its structures, the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, the UN agencies and so on and so forth, if there is commitment, transparency and accountability, those agencies respect you, embrace you and work with you. It is the same with the public (King is a retired Executive Director of an advocacy organisation in Accra with operations in the West Africa sub region).*

In some organisations, it appears as if the board, which should be policy and value-oriented to lead (Carver, 1990), is often spoon-fed (Mace, 1971) by the executive director or management. The boards' activities, in some cases, may at best be described as reactive. Some of the major CSOs visited had systems and processes that they stuck to, but some of the smaller organisations had boards that only met (if they ever did), to deal with issues that arise – some firefighting approach of a sort. In most cases, these boards are brought together when a funding opportunity requires the board to meet. This was the response of Jack (a non-profit founder–manager), one of the participants in an interview in his office when he was asked about the infrequent nature of their board meetings:

*We sometimes get the board to meet so that we can get minutes of these meetings to apply for one project or another (Jack, a CSO founder and present ED).*

It is worth reiterating here that *governing boards* do not exist in nature. Boards are organisational creations. As such, they are only what they are created to be. Thus, a board put together for registration and causes like what Jack mentions in the preceding quote, cannot be anything more than ineffective in operation. The following is a quotation from one executive director and founder during the interviews. He was asked how the organisation manages the inability of the board to meet:

*We just contact them sometimes by phone and then tell them what it is that you want to do and then they also give us inputs. That also comes back to the fact that the finances haven't been helpful; if it were, we could just easily organise the meeting and*

*then we ensure that they will all be around and things will just flourish like that. So, they've not been able to function so much as expected of them (Taffa, ED and Founder).*

The non-existence of proper governance structures and systems is also largely because some non-profit boards as stated earlier, happen to be competent, yet, busy individuals brought together to support the organisation with their reputation without any clear design of what their role should be. Both small and well established CSOs face the challenge being described and indeed, many of the governance deficits uncovered in this study could be blamed on four (4) main factors namely:

1. The lack of understanding on the part of some board members of their position and duty in the organisation.
2. The composition of the board usually to include friends and family relations.
3. Founders' lack of understanding of the value of governing boards for organisations.
4. The lack of clear distinction between the role of the board and that of management in the organisations.

From the field data, many of the boards could be described as dysfunctional. A critical interrogation of the narratives so far yields some possible explanations for why boards may be malfunctioning in the sector. First, many of the executives felt that the people they put on their boards usually do not have time. For many, it is exceedingly difficult to attract the right board members or to get the right fit (i.e., people who add value to the organisation). As such, most of the organisations usually start with family and

friends in constituting the founding boards. Such CSOs essentially pack the board with family members or other relations who may not be necessarily 'right fit'. When this happens, the activities of the boards never take off. A typical example is found in the following quote from the interview with Dan who is a co-founder of a CSO in environmental advocacy in the Greater Accra Region:

*We looked out for people with integrity, some level of pedigree and also very much educated. That is it; ... because of the way we are constituted, it was to be able to register the organisation and it's not an easy task. So, the people are basically people that we knew, like family and friends (Dan, co-founder of an environmental advocacy CSO).*

In many cases, there is a very strong charismatic founder, who is very passionate about whatever organisation he/she has started and wants to have some control. Often, he/she feels that if he/she secedes some of his/her power to the board, the organisation may lose the vision. To have that control, this founder invites friends and people who cannot really play independent roles on the board:

*Some people are afraid that look, when people who really know what they are about come, they would lose control and so they try to stage manage who is in leadership position especially on the board. They try to manipulate it so that it is people they can control, they can literally instruct even though in reality it should be the other way round. And that's where*

*their challenge comes in and I've seen a lot of that* (Theo is a coordinator of a coalition of NGOs in the Region).

Another explanation offered is that some people simply do not know what to do when they get on boards. They genuinely lack the understanding of the roles they are to play in the organisations as board members. There is this common assumption that when people are qualified and have all sorts of credentials (as Dan reluctantly refers to in the earlier quote on how the environmental advocacy group constituted its board), then they “know”, but the facts do not support that. When people are invited unto the boards of these organisations, they say yes without asking what their specific roles are. In the end therefore, you find qualified individuals on boards with wonderful credentials but lacking the understanding of what it is they are to do to add value to the organisations.

Third, and the most common reason is the registration of NGOs and the requirement of a board of directors. A lot of the CSO founders feel they do not really need the board but of course they need to put people's names there to enable them to register their organisations. In the end, it only remains a board on paper, which is a demonstration of a lack of understanding on what the value of a board is for an organisation.

Confirming the above issue (board members' lack of understanding of their role on the board), many of the CSOs were found not to have any orientation programmes for their board members. In the few that have orientation programmes, the programmes are often not effective. Only 27% of the survey participants reported the existence of planned orientation programme for board members of their organisations. Of this number, 71%



did not agree with the suggestion that their organisation's orientation for board members adequately prepared the members to fulfil their governance responsibilities. Related to this widespread challenge, there is practically a lack of clear distinction between the role of the board and that of management in the organisations. This often creates conflict between boards and their executives, or as was the case in many CSOs, boards that are dormant.

Where the factors mentioned above are present, one finds a passive listenership of boards to management reports, and sometimes a preoccupation with budgets of foreign travels of staff and management. In many cases, because of their busy schedules, everything that is put out by the board is only what the management and staff have produced for them to "approve". As has been mentioned, these board members are either *'busy and absent'* or overly engrossed in the trivial matters of the organisations. As Carver (2006) notes, most of the challenges of boards and their governance do apply to most, if not all, non-profit boards. Most non-profit boards, like public boards, fail to do what needs to be done for a strategic leadership of their organisations. Unlike other sectors, executives of non-profits instead of being concerned about the ineffectiveness of their boards, appear to rather enjoy the weak boards because of the hegemonic situation the weaknesses create.

One thing that has not been contested anywhere in the non-profit literature is the fact that generally, CSO founders are special people. They are visionary, risk-taking, no-barriers, and courageous human beings (Linnell, 2004). They go where governments and private businessmen will not go. These CSO founders have the special ability to take a cause and turn it into a mission, and rally people around this great mission. They are creators of a sort.

Quite often however, these great abilities have at the same time been the source of their worst nightmares. Many of the founders fail to appreciate the need for structures; and even where the structures exist, founders deliberately impede their proper functioning.

It has often been said that political patronage in Africa, and patronage appointments results in the weakening of essential public service institutions (USAID, 2018). What is often seen in these institutions is loyalty to ruling governments as against institutional integrity. This could sometimes create mistrust between the institutions and their stakeholders including their beneficiaries. Paradoxically, this picture is no different from what pertains in sections of civil society. As the apostles of good governance and institutional integrity, the civil society sector should have been the torch bearer in society; and an example of good governance at the institutional level. As this study's results confirm, the lack of structures and systems to ensure internal control and accountability is sometimes not because the systems were implemented and are lacking effectiveness but rather, the initiatives never get to see the light of day. In some cases, the proposal of the systems meets stiff opposition. Where they are accepted and instituted too, they are done with tokenism to have no effect. Why? One probable reason offered is that structural weaknesses serve the interests of their perpetrators.

While the account here is worrying, it does not suggest that there were no leaders of the sector in the Region who stood and continue to stand for proper structures and governance systems, which offer better accountability. In making this point relevant, the following statement by a former chief

executive of a non-profit organisation in the Region with its headquarters in Accra, comes in handy:

*You need an independent board of directors that oversees the work of the executive director. In the BBB (not real name of the organisation), when I became the executive director, I was a member of the board and the executive director. Looking at the system we ran and how the board worked, I could do anything, so after a while I said look, this board has become very dysfunctional, we need to disband it, the board said no. So, I resigned as executive director and resigned from the board and then slowly the rest started resigning until they constituted a new board and then appointed a new executive director. If I decided to stay there for life, no one would have said anything but these things kill organisations (Razat in an interview at his office in Accra).*

There are a few such cases where leaders who are committed to certain principles insist on the creation of governance systems that protect those principles. The challenge however is that these are still strong personalities whose opposites exist. A strong selfish personality supported by weak governance structures and systems could have dire ramifications for organisational sustainability.

### **Civil society and the dividends of voluntary accountability**

One finds a general lack of accountability and accountable systems in the CS sector across the Region. Where there is a semblance of accountability, it is upwards and towards donors who provide financial resources for the

organisation. People in the sector get caught up with donor accountability mainly because they receive resources from these donors, but accountability is more of a full cycle responsibility. It is not just about donors; it is about accountability to those they claim to represent (which is extremely important) and then their accountability to their own peers which are weightier than accountability to donors. Lateral and downward accountability have proven to be very effective in other jurisdictions and indeed in some western countries, if a non-profit organisation does not have a good reputation with peer organisations, no one would want to work with such an organisation (Becker, 2018).

Being accountable and ensuring feedback is something that has the potential of changing the non-profit narrative. When done, practitioners in the sector are able to court citizens' respect and recognition as serious people who are contributing to development. For many at the community level, CSO practitioners are seen as people surviving on foreign funds, driving big cars, and pursuing foreigners' agenda by being remote controlled. Some are of the perception that when foreigners fail to influence governments directly, they go through civil society organisations to push through their selfish agenda. This is a worrying picture for a sector that is expected to look internally for resources (WACSI, 2015) to survive in the coming years.

Beyond legal regulations, some non-profit organisations commit to voluntary accountability towards ensuring that the organisations adhere to financial and ethical standards. This has been found to send signals of quality and trustworthiness (Becker, 2018), which are vital ingredients for organisational sustainability. Voluntary accountability is reported to lead to

high reputation and increase perceived quality in the non-profit community. While voluntary accountability has not been agreed upon to relate directly to donation behaviour(s) in previous research, the lack of it has been established to be linked to less donation behaviour (Becker, 2018). It acts as some hygiene factor of a sort. Its presence does not necessarily motivate but its absence serves as a disincentive. That is, the absence of voluntary accountability negatively affects the reputation of organisations, perceived quality of their services, public trust and people's willingness to donate to their causes.

While Becker (2018) acknowledges the neglect of the non-profit stakeholder perspective, some studies have highlighted the importance of voluntary accountability in creating a favourable public response towards non-profit organisations (Feng et al., 2016). This discussion is important because, in the present discourse on CSOs' financial sustainability in Ghana in the face of dwindling foreign donations, the call has been to shift the focus home towards local funding sources including public funding of CSOs as a response to what has been described as a post-aid environment in Ghana (Arhin, 2016; Lewis et al., 2015; WACSI, 2015; Vandyck, 2018). If these proposals are to succeed, the importance of a favourable public response to NPOs in the country cannot be overemphasised. Non-profit rating agencies (popularly called non-profit watchdog organisations) often play key roles in this regard by helping communities decide on which organisations are doing well with their transparency and overall accountability.

Research shows that most donors all over the world do not consult any non-profit rating agency when making donations to non-profit organisations. In one of such studies, Cnaan, Jones, Dickin and Salomon (2011) revealed

among other things that well over 77% of donors do not consult organisations devoted to rating the accountability and transparency of non-profits when it comes to making donations even though their services are available online. Cnaan et al. (2011) used three (3) waves of the Harris Interactive Donor Pulse in their study and found only about 22.4% of donors who were likely to check the accountability and transparency rating of a non-profit when donating. Quite interestingly, the 22.4% constituted only those who give large amounts of money or engaged in some advocacy. The relationship between NPOs and the donors as described by Cnaan et al. is one of principal –agent relationship in which the principal is not able to supervise the production of goods and services. Principals (donors) have to often rely on agents’ (NPOs’) reports to make their judgement on the claimed successes, quality and efficiency of the agents. Donors suffer from what is called information asymmetry when they are unaware of the fidelity of the NPOs they support.

Two (2) sets of donors can reduce this information asymmetry themselves. As was mentioned earlier, only large, or very rich donors and volunteers are able to reduce this information asymmetry on their own. Thus, rich donors can demand control of NPOs and access to accounting and financial records in return for their usually large donations. Also, volunteering at an NPO can afford an individual access to privileged information which can be used to make informed donation-related decisions.

Taking into consideration the fact that this category of donors form only a small fraction of the donor community worldwide, gives credence to recent findings by Becker (2018) and related others that external voluntary accountability does not have a direct effect on donor behaviour. The reality is



that most donors to non-profit causes neither possess the ability nor know how to obtain information that will help them to compare the ethics, efficacy and credibility of the overwhelming numbers of NPOs. That is, your regular/typical donor cannot do any of the two things described earlier as ways of reducing information asymmetry. The ability of the typical donors to assess an NPO's quality, efficiency, integrity, and success themselves is always limited especially in the absence of voluntary accountability.

Most of these donors are unable to distinguish between the best non-profits and the worst or those in the production of the most public good, act most effectively and ethically, and those who do not.

That aside, another tenable argument earlier offered by Hibbert and Horne (1996) and recently reiterated by Cnaan et al. (2011) is that in donations, donors who have little to lose seek little information regarding their intended donations (even when the information is available on the internet) and since most donors give in really small amounts, it only stands to reason that a majority of these donors do not consider information from non-profit watchdogs as necessary (Cnaan et al., 2011, p.11).

### **Concluding Remarks**

For there to be a thriving third sector, the governing processes of CSOs must be clear to include the basic responsibilities and powers of their respective governance organs and operational structures, membership rules and terms of office (length of term and limits on re-elections) and other decision-making procedures. One could speak of conflict of interest provisions for both the board and management, as well as board member remunerations. Other considerations include board competencies which could cover a review

of the CEO or ED's performance, review of financial management performance, responsibility in the recruitment of CEO and the management of executive transitions. It has been argued and rightly so that a review of the soundness of the governance structures of CSOs in terms of their adherence to the indicators mentioned above is what differentiates them from profit making and private enterprises. The other concern (mostly driven by donors) is the existence of sound financial management systems. This is demonstrated in the existence of basic accounting practices, financial reporting and record-keeping, audit, and fraud prevention practices, which as earlier stated, were only observed in the big organisations headquartered in Accra.

It is important that the policy formulation and guidance role of governing boards be understood and separated from the purpose of management. Management and governance should not be confused with one another. These are and should remain separate functions in all organisations (Howe, 1995). However, as observed in this Chapter, it is not the case in the Ghanaian CSO context. There is no clear separation of board from management functions per the findings of this research. Respondents rated the sector 1.74 out of a possible five (5) in institutionalising structures that ensure a clear separation of board from management functions and that is worrying. Meanwhile, from the widely accepted Carver (1990) policy governance model and indeed the management literature, the board is always in the driver's seat while recognising the key roles of management in attaining the goals of the organisation. The model as was espoused in Chapter Two proposes a system that allows the board to deal with policy without meddling in the operation or programming of the organisation. The board is supposed to give strategic

direction while the management led by the chief executive concentrates on the implementation of the strategy, but observations in the present study show that this is not always the case.

Good and effective governance in CSOs is important for two key reasons: (i) CSOs use public funds – whether internally or externally sourced, [it is still from *some public*]; and (ii) they are intended as organisations to influence public business. Considering their important roles in society, the weak internal governance and accountability of CSOs, whether real or perceived, is an important problem worthy of attention (Moore & Stewart, 1998). This problem goes to the core of CSO sustainability because some governments leverage non-accountability of CSOs (and sole accountability to foreign donors) as an excuse to control and harass the organisations. Many CSOs are said to set themselves up as experts or specialists on problems that are defined by themselves. They are accused of living almost entirely on foreign funds and could therefore do whatever they please provided they find a way to make their funders happy. While this may not be a true representation of CSOs in Ghana, the absence of effective governing bodies and systems tends to give credence to these accusations.

It must be articulated that even though non-profit organisations are mostly non-governmental, they are public entities just like government and its agencies. Their effective management is therefore essential. As public entities, they are expected to be accountable or bear some responsibility towards stakeholders of public funds, private donors, members, and staff. CSOs in Ghana have often demanded for good governance from political/ state actors in the public sector. While calling governments to order, many of these CSOs

often downplay the importance of the effectiveness of their own institutional governance and systems of accountability. Sadly however, how individual organisations are run internally affects their credibility, effectiveness, and viability as organisations and this cannot be discounted by any stretch of imagination.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

#### Introduction

The third objective of the study explored how executive transitions and successions were managed in CSOs in the study area. In line with this objective, this Chapter discusses the state of succession planning in the study organisations. It also examines executive transition practices in the organisations and the role governing boards play in those transitions. The Chapter also describes the key barriers to effective transitions in the sector as learned from the field accounts.

#### Executive Transition Practices in CSOs

Leadership, and particularly, executive transition is a process that is often challenging for all organisations and not just non-profit firms. This is fundamentally because, when judged wrongly, even the basic decision to hire a successor from within or outside alone could throw an organisation into turmoil. Consistent with the existing non-profit management literature, the present study did not find the CSOs ready for executive successions. There was some extent of stability in most of the organisations in the sector because a lot of the members of the top leadership had remained stable for many years. Only a few of the organisations have experienced some leadership transition or succession at the level of the chief executive. Even in cases where transitions took place, the founders or exiting chief executives were still keen in determining who their successors were. It is important to clarify here that, recommendations that exiting CEOs should be involved in decisions regarding

their transitions should not be confused with the ‘handholding of a successor’ by an outgoing officer, which is what is being referred to in this context.

Broadly, there exist two (2) key practices regarding transitions at the executive level of CSOs in the study area typically associated with the different types of organisations. Whether the CSO was an individual organisation or a network/subscriber-based was important for the kind of transition practiced. In one, the common practice was that the executive head decided when and how he/she wanted to transition (if he/she wanted to), and in the ‘near proper practice’, he /she informed the board about it. After informing the board, the outgoing executive begins the process of transition. Worthy of note however, the board in this set of practices played very minor roles in the entire transition process. The exiting chief executives (mostly founders), controlled the entire process and delivered the successor to the board for “approval”. Approval is in quotes because this is often only a rubber stamping of the executive’s decision as predicted by the managerial hegemony theory (Mace, 1971). Essentially, in many of the CSOs, the popular thinking was that the organisation was for the founder and he/she decided who did what, even in his/her absence. The practice described here was commonly associated with individual organisations. Here, succession decisions were often abrupt, and sometimes taken without the active involvement of the board. Within the context described above, when something came up (like, public appointment, travel opportunity, or ill-health), the executive director handed over to a candidate of his/her choice.

In the second, the board played an active role according to some existing operational regulations, constitutions, or procedural documents. Two



(2) in three (3) of all such cases involved a network or subscriber-based organisation. Contrary to the practice in the first set, there were examples where boards determined the exit and exit plans of the executive heads.

In line with arguments advanced by the structuration theory, institutionalisation of transition practices was found to have more to do with repeated practice than dictates of pre-existing structures. Thus, in most cases, the first transition was approached with a lot of ill-preparation but where organisations had the opportunity to go through the practice again, it was approached much more systematically appearing to be a structured practice on the basis of the previous experience.

### **The state of succession planning**

The departure of an organisation's most senior person is no mean an activity. It could be disruptive and traumatic for both the leader and the organisation. It is for this reason that executive succession planning has attracted considerable attention from practitioners and academics. Succession planning is described as "a systematic and long-term practice that an organisation follows to ensure it has the necessary pool of managerial talent(s) to enable it to meet its business objectives and achieve its mission" (Rothwell, 2002 cited in McKee & Driscoll, 2008, p.341). There is a strong view in the management literature that there are tangible benefits that accrue from the development and implementation of succession plans (Fulmer & Conger, 2004; McKee & Driscoll, 2008). Researchers in the global north consider succession planning as part of the strategic plans of the non-profit sector (Rothwell, 2001; McKee & Driscoll, 2008).

There are several definitions of succession planning without agreement. However, all these definitions connote some form of formal rules and procedures designed to ensure succession. Rothwell (2001) offers a comprehensive description of what succession planning entails by defining the concept as:

*a deliberate and systematic effort by an organisation to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement* (Rothwell, 2001, p.6).

While the very activities included in each succession planning may differ, what it generally represents should never be in doubt. In the evolution of the practice of executive succession planning, there have emerged two (2) popular approaches. They are the “horserace” and “relay” succession, each of which must be approached intentionally and deliberately. Either one is mentored specially for a position, or it is left open for others to takeover at the end of an executive’s term. These two (2) succession practices were observed in the literature by Froelich et al. (2011). The authors described the relay succession as a practise in which “an heir apparent is groomed for the top executive role”, while in horserace, “multiple internal candidates essentially compete for the post” (Froelich et al., 2011, p.5).

Considering that a succession plan is a plan specially put in place to aid the preparation for either a long term or short-term departure of a member of an organisation, it could happen at every level of an organisation. This is however crucial at the level of the executive directors because of the sensitive role they play in such organisations.

Indeed, the consensus in the management literature is that, before any executive director transition will take place, the organisation ought to put together both emergency (short-term) and long-term succession plans. This will prepare the organisation and its members for the short or long-term departure of the leader (Allison, 2002; Chapman & Vogelsang, 2005). The plan is also expected to guide the organisation to sustain itself during the process, and how to prepare for a new leadership. A succession plan should be clear about who should take over the role of the executive director in his/her absence (in the interim). It should also provide clarity on the process to be followed in looking for, and hiring a replacement for the executive director in the event of a permanent departure (Chapman & Vogelsang, 2005).

The study assessed the extent to which the study organisations are engaged in succession planning. All the survey respondents and indeed, most of the key informants recognise the value of planning for succession. These participants appreciate the ability of a succession plan to serve as a safety net in times of key departures. While acknowledging that key departures happen, the CSOs do not plan for them.

Except for a few cases encountered, nearly all the organisations that participated in the survey and the key informant interviews had no formally instituted leadership succession plans. When asked to rate the performance of CSOs in institutionalising clear leadership succession plans in their organisations (on a scale of 0-lowest to 5-highest), 87% of participants scored their organisations below average in this function. Only 13% scored their CSOs above the average score. While this is indeed startling, some clarity may be brought to it when the tenures of the sector's present executive leadership

in the Greater Accra Region are observed. Only 30% of the chief executive officers have stayed in their positions between one (1) and five (5) years. Forty-nine percent (49%) of the CEOs have served six (6) to 10 years and the remaining 21% have served in the same position for a period ranging between 11 and 20 years. A plausible explanation for the lack of succession planning in the study organisations could be the rare occurrence of succession in the sector's top leadership over the past decade or so. Indeed, nearly 90% of the respondents stated having had only one (1) CEO over the past 10 years, thus affirming the point that executive succession has not been a common occurrence as acknowledged in the non-profit management literature.

It is also important to note that the majority of the organisations (93%) in the sector have no clear tenure for their executive heads and as such, in approximately 67% of the cases, executive transition or succession has not been an important discussion at any level. Moreover, while 27% of the organisations engaged in some level of succession planning, most organisations did not engage in the practice at all. For some of the organisations, there was some documentation as to who would take over in the absence of their present executive director, but no such documentation existed in the organisations of 70% of the survey respondents. There were also no roadmaps on how to handle the resignation or retirement of the executive director in more than two-thirds of the organisations.

Looking at the performance index on successions and succession planning in the governance effectiveness measure, it can be concluded that the organisations are doing poorly when it comes to planning for succession. This finding finds a lot of agreement in the extant literature where many earlier

research found only a limited number of organisations in the non-profit sector in which formal succession plans existed. Particularly, some small-scale studies found no formal succession plans in 66–90% of organisations (Santora & Sarros, 2001; Santora et al., 2011). Similarly, large-scale assessments had similar findings where 71–83% of non-profit organisations lacked formal succession plans (Bell et al., 2007; Cornelius et al., 2011).

Where there are properly institutionalised governance systems, the chances of having formal and effective succession plans are high. The present study found a strong positive correlation between succession planning and the institutionalisation of governance systems. A two-tailed correlation test of the two (2) variables yielded a Pearson R of .792 signifying a strong positive relationship between the organisations' institutionalisation of governance systems and their involvement in succession planning. With effective planning for executive succession as a product of governance, poor governance systems' institutionalisation would mean poor planning for succession.

In addition to the absence of a well-thought through executive succession plan, most of the organisations in this study who had gone through executive transition did not seek the help of professionals in managing the process. This in part affirms the fact that organisations attached little seriousness to this process and therefore did not think it worthy of investment. One thing is however certain –in the absence of formal succession plans and professional support, the result of many such transitions is chaos or the quiet demise of the organisations. Although some of the organisations are alive today, they are not effective when it comes to the pursuit of their missions and social objectives. For some, if they closed tomorrow, no one will even notice.

The study asked respondents to rate boards of directors of their CSOs in terms of boards' risk management abilities. This was to help make judgements about the boards' ability to handle organisational risks that could be reasonably anticipated. Here, the boards' ability to manage organisational crisis was given far less than a satisfactory score (1.80 out of a possible 5). Participants in rating the board's ability to manage its own affairs as a board, gave it 2.6 (which is an average score). The practitioners generally agree that 'the board manages itself well by using sound decision-making processes (2.4), demonstrating commitment to organisation missions and values (3.0), as well as complying with key requirements (2.8). Also, the boards' capacity to govern effectively is not being impaired by conflicts among members (3.6). At the same time, these practitioners doubt the ability of the boards to effectively handle crises including those occasioned by executive transitions. This latter revelation raises key concerns about the nature of boards existing in the CSOs, because one of boards' significance is their ability to manage organisational crisis.

The evidence presented above, gives a lot of credence to the earlier argument advanced about the converse dependence of non-profit boards on their executive leadership. Clearly, the dependence of the CSO boards on executive agents raises questions about the effectiveness of these boards. While possessing some of the qualities of good governing boards, there is still doubt surrounding the ability of the boards of participating CSOs to perform one of the fundamental responsibilities of boards.

Significantly, in most cases, the organisations were still under the charge of founders as chief executive officers. As depicted in Table 8, of



Chapter Four, many of the CSOs in the Region had no clear leadership succession plans. In many cases, executive succession as a subject had not been an important discussion in the organisation. When asked to score their organisations in terms of the existence of clear leadership succession plans, the participants gave a score of 0.87 on the average (out of a possible score of 5). Only 19.6% of the participants were emphatic that their CSOs had clear leadership succession plans. To the remaining 80% of the participants, their organisations lacked clear plans for leadership succession.

To confirm the extent to which the specific organisations engaged in the practice of planning for succession, a question on CSOs’ engagement in effective succession planning was posed. Only 12% of the survey participants said their organisations engaged in effective planning for succession. Figure 3 presents the responses to this item of the survey.

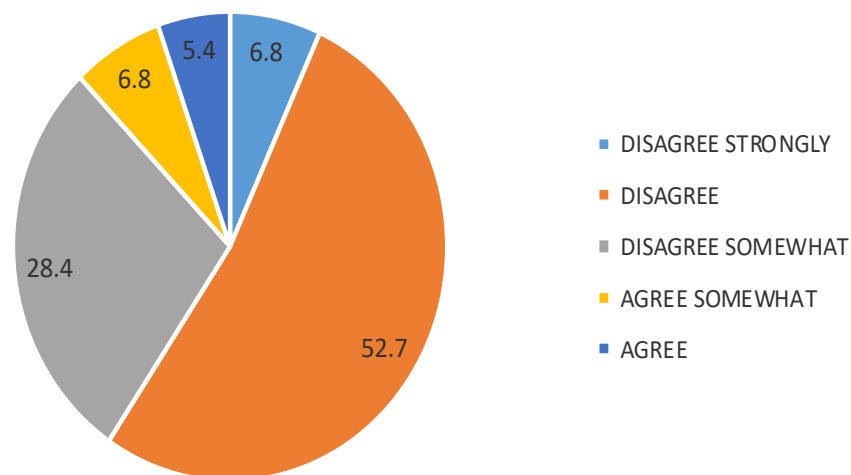


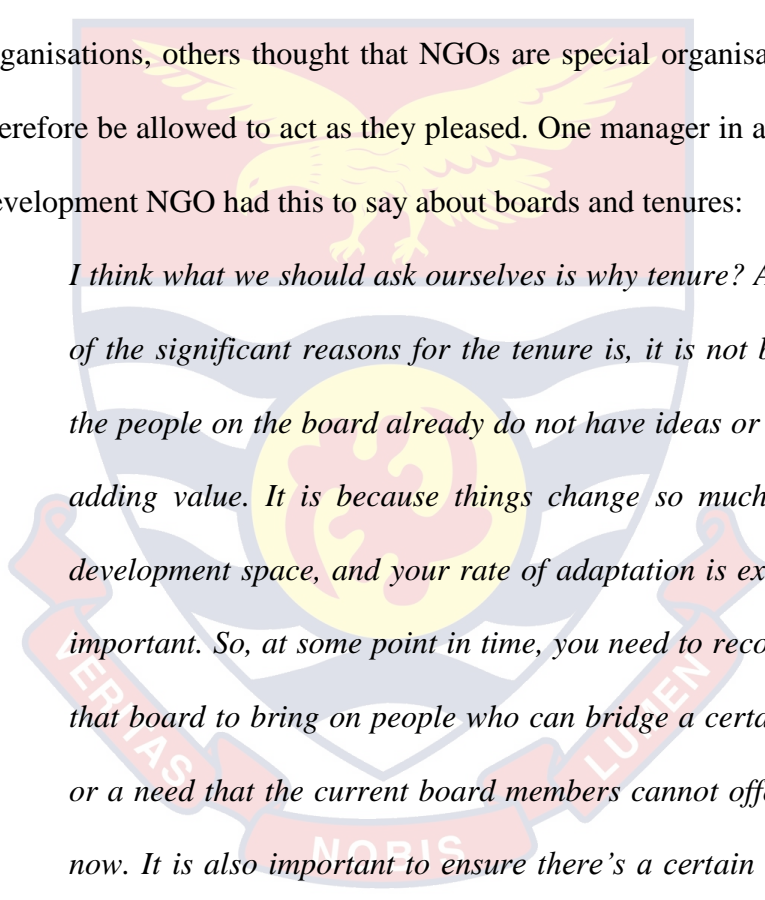
Figure 3: CSOs engagement in effective succession planning

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)

This is like the poor rating of organisations in terms of tenure for their executive leadership as was observed in Table 8. For many of the participants, there existed no roadmap on how to handle the resignation or retirement of the

executive head of their respective organisations. According to these participants, the boards of their organisations do not play any active role in the selection of new executive directors.

Regarding leadership tenures, participants in the key informant interviews expressed conflicting opinions about executive heads, boards, and fixed terms. While some practitioners were of the view that changing boards' composition for example had some tangible benefits for non-profit organisations, others thought that NGOs are special organisations and should therefore be allowed to act as they pleased. One manager in a leading capacity development NGO had this to say about boards and tenures:

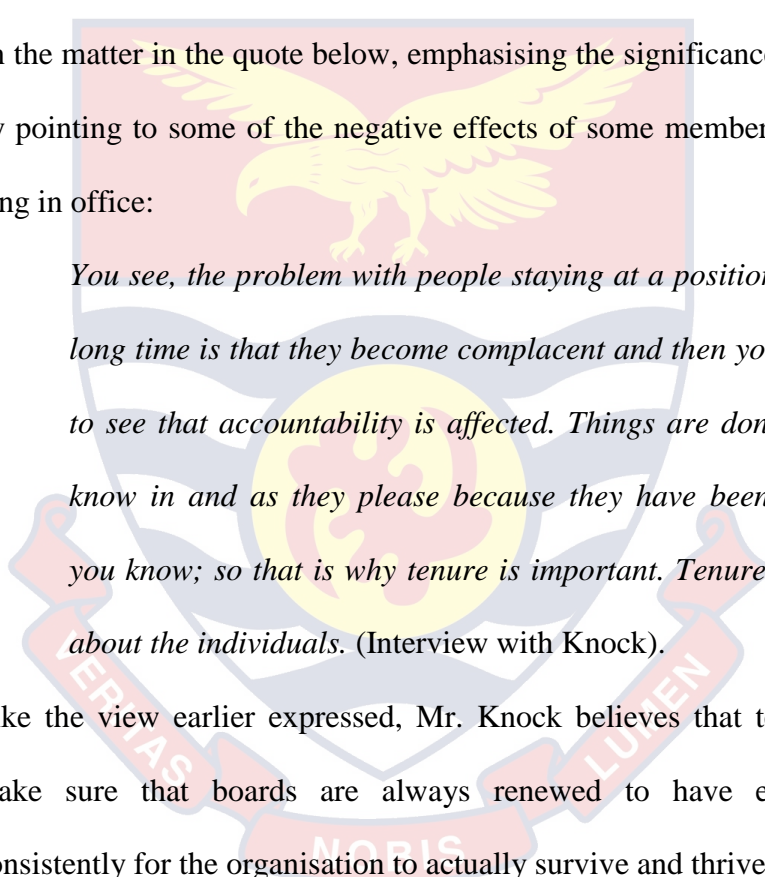


*I think what we should ask ourselves is why tenure? And one of the significant reasons for the tenure is, it is not because the people on the board already do not have ideas or are not adding value. It is because things change so much in the development space, and your rate of adaptation is extremely important. So, at some point in time, you need to reconfigure that board to bring on people who can bridge a certain gap, or a need that the current board members cannot offer right now. It is also important to ensure there's a certain amount of transparency and accountability (Lucky, Middle manager of a CSO in Accra).*

It is then obvious that some practitioners do recognise the need for tenures and in some cases, practice it in their organisations. In Mr. Lucky's organisation, the board's tenure is tied to the strategic cycle and the board is renewed from time to time. While recognising that there are no hard and fast

rules about boards and tenures, his organisation makes it a practice to bring some new brains on the board every five (5) or so years. What is even worthy of note is how this is done. It is done in such a way that the board in every strategic cycle, has both new and old board members. The old are often left on the board to ensure that there is no point in the organisation's life where all members on the board are fresh. This ensures that there is always continuity.

In a similar conversation, another executive shared a similar position on the matter in the quote below, emphasising the significance of office tenure by pointing to some of the negative effects of some members staying unduly long in office:

The logo of the University of Cape Coast is a watermark in the background. It features a yellow eagle with its wings spread, perched on a shield. The shield is divided into four quadrants with different colors. Below the shield is a banner with the motto 'VERITAS LIBERABIT VOS'.

*You see, the problem with people staying at a position for a long time is that they become complacent and then you start to see that accountability is affected. Things are done, you know in and as they please because they have been there you know; so that is why tenure is important. Tenure is not about the individuals. (Interview with Knock).*

Like the view earlier expressed, Mr. Knock believes that tenure is done to make sure that boards are always renewed to have enriching boards consistently for the organisation to actually survive and thrive.

On the other hand, it was argued by some key informants that NGOs are special organisations and should be allowed to run systems that for them support what they do. Among this set of practitioners, discussing office tenure in civil society organisations, is always a misplaced discourse. From the FGD transcript, one senior manager advanced the latter view so strongly during the FGD on the length of stay of the sector's leadership:

*I really don't have a problem with executive directors or board members staying on for life. I said earlier on, I think that non-governmental organisations are a special breed whether we like it or not. It's a business really, but it's a special kind of business. People who start a certain cause, have a certain vision, a certain passion, a certain drive around it and I decide that... (Adwoa, a focus group discussant).*

Even though this was a minority view, some executive directors interviewed shared similar views. In their view, NGOs are special businesses and should not be compelled into having systems and practices of corporate entities and public institutions. For some of these CSO leaders, they find it therefore absurd that people are discussing the long terms of executive directors and founders in the non-profit sector as though it were any special problem. What appears contradictory however is that the same leaders cite cases of founders who lead their private /family organisations until they die to justify the above position:

*You know, one of the things that came up that I want to comment on was the fact that founders or members of this institution want to be part of the management or board; there is nothing wrong with those things. The law allows it and a company can have two shareholders and the two of them are the only board members. There is nothing wrong with it... It's a private company! And what makes you think the NGO or the CSO is not a private company? Where he*

*sits, he started this venture because he had such a passion for it, and he started it. He's the owner; in him is the best vision and drive for his company (Mrs. McCarthy, ED).*

One can sense the passion that this conversation about transitions and tenures spark in the non-profit sector in the above quote. What is fascinating in all of these however is that in one instance, CSO leaders like Mrs. McCarthy are quick to justify their arguments with what happens in private corporate and family businesses and in another breath, argue that the non-profit is a special breed not to be compared with business corporate and the government.

The challenge however with the sort of argument advanced and typified by Mrs. McCarthy's quote is that a business can come and die, and no one will notice or be bothered about it. In this world of competition, another one would just arise and take its place. However, if an NGO is providing health services in remote communities, then that organisation's sustainability concerns everyone in society. So, unless such institutions can continue beyond their founders, society will not be getting sustainable provision of services and programmes that are not necessarily profit worthy. Setting up and running a civil society organisation has never been compared to a private business anywhere in the world and majority of the participants share this view:

*Otherwise every founder of an organisation now owns the organization. If you own it, it cannot be an organisation, if you own it. You cannot own a non-governmental organisation, yes you can be a founder, but you cannot be an owner (Zaro, ED of a network headquartered in Accra).*

This is because if you set up and run a successful business, you can sell it and be paid, which you can either use to set up another business or retire on the proceeds. That is, when you sell a business that you set up, you earn money but if you are leaving an NGO as a Chief Executive, there is nothing; you don't get anything. You cannot sell it because it is not yours to sell. This is the peculiar situation of a non-profit enterprise. This condition however deepens the problem of transitions at the executive level of non-profit organisations.

While acknowledging that the departure and replacement of executive directors is a crucial task, the study found that there are no proactive steps toward smooth executive transitions in many of the organisations. This is even much pronounced when the executive director happens to be the founder of the organisation. Stating it bluntly, there are no preparations for transitions, and no one talks about it until the leader on his/her own volition, decides he/she has had enough and wants to move on. It is only at this stage that some "planning" begins. Here again, the "planning" is done solely by the founder or (at best), at his instance. They have mostly actively directed who their replacements should be. Often, at this stage, the founder is tired, sometimes old, and simply wants to move on so not much of a mentoring is done.

Some of the founders have some funding sources tied to their personality, influence, and personal integrity other than that of their organisations. In such situations, there is the need for the founder to introduce the successor to these funding sources and build safety nets for the continuous flow of funds for the survival of the organisation in his/her absence. Sadly,



this hardly happens because the transitions are not proactively and systematically approached in most organisations.

Deliberate and well thought out plans as described in the early parts of this section were absent in most of the organisations studied. Where plans exist at all, they were not detailed and therefore gave no clarity as to how the transition should go. It was so in many of the cases because majority of the organisations are still led by their founders and co-founders. In such organisations, succession planning as an organisational practice becomes a taboo. Asking for succession planning would mean an attempt to whisk the organisation from its founder and leader. Some of the practitioners, many of whom are part of management in their organisations, expressed dissatisfaction with lack of planning but like the average Ghanaian, they will not stick their necks out on it at the organisation. Here, we find the unquestioning acquiescence of the average Ghanaian referred to by Ebow (1993) and later Amoah (2013), exemplified within organisational context(s).

As regards transitions and transition plans, the researcher encountered only one (1) organisation in which there was absolute clarity about the transition process of the organisation and accompanying documentation. This organisation had a transition policy in which all the decisions regarding the transition issues were clarified. As the executive director explains to me:

*So the whole process of the transition including the mentoring process of the exiting leader to the next person is clear and it's not just at the level of the executive director, it is also at the level of even programme director and other management staff and other key staff that provide the*

*institution with stability. So, in other words, I think that what brings tension in other places is these things are not clearly defined and documented (Zaro, ED).*

Zaro referred the researcher to a detailed formal succession plan developed prior to the organisation's first executive level transition, which casts doubt on other practitioners' position that merely going through a few transitions will institutionalise the practice. It takes a deliberate effort and commitment to institute such plans and there exist a near perfect example in Zaro's organisation. This organisation has seen a few successful transitions, and the organisation is still relevant, vibrant, and active. The executive director attributes this success to a formalised process institutionalised by the organisation:

*I think the reason is because we sat down as an institution and developed a policy that guides our transition process. And I think that it is something that I encourage every civil society organization to have. Before either the founder of the civil society or the first executive director exits, let there be a transition plan through a policy that is approved by the board and if it is, like in our own case, a membership organisation, let the General Assembly approve a transition plan and let people comply (Zaro, ED).*

Here again, it is important to draw attention to the type of organisation. As Zaro mentioned, they are a membership-based organisation, which runs quite differently from individual NGOs. This means, what was witnessed in

that organisation could partly be attributed to the fact that the organisation is a network. That is not to suggest that there were no networks with transition challenges. Indeed, as earlier cited in this thesis, there was a case of a network's leadership crises caused by a failure to transition.

In some of the cases encountered in this study, the founders on their own, without any clear plans in place decided it was time to leave and hand over to a new leadership. In all those instances, the decision to leave, the time to leave, and who the replacement should be, were handled by the founder-leaders. Revisiting the interview with Asempa, who is a co-founder and present executive director of his NGO, he admitted the lack of succession planning in most CSOs, but had the following to say:

*...so, what we are talking about really is a leadership culture problem which you find even in the private sector. I know one of the biggest private companies in this country which is foreign owned. When the lead, the man who ran it for many years was leaving, it wasn't hard to hand over to a successor, you see, because of the robustness of the governance structures. So, what I am telling you is that it's not only the NGO sector that you find this problem... In every society, there's a culture around power which you can point to which is quite different. In the Ghanaian context, we have what I call a chieftaincy culture to power. A chieftaincy culture to power which feeds the male dominance, unaccountable behaviour, and assuming that you can sit in office until you are ready to go, and you should not worry about who comes*

*next. And in private limited liability companies which people set up, they tend to collapse precisely because of this problem. And I think it's not an NGO problem. (Interview with Asempa in Accra).*

Asempa in that interview advised that in the discussion of tenures and planning, those conditions in NGOs should be discussed in the context of the larger social and cultural milieu within which the institutions operate. This executive director was quick to add that “institutions are creatures of their contexts”.

Institutions (and indeed, institutional behaviours), are “creatures of their contexts”. Quite clearly, this executive director associated the poor succession planning record of the CSO sector (which he acknowledged), with a dominant Ghanaian culture. If the quote from Asempa holds, then one can say that it does agree to some extent with the accessibility of people to traditional leadership in Ghanaian cultures. In the traditional Ghanaian society, leadership is ascribed, and not easily accessible –it is not by achievement, even though in some western coasts the title “chief” could be borne by anyone with the resources to engage in the elaborate rituals that come with the position, and also sponsor a number of community–feasts. But according to Ebow Daniel (1993), chieftaincy in Ghana is restricted to royals and their close relations. The power that comes with being a chief cannot be worked for. It is however to note that the finding relating to this discussion is not particularly contextual.

The lack of succession planning is a challenge that has been observed in many other contexts in the non-profit literature. In one such case, Froelich et al. (2011) did a survey in which succession planning of executive directors of

charitable non-profits and CEOs of cooperative organisations were explored. In their study, they found that planning and preparation were not commensurate with the level of concern and interest in executive successions. In the said study, while replacing long-serving leaders is acknowledged to be a difficult task, very few organisations were found to be forward-looking about it.

The decision to transition from an executive level position is one that does not come easy and many considerations are made even before arriving at that. Founder-managers consistently reflect on the level of the organisation and their place in it, but it has not been something they outwardly discuss in the organisation. For many of them, the thought of leaving the organisation they created scares them. Many founder-managers made this clear during the key informant interviews. In one such interviews, Dan had the following to say:

*I have been taking consolation from the fact that if I'm not around my technical adviser and my co-founder or my coordinator will take over and do things even though I have a feeling that they may not be able to do it as much as I would have done, if I were around, yeah. But I haven't had so much of a solution to that fear (Dan, co-founder).*

Essentially, decision times have come with great challenges for many leaders as exemplified in Dan's quote. In a similar case, howbeit difficult, Mr. Adongo successfully passed this challenging decision stage. His case was of interest to the present research because of the apparent ease and stability of the transition. While acknowledging that the decision was difficult, Adongo noted

that moving on was the next best option. He had this to say on how he arrived at leaving the organisation he founded:

*After a while, I realised that having started the organisation and having managed it for so long, I was beginning to feel that there is a need for new ideas, there is the need for new ways of doing certain things. Fundraising for instance, there is a point at which you find out that, we were not being able to raise as much as possible. I don't know the reason; donors get scared you know of issues of this and that. In other words, there is a need all the time for new ideas, new ways of doing things, and even new faces and if you want the organisation to grow after you, then, the best thing to do is for you to come to that decision. That's how it happened (Adongo, Former ED and Lecturer).*

Howbeit successful, at the point of Adongo's decision to leave, there was no formal succession plan of any kind in place. He had to start the succession process without a formal plan, but it was still with some good success. What is important however is that Adongo was the founder of this organisation and his succession decisions with or without a formal succession plan was going to be faced with a very little challenge if any at all. He only had to decide, find a successor, and move on with his exit. What can however not be guaranteed is the long-term success of this succession approach.

The other challenge that arises in this discussion is what the role of a founder or long serving executive director of an organisation should be (in that organisation) after his/her departure. While it is generally agreed that founding



leaders should continue to be relevant to their organisations after departure, the capacity in which they serve is important and must be decided with tact. In line with what appeared to be a common practice in the sector (in the Region), Adongo had been invited to serve on the board of the organisation a few months after leaving office. Indeed, when asked the ways in which past managers and founders could serve their organisations after leaving office, many of the participants (founders especially) thought ex-leaders could be of great use on the boards of the CSOs. Two (2) of the founders who had exited from their executive positions in the organisations they each founded, and led, were serving as board members of those organisation at the time of the study. This, in some respects, presents a lot of opportunities for the organisation. However, its challenges are also not farfetched.

While many success stories may exist of founders transitioning onto the boards of their organisation, there are equally damning cases. The practice is common in the management literature, but it cannot be described as a healthy organisational practice that should be encouraged. One reason why this cannot be good practice is that the structure of non-profit organisations is such that the board exercises some leadership and supervisory role over the management. While this is becoming an entrenched practice in Ghana's CSO terrain, some practitioners disagree with it and describe it as unhealthy:

*I have seen civil society organisations that the Executive director exit and become the board chair. Because if you move to the board you automatically assume the same role you were playing as an executive director. So it is the same supervisory role, so let's assume my deputy now okay, if I exit*

*and the person becomes the executive director and I become the board chair; it is the same supervision I'm providing. So, nothing has changed (Zaro, ED).*

The challenge is, if an influential founder-leader should leave an organisation he created and take a position as influential as a role on the board, then that individual never left. This is so because as indicated earlier in this report, many of the founders were mostly either instrumental in finding their replacement or essentially handpicked the successors. It is only politically correct therefore to think that such a successor, making an entry into the executive position through the vehicle of the founder, would continue to do the business of the founder. Where the successor acts otherwise, the result has often been the failure or early departure of the new hire. A similar case in the non-profit management literature is that which Chapman and Vogelsang (2005) reported over a decade ago. In that example, a 73-year-old founder while negotiating his exit after a considerable pressure from the board to retire, managed to secure himself a place on the board among other benefits. The executive director who came immediately after this founder lasted only nine (9) months in office. The second was willing to take the position only when the initial agreements with the founder were changed.

There are no general rules about dealing with the role of a founder after a departure. The capacity in which an outgoing founder or executive director should serve in an organisation is a critical decision which the governing board ought to make with a lot of consideration and tact. Despite the recommendations from practitioners and some non-practitioners during the key informant interviews that founders' transition unto boards could serve

organisation well, the example from Chapman and Vogelsang (2005) suggests that a founder's place on the board after departing from the position of an executive director is not always the best for non-profit organisations; at least, not in the first 12 months following their departure. If that ever happened, the founders' place on the board must be managed with a lot of wisdom. There are several other capacities in which the founder can serve the interest of an organisation he just exited but it is obviously not the best on the board, which somehow exercises supervisory role over the new management.

### **Governing Boards and Executive Transitions**

Transitions present challenges for all forms of organisations. Therefore, the role of governing boards is even so crucial during leadership transitions. In an executive transition, it is the board's responsibility to provide leadership. This is the time to develop and enhance cohesiveness and trust in the organisation. This comes on the backdrop of the fact that resisting change is a common organisational behaviour that must be appreciated and managed appropriately. Decision making during a transition is very important and must be participatory to avoid the inflammation of passions.

As has already been acknowledged in this thesis, most of the organisations and their boards are not prepared for leadership transitions. However, considering the crucial nature of transitions, boards and managements will be better served by acting, rather than reacting, during transitions. Where transitions are not handled deliberately, it leads to a lot of disruptions – one of which is the resignation of experienced senior staff, a weakening of board relationships and the ultimate disruption in service provision (Balabhaskaran, 2019; Giambatista, 2005; McKee & Driscoll,

2008). Two (2) cases of the manifest effects of poorly handled transitions got the researcher's attention in the present study. In these organisations, the lack of deliberate planning for executive transition resulted in some disruptions. The changes in leadership and the boards' ill preparation resulted in key staff resignations and disruption in board relationships.

It can be argued that no organisational development professional worth his sort will put together an interview panel to hire a new chief executive during a transition on which a senior staff who is known to be interested in the same chief executive position serves as secretary. As bizarre as it may sound, this was the case in one (1) of the organisations that participated in the present research. The resulting impact of such a blunder is obvious. In the following narrative captures sections of an interaction with a former executive director of one of the leading CSOs in the Greater Accra Region and indeed, in Ghana:

*You see, there were initial problems when I came in, with the one that was acting, because she also felt that having acted for six (6) months, they should have just given it to her. Unfortunately for her, I had no role in that. I saw an advert and I applied; she was the secretary at the interview. So, one wouldn't have expected her to behave in a certain way but human beings being what they are... The first two (2) years, it was a... it was really hard. I don't know whether she thought if she did that I would leave or something, but it didn't work exactly as well. (Gingo, former ED of a subscriber based CSO in Accra).*

The new executive director and this senior person never got along. The staff eventually had to resign from the position. Confirming this ill-treated transition, the same senior officer returned to the organisation following the retirement of the executive director in question. It is important to mention here that these observations of clear feud during and after transitions were observed in networks or subscriber organisations and that is very significant to the present analysis. As was mentioned earlier, these kinds of organisations often have some clauses in their operational documents on successions compared to individual organisations. They also usually have functional boards and are run by managers, who in most cases are not owners or necessarily founders. This creates a certain kind of competition when positions become vacant in them, which is not the case in individual counterpart organisations.

Although the above is the general trend, it is again not to suggest that all subscriber-based organisations have this challenge. As has been cited in previous Chapters, there was this particular network which had had two (2) major top management transitions with an impending one within the 20 year-life span of the organisation without any tensions whatsoever. Zaro's opinions about transition challenges appear to fit the troubles in his counterpart organisation cited in the previous paragraph. He makes an insightful point about the clarity of transition arrangements:

*So, I think in summary, it is the lack of documentation and the lack of policy on transition that in my opinion, increases tension, increases instability and increases expectations. When succession plans are not clear about the transition process, everybody is qualified (Zaro, ED of a Network in Accra).*

On the other hand, individual organisations often ran by founders, have a kind of centralisation of power in the chief executive (even where a functional board exists). In such organisations, the founder chooses a successor without open contestation of the decision. In those situations, the outgoing chief executive and in the worst-case scenario, founder, dominates the succession process without any formal plan, which is a clear practical demonstration of Mace's (1971) theory of managerial hegemony.

Among all governance experts and indeed in the governance literature, there is agreement that processes leading to the departure and hiring of chief executives is one of the primary responsibilities of a board. It is the governing board that leads and directs an executive level transition. Yet, in the present study, it was common practice to find the responsibility consciously or otherwise, ceded to the executive led by the outgoing leaders themselves. In many of these cases, the board was only given the outcomes of these processes to approve to fulfil all righteousness.

In the management of executive transitions that supports organisational growth, the board exercises the leadership role. It is a governance issue more than an executive act, especially when it has to do with the top executive or a board position. The process must be forward-looking and involve two (2) major phases – the planning and preparation phase, and the transition phase itself. In the first phase, there is the need to institute long-term and short-term or emergency succession plans. Such a plan should try to include transition coaching and a deliberate attempt at building executive legacy. In the period leading to the planning and the transition itself, there is the need for organisational assessment. This includes putting together a competent team (a



committee) to manage the process. During this assessment, efforts should be made to reaffirm the mission and vision of the organisation. Priorities are set for the next activity of bringing in a new chief executive. All of these processes must be deliberate and formal.

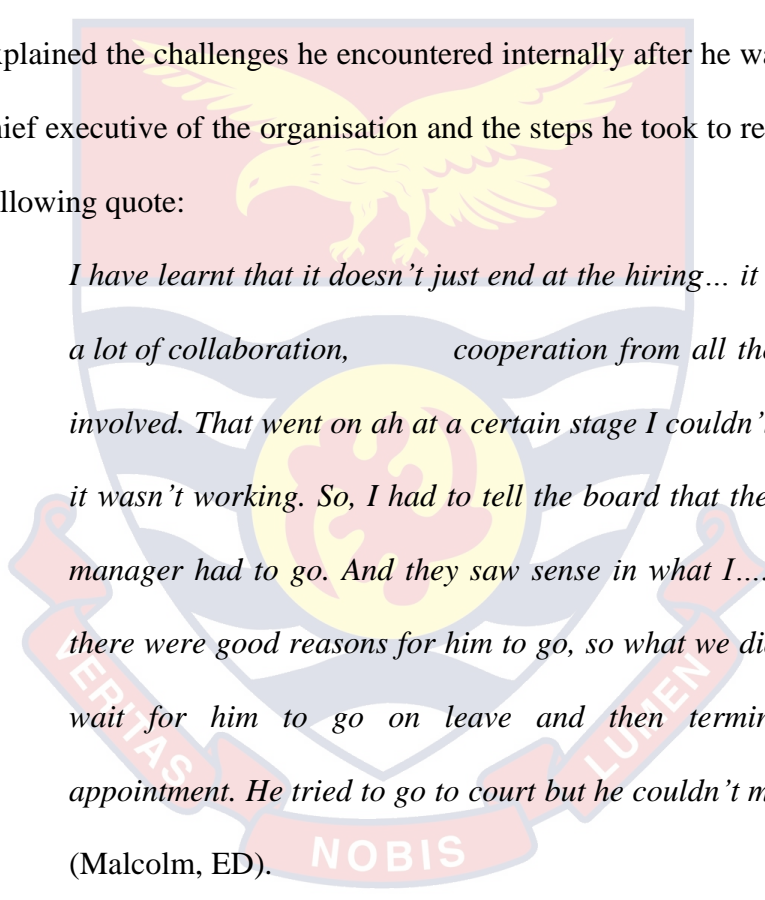
The recruitment and selection of a new chief executive becomes the next big thing. A job description is developed by the committee with expert help and the search begins whether internally or externally. This could then be followed by the interview and a shortlist presented to the entire board for consideration. After the board has made its selection, issues of benefits can then be determined before the hire.

Similar to the pre-selection cases in some organisations presented above, the post-hire period is left to chance but this according to existing evidence in the management literature could be dangerous since the period immediately following the recruitment is as important as the period preceding it.

In one of the cases encountered in this study, the finance and administration manager of an organisation who was previously the business development manager was given the finance and administration position after his failed attempt at becoming the chief executive:

*We had a business development manager who contested for my position, we went for the interview together and I was picked as an Executive Director; he was made the business development manager and you can imagine that creates problems... because he felt that maybe he could have also been there so I cannot assign tasks to him... (Malcolm, ED)*

Listening to this executive director narrate the details of the brawl between him and one of his senior managers, one thing was clear. The transition was ill planned without a proper forecast of the aftermath of the hiring process. That is to say that even in cases where some form of planning exists, they often were about the activities leading to the selection. The post-selection period is often left to chance and not given much attention in most organisations. In the case above, the executive director in question further explained the challenges he encountered internally after he was selected as the chief executive of the organisation and the steps he took to restore order in the following quote:

The logo of the University of Cape Coast is a watermark in the background. It features a yellow eagle with its wings spread, perched on a shield. The shield is divided into four quadrants with different colors: red, blue, yellow, and red. Below the shield is a banner with the Latin motto 'VERITAS LIBERABIT VOS' and 'NOBIS' written below that. The entire logo is in a light, semi-transparent color.

*I have learnt that it doesn't just end at the hiring... it requires a lot of collaboration, cooperation from all the people involved. That went on ah at a certain stage I couldn't work... it wasn't working. So, I had to tell the board that the finance manager had to go. And they saw sense in what I.... I mean there were good reasons for him to go, so what we did was to wait for him to go on leave and then terminate his appointment. He tried to go to court but he couldn't make it... (Malcolm, ED).*

Typically, in properly thought-through and planned transitions, the above situations are envisaged, and stabilisers and safety nets created for successor executives. These were however absent, and the executives are most often than not left to figure out how to proceed once hired by the board. However, what the present findings affirm is that the process of transition is

laborious and requires more attention than it is presently getting in the civil society sector.

Both successions and post-succession periods require planning and deliberate actions. Here, there is the need also for executive director coaching and mentoring of a sort. The reason is that the literature has shown the top position in the non-profit sector is not one that many people hold twice. So, hardly does there exist an experienced executive director. Studies around the world have shown that most executive directors who experience turnover do not transition into another organisation as executive directors. Thus, most fresh executive director hires are indeed fresh hires. That aside, there is also the need to introduce the new chief executive to a network of peer executive group immediately after the hire in line with best practice. These are all to help the new executive in his/ her new role.

Failure to engage in this deliberate executive coaching and mentoring could create a situation where the new inexperienced non-profit chief executive looks up to senior staff for direction and guidance, which could subsequently create ineffectiveness or conflict. Beside the challenges shared already, some senior staff by merely guiding a new chief executive (in the period immediately following the chief executive's employment), become kingpins. In some cases, the staff later rally a constituency of workers around themselves and rule a section of the organisation, while the chief executive controls the other. The dangers of these are obvious. It is for this and many other reasons that boards should treat their roles in a leadership transition with utmost importance.

### **Threats to effective executive transitions**

In analysing the present findings, the question arises about what the threats to successful executive transitions are. This question was posed to many of the participants in this study and the common responses could be grouped into five (5) key issues. They include: the lack of effective governance structures, issues of legacy, fear of the unknown, livelihood, power, and prestige; and are discussed below.

#### ***Lack of effective governance structures***

The first key factor found to threaten successful executive and founder transitions in this study is the lack of effective governance structures in many of the organisations studied. Non-profit organisations are limited only by guarantee. This organisational type lacks the relational bonding of families, and the commitment to success given by the profit motive of the private sector. What drives civil society and the non-profit generally is commitment to a vision and mission. Therefore, if a group of individuals have set themselves up as an organisation in pursuit of a vision, there should be a way of ensuring that there is commitment to this vision, and this is what governing bodies do. Unlike the private business however, the non-profits' commitment to a public cause accords some public services and privileges to them requiring that the same public has a stake in these organisations. Therefore, the board is and must remain a trustee of the public. It holds the non-profit company in trust of the public.

#### ***The legacy challenge***

One thing deduced from field interactions with long serving founder-managers was that many of them were apprehensive about how their legacy

would be treated in their absence. The interview sought to appreciate from the perspective of founders, the challenges behind founder transitions in the sector and what may be causing these challenges. The following quote represents in part, what the challenge about apprehension over legacy has been among many CSO founders:

*It's a human thing. I mean as human beings, we start something, we are passionate about it, we feel that we are the only ones who understand where we are going with it so we want to hold on to it as soon as it starts until we get to where we think we are going but you see, genuinely, we are also afraid; there's also the fear element of letting go of something you've nurtured that may be destroyed or changed. That way, our own legacy will be removed (Dan, a co-founder and ED).*

The above quote is a widespread sentiment. A lot of CSO founders feel they may not be recognised and that the significant roles they play in their organisations will not be given the required recognition after they have left. That notwithstanding, it is important for founders to leave a legacy by making sure their organisations can stand on their own without them (as founders) in them. It is the greatest legacy a founder can leave and will always be remembered for that. Also, in dealing with founder transitions, there should always be a way to recognise and celebrate the contributions of exiting leaders. There are several ways by which their legacies could be preserved and where practicable, make it possible for them to continue to add value to the organisation in different respects. Some have transitioned into ambassadorial

and advisory roles and continue to add value to the organisations they created, and such models could be emulated.

For transitions to be successful, generally, it is important that the one leaving acts in the most transparent and accountable manner possible. People should learn to account for their stewardship which should reflect in their handing over notes. Exiting executive directors should be very transparent about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the organisation in a detailed way, providing the requisite necessary information for the next person to build on. Presently however, the sector is awash with individuals leaving and haemorrhaging the organisation by keeping certain important information and in the end making the life of the next person very difficult. How leaders, especially long serving leaders, exit their organisations is a part of their legacy. The way a leader leaves in itself can either make his/her legacy or break it.

### ***Fear of the unknown***

The second factor worthy of note is what has been termed here as the “fear of the unknown”. Many of the founders the researcher spoke to during this study confessed of a genuine anxiety about the future of the organisations they have long toiled to build. They ask themselves, “what will become of this organisation should I decide to permanently depart from here?” They believe in the vision and are passionate about it and therefore feel they are the only people well placed to pursue or lead that vision. Indeed, some founders expressed genuine believe that their organisations could not succeed without them. While this is an acceptable human condition, considering all that founders go through to establish organisations, it is possible that such beliefs



threaten the future of many of the organisations. It was clear in the data gathered, that this feeling made many of the founders hold on tight to their positions even when there were clear indications that their strengths and intellects could no longer offer anything new to the organisation(s):

*If you cling unto power too long, it is like taking water into your mouth and holding it without cleaning your mouth. I was chairman of the board and my friend was the president. We both founded it. So at a point I suggested we could maximum stay in power for two (2) terms of two (2) years each, then we give way to some new people; we should groom people to take our place. At the time, I was about 70 years and currently I am 75, I will be 75 in November and I say well, I cannot continue as an old man and I know what I feel in my bones, let us bring up certain people to take our place. My president didn't like it. So I threatened reluctantly to resign from my post and I did (Lawson, a retired Board chairman and founder).*

It is obvious that Lawson's friend, like many other founders, felt he was not done achieving all that he aspired for his organisation and probably harboured a fear of what might happen in their absence.

One mark that is missed in all the above is that these are common human behavioural tendencies and that is why there is often a body called the board, to at least, place a check on individual incredulities. The leadership and direction of an organisation is the primary responsibility of the governing body and not that of the founder or management. It thus becomes the

responsibility of the governing board or council to determine when a change is required for the organisation and how that transition should be handled.

Some respondents drew attention to the fact that many of the organisations that have remained relevant and vibrant may have been under stable leaderships. One of them was quite emphatic as shown in the quote below:

*If you check, the strongest CSOs in Ghana still are those that are still led by their founders and there are a few successful NGOs beyond their founders, and they are struggling. They are not so stable. They are not as stable as when their founders were there. (Interview with Rayat in his office, Accra).*

In relation to Rayat's position, one can indeed point to many failed CSOs whose failure is attributable to the loss of their founders. This observation prompted a casual count of influential CSOs in Ghana and I can affirm that indeed most of the CSOs that have remained active and relevant have been under the leadership of their founders or long-serving executive directors. While this is worthy of further exploration, one could argue that even the so called relevant CSOs could have been better under new leadership. Assuming without admitting that the fact in the quote applied, would that mean these founders lead better? These are pertinent issues yet to be addressed by any empirical observation in this part of the world. What is known however is that where an organisation – be it public or private, is run single-handedly by its founding manager without the effective participation of others, it most likely will not survive beyond the 'lifetime' of that founder. That is why it is

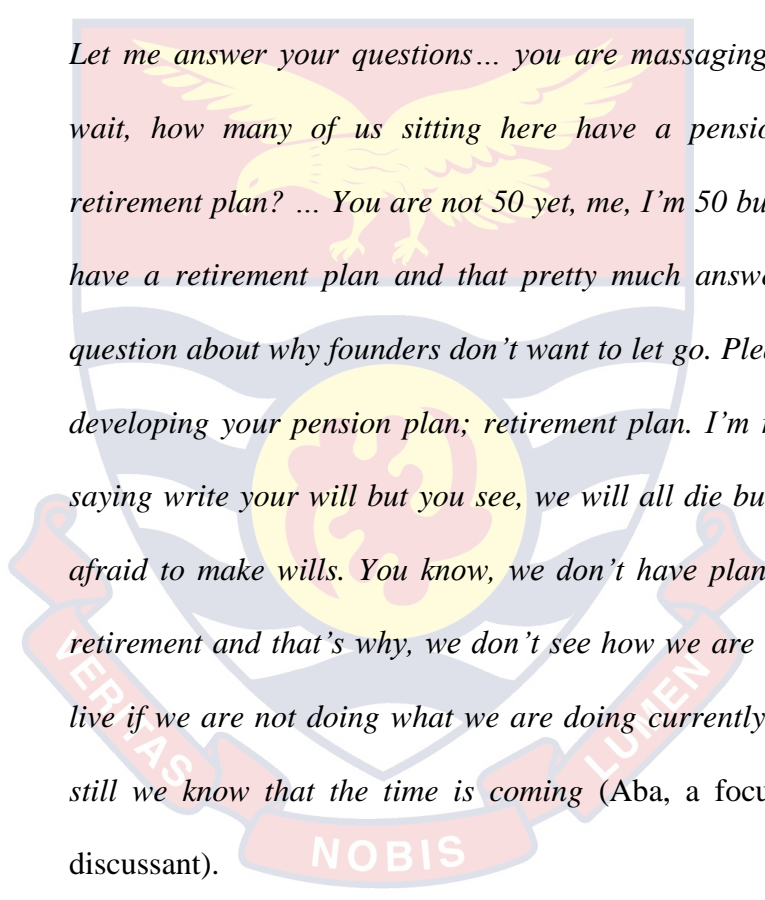
even more important to understand the reasons behind the founder syndrome to find effective ways of addressing them for a thriving third sector.

While many of the respondents thought it is about time a dispassionate discussion is held about the “sit tight” syndrome of CSO leaders, a section of the leaders and especially founders argued strongly that the call to such a discussion is misguided. One (1) founder who doubles as executive director who had been in his position for over 15 years, insisted that “one should not make it [look] like there’s some principle somewhere that requires that organisations change their leadership or that people leave organisations after any period” (Interview with Yango, Accra).

One can admit that the argument in the above quote is valid. However, one should not misconstrue the call for a dispassionate consideration of leadership transitions and succession planning to mean a call on CSO founders and executive directors to necessarily quit their jobs. The understanding that is required is that the departure or otherwise of a chief executive and how such a transition is handled is a governance function and should therefore be a policy decision. What is the policy of the entity regarding the tenure of its top executive office holder? Staying true to the mission and related policies of the organisation is what is important and consistent with good organisational governance. If the stated policy of the organisation is that the executive director could serve 30 years, this should be followed. However, the argument here is that such an important decision should not be left to any one individual’s whims and caprices as is the practice in private realms.

### *The livelihood challenge*

There is the economic angle to effective leadership transitions problems. For some founders, the decision to remain in their position as leaders of the organisations they created (even amidst social and natural calls for change in leadership), is economically driven in most cases. Nearly all the focus group participants agreed with *Aba* when she made this point during the discussion of the threats to transitions:

The text is overlaid on a large, semi-transparent watermark of the University of Cape Coast logo. The logo features a central shield with a yellow eagle, a red and white circular emblem, and a banner at the bottom with the word 'NOBIS'. The shield is flanked by two banners with the words 'VERITAS' and 'LUMEN'.

*Let me answer your questions... you are massaging it. See, wait, how many of us sitting here have a pension plan, retirement plan? ... You are not 50 yet, me, I'm 50 but I don't have a retirement plan and that pretty much answers your question about why founders don't want to let go. Please start developing your pension plan; retirement plan. I'm not even saying write your will but you see, we will all die but we are afraid to make wills. You know, we don't have plan for our retirement and that's why, we don't see how we are going to live if we are not doing what we are doing currently and yet still we know that the time is coming (Aba, a focus group discussant).*

For many of the leaders, they do not foresee any other source of livelihood beyond what they do for their organisations. So, it becomes a question of survival rather than a genuine fear that the organisation may not survive in their absence as has been advanced in some cases. The financial incentive that makes commercial entrepreneurs move on without difficulty is almost always absent in the non-governmental sector. As a social

entrepreneur, when you feel like moving on, you cannot sell off your enterprise and retire, and this, some admit, is a problem.

### *Power and prestige*

This factor is hardly ever accepted by the founders themselves. Though hesitantly, some do agree that leading these organisations come with some power and fame depending on the size of the organisation. Letting go of such privileged positions in society can be very difficult. It is human and must be understood and handled in the best way possible.

Considering the factors mentioned above and their strength in determining human behaviour, one can understand why people hold on to their positions even when there are calls to give others the opportunity to contribute to these organisations. Too often, senior, and experienced officers in CSOs burn out and feel frustrated because they do not foresee career progression opportunities. This is how one senior officer put it during the interview:

*I've been the programmes officer for years, so now what? Where do I go from here?* (Williamson, Programme Officer in Accra).

This sentiment, as simple and ordinary as it may seem, represents the sentiments of a great constituency of senior and middle level managers of the civil society sector. Some other participants at some point expressed this frustration of limited opportunity to advance in their career in the non-profit sector:

*Number two (2), as I keep saying, NGO work is different in some ways. Most NGOs are not equipped to grow carriers. If you get somebody, getting to the verge of you know the peak of the carrier and plateaus and they have a passion for what they*

*are doing and you know, want to stay long hall. But somebody else comes from university and want to be standing somewhere speaking, I want to be a Programme Officer in this organisation for the next 10 years. There is nothing like associate programme officer, you know, lead speaker, you see most of NGOs are not set up to provide that kind of carrier progression for most people (Mansah, is a Programme Officer at a renowned NGO in Accra).*

*I don't have any inclination as to if I stay, what? You see, I've been having that conversation with my boss lately. You see, it becomes difficult. We've been having it for some time now but now it has become very pressing (Kafui Programme Officer).*

While the turnover intentions of participants were not the focus in this study, a careful interrogation of the facts in the preceding quotes reveal high turnover as one of the effects of founder syndrome. A certain frustration could be sensed in the two quotes above. It is important however for all who care about the success of the civil society sector to recognise that the career space for civil society actors is limited and therefore, demands a lot of thinking and effort into programming and organisational structuring and re-engineering especially in Ghana. This is because no one is monitoring the rate of turnover in non-profit organisations, not much discussion exists on these issues. They are however important if the intention is to live true to our organisational missions.

Founders' understanding of succession planning is often limited to efforts made towards planning for successions in the top management, and



since they do not plan for their exit anytime soon, they turn to neglect its value. Meanwhile, succession planning in its true sense is much more expansive than meets the eye. It includes a systematic development of talents internally at all levels of the organisation.

Many of the selected organisations in this study had no limit on the tenure for their executive directors. This is mainly the case with individual organisations. What exists at best are unlimited office tenures during which the governing board has the right to terminate the appointment of the executive director based on performance and conduct. On the face of it, this may sound great. That the board exercised the oversight and could ask the executive director out for poor performance sounds awesome but considering the little that is known about CSO boards in this study, one wonders whether this has a chance of ever happening. While boards still remain the leaders of executive transition processes as the sole body laden with the authority to hire and fire top management, it is clear that these boards (at least 80% of them in this study) are not prepared, and do not have any well-designed processes to oversee effective leadership transitions. As could be deduced from many of the responses, this challenge goes back to the basics of board membership composition. Once this is wrong, it follows that the board will most likely be ineffective in governing the organisation, especially the transitions it goes through.

### **Governance, Executive Transitions, and the Sustainability of CSOs**

In this section, attention is turned to the discussion of the fourth and last objective of the study which is the implications of the executive succession practices as observed in the organisations, for the sustainability of

CSOs in the Region. As has been clarified in this study, governance and leadership are treated as sustainability dimensions, and this section discusses how these dual concepts, and particularly executive transition lapses, affect the sustainability of organisations.

A content analysis of the narratives on the subjective of sustainability yielded particularly interesting results. In discussing issues of sustainability, responses of the sector's leaders ranged from the organisations ability to continue to do what it does without harassment from authorities to the organisations' ability to continue its work even in the absence of key personalities:

*The ability to look far into the future to ensure that when tomorrow comes, we will still be here. For me, that is how I see sustainability (Agawu)*

*I think when those you work with, the institutions, individuals and even the beneficiaries of your services will trust and continue to deal with you now and even in the future, then we can say your organisation is sustainable (Zaro, ED).*

*The ability of an institution to withstand difficult times like the changes we are seeing now is what being sustainable is all about. So, so, what I mean to say is that very soon, in Ghana, we will know those who will still remain relevant and through to their objectives. There are funds from certain quarters we reject. We don't accept it as a matter of principle even though we are broke. For me, that's part of sustainability (Asempa, ED)*

Also, during the FGD, several opinions were offered on what sustainability represents but there was an agreement in the end to the effect that sustainability in the institutional context meant:

*An organisation being able to build institutions and systems that are able to stand with integrity against challenging influences especially external to the organisation itself (FGD, transcript).*

Further analysis of the discussions of sustainability revealed some key themes and terms common to many of the participants' position espoused during the interviews. These themes were used to organise nodes that were used to analyse the data from the interviews with the help of the Nvivo software. The analysis resulted in the retuning of some of the nodes and eliminating others. Table 13 presents some of the key themes that emerged and the extent of their usage by participants:

**Table 13: Key Themes on sustainability**

Themes	Frequency of occurrence in discourse across 30 interview scripts
Resource availability (financial resources)	23
Lasting systems and structures	17
Respect for the organisation	14
Accountability and transparency	13
Consistent commitment by leadership	7
Capacity (human resource & expertise)	5

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)

The FGD was excluded from the analysis above because of the way the subject was gauged during the discussion. Consistent with in line with the existing literature on sustainability (USAID, 2018; Arhin et al., 2018; Arhin, 2016; Vandyck, 2017; WACSI, 2015), financial resources seem dominant in participants' discussion of sustainability as compared to interest in other factors. That said, a further interrogation of the data above does not entirely give that overriding financial interest outlook. Reference was made to 56 other factors under the subject of sustainability other than financial resources which occurs a significant 23 times across the narratives. These 56 other references were in respect of governance systems, processes, and management responsibilities.

Further, the following quotes from some participants is particularly illuminating in the discussion of sustainability:

*First of all that commitment is important for the sustainability of the organisation in the sense that if the organisation stands for 'A or B' but the constituents, the constituency it is working for, do not come to the organisation to seek assistance, support or to work with that organisation; then really you don't exist (FGD, transcript).*

*An important factor also I think is management style. The management of the organisation itself must be transparent and democratic. If you are managing any organisation and there is transparency, you attract and get the dedication of the people you have employed. You attract and receive also the the confidence and trust of donors. You attract in other words,*

*if you are transparent in your dealings with your organisation and with your constituency, the duty bearers have nothing to undermine you (Zaro, ED of a network)*

*...and sustainability is ensuring that there are many people who can do the work with or without this or that person you see (Mass, an academic and researcher).*

These participants (FGD members, non-practitioners, and practitioners) saw sustainability beyond just finances unlike the existing discourses and research publications would have us believe.

A similar analysis was carried out with respect to the documents obtained from the organisations. Of the seven (7) annual reports sourced, five (5) had sections that broadly addressed institutional and financial sustainability issues. Many of these were in the form of what the organisations did (and sought to do) in the strategic cycle to ensure their sustainability. Under this subject of sustainability, some key issues were raised as approaches for remaining sustainable put forward by organisations. The approaches include the list outlined in Table 14.

**Table 14: CSOs' Approaches for Enhancing Sustainability**

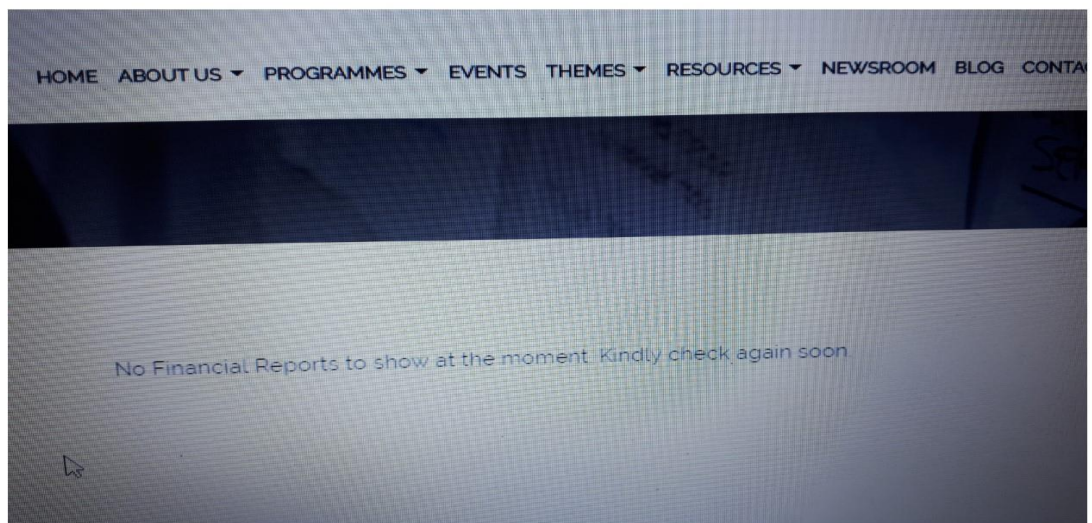
Sustainability approaches	Number of reports in which this is topical
Funding through local & internal sources	7
Institutional governance and structure consolidation	6
Improving transparency & internal participatory processes	6
Institutional reforms	6
Building personnel capacity	5

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)

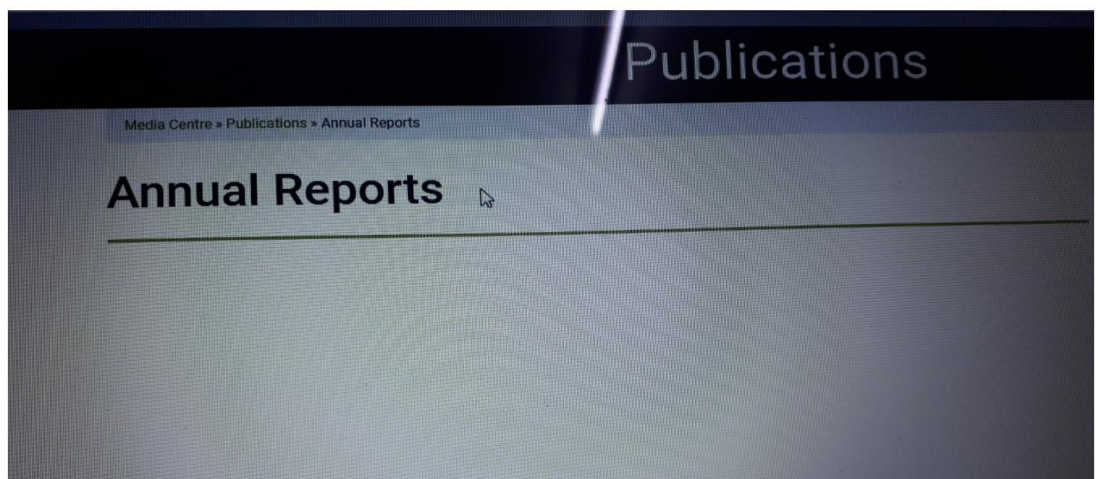


It is particularly interesting to observe that for some of the organisations (especially, those well-resourced), all kinds of reports and institutional publications could be assessed by just visiting their websites in line with efforts to improve transparency as stated in Table 14. Significantly, some even provide links to their financial reports even though a click on many of these links leads to a dead end:

#### Organisation A's link to its financial reports



#### Organization B's response annual reports



*Plate 1:* Search Results on Some Links to Financial and Annual Reports

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)



All other reports to which the CSOs have provided links, led to the digital archives at a click of a button. It does appear that while there is transparency in many of the CSOs, for others, it depended on what they wanted to be transparent about. In a way, this behaviour of some CSOs justifies Ebrahim's (2005) concerns about accountability in his publication on "accountability myopia: losing sight of organisational learning". In this article, the author bemoaned how accountability was sometimes used as "short-term and rule-following behavior" rather than "a means to longer-term social change" (Ebrahim, 2005, p.56). Here again, the point is not to say that the organisations are hiding their finances (even though some study participants gave that indication), but an attempt at interrogating further the claims of the organisations on these governance ideals. It must be admitted that there were two (2) of the annual reports accessed which had financial reports with auditors' review comments.

### **Governance and Sustainability**

Despite the fact that it has not received the best of empirical attention, governance and board governance in particular is widely recognised in the non-profit literature to have the potential to affect the sustainability of non-profit organisations (USAID, 2016; Vandyck, 2017). It is considered a key driver of the operational resilience and sustainability of CSOs (Vandyck, 2018). While the value and prominence of CSOs in Ghana is clearly not in doubt, as the evidence suggest thus far, the sector's organisations appear to be incorrigibly pallid when it comes to investing energies and resources in institutionalising governance systems and leadership development programmes. The indicator scores obtained from the field on governance and

leadership as a dimension of sustainability, cast doubt on the sector's sustainability along that dimension. The organisations' composite sustainability index of 2.3 obtained in this study means that the sector is rated less than satisfactory in its sustainability along the dimension of governance and leadership.

While the finding here appears contradictory to earlier results obtained on the sector's sustainability along a similar dimension by the WACSI (2015) research, a further interrogation of the data proves that this may not in actual fact be the case and the reasons for that conclusion will be given below. The 2015 WACSI report scored the civil society sector 3.1 and described it as satisfactorily sustainable in its civil society sustainability index on identity and continuous existence of organisations as a dimension of sustainability. The report concluded on this basis that there was a sense howbeit perceptible, that "with relevant missions, operating space, generally favourable legitimate support from various constituents, CS will survive even if thriving proves very difficult" (WACSI, 2015, p.13).

Whereas some may find the present result and that of WACSI contradictory, it is important to state that there are plausible explanations for the perceptibly varied scores observed in the two (2) surveys and why they may not be contradictory as they appear. First, while the issues observed in the present study hinge on the identity dimension of sustainability as observed in the WACSI (2015) research, the indicators used in the two (2) studies differed slightly. For example, the policy and regulatory environment which the present study conceptualised in the civil society sustainability construct (see Figure 1) as part of the remote factors of sustainability (and therefore excluded

from the present measures), was in fact included in the CSSI measures. As has earlier been mentioned in this study and acknowledged by many publications (including WACSI's own 2015 study), the regulatory environment in Ghana is not restrictive and this could explain the slightly higher score observed in the CSSI. Indeed, Ghana's legal and regulatory environment remains one of the most favourable and stable indices of the civil society sector's sustainability measures. Evidence spanning five (5) years of research (2013-2017) from the USAID CSSI presented in Figure 4 supports the view on the stability of Ghana's legal and regulatory environment.

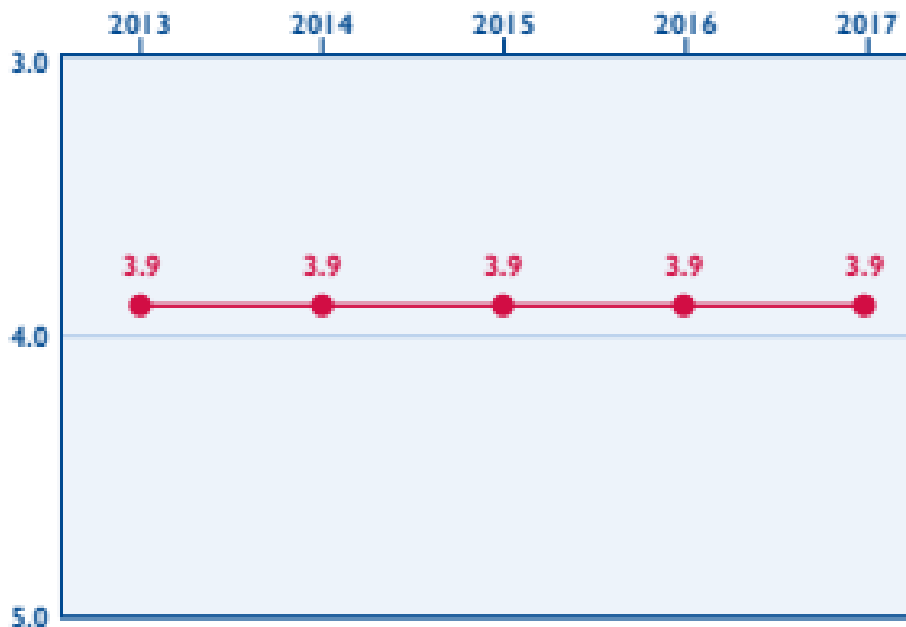


Figure 4: The Legal Environment in Ghana from 2013 – 2017

Source: 2017 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (USAID, 2018, p. 91).

In the USAID sustainability index cited in Figure 4, the legal and regulatory environment as an independent dimension consistently recorded 3.9 over a period of five (5) years spanning 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 (USAID, 2018). It is clear therefore that the inclusion of this factor with others

in assessing a dimension has the potential of skewing the results towards a particular direction). The above notwithstanding, it is also important to mention that while the satisfactory score in the present computation was 2.5, the CSSI by WACSI had three (3) as its satisfactory sustainability performance index or score. What this means in actual terms is that the difference between the two scores in real terms is very negligible. Besides, one can recognise that the two studies are three years apart from each other, and considering how fast changing the CSO landscape is, a three-year space between studies could reasonably account for the difference in scores.

### **Executive transitions in the sustainability discourse**

The revelations of the present study regarding leadership transition management and succession planning particularly stimulates curiosity about the implications these may have for the sustainability of the organisations and the civil society sector. It is important to draw attention to the impact of succession practices on the entire governance sustainability index discussed in earlier Chapters of this thesis. As the data in this study has shown, leadership transition and succession planning remain the weakest link in the sustainability index and could be said to have accounted for the organisations' (less than satisfactory) performance in the governance and leadership sustainability index computed in this study. Thus, it is on this basis that the present study while recognising the importance of organisational governance for the general sustainability of CSOs, sought to explore the implications of executive transitions and succession practices in particular for the sustainability of CSOs considering the inevitability of executive turnovers and transitions in the sector.

### **Implications of executive transition challenges for CSOs' sustainability**

There is impending leadership gap in the CSO sector in Ghana. This heightens concerns about the sector's sustainability that requires urgent attention. This is because the early generation founder-leaders of the sector are fast reaching retirement. The survey results on the other hand suggest that many of these leaders are not planning for their transitions and this is evident in the fact that in 80% of these organisations there are presently no formal succession plans. Executive succession has some varied implications for organisational sustainability. It proves to be an excellent opportunity for organisational transformation when done right (Alison, 2002).

On the other hand, it has the equal potential of throwing hitherto vibrant organisations into turmoil. A case in point is the short-term success of Uber following its topmost executive succession. The six (6) months preceding the succession saw one of the world's most valuable companies take a nosedive following the numerous allegations and scandals that hit the company. The start-up lost well over 200,000 passengers many of whom responded to a "Delete Uber Movement" hashtag introduced by a former Engineer of the company, Susan Fowler. The situation was chaotic with numerous sexual harassment accusations, talks about the corporate culture and a litany of lawsuits. This forced the CEO and founder out leaving the organisation almost headless for two (two) months.

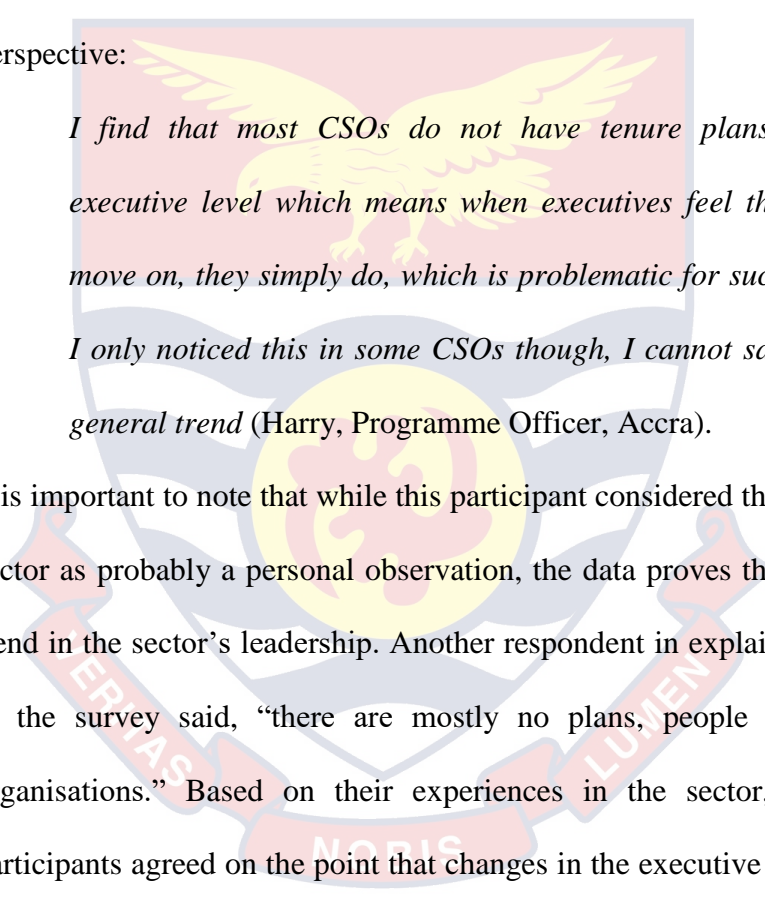
While some corporate commentators described Uber's board in this trying times as dysfunctional, it succeeded in pushing out a "non-performing" founder -leader who while creating a global force in Uber also succeeded in leading the company into a mess. This is a mission almost impossible for

many non-profit boards in Ghana according to interactions with the sector's leaders. It is early days yet, but Dara Khosrowshahi from Expedia who replaced Travis Kalanick is believed to be leading a great Uber turnaround leading to its Public Offering in May 2019. The opposite story of Tata Sons Ltd. (TSL) in India also exist detailing the trauma of the company's transition and what the implications are for the 100-billion-dollar company (Balabhaskaran, 2019). In Tata's case, Balabhaskaran reports of some great immediate impacts of the organisation's obstreperous succession. In the period immediately following the arduous transition, the brand image of the Tata group suffered a great beating amongst stakeholders over the handling of the executive succession and the company's arsenals were all thrown at dealing with the uncertainty that the ruinous succession related conflict had created (Balabhaskaran, 2019). There was so much skepticism and this led to a lot of market losses for the Tata Group. So, indeed, succession at the executive level has 50:50 outcomes in all forms of organisations.

Executive turnovers and transitions are inevitable in the life of every organisation. Furthermore, organisations' ability to deal with the changes go a long way to indicate their resilience to change. Indeed, research had earlier found the sustainability of civil society in Ghana to be challenging and in this, leadership is key. In this light, the importance of leadership has been recognised by many. However, the focus has been about having inspiring, visionary, and motivated leaders for the civil society sector (WACSI, 2015). Findings from the present field data bring to light the importance of leadership changes for the continuous existence of organisations in the sector.



Most respondents in the present study expressed concern about turnover at the executive level of the CSO sector in Ghana. Some 81% of the survey respondents indicated they were concerned about the turnover threats to organisations in the sector especially when it happens at the executive level. They shared varied experiences and views on the phenomenon and what could be feeding their fears. In the following quote, a participant's explanation for his concern about executive turnover in the sector puts the discussion in perspective:



*I find that most CSOs do not have tenure plans at the executive level which means when executives feel they must move on, they simply do, which is problematic for succession. I only noticed this in some CSOs though, I cannot say it is a general trend (Harry, Programme Officer, Accra).*

It is important to note that while this participant considered this problem of the sector as probably a personal observation, the data proves that it is rather the trend in the sector's leadership. Another respondent in explaining her concern in the survey said, "there are mostly no plans, people "die" with their organisations." Based on their experiences in the sector, all the survey participants agreed on the point that changes in the executive leadership or the lack of it in CSOs threaten the survival of the organisations in the sector. To these practitioners, executive succession and how it is handled threatens the survival or long-term existence of organisations.

*See, my brother, I have seen several organisations in this our sector go down just because the founder has moved on with his life. Passions change (Yale, a Programme officer)*

As has been stated in the literature, change is good where there is a non-performing executive, but it is equally bad if good executives are leaving an organisation. It can affect the organisation negatively especially when it is not a planned exit. To many of the participants of this study, executive transition challenges have the potential to stall the progress of organisations. Several examples were shared by participants to support the fact that executive succession failures have been responsible for the dysfunctions of many organisations in the sector. Participants at the FGD also shared common understanding that change in executive leadership has some uncertain outcomes and concluded that indeed:

*Change in executive leadership can make or break a CSO. If there is no proper succession plan, it can be disastrous. Also, the debate as to whether an internal candidate would be better than an external one is one that arouses curiosity because sometimes a fresh set of ideas can be helpful while someone who knows the inner workings of the organisation and has risen through the ranks can often be invaluable (FGD transcript, 2018).*

A few important cases which cannot be described as failed successions but rather the lack of succession, were encountered during the fieldwork. Here, long serving leaders remained and this inspired some challenges. It was cited by some participants as being responsible for the common practice of the emergence of similar NGOs with similar objectives and roles. Often, disgruntled members and staff of organisations in this stream moved out of their organisations to establish similar NGOs. This mostly happened after

these members or staff notice a lack of change in leadership for several years and the attendant problems. This is what one practitioner with 18 years' experience said on the subject during an interview:

*...but some [founder –leaders] are also staying far too long and it also causes problems. One of my guys just resigned last year because he feels he has served enough to handle bigger responsibilities and that isn't coming. He thinks the time might never even come* (Interview with Macash, ED of an Advocacy CSO).

The above was a common concern in the study area. While participants including focus group discussants shared the view that some of the organisations had grown weaker just because the executive director left without a plan, there were equally concerns about organisations that were losing competent staff because there were no opportunities in those organisations to rise to the top. In many a CSO, the head is one, and everyone else's position is fixed.

On this issue of executive transitions, a few sub-themes emerged from the data and the discussions. In the first, there are organisations which have had successful transitions at the executive level without any serious challenges and this was characteristic of both individual organisations and networks. The dynamics are however different for each case. While the few successful transitions in the networks could be attributable solely to the existence of effective governing boards, the same cannot be said of the individual organisations. The reason simply is that, in individual CSOs, the founders'

wishes (with or without the board), were most likely to be implemented without opposition whatsoever.

On the other hand, there were a few failed transition/ succession failures. These were almost in the form of Coup D'états. They were successions that were found to be non-harmonious and full of acrimony. Interestingly, this was observed to only happen in the networks and subscriber organisations. Unlike the for-profit Uber case cited earlier, even where board members were unhappy with their chief executive in the CSO sector, the board did nothing and the reasons for this have earlier been adduced in Chapter Five.

In the third sub-theme, there was lack of, or deferred transitions. Deferred because it has already been established strongly that leadership transitions were inevitable. In these organisations, the succession, which many think is long overdue, is not happening. This again was characteristic of individual organisations than networks. The leaders (mainly founders) were simply not ready to let go of their organisations even though it was becoming obvious in some cases, that the organisations were either stalling or outgrowing the founders' capabilities. This is not to suggest that there were no such challenges in the networks. Rather, when this happened in networks, they often resulted in heated contestations, often leading to a resolution. In one such case, the failure of an executive head of a network to relinquish power after the expiration of his tenure, was before the DSW officials for resolution at the time of the study.

In all the above, it is important to state that formal succession plans were absent, which further heightened tensions in subscriber organisations. Networks or subscriber-based organisations are singled out here to again make

the point that executive succession in individual organisations (especially where it concerns the exit of the founder), with or without a formal plan, does not generate much feud. The individual organisations as has been acknowledged are very personalised and so when the founder-leader is ready and names a successor, that is it, everyone goes to sleep with their concerns. In worst case scenarios, the aggrieved staff or board member may only have to resign. This condition is no respecter of organisational size; it is not something that is found only in smaller CSOs and this is something all practitioners know about.

The other challenge, closely connected to the succession process, is post-succession difficulties. In a few of the organisations where there have been “successful transitions”, there remained some post succession problems which were attributable to the organisations’ myopic approach to succession. There was virtually a dearth of post succession plans.

Evidence from the FGDs showed that several organisations in the sector did not live beyond their former leadership, especially where founders were involved. In almost all such cases, post succession failures were attributed by discussants to ex-leaders’ characteristics than that of the successors. Many of the challenges the organisations face after a succession have had to do with how the organisation ran under the previous leadership and how the transition process was handled. According to the participants at the FGD, many of the organisations struggling after the departure of their founders were absolutely tied to those leaders and so the change in leadership was too much of an adjustment for the organisations to handle:

*When they leave [executive directors], it causes a lot of problems because of how they run their affairs. They oversee virtually all things. They know who the donors are and how to court them and all (FGD transcript).*

Also connected to the ill-treated succession process, some new CEOs could not gain recognition or acceptance with key stakeholders. It is worthy of note that while these cases observed were very significant, they were not abundant, and this was for obvious reasons. First, only few transitions had occurred in the sector's history prior to the study. Second, many of the transitions encountered during the fieldwork were fresh with many of them still in their first and second years following the transitions. In this case, it was difficult to judge the success that had accrued to the organisations by the leadership change and whether that could be said to be sustainable.

As earlier noted, some of the founders who participated in the study either negotiated to join the board or were invited to serve on the board. However, this has been found to be unhealthy especially within a non-profit environment. It does not support the building of sustainable institutions. For some, a founder's place on the board is fair compensation for toiling to build. However, looking at the practice critically, it appears that the practice only takes the power of the founder from one section of the organisation to another. A new role on the board gives the founder oversight over the new executive.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The Chapter concerned itself with the subject of executive transitions and succession planning as practiced in the participants' organisations. As was recognised in the early part of this study, many organisations (not-for-profits



in particular) have their CEOs nearing retirement age. This places the organisations at the apex of a major dilemma. The situation is known to present both opportunities and major challenges. The data and the ensuing discussions clearly support the view that impending successions are always opportunities for transformation and at the same time a risky period for organisational survival.

Confirmable the available literature, the Chapter demonstrates a not so good record of transitions in CSOs (at least in the few cases where there have been transitions) in the study Region. Boards and executive directors of these organisations per the present findings have often failed to plan formally for executive successions. The study argues that these lack of planning by boards and their executive directors for succession poses a great threat to the sustainability of the organisations. The weak leadership and poor succession practices observed could expose the institutions to organisational vulnerabilities with the tendency to lead even to their eventual demise/collapse.

In the Chapter that follows, attention is turned to an important phenomenon in the context of the present discussions. It focuses on the problem of founders and the age-old founders' syndrome which is becoming a disturbing menace in non-profit organisations.

## CHAPTER SIX

### FOUNDERITIS: A CSO SUSTAINABILITY CONCERN

#### Introduction

The Chapter, following the format of earlier chapters on the findings of the study, is dedicated to a concept that is attracting a lot of traction in the non-profit world –the ‘founder’s syndrome’. While glimmers of this syndrome have already been presented in previous discussions, its importance deserved a special discussion and appreciation. As would be noticed in this Chapter, the phenomenon which is termed *founderitis* in line with its earlier usage by Linnell (2004), is used after the manner of diseases in the natural sciences and regarded here as a health concern to the civil society sector in Ghana. As the extant literature proves, it is not a neglected issue. It has received some attention particularly in the global north as articulated in the works of Linnell (2004), McKee and Driscoll (2008), and James (2017) among other authors. It is a global phenomenon. In this Chapter, the phenomenon is analysed within the context of the present study and given some suggested list of ‘remedies’ for its effective management and possibly, its cure.

#### Heroic Roles of Founders and the Founder Syndrome

Commonly referred to as the founder syndrome, *founderitis* is a condition that can collapse any organisation once it gets a hold of it. It is known as founderitis, yet founders and long-serving leaders are equally susceptible to its rancour. As acknowledged in the non-profit literature (Linnell, 2004; James, 2017), if left untreated, founderitis has the tendency to result in organisational fatalities. The condition can frustrate staff and other members of organisations and increase turnover to unsustainable levels (Linnell, 2004).

What is founderitis and what are the symptoms of the syndrome? The condition describes a situation where a founder or leader stays on for too long in a leadership position to the effect that the continuous stay of this leader begins to serve the organisation in a dysfunctional way. The symptoms may include a show of absolute power and control over the organisation and its functioning, the lack of ability to delegate on the part of the leader, the organisation beginning to be oriented towards the personality of the leader (leaders having role-bound identities), indications that the organisation has outgrown the leader and requiring a change, yet the leader remains in charge (Linnell, 2004; James, 2016; Tandon, 2016a; McKee & Driscoll, 2008) and a display of non-exhaustive knowledge by the leader among others.

Owing to the leader's 'almost infinite knowledge' of the organisation's operations, s/he begins to ignore the inputs of subject-matter experts. Such leaders hardly ever want to change what has worked in the past even in the face of changing trends. They tend to focus much on loyalty as compared to good performance of the people they work with, and do not value the importance of formalised planning. In most cases, any attempt at instituting measures that decentralise decision making is fought off by these leaders. The symptoms are concerns that threaten the survival and continuity of some of the organisations and the non-profit sector in general.

While all organisations are susceptible to this ailment, the susceptibility of non-profits is high according to McKee and Driscoll (2008) and Tandon (2016b) for many reasons. Using Ghana as a case, the non-profit sector is only limited by guarantee, and there is not much regulation as to who can or cannot serve as a trustee of the public. Also, the sector is unique in the

sense that the profit that drives the private entrepreneur is absent in the non-profit sector. At the same time, the sector lacks the qualities that bind families together. The non-profit is purely driven by a mission, which is drawn from the vision. This vision is often that of the founder(s) and this increases the susceptibility of the sector's organisation(s) to founderitis.

One point worth reiterating in this thesis is that the sustainability of civil society is imperative for the survival of Ghana as a democratic society, and indeed, Ghana's history can never be well-written without the heroic roles of civil society organisations and their founders. From advocacy to service provision, and all that comes in between, the role of civil society cannot be overemphasised. CSOs go where governments and the private sector will not dare to go. The non-profit founder-leader is a creator and a genitor. However, understanding to build, maintain, and transition both personally and organisationally are core leadership competencies that some CSO founder-leaders lack as the findings of this present study show. While acknowledging that organisations need stability to be sustainable, excessive stability at the expense of flexibility proves to make organisations static in areas that are not helpful.

Why is discussing, and eventually dealing with founderitis in CSOs and other non-profits so important? The answer is quite simple. Unlike the private sector, CSOs are "publicly funded". While many of the research participants present a contrary view on this, the fact that CSOs use public funds cannot easily be wished away. Public funding is not to be understood only in terms of state funds sourced locally. The donor funds on which CSOs heavily depend for their survival, are public funds. It could be sourced from

whichever *public arena* – whether individuals or foreign governments. It is for this reason that founderitis may pass unnoticed in a private family-run enterprise but it is of a serious ‘public health’ concern in the non-profit sector. Moreover, unlike private profit-making organisations, non-profit organisations are most often engaged in activities that are inimitable to those very organisations. CSOs often lack competitors in most of their projects. As such, when a non-profit is brought down by whatever cause, its clientele, beneficiaries, or constituencies cannot simply walk away or seek those services they hitherto obtained in this organisation from other organisations.

A parallel example in contemporary Ghana could help. In what has been described as the worst shake up in Ghana’s financial sector in recent times, the Bank of Ghana (while closing down nine (9) Ghanaian banks) cited among other things, poor corporate governance practices and the influences of related others as some of the key problems leading to the collapse of many of the banks. Key among the recommendations for the sector going forward were transition and formal succession plans. Unlike what has been described above pertaining to non-profit organisations, clients (and some staff) of these collapsed banks were successfully moved to other banks. Customers of Capital Bank were moved to GCB Bank without any difficulty, after Capital Bank’s collapse. This is a rare occurrence with the collapse of any CSO. So, the point is, organisations collapse but that of non-profits may have irredeemable consequences.

In many of the organisations visited during the fieldwork, even though there existed organisational structures, they were mostly undeveloped. In terms of management, many of the staff members reported directly to the

executive head, which is not a very good sign of organisational development in the literature (Linnell, 2004; Block, 2004; Li, 2018). In some cases, the structures and reporting protocols existed in theory, but they were practically absent. In other cases, members and staff of the organisations were barely granted any opportunity to grow and aspire to other leadership responsibilities. Speaking to staff during the field visits revealed that some of these workers were close to the point of burning out. Many of them did not find their roles exciting anymore, because they claimed they were very limited in operation and contribution or value addition. Some complained of the monotony of ‘writing reports, attending meetings they were sometimes not interested in, and responding to emails. These field interactions also confirmed some observations during the interview sessions. That is, the bulk of the knowledge base of the organisations in many cases resided with the founder-leader. He/she bore the institutional memory and the understanding of what the organisation was doing, the rationale behind certain key projects and programmes, thereby rendering the role of subject matter experts ineffectual. The founders were passionate about the issues and ideas behind their organisations, and the organisations they founded do meet the needs of their respective communities.

With the same interest, passion and charisma, founders are able to translate an idea of solving an identified social need into enterprising ventures that begin to attract the best of resources—both human and financial, and in most cases, of a great community of interest. The present study revealed several unhealthy acts and relations around the founder figure. One thing that many founders of NPOs, and of course for-profit organisations, fail to



appreciate is that skills that are required to start and keep an enterprise alive as a start-up may not prove useful as the organisation grows. As organisations grow, they become more sophisticated and sometimes require a leadership style that is less passion and personality driven.

First, it was discovered that in three (3) of the organisations, the board chairmen doubled as the executive directors. Also, in three (3) other organisations, the outgoing executive directors headed the search committees for their replacements when these EDs finally decided it was time to exit. In two (2) of the latter, the leaders (all of whom were founders), had taken up places on the board of the organisation in the same year of their exit. Reference were made by some participants to a case in which the committee that had to evaluate the new executive director was headed by the founder who just exited.

Another disturbing trend was ex-leaders' access to key staff of the organisations. Some contacted key staff directly at will without any recourse to the new leadership of the organisation. Some of the observations and narratives in the organisations that have undergone transitions in their executive leadership were worrying.

Concerning the founders, there was a genuine concern about the future of the organisations if they totally withdrew. They often felt that without their presence or influence in the organisations in some form, the organisations and their positive contributions would come crumbling down:

*At times you get scared that this dream you've worked so hard for may die if you don't take care. If you don't get someone to share in the vision and then work as effective on whatever that*

*he's doing; I get scared. Truthfully, sometimes, I just don't want to apply my mind to these future things. They scare me*  
(Jake, CSO founder).

The fears entertained by some founders as shown in Jake's example above, are sometimes justified because the history of organisations collapsing in the absence of their founders abound. A young founder of a vibrant CSO who was interviewed in 2017 and subsequently in 2018, expressed a genuine concern about the future of the organisation without him in it. Each time we got into discussing scenarios of his absence from the organisation (due to ill-health, death, or travel), he expressed a fear. The young founder often made reference to the fact that the organisation was his brainchild and as such, he puts in all his efforts despite the financial challenges the organisation faces; essentially suggesting that others may be interested in what the organisation does but may not have as much passion to go on in the phase of dwindling financial resources. A year after the first interview, the young leader received a bigger opportunity to function in the UK. While it did not mean an abandonment of his "passion for advocacy", it certainly involved handing over "his organisation" to a new leadership; something he always dreaded as a founder. The inevitable had to happen. There is a new leader in place howbeit an insider as further enquiries revealed. It is worth mentioning that as at the time of the interviews, there were no succession plans in place. It is still early days yet, but it would be interesting to follow up on this story to see where it leads.

This study also found that sometimes the challenge had just been about the founders themselves and how involved they had been in the life of the

organisations in the past; or rather, how involved the organisations have been in their lives. The difficult question they are faced with is, “now what next?” A number of such cases were encountered. For a great majority of non-profit founders, the organisation is their life. Their network of friends is in most cases made up of partners or stakeholders of the organisation. For many such founders, even a holiday from work does not look any different from a regular working week. All their lives are built around these organisations. It becomes therefore unimaginable to think that a day would come that they would not have this organisation, or they would not be working in it even if it existed.

So, all the involvement (in the transition process) of the founders from the time of deciding to transition (or not) through to the transitioning period have been based on the trust (or rather, distrust) that the organisation can indeed succeed without them leading it. This genuine worry may continue to cloud the founder’s judgment even after a transition and a new chief executive is in place. Indeed, many continue their hold on the organisation by accepting (and in some cases, negotiating for) sensitive roles in the organisation, some of which place them parallel to the new chief executives. There have been situations where the new chief executive has wondered and quizzed though quietly, ‘why in the world did this board hire me in the first place.’ He/she begins to feel distrusted by this founder, some of the board members, and even key staff.

One would wonder why the board gets mentioned in such awry narratives but it is mostly in it for several reasons, especially if you are to consider the circumstances of the initial constitution of founding boards – which is largely made up of friends and relations; and mind you, the stability

of most non-profit boards in Ghana is not in doubt. It was observed during the interviews that founding boards often existed for long. Some have existed for 14-18 years with very minimal replacements. This was in some instances cited for boards' ineffectiveness and display of helplessness even when members feel the founder is no more serving the interest of the organisation. During the FGD, participants agreed that the boards ought to continually renew the mandate of the executive directors and where the executive directors are no more pushing the vision, they need to get out on the instruction or demand of the boards. The participants also agreed that this problem was not the common practice. This challenge, they posit, exists because the founders become the executive directors and they choose their boards; so, the board is unable to sack them even after 30 years or in case of gross misconduct. What rather is most likely in this case according to the discussants, is the executive director sacking the board.

One may think based on the above revelation that the seeds of founderitis are sown at will by these founders, but they are not; at least, per researcher's field experience. For all intents and purposes, these individuals (founders) strive to build high profile boards. It is just that they turn out to be weak boards made up of mainly friends and relations. That said, the position expressed by the focus group discussants is difficult to contest because all through this study, only two (2) organisations in which the CEOs departed was at the instance of the Board. In all other cases, the transition was either not talked about or where it was, it happened as though it was the prerogative of founders.

On the part of the board and founderitis, board members often worry about the possibility of lost relationships should they allow the founder to go. Many of the members joined the board based on their relationship with the founder. They do not want to lose that. That aside, as was mentioned in earlier sections of this thesis, and indeed acknowledged by the non-profit literature, funding in the non-profit sector is very personalised. They are mostly tied to the personality of the founding leader; and so, his/her exit is feared to upset the relationship with donors and if you like, other constituencies. Some founders exit with their donors when the transition is not well managed. On other occasions, the board worries about the loss of the great institutional memory of the founder. As has already been stated, founders are sometimes the repository of all that could be known in the past about the organisation.

It is important to state here and again that the conditions described above do not only occur with founders but long-serving chief executives as well. The situation where NPOs orientate towards the personality of their leaders is common in Ghana. It is a regular phenomenon for people to mention certain names or personalities in a CSO discourse when indeed they set out to list organisations and not individuals per se. At the time of writing this research report, this practice was exemplified in a conference the researcher attended in Accra. The conference drew a lot of participants from academia, state departments, ministries, civil society, and the private sector to discuss issues of importance to the nation. The designation of Mr. AA who is a very popular CSO practitioner in Ghana, who had been invited by the conference organisers to chair an important session of the event was introduced both in the brochure of the programme and orally as former executive director of CSO

‘A’ when indeed he had been executive director of CSO ‘B’ for over two (2) years. Mr. AA had retired from CSO ‘A’ well over two (2) years before this conference and had since been heading a different CSO he co-founded.

Many colleagues and conference participants who have not been interested in this discourse of CSO sustainability and its attendant challenges did not consider or even notice anything “wrong” with this observation at the event. The researcher had met Mr. AA a year earlier in his office after his exit from CSO ‘A’ and starting ‘B’. He recounted in this interview how following his exit from his former organisation and a new chief executive hired, stakeholders, and media houses had continued to bother him with everything that concerned his former organisation. He did mention how he had taken the trouble to always refer these institutions (stakeholders) to the former organisation and its new leadership to no avail. If a transition is handled well as it should, a new CEO should not require three (3) years to be noticed or recognised by stakeholders of the organisation.

The founder syndrome is of great concern in the CSO sector in Ghana. Some founders pass on the baton but do it so privately that it allows them a little hold on the stick. This often sets up the new leader for failure. So unlike some participants’ suggestion that “those NGOs that have attempted transitions have been weakened by the exit of their founders”, it rather appears some exit arrangements tend to weaken the organisations and not necessarily a weakness in the new leaders. The way out is found in the strong and competent boards of directors who are responsible for the health and ultimate sustainability of the organisations. Often, however, the board itself for fear that the organisation may not survive the departure of the founder and for



personal gratitude and loyalty to this founder, fail to own the transition process and therefore throw their organisation into turmoil after the founder has “left” even in cases where s/he leaves.

The effects of founder syndrome could be dire. It has the potential to make organisations static with its institutions undeveloped. Such organisations only develop up to the capacity and wit ends of one man –the founder –leader. A problem beyond the wits and old strategies of such a leader never gets properly resolved and disagreement with such a leader has only one outcome – either you find the door, or you are shown where it is.

During the fieldwork, situations were encountered that required follow-up meetings with some staff (often in managerial positions). They expressed concerns and observations that typified the real existence of the founder syndrome in their respective organisations. These managerial personnel nit-picked what appeared to be a growing recentralisation of decision making in their respective organisations. In some cases, even when the processes of decision making were followed, the end product (which is the decision itself) was often that of the founder irrespective of the inputs they made as subject matter experts. In two (2) of such cases, the personnel resigned a few months after our initial interactions. There were follow-up interviews to find out whether their resignations were directly related to the concerns they earlier shared while they were with their organisations. One did affirm that her resignation was over related concerns, but the other participant was unwilling to speak to issues related to his former organisation or job. In both cases, careful observation revealed that founderitis was at play.

Speaking to CSO founding-leaders as a researcher also explained why the founder syndrome is such a big deal in the non-profit sector. They call the idea that birthed their organisations “my baby” for a reason. They conceive the idea, toil so hard to birth it, and watch it grow. In most cases, they make great sacrifices for the organisation to survive and thrive:

*...you see, that is the main problem with civil society. Most are founded like private businesses you see; let me give an example, a friend and I set up this place after I went on retirement. With the first funding that we got, we needed an office, they said they don't provide administrative expenditures but we convinced them... they were ready to just pay one month rent, for the place for six months, which was not enough to cover the rent so we had to do it ourselves; get the money ourselves to make up the difference. In fact, my colleague, he paid, he contributed. They gave one thousand for a month, the rent was nine thousand, and they gave one thousand for six months, so he added three thousand. Then they were not also paying us salaries. Now I was full time here in a way, but he was still working, so what they did was if you're doing some work, they are supposed to pay us something for our time. So, I was doing the work of the two of us so what he should have done, I combined it. So, the money that would have gone to him, we then use it to furnish this office and all that. So, when you have done all that, even though it's not a business to make profit, the tendency to see it as your own is there. And also, if*

*you have a board and they think that you should leave, it's very difficult* (Russel, CSO co- founder, Accra).

Starting up an NGO and particularly in Ghana is not an easy task, the NGO work itself is certainly not easy anywhere. Causes that are essential are not necessarily economically rewarding. Many of the founding managers described processes they have gone through to bring up their “brainchild” with a lot of passion and emotion during the interviews.

Letting go of a baby you have toiled to birth is no mean activity. From the founder's perspective, the process of founder transition can be likened to “giving one's child for adoption”. Giving your child for adoption while still alive can be emotionally threatening but as one founder did admit, “it looks like sometimes it is just the right thing to do if you wish better for the child” (Interview with Mr. Barnes, in Accra). Mr. Barnes is a CSO founder who has moved on after several years of leading the organisation he founded as its executive director. To him, the issue of founders leaving their organisations at some point is a stark reality that no founder could run from.

*It could delay especially when you are young, exuberant, and full of energy; but there always comes a time you begin to reflect over your achievements and present impact. Usually, if you are rational enough, this reflection only leads to one conclusion –that your presence is no more healthy for the organisation; but mind you, it is not easy* (Interview with Mr. Barnes, 2018).

The expression in the quote above is akin to what Giddens (1984) terms ‘the reflexive monitoring of actions’ by which agents can think about their actions or behaviour(s) and consider whether their objectives are being achieved. In cases where they are not, the agents begin to adopt new behaviours; and by so doing change the patterns of interaction and the structure or aspect of it. To this founder, therefore, current attention should be directed at how this all-important activity (a founder’s transition) could be managed so that it is less disruptive, less painful, and altogether healthy. Many participants agreed that the sector’s poor record of founders’ sit tight attitudes, and failed transitions have been because not much experience exists in the practice of founder transitions. They were hopeful however that the sector’s performance would improve in the face of the few recent high profiled founder transitions in the sector, arguing that other founders would socially reflect on their actions and begin to do what is right for their organisations.

Participants in this study proffer the implementation of succession plans as one sure way to battling the malady of founderitis in CSOs in Ghana. As has been mentioned earlier, the present study found no formal succession plans in place in many of the organisations studied. The networks and coalitions had some statements or regulations regarding succession vaguely stated in their constitutions or foundational documents. The formal process of planning was absent even in many of those networks. Preparing for any transition in leadership is left to the discretion of whoever manages the process. The results of such “vague plans of succession” have been chaos. The study encountered two (2) classic cases where the leadership of networks failed to relinquish their positions at the expiration of their tenure. One of

these was at the DSW's NGOs office for resolution during the fieldwork. Therefore, the solution to founderitis is not in vague constitutional provisions per se. It is an exercise that requires a deliberate plan and commitment. Besides, before a succession plan becomes useful, the founder's ability to know when it is in the interest of the organisation to leave is invaluable.

The whole matter concludes that in the end, the founder who birthed the organisation, nurtured it through his/her entrepreneurial skills and energy to build success will still have to move on voluntarily or otherwise. What these field interviews reveal is that it always ends somewhere. At some point, founders and long-serving leaders alike have to ultimately step aside (if not move aside) if they desire the good of their organisations. When those moments come and there are no plans in place, organisations get drawn into chaotic imbroglia fuelled by hard feelings; eventually, the organisation's value and successes begin to degenerate and in the case of non-profit organisations, often, their hard-won reputation begins to suffer.

Executive successions are described in the literature as incredibly difficult and there are no magic bullets that guarantee their success. However, there are some principles that prove useful in enhancing the success rate of transitions and avoiding founder syndromes or at least surviving them when they do occur. In the next section, some valuable proposals are articulated towards the prevention and management of founderitis in line with principles known to work.

### **Dealing with the Threat of Founder Syndrome**

One can admit that *founderitis* is indeed a deadly organisational disease, but it can be cured. Founders can let go. Transitions can be healthy

when done more intentionally. Civil society organisation founders should find wisdom in learning to support the independence of their boards and the people they work with. It is time to realise and move away from the “dependence and compliance” model of board leadership to one that is appropriate in composition and prepared to use well –designed processes to deal with changes organisations experience and most importantly where there are emergencies, be able to lead the way.

There is widespread consensus that the task of dealing with founder syndrome is very daunting. The act of letting go of one’s creation no matter its state is difficult, and no one could pass the test. As Sophia Shaw (2017), who is a Director of Kellogg Board Fellows acknowledges, founders particularly dread having an organisation without them in it and all the possibilities that could be imagined in that circumstance. Shaw (2017) is of the view that “no matter the age of the leader or stage of the organisation, using common sense and sound succession planning tools can make leadership transitions easier, reduce stress among employees and family members (in the case of private business), pay homage to a remarkable founder’s legacy, and ultimately improve the strength and longevity of any organisation.” She suggests some important steps in succession planning to overcome founder’s syndrome. Shaw’s (2017) propositions are particularly interesting because they have wide application for both profit and non-profit organisations. She emphasises how invaluable planning for the future of organisations of all kinds is when it comes to changes in its leadership and proposes five (5) steps towards succession planning with a greater likelihood of success.



Shaw (2017) recommends that organisations and for that matter, those saddled with the responsibility of planning the future of those organisations should start with a contingency plan which would outline in the short-term who in the organisation would have the decision-making authority in the likely event that a founder or executive director leaves suddenly or is unwilling or unable to serve. This proposal speaks to the many situations that exist in the sector regarding departures. A CEO could be “hit by a bus” or “win a lottery” and “abandon” the job. Many reports exist particularly in Ghana of travel opportunities and juicy appointments falling the way of CSO leaders. The contingency plan is also supposed to describe in some detail the process the organisation is to use in determining a permanent successor.

After a contingency plan is in place, the next thing to do is to consider a more purposeful and detailed succession plan. In such a plan, there is provision for the continuous training and development of leadership. Such a plan should outline for example how to identify and groom potential leaders from within the organisation.

It is also important that the succession plan is based on an objective assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation with some space for the contextual dynamics of the organisation.

With the above considered, the plans now must be documented. It is in this process that organisations can really identify which part of the plan requires further inputs from a legal dimension and whether sections of it run parallel to present institutional makeup and would, therefore, require some institutional reconfiguration to be effective.

The board's involvement and leadership role in the planning and execution of a leadership succession plan is so crucial. The board ought always to understand that one of their key responsibilities to ensuring that they build a resilient organisation is to plan for change both at the executive and board levels. The best boards are those that renew their membership and value diversity of backgrounds on the board.

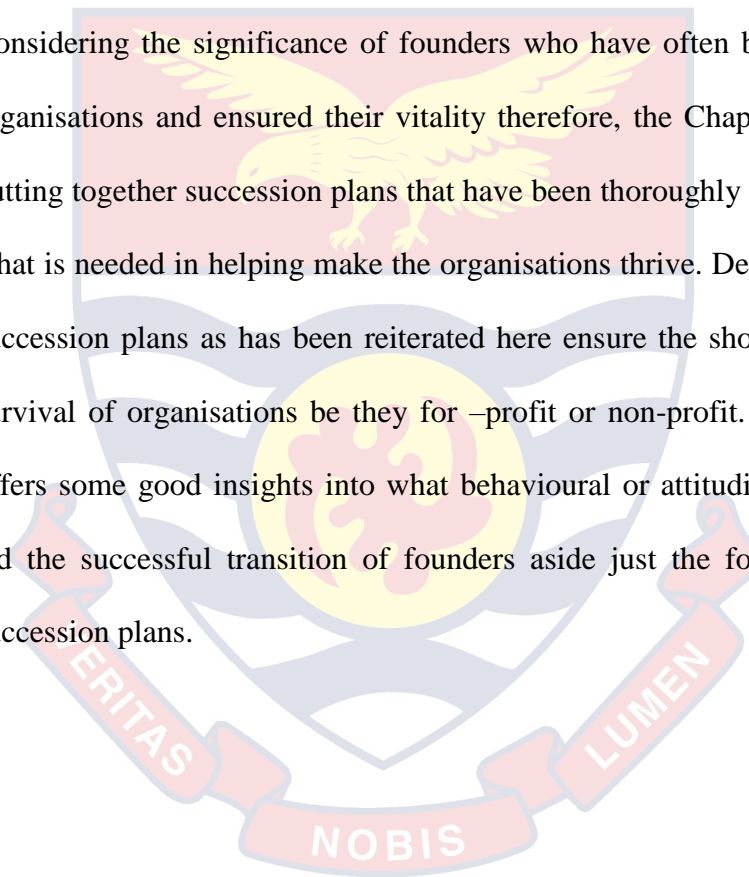
In planning for succession especially where a founder is involved, the board requires a lot of bravery to be successful. It requires leadership and it is an opportunity for boards to prove their stewardship and demonstrate trust among stakeholders. Its success proves to everyone that the organisation can survive beyond its singular agents.

Beyond succession planning, other key behavioural and attitudinal characteristics aid effective transitions that leave healthy organisations behind. These characteristics are to be seen in all key stakeholders of the process –the exiting founder/long-serving CEO, members of the board, the incoming executive and staff of the organisation playing their respective roles professionally.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The Chapter has discussed a long-standing CSO health concern all around the world. It affirms that indeed, aside state institutions, be it in a restaurant, hotel, a grocery shop, or a school, one can be sure that there is a proprietor (or founder) involved in its success. The challenge however is, it so often happens that your favourite organisation's decision-making process and profile become almost inextricably associated with this visionary leader in whom is the vitality of the organisation. While there may be nothing wrong

with this, its effects or manifestations have long been documented to trouble the growth, culture, productivity, and sustainability of all forms of organisations. Indeed, the culture of many start-ups, be they profit or non-profit – is most likely to mimic largely the personality of their founders. Failure therefore to temper this culture as Rubin (2018) argues, with some accountability to a board or some governance system is a potential for doom and one can be sure that this danger doubles in the case of non-profit start-ups. Considering the significance of founders who have often birthed visions for organisations and ensured their vitality therefore, the Chapter concludes that putting together succession plans that have been thoroughly thought through is what is needed in helping make the organisations thrive. Despite its difficulty, succession plans as has been reiterated here ensure the short and long –term survival of organisations be they for –profit or non-profit. The Chapter also offers some good insights into what behavioural or attitudinal characteristics aid the successful transition of founders aside just the formal existence of succession plans.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in developing democracies in Africa may be restricted in their activities and the impact they make due to a host of challenges. These challenges include lack of popular support for CSOs' place in society, organisational inefficiencies, apathy, lack of access to funding, and in some cases government hostility or opposition. The challenges have led many to question the sustainability of civil society on the African continent culminating in a few research efforts many of which have focused on the financial and operational sustainability of the sector. The twin concepts of governance and leadership have an overarching impact on CSOs sustainability which is what this study sought to contribute to understanding.

The study examined the governance systems of selected non-profit organisations and their effectiveness in managing executive transitions in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Pursuant to its main objective, the study specifically examined the extent of institutionalisation of management structures and practices of good governance in the CSOs. It also assessed the effectiveness of existing systems and internal mechanisms for ensuring executive control and accountability in the organisations. It further explored how executive transitions and successions are managed in the organisations and examined the implications of the governance systems and practices and executive transitions for the sustainability of civil society organisations in Ghana.

The study was underpinned by two key (2) theories –the systems theory and the structuration theory. Towards its practical effectiveness, a conceptual model of CSO sustainability was developed to guide the research and the context of its discussions.

Considering the research context, the philosophical approach to the present study was pragmatism and the researcher sought to do what works in the context. The cross-sectional exploratory research design was adopted in which survey, in-depth interviews of key informants, FGD, and observation were employed as key data collection methods. Using a population of 1,686 organisations in the Greater Accra Region, a sample size of 323 was drawn from a list of organisations making up organised civil society in the Region for the quantitative bit of the study. The qualitative aspect used a sample of 30 participants constituting top managerial personnel and board members of the CS sector as well as experts (mainly academics and researchers and some state actors) in the sector. This was complemented by a nine (9) member focus group discussion and some field observations. In terms of sampling strategy, both probability and nonprobability sampling techniques were employed. The systematic random sampling technique and the purposive sampling techniques were utilised in the selection of the quantitative and qualitative samples respectively.

Analysis of the quantitative data was mainly descriptive with the assistance of the IBM SPSS Statistics, a data analysis software. Nvivo on the other hand was used to generate themes, nodes, and trees for a better appreciation and presentation of the qualitative data which were mainly audiotaped and transcribed. The two (2) datasets were then triangulated and

presented for discussion in a concurrent manner yielding as has been observed so far, some useful findings, a summary of which is presented here.

### **Summary of Key Findings**

The study discovered among other things that governance systems institutionalisation in the organisations is poor across the civil society sector. The sector was scored 1.7 out of a possible five (5) along seven (7) indicators by participants when asked to rate their organisations' performance in institutionalising key governance systems and structures.

In assessing the effectiveness of governance systems instituted by the organisations, a composite score of 2.3 was obtained across the various indicators which was less than satisfactory because it fell short of the average score of 2.5. The composite rate was generated as an average of boards' fiduciary responsibilities and oversight, self-governance, management systems as well as succession and succession planning as outlined in the conceptual framework of the study.

Quite curiously, the sector's performance in managing its transitions and institutionalising formal succession plans was poorly rated (1.7) as well. In many of the organisations, the study found no formal succession plans in place. It was the case with the survey supported by results from the key informant interviews and further affirmed by the FGD. While the sector's performance in the Region was generally low, it is worthy of note that in the institutionalisation of governance systems and their subsequent effectiveness, it mattered according to the study's findings with regards to whether organisations were individual, subscriber-based networks, local or international. Networks and international organisations are more likely to have



effective governance structures and systems than individual and local organisations with operations in-country.

Quite a few high profiled and low-key transitions have been recorded in the sector in the past few years with mixed results. While some have been successful, there are yet others that cannot be described as successful even though there appears to be some uneasy progress following the transition. The study found the transition practices in most organisations to be ineffective and lacking direction. Most of the practices and decisions therein were at the whims and caprices of executive directors and founders especially. There were also a few observed differences in how the transition is managed in individual organisations and networks or coalitions.

The study also uncovered some factors which serve as key threats to effective executive transitions in the CSOs. They include the lack of effective governance structures, apprehension over the legacy of exiting executives, fear of the unknown, livelihood challenges (bread and butter issues) as well as power and prestige.

In line with the study's conceptual underpinnings, the poor governance systems and particularly, ineffective management of executive transitions, were the major threats to the sustainability of organisations in the Region. Aside from the general governance ineffectiveness, the study found the lack of succession plans, transition roadmaps, and abrupt executive departures as key threats to the sector's sustainability. The organisations are generally not being effectively governed and the governing boards in most cases are either practically non-existent or weak and therefore unable to handle organisational risks, some of which are occasioned by executive turnovers.

Governance systems safeguard organisations from the deleterious effects of unplanned executive departures, but the present study found that ever so often, these systems are either not instituted or ineffective where they exist. Using governance as a dimension of sustainability therefore, it concludes that the sector's organisations are not sustainable along with the governance and leadership dimension. The sector faces a threat howbeit not from its external environment per the study results. The eminent threat emanates from the system's own lack of internal integrity rather than external control and influences.

### **Conclusions**

The study has established that organisational governance and leadership transitions are critical to the success of non-profit organisations in the Greater Accra Region. It also recognises that the type of organisation, size, and nature of operations can discriminate between the levels of governance performance in CSOs.

The findings point to a difficulty in drawing the lines between the two halves of the leadership core (the executive and the board) as proposed by the policy governance model because of the practical manifestations of managerial hegemony. The hegemonic situation created by the ineffectiveness of governing boards witnessed in this study poses a threat to the CSOs' sustainability.

Majority of CSOs demonstrate a lack of preparedness for leadership transitions and this could expose the institutions to organisational vulnerabilities. Also, the observed challenges with governance and leadership in the study affect organisations with dire ramifications for the larger social

system. The present findings stimulate further discussions about the roles of non-profit leaders and their governance responsibilities.

Previous analysis of civil society sustainability had sought to understand the phenomena generally without a focus on governance and leadership as a category (WACSI, 2015; USAID, 2018). Unlike these studies, the present study's concentration on governance and leadership as a defined category revealed precisely how the dimension contributes to the sustainability of CSOs. The research and its findings also differ from earlier emphasis on financial sustainability by Arhin (2016), Hailey and Salway (2016), Pratt (2016), WACSI (2015), and Arhin et al. (2018).

As a sustainability feature, findings on the effectiveness of governance in the present study, slightly differed from earlier estimates by WACSI (2015) and USAID (2018). The differences can be attributed to some variations in conceptualisations about the dimension of sustainability used in the three (3) studies. The present study, as was emphasised, did not include the legal and regulatory environment as measures of sustainability along the governance and leadership dimension. The factor was treated as remote in the present conceptualisation, which may have accounted for the differences in scores.

Findings on the strength of management systems, as compared to board fiduciary and oversight, confirm claims by Mckee and Froelich (2016) in the USA, and Gyimah-Boadi and Markovits (2008) in Ghana, that non-profit organisations often have strong executive agents as opposed to boards.

While agreeing largely with findings of earlier studies in the USA (Froelich et al., 2011), revelations about leadership transition practices in the present study yielded some differential outcomes. In the context of the Greater

Accra region, the practice of having multiple internal candidates compete for a vacant position during a transition (as found in Froelich et al., 2011) was a rare occurrence. Also, the present analysis revealed the importance of certain organisational characteristics (i.e. type of CSO – whether individual or network) for transition practices. Present findings regarding the practice of succession in individual CSOs and networks differ remarkably from Froelich et al. (2011) and Mckee and Froelich (2016), as those studies did not relate their findings to the types of organisations.

This study, like others from the global north (Mckee & Froelich, 2016; VonBergen, 2007; Santora et al., 2013; Froelich et al., 2011), show that the majority of non-profits are not doing much towards succession planning and preparation for executive successions. The absence of formal succession plans in the majority of CSOs studied confirms earlier results by Santora and Sarros (2001), Santora et al. (2011), Carmen et al. (2010), and Froelich et al. (2011).

In the true sense of governance, the same officer cannot play the role of the executive and the board or council. However, this was the stark reality in some CSOs studied. Sequel to this challenge, majority of CSOs demonstrate a lack of preparedness for leadership transitions in all sizes of organisations. To deal with this challenge, all organisational actors especially founders and board members should recognise that transitions are facts of organisational life that must be seen and approached as part of the normal development an organisation goes through. While admitting that founders are special in their commitment to the success of organisations they found, it must be equally accepted and appreciated that one man's effort is never going to be enough in ensuring the sustainability of any organisation, let alone, a non-profit one.

The present study unravelled some pertinent issues regarding governance practices in CSOs and has drawn attention to the importance of good governance practices for their sustainability. The proffered measures in the next section could help strengthen the ability of CSOs to monitor the allocation of internal and external resources for a thriving third sector. They encourage inclusivity and balanced decision making within CSOs. The discussion is therefore hoped to arouse further engagements on executive and founder transitions, with the hope to find a lasting cure for the ‘founder’s syndrome’ and its associated devilry in the non-profit sector. The study is also expected to serve as a baseline for much broader studies on CSO governance, accountability, organisational effectiveness, and leadership transitions throughout Ghana and beyond. The researcher hopes that the study’s findings and discussions serve to be a good resource to practitioners and academics who are interested in CSO governance and sustainability in Africa.

### **Strengthening Governance and Executive Transitions in CSOs: Some Key Recommendations**

One fundamental challenge that CSOs face, at least, from the perspective of their critics, has been the lack of effective governance systems and internal democracy. This challenge can be traced to the regulatory framework for CSOs. In Ghana, the sector is regulated in much the same way as for-profit companies under the company’s code and registered as companies limited by guarantee. The one difference found is that CSOs do not have shares and do not distribute their profit if they ever made profit. The regime for managing their directors, removing their directors, and for appointing their directors is all managed by the company’s code (1963, Act 179). These non-

profit organisations operate within this strange amorphous milieu where all the other companies, limited by shares and for-profit, operate. It is therefore not surprising that we find the governance systems of many of these CSOs correspondingly compromised. Even as we call for democratic processes in CSOs, we must not forget that the company's code which also guides CSOs is not a democratic regime.

Companies are controlled by their owners, those who own the shares but there are no shares in the registration of NGOs. And the next most important set of people are the directors (Companies Act, 1963, Act 179). In Ghana, and many other places, most directors are either related by family, friendship, or strong business ties (McKee & Driscoll, 2008). In the case of CSOs, the directors are people who seem to share a certain vision. Therefore, there is a disjoint between what binds directors in for-profit companies and what is supposed to bind directors in CSOs, and yet they are directed by the same regime. Hence, the first step to ensuring effective governance of the civil society sector in Ghana is to reconsider the regulatory framework or regime within which these organisations operate. This is not to call for gagging of CSOs by the state as is the present attempt in Nigeria. After several years of democratic rule, many commentators have described the strenuous attempts by Nigeria's House of Representatives to set up a Federal agency to regulate the activities of NGOs as a blow to the civil liberties of the Nigerian people. This is because of the content of the Bill and what it seeks to achieve. What is being proposed for Ghana in the present study is to come out with a regime different from the companies code, which will take into consideration the peculiar challenges that confront the non-profit sector.



While civil society regulation has been fought by many practitioners, there are cases where there can be positive regulation. Most broadly, regulation could mean a ‘form of behavioural control, whatever the origin’ (Hansmann, 1987). In another context, legal, for example, could be used to refer to ‘the realm of legislation, governance, and social control’ (Ogus, 1994). In the academic field, the regulation comes with a rather narrower definition as recognised by Garton (2009). The concept has often received attention from law and economics. It is described as the ‘sustained and focused control exercised by a public agency over activities that are valued by a community’ (Garton, 2009, p.4 -5). Such a sustained and focused control will be expected to among other things, direct or encourage behaviour which (according to the present study) may not occur without such an intervention; and by so doing correct the real and perceived deficiencies in the system in meeting the collective or public interest goals.

As has been mentioned earlier in this thesis, there are successes of self-regulation in other jurisdictions. That notwithstanding, the kind of regulation suggested in this study will serve to streamline the structure and governance of organised civil society. This is expected to correct the existing deficiencies of the sector towards the maximisation of the sector’s benefits to society.

Consistent with the above efforts, this study calls for a shift of non-profit organisations from the company’s code towards the establishment of a different regime for their governance. In that regime, certain things can be determined or better clarified there. First and most important is the calibre of people who should sit on the governing boards. Every non-profit organisation must have a governing board and the legal regime should provide for the

calibre of people who can sit on that board. Second, provide for their functions, their responsibilities, and then their benefits. Then establish that every NPO must have an executive agent – however, the organisation chooses to call the agent. The occupant of this office should be appointed by the board who sees to the management of affairs. Also, the regime must ensure that every NPO has its vision and mission spelled out and made to stay true to its mission. In this scheme, there must be a deliberate attempt to reduce the powers of the executive and the leadership role of the board emphasised.

There are many responsibilities of the boards of non-profit organisations. Key among these is the selection of an executive director or CEO. This has been proven over the years because even though it seldom happens, whenever it happens that a new executive director is to be selected, it becomes number one on the board's agenda. This is partly informed by the available evidence of the outcomes of poor hires in the sector (Golensky, 2005). The process of selecting a chief executive is so important and must remain on the front burner of every non-profit governing board. Where there is a need, professional help should be sought. However, one other strategy affirmed in the non-profit literature is the setting up of a small committee of a cross-section of board members (Weisman & Goldbaum, 2004; Golensky, 2005). This small committee oversees the process until the point where selection is to be made of the new executive director. It is at this point that the full strength of the board is brought to bear on the hiring process. This is also important because if a hire is to be made at this point, then the benefits of the position must be determined by the whole board and not just a subcommittee.

For there to be effective executive and most importantly founder transitions, founders and long serving executives must themselves appreciate the need to transit and the associated dividends of doing it right. It is about time founders (in particular) recognised that sometimes all their organisations need is a leadership transition if it is to be a sustainable organisation.

Boards of CSOs must embrace their role as custodians of non-profits and rise to the occasion when their role is most required. As has been emphasised in this report, managing an executive transition is a board function and so boards of non-governmental entities must be seen playing their functional role. Exercising institutional leadership for an organisation going through a transition is the best any board can do for its organisation. This again has a lot to do with the constitution of the governing boards.

Organisations should by themselves eschew the habit of assembling friends and family when constituting their boards. The purpose and key roles of board members must also be clearly spelt out to them. As has been emphasised time and again, boards do not exist in nature, human beings create them, and they only become what humans create them to be.

Most often, the organisations are themselves not ready for these changes that they go through. It has been one of the reasons if not the main reason for the demise of many organisations after the departure of their founders and long-serving directors. Organisations should generally be prepared for changes and succession plans should be taken seriously if the non-profit sector is to survive and thrive. The argument has often been advanced that founders of organisations make a lot of sacrifices and investments for their organisation than their followers. That is true most of the

time. However, while one can appreciate that founders make a lot of intellectual, emotional and if you like, material investments in the organisations they have founded, we need to understand that the founder is not the only person to be destabilised by a transition. It is the whole organisation that goes through the kilning process and so every part of the organisation must be readied for the big change. A ready organisation is also able to carry other stakeholders like donors and beneficiaries along during a transition. One of the things that starve organisations to death after their founders is the fact that CSO funding sources can really be a personalised field. That is to say some donors and funding sources are attached to the personalities of founders and long serving executive directors and so a failure to plan and involve all stakeholders to appreciate the changes will mean a huge fall in revenue and support for the organisation's activities.

The other issue which often has great implications for post succession failures and successes has to do with organisations' ability to benefit from the wealth of knowledge and institutional memories of their exiting key staff, executive directors, and founders. Often, there is no deliberate plan in place to retain the knowledge and institutional memories of exiting executives. It is recommended that organisations make exit interviews a conscious and necessary part of every transition. This will serve as an opportunity to get closure for exiting executives while building a knowledge base from which successors can benefit in determining the new direction of the organisation. The practice can also serve as one of the unique opportunities of paying homage to the legacy of founders and other remarkable executive directors.

One economic viewpoint worthy of note in strengthening founder transitions is the case of compensation. The problem of livelihood or financial insecurity as has been mentioned in this study cannot be ignored if we are to have effective leadership transitions. Many founders have been irritated by the subject of transitions and succession planning primarily because they have not been compensated enough. We cannot lose sight of the fact that organisations start out small and in their teething stages, founders tend to earn little as compensation for their time and service to the organisation. It therefore becomes difficult for them to plan a befitting retirement because in some cases, they only just started earning something meaningful. There should therefore be a proper consideration of compensation of founders during a transition if we are to start experiencing healthy founder transitions.

Sociologically also, founders and long serving executive directors should be coached in the best way to create a balance between their professional lives and social lives. Most often than not, founders and some executive directors become so attached to their organisations and the vision they pursue to the neglect of their family relationships and social networks. In the end, only their identity as founders or leaders of those organisations gives them social connection. When this happens, it becomes very difficult to accept the reality when it finally dawns on this individual that s/he must stand somewhat detached from the only social environment s/he has. It is the responsibility of the community of people interested in a thriving third sector to help founders prepare for their transition and the sociology of it cannot in any way be ignored. Founders should be taught to have 'a life beyond their organisations'.

Also, as emphasised in the church's example presented above, there should be a conscious attempt at making the best hire of a successor. How prepared a successor is could determine whether the organisation will be sustainable or not. In this respect, post-hire executive coaching is a good initiative that must be utilised. Also, succession plans should include efforts at introducing new executive directors to their peers for some peer mentoring and networking in their new careers. This can be perfectly executed if organisations would make post succession plans an important part of the succession planning process.

Many of the challenges of the sector are due to lack of regulation. Even though this thesis has mentioned "regulation" and the "regulator" a couple of times, in all honesty, the civil society and the non-profit sector generally is not regulated in Ghana. The company's code only ensures their registration and gives the organisations legal identity to operate, which is why self-regulation is key in this sector. There is abundant evidence on the African continent to the effect that it is dangerous to leave governments alone to regulate the sector when sometimes they do not understand the mechanics and the historical evolution of civil society. It is recommended that civil society must show how the sector should be regulated, it is sufficiently clear that civil society cannot run away from regulation anymore, mainly because of terrorists and anti-terrorist activities. Due to trends of terrorist financing and anti-money laundering efforts, civil society regulation is coming whether civil societies like it or not. This is because these organisations are thought to be easy conduits for money being channelled to terrorists.



Getting the non-profit sector to thrive therefore should be approached collectively and dispassionately. All the above recommendations may not lead to the success of the sector in the absence of vision carriers and people with passion on the boards of non-profits. While this is not in doubt, what the sector in Ghana needs is a proper balance of passion with professionalism. An organisation is as good as its board but as it is now, what we have in Ghana are organisations that are as good as their executive directors. Many of the organisations in the sector are lopsided which is not sustainable and there is the need therefore to approach this problem head-on. And mind you, field experience during this research leaves no doubt in my mind that the effort at solving the problems of civil society should not be left to state actors or regulators to decide. Civil society must be allowed to lead its change.

In summary, the recommendations being proffered are that:

1. The regulatory framework or regime within which civil society organisations operate should be reconsidered if we are to ensure effective governance of organisations in the civil society sector in Ghana. This should include the outing of non-profit organisations from the companies' code and putting them under a more democratic regime.
2. The Ghanaian public should be sensitised by the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) on what it means to accept to serve (and actually serve) on as a board member of an organisation (be it for-profit or non-profit). This education should be thorough about the meaning of the stewardship of non-profit board members and their attendant legal liabilities.

3. Organisations should by themselves eschew the habit of assembling friends and family when constituting their boards. Also, the purpose and key roles of board members must be clearly spelt out to them through extensive orientation programmes.
4. The process of selecting a chief executive is so important and must, therefore, remain on the front burner of every non-profit governing board. This should never be made an executive function and that fact should be made clear to all organisational actors.
5. Organisations should be prepared for changes that accompany executive transitions and formal succession plans should be developed and taken seriously if the non-profit sector is to survive and thrive. In succession planning, the post succession period should be given serious consideration and should include the introduction of new executive directors to their peers for some peer mentoring and networking.
6. There should be a deliberate plan in place in all non-profit organisations to retain the knowledge and institutional memories of exiting executives and board members. Organisations should make exit interviews a conscious and necessary part of every transition. This will serve as an opportunity to get closure for exiting executives and pay homage to the legacy of founders and remarkable directors, while building a knowledge base from which successors can benefit in determining the new direction of the organisation.
7. Non-profit organisations should properly consider exit compensations of founders as an important part of the transition arrangements.

8. Founders and long-serving executive directors should be coached in the best ways to create a balance between their professional lives and social lives, if we are to start experiencing healthy transitions in the sector.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

The present findings help our understanding of governance and transitions in the Ghanaian non-profit sector. It is the first study in this context to assess governance and leadership as a defined category in the sustainability discourse. While the sector was in itself interested in the subject of sustainability, the knowledge that existed pertaining to CSO sustainability had been driven by the social exigencies of the sector—finances – thereby jettisoning an intellectual and fuller engagement of the phenomenon. The present study's findings critique that approach to understanding human processes and offers new pathways of analysing institutional phenomena.

The study proposes, based on the present findings, a revised model for analysing the specific relationship between governance, transition practices, and organisational sustainability (Figure 5). The conceptual model in assessing governance, executive transitions, and sustainability, emphasises the independent variable of organisational characteristics, and how they influence leadership and vice versa. The model further enables the analysis of the combined effect of these characteristics on governance, transitions, and sustainability.

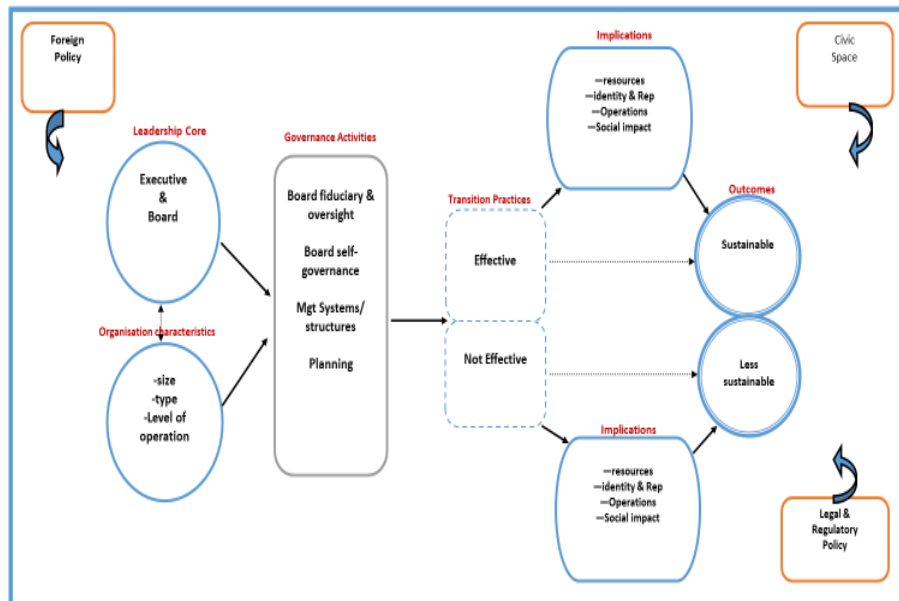


Figure 5: Proposed conceptual model for analysing the effects of governance and leadership transitions on CSO sustainability

Source: Author's construct based on Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)

As can be seen in Figure 5, in the analysis of these factors and how they affect sustainability, the remote factors of foreign policy, the civic space, the legal and regulatory policy, as outlined in Vandyck (2017), are maintained. Uniquely, the proposed framework, makes it possible to analyse the effect of governance as a category on transition practices. It provides an analytical basis for tracing the course of governance, through leadership transitions, and its effects on sustainability with clearly delineated variables.

The study's revelations on the governance institutionalisation and effectiveness of the two (2) organisational types (namely, individual and networks) introduce an important variable into the discourse of institutional typologies, particularly knowing that this knowledge does not exist in the Ghanaian organisational context.

The discussions on executive transitions and, the state of succession planning in the non-profit sector is novel and will seek to guide new frontiers of research efforts in this all-important planning function. Regarding founder transitions and the founder syndrome, the study makes an important contribution to knowledge by providing insight into the phenomenon. It also offers practical approaches to mitigating the long-standing effects of founder syndrome.

Finally, the study's combination of both structural and interpretative traditions in studying these organisational contexts enhances the appreciation of institutional processes as opposed to the many structural observations of organisations.

#### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Quite clearly, the study makes a key contribution to the debate surrounding the sustainability of non-profit organisations with a focus on governance and executive succession practices. While the findings have both practical and theoretical implications for the CS sector as discussed above, the recommendations are concluded here with some suggestions for future research. First, the study recommends research into the implications of organisations' governance practices for organisational effectiveness in the Ghanaian context. It would be insightful to know the organisational effectiveness of CSOs and which part of that matrix would be informed by their governance practices.

Secondly, further research into the demise of civil society organisations in the country and the real reasons behind their closure would be invaluable. Such studies could also look at organisations which have

undergone (or are undergoing) planned closures and how this rare process is handled with attention to the rights, benefits, roles, and responsibilities of the various stakeholders in the process. A further study of the centre–periphery relationship existing between big and small CSOs could be explored to understand the kinds of resources exchanged within these contexts of relationships.





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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### BACKGROUND AND CONSENT FORM

I am Solomon Kofi Amoah, a PhD Candidate at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Cape Coast. I am collecting data on “Governance and Executive Transitions in Civil Society organisations in Ghana” for my PhD research thesis. I would like to seek your thoughts by asking you a few questions on governance systems and executive transition practices in CSOs and your organisation. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may at any point decide to withdraw from this exercise if you find it necessary. While your participation is voluntary, I believe your responses and inputs would be invaluable in my quest to appreciate governance and executive transitions in CSOs in Ghana.

I assure you that your responses on these matters will remain confidential as they will only aid my analysis of the subject of interest. Your responses will not be provided to anyone for any other use whatsoever. Do not feel obligated to answer any question(s) that you are not comfortable with. Beyond this, if you have any questions or wish to provide (or be provided with) any further clarifications on the subject of the research, you may contact me on **0552479083** or by Email: [samoahamani@gmail.com](mailto:samoahamani@gmail.com) or any of my supervisors via [wib981@gmail.com](mailto:wib981@gmail.com) (Dr. William Boateng) and [safranie@ug.edu.gh](mailto:safranie@ug.edu.gh) (Dr. Stephen Afranie).

### Consent

"I have read or have had someone read all of the above regarding participation in this research to me, and I am willing to give my consent to participate in the study. I have however not waived any of my rights as a research participant by signing this consent form."

\_\_\_\_\_  
Initials of participant

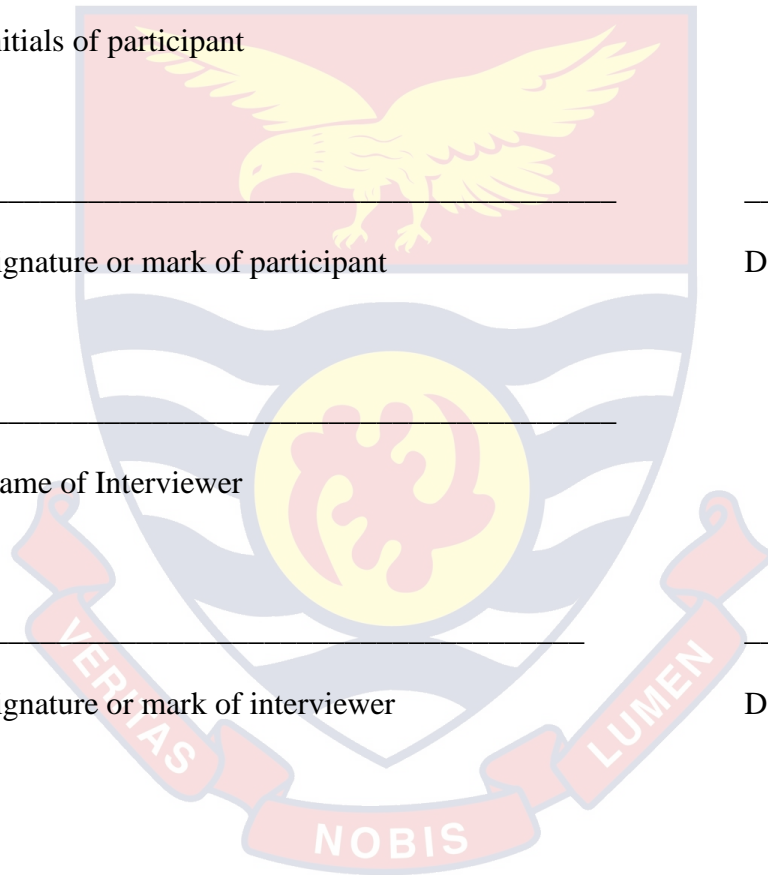
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature or mark of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Name of Interviewer

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Signature or mark of interviewer

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Date



## APPENDIX B

### RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

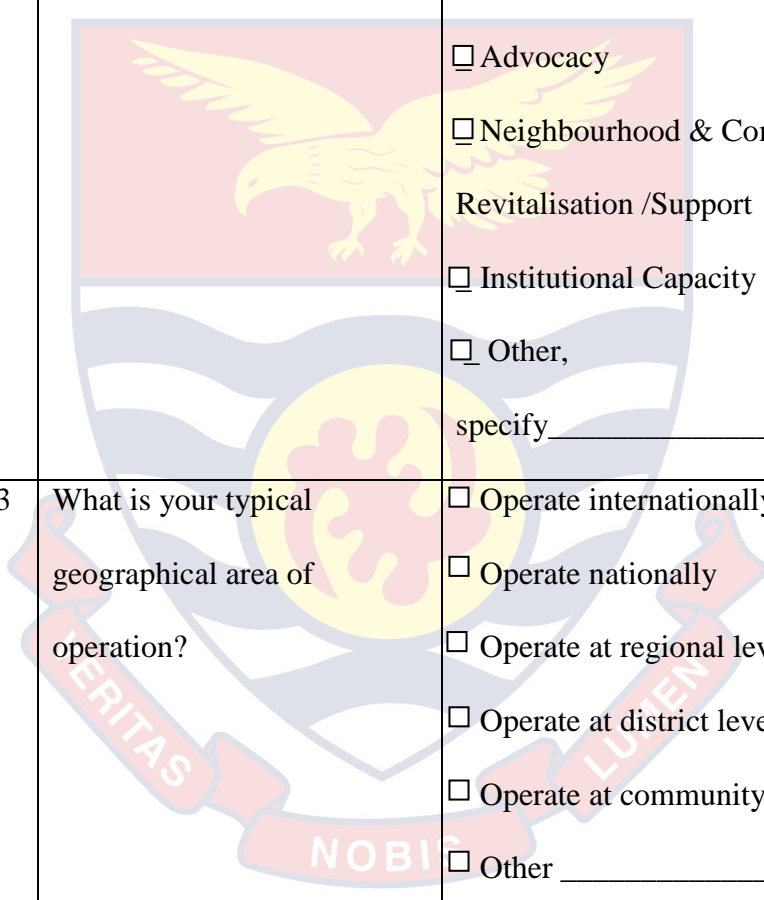
As part of your commitment to helping to make the CSO sector better and future facing, contribute your thoughts, experiences and opinions on the issues raised in this questionnaire as sincerely as possible. Be assured that this data/information would only be used statistically for academic purposes. Do not indicate your name on this questionnaire. All further questions/ enquiries can be addressed to the Researcher- Solomon Kofi Amoah on 0552479083 and [samoahamani@gmail.com](mailto:samoahamani@gmail.com) or any of his supervisors via [wib981@gmail.com](mailto:wib981@gmail.com) and [safranier@ug.edu.gh](mailto:safranier@ug.edu.gh). Thank you in advance for taking out time to be part of this survey.

**Instructions for filling out the questionnaire:** Tick or circle the response that closely corresponds to your answer or write your response where spaces are provided.

#### A. ORGANISATION TYPE, SIZE AND REACH

sn	Item	Responses
A1	Type of organisation:	<input type="checkbox"/> Local/ National Network/ Alliance <input type="checkbox"/> Individual local/National CSO <input type="checkbox"/> International Network/ Alliance <input type="checkbox"/> Individual International organisation <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Group



		<input type="checkbox"/> Other, specify <hr/>
A2	<p>Considering the thematic area of work, which of the following best describes what your organisation does?</p> 	<input type="checkbox"/> Human services <input type="checkbox"/> Health and Health related <input type="checkbox"/> Arts, Culture or recreation <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Youth development <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy <input type="checkbox"/> Neighbourhood & Community Revitalisation /Support <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional Capacity Dev. & Support <input type="checkbox"/> Other, specify <hr/>
A3	<p>What is your typical geographical area of operation?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Operate internationally <input type="checkbox"/> Operate nationally <input type="checkbox"/> Operate at regional level <input type="checkbox"/> Operate at district level <input type="checkbox"/> Operate at community level <input type="checkbox"/> Other <hr/>
A4	<p>For how long has the organisation been in operation?</p>	<hr/>
A5	<p>Estimated population/number of People</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 499 or fewer people <input type="checkbox"/> 500 – 999 people <input type="checkbox"/>

	reached/ served by your organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> 1,000 – 9,999 people <input type="checkbox"/> 10,000 – 49,000 people <input type="checkbox"/> 50,000 – 100,000 people <input type="checkbox"/> More than 100,000 people
A6	Estimated annual operating budget of your organisation:	<input type="checkbox"/> GHS 1 – GHS 49,999 <input type="checkbox"/> GHS 50 – GHS 99,999 <input type="checkbox"/> GHS 100,000 – GHS 149,000 <input type="checkbox"/> GHS 150,000 – GHS 199,999 <input type="checkbox"/> GHS 200,000 – GHS 249,999 <input type="checkbox"/> GHS 250,000 – GHS 299,999 <input type="checkbox"/> GHS 300,000 – GHS 349,999 <input type="checkbox"/> GHS 350,000 – GHS 399,999 <input type="checkbox"/> GHS 400,000 – GHS 449,999 <input type="checkbox"/> GHS 450,000 – GHS 499,999 <input type="checkbox"/> GHS 500,000 – GHS 1,000,000 <input type="checkbox"/> GHS 1,000,000 – GHS 1,500,000 <input type="checkbox"/> GHS 1,500,000 +
A7	Staff strength:	<input type="checkbox"/> fewer than 5 paid staff <input type="checkbox"/> 6 – 10 paid staff <input type="checkbox"/> 11 – 20 paid staff <input type="checkbox"/> 21 – 30 paid staff <input type="checkbox"/> 31 – 40 paid staff <input type="checkbox"/> 41 – 50 paid staff <input type="checkbox"/> 51 or more paid staff
A8	Which of the following is	<input type="checkbox"/> individual donations

	the best description of the organisation's major source of funding?	<input type="checkbox"/> international donors and foundations <input type="checkbox"/> government agencies <input type="checkbox"/> corporations and private businesses <input type="checkbox"/> other, specify _____
A9	Is there someone who acts in the absence of the executive director of your organisation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
A9i	If yes, what is the designation of this person(s)?	_____

**B. INSTITUTIONALISATION OF GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS**

On a scale of **0 (lowest) – 5 (highest)**, how would you rate the performance of CSOs in Ghana in institutionalizing the following:

sn	Item	Response/ scale					
		0	1	2	3	4	5
B1	Structures and systems that specify accountability.						
B2	Internal conflict of interest rules.						
B3	Clear operational structures and policies.						
B4	Financial management systems.						

B5	Clear governance structure in terms of the role of the board.	0	1	2	3	4	5
B6	Clear separation of board from management functions.	0	1	2	3	4	5
B7	Clear leadership succession plans.	0	1	2	3	4	5

**C. TURNOVER AND SUCCESSION PRACTICES**

sn	Item	Responses
C1	To what extent are you concerned about turnover at the executive level of CSOs in Ghana?	<input type="checkbox"/> not concerned <input type="checkbox"/> a little concerned <input type="checkbox"/> concerned <input type="checkbox"/> very concerned
C2	Explain_	_____
C3	How many executive directors has your organisation had in the past 10 years?	_____
C4	How long has the present executive director served as the executive director of the organisation?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 – 5 years <input type="checkbox"/> 6 – 10 years <input type="checkbox"/> 11 – 20 years <input type="checkbox"/> 21 years +
C5	Does your organisation have tenure for its executive	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

	head/director?	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
C6	If yes, what is the tenure?	_____
C7	Has executive transition/succession been an important discussion/conversation at your organisation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
C8	To what extent is your organisation engaged in succession planning?	<input type="checkbox"/> A great extent <input type="checkbox"/> Some extent <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat <input type="checkbox"/> Not really <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all
C9	Is it documented as to who would take over from the present executive director in his/her absence?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
C10	Does the organisation have a roadmap on how to handle the resignation or retirement of the executive director?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
C11	Briefly describe what such an	_____

	existing plan says about the turnover or departure of an executive director.	
--	--	--

### GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS

**D1.** On a scale of **0 (lowest)** – **5 (highest)**, how would you rate the Board’s performance in the following roles and responsibilities in your organisation:

sn.	Item	Responses					
		0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>i.</b>	Determining the mission and purpose of the organisation.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>ii.</b>	The selection of new executive director.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>iii.</b>	Supporting and evaluating the performance of the executive director.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>iv.</b>	Managing the compensation of the executive/management.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>v.</b>	Monitoring and strengthening the programmes and services of the organisation.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>vi.</b>	Ensuring adequate financial resource mobilization.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>vii.</b>	Providing financial oversight.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>viii.</b>	Ensuring effective planning for executive succession.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>ix.</b>	Managing its own activities as a board.	0	1	2	3	4	5



Using the scale: **Agree Strongly (5); Agree (4); Agree Somewhat (3);**

**Disagree Somewhat (2); Disagree (1); Disagree Strongly (0)**, indicate your agreement or otherwise with the following statements by ticking or circling the corresponding rate/ number:

sn	Item	Responses					
<b>Board Fiduciary &amp; Oversight</b>							
<b>D2</b>	My organisation has a planned orientation programme for its board members.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>D3</b>	The orientation adequately prepares board members to fulfil their governance responsibilities.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>D4</b>	The board is actively involved in planning the direction and priorities of the organisation.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>D5</b>	The board does a good job of evaluating the performance of the ED/CEO ( <i>Measuring results against objectives</i> ).	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>D6</b>	This organisation is financially viable and stable	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>D7</b>	The board members demonstrate clear understanding of their own roles and those of the ED/CEO.	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>D8</b>	The organisation's resources are used efficiently ( <i>good value for money spent</i> ).	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>D9</b>	The board has high credibility with key						

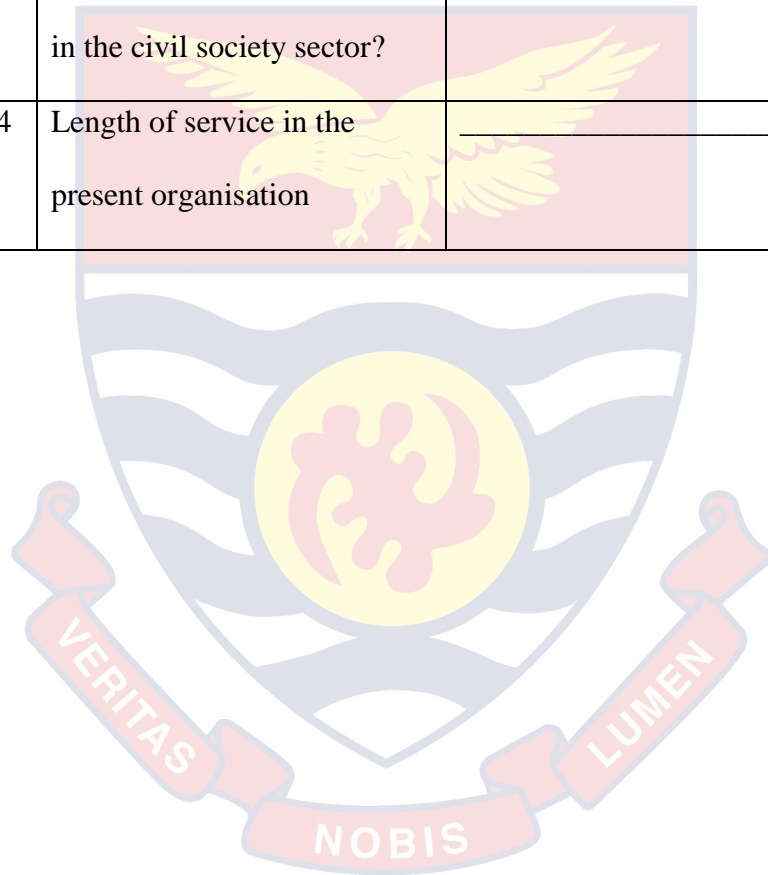
	stakeholders ( <i>e.g., funders, donors, consumers, collateral organisations or professionals, community, staff</i> ).	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>D10</b>	Board members demonstrate commitment to this organisation's mission and values.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Self –governance of the BOD</b>							
<b>D11</b>	Board members comply with requirements outlined in key elements of the governance structure ( <i>bylaws, policies, code of conduct, conflict of interest, traditional/cultural norms, etc.</i> ).	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>D12</b>	The board's capacity to govern effectively is not impaired by conflicts between members.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>D13</b>	There is a productive working relationship between the board and the ED/CEO ( <i>characterized by good communication and mutual respect</i> ).	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>D14</b>	I am confident that the board would effectively manage any organisational crisis that could be reasonably anticipated.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>D15</b>	Board meetings are always held according to schedule.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>D16</b>	Board meetings are well-managed.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>D17</b>	The board uses sound decision-making processes						

	<i>(focused on board responsibilities, factual information, efficient use of time, items not frequently revisited, effective implementation).</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Management Systems/Processes</b>							
<b>D18</b>	This organisation has a good balance between organisational stability and innovation.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>D19</b>	There is the application of standard and transparent management processes.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>D20</b>	There is a management structure in charge of ensuring a transparent decision making process.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>D21</b>	Members and volunteers actively take part in the decision making process.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>D22</b>	The organisation is using available resources effectively and in line with original objectives.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Succession Planning</b>							
<b>D23</b>	My organisation plans effectively for succession.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>D24</b>	There is a clear roadmap to be followed for the selection of new executive director.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>D25</b>	The organisation has clear leadership succession plans for its executive and board members.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>D26</b>	The board performs well in the selection of new executive directors.	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>D27</b>	The board would be able to handle any organisational crisis that would be occasioned by	0	1	2	3	4	5

	an execution transition.						
D28	Succession planning is (or needs to be) one of the board's core responsibilities.	0	1	2	3	4	5
D29	Responsibility for executive succession planning rests with the governing board.	0	1	2	3	4	5
D30	There is the need for increased board development and training on succession planning.	0	1	2	3	4	5
D31	If a new executive director is to be selected, I would prefer an external candidate to an internal candidate.	0	1	2	3	4	5
D32	I do not mind being considered for executive director position of a CSO in the near future.	0	1	2	3	4	5
D33	Executive succession and how it is handled does threaten the survival of an organisation.	0	1	2	3	4	5
D34	Changes in the executive leadership or the lack of it in some CSOs threatens the survival of the organisations.	0	1	2	3	4	5
D34i	Share a few comments based on your experiences in the sector (in relation to C18 above).	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>					

**D. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

sn	Item	Responses
E1	Name of organisation	_____
E2	Job role /position of respondent:	_____
E3	How long have you worked in the civil society sector?	_____
E4	Length of service in the present organisation	_____



## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PRACTITIONERS

#### 1. In what ways are management and governance structures institutionalised in the organisation?

- A governance issue for CSOs seems to be accountability. How does your organisation define accountability?
- To whom or what would you say your organisation is most accountable and why?
- What strategies or activities does your organisation use to strengthen its accountability?
  - What governance institutions, systems and structures exist in the organisation?
  - How is control and accountability handled in the organisation?
- By what regulation is your organisation governed?
- If your organisation has a Board of Directors (BOD), how was the BOD constituted?
  - Any subsidiary documents on the activities of the BOD?
  - Do any members of the organisation sit on the BOD and in what capacity?
  - How would you describe the performance of the current BOD?

#### 2. How are executive transition and succession managed in the organisation?

\*If the organisation has gone through a transition: how was it done? What were some of the challenges and how were they managed?



- What is (*or should be*) the head of the organisation's role in managing a leadership transition?
- What is (*or should be*) the Board's role in managing a leadership transition?
- Implications of succession planning for Civil Society sustainability.
- The most effective approaches to institutionalizing succession planning within CSOs in Ghana? What works and what does not work?
- What needs to be done to strengthen leadership transitions within civil society in Ghana?

**3. What implications in your view do executive transitions have for the sustainability of the non-profit sector?**

- Ask participants to share personal observations and experiences.

**4. How can the governance processes and leadership transition processes in CSOs be strengthened? [Some *recommendations*]**

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR NON- PRACTITIONER (EXPERT INTERVIEWS)

#### 1. In what ways are management and governance structures institutionalised in civil society organisations?

- A governance issue for CSOs seems to be accountability. How would describe accountability of CSOs in Ghana?
- To whom or what would you say these organisations are most accountable and why?
- Would you say CSOs in Ghana are doing enough to strengthen their accountability?
  - What governance institutions, systems and structures exist in the organisation?
  - How is control and accountability handled in the organisation?
- Share your thoughts on the constitution and efficiency of Boards of CSOs in Ghana with me.

#### 2. The management of executive transition and successions.

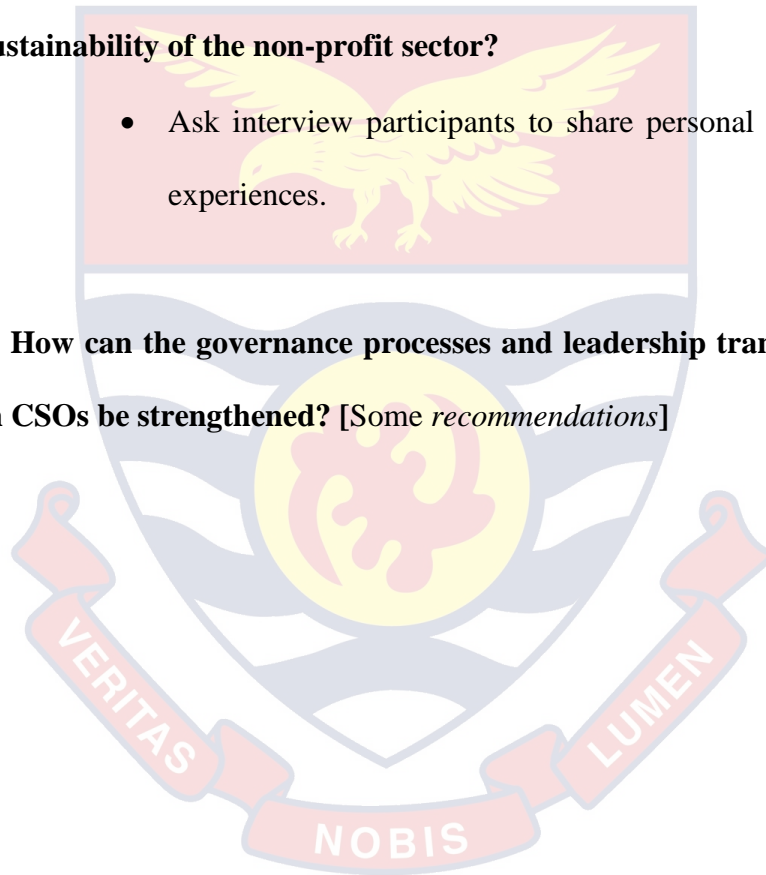
- What in your view should *should be* the head of an organisation's role in managing a leadership transition?
- What in your view should *should* the Board's role in managing a leadership transition?
- Implications of succession planning for Civil Society sustainability.

- What are the most effective approaches to institutionalizing succession planning within CSOs? What works and what does not work?
- What do you suggest should be done to strengthen leadership transitions within civil society in Ghana?

**3. What implications in your view do executive transitions have for the sustainability of the non-profit sector?**

- Ask interview participants to share personal observations and experiences.

**4. How can the governance processes and leadership transition processes in CSOs be strengthened? [Some *recommendations*]**



## APPENDIX E

### FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

#### 1. Governance structures, systems, and processes of Civil Society organisations.

- Unpacking the present situation compared to best practices.
- How do CSO leaders handle inputs of so-called subject -matter experts?
- The factors that facilitate institutionalisation of effective governance structures and systems within civil society?

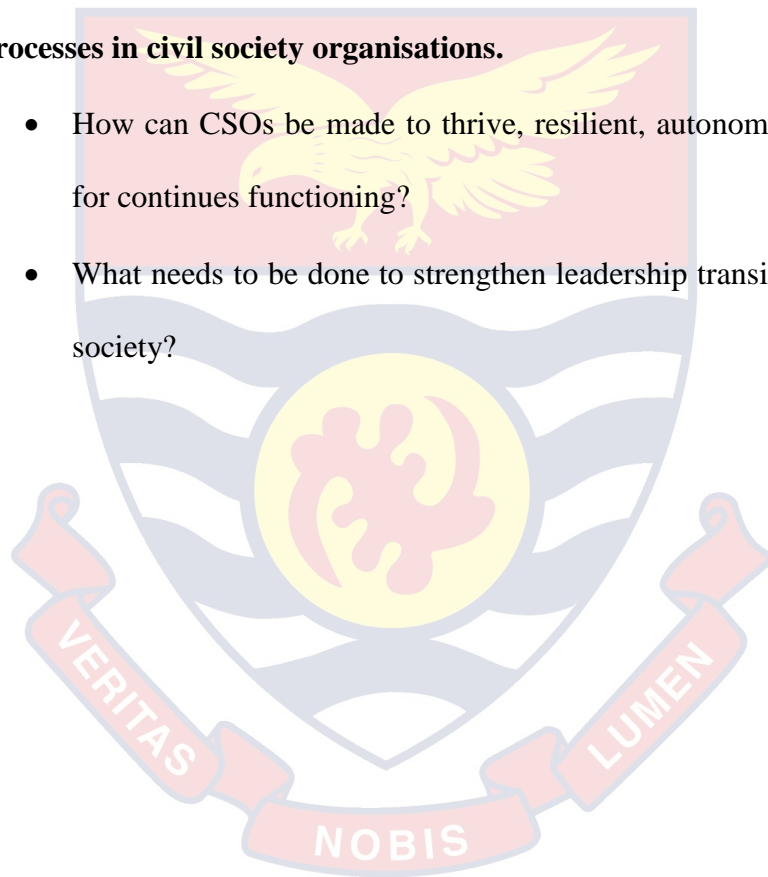
#### 2. State of Leadership Transitions and Succession Planning.

- Find out whether executive transition is being discussed at the organisations and what the nature of the discussion has been.
- Discuss common practices in the hiring of executive directors of the sector.
  - Are executive search firms (external resources) used when recruiting executive directors?
- The most effective approaches to institutionalizing succession planning within CSOs in Ghana.
  - What has worked?
  - What has not worked?
- What is (*or should be*) the board's role in managing a leadership transition?
- What is (*or should be*) the head of the organisation's role in managing a leadership transition?

- A lot of businesses (family businesses in particular) are led by the founders until they die.
  - Are the attitudes of CSO founders particular to CSOs or it is an organisation issue?
- Implications of succession planning for CSOs sustainability.

### **3. Strengthening governance processes and leadership transition processes in civil society organisations.**

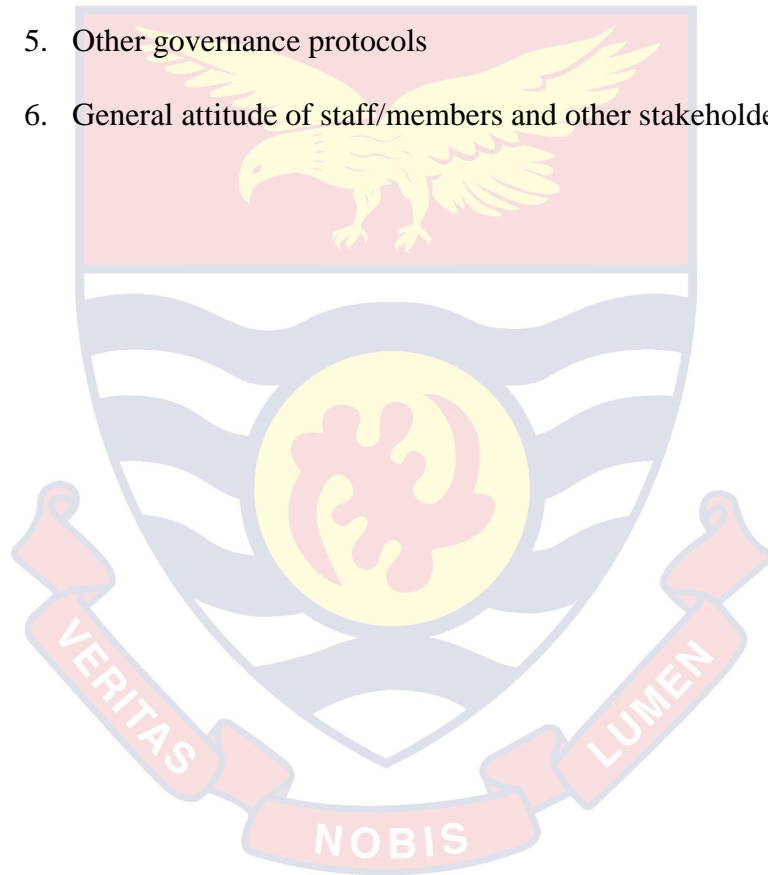
- How can CSOs be made to thrive, resilient, autonomous, independent for continues functioning?
- What needs to be done to strengthen leadership transitions within civil society?



## APPENDIX F

### OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

1. Meetings of board of directors & general conduct of the board
2. The availability of strategic plans
3. Existence of constitutions and succession plans
4. Leadership styles of executive directors and particularly, founding managers
5. Other governance protocols
6. General attitude of staff/members and other stakeholders





APPENDIX G

TABLES

Table 15: Organisational characteristics: Estimated annual budget, staff strength and population reached

	Organizational Type				Total
	Organizational Type		Type		
	Local	International	Individual	Network	
<b><u>Estimated Population</u></b>					
Less than 50,000	25 20.0%	3 13.0%	19 15.0%	9 42.9%	28 18.9%
50,000-100,000	57 45.6%	13 56.5%	59 46.5%	11 52.4%	70 47.3%
More than 100,000	43 34.4%	7 30.4%	49 38.6%	1 4.8%	50 33.8%
<b>Total</b>	125 100.0%	23 100.0%	127 100.0%	21 100.0%	148 100.0%
	$\chi^2$ statistic = 1.07, df (2), p value =0.58>0.05		$\chi^2$ statistic = 13.65, df (2), p value =0.001<0.05		
<b><u>Estimated Annual Operating budget</u></b>					
Less than 100,000 GHs	48 38.4%	3 13.0%	32 25.2%	19 90.5%	51 34.5%
GHs100,000-349,999	34 27.2%	0 0.0%	34 26.8%	0 0.0%	34 23.0%
GHs350,000 - 1,500,000	27 21.6%	0 0.0%	27 21.3%	0 0.0%	27 18.2%
More than GHs1,500,000	16 12.8%	20 87.0%	34 26.8%	2 9.5%	36 24.3%

<b>Total</b>	125	23	127	21	148
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	<b><math>\chi^2</math> statistic = 58.77, df (3), p value =0.0001&lt;0.05</b>		<b><math>\chi^2</math> statistic = 34.58, df (3), p value =0.0001&lt;0.05</b>		
<b><u>Staff strength</u></b>					
Less than 6	77	0	58	19	77
	61.6%	0.0%	45.7%	90.5%	52.0%
6-10	45	3	48	0	48
	36.0%	13.0%	37.8%	0.0%	32.4%
More than 10	3	20	21	2	23
	2.4%	87.0%	16.5%	9.5%	15.5%
<b>Total</b>	125	23	127	21	148
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	<b><math>\chi^2</math> statistic = 106.70, df (2), p value =0.001&lt;0.05</b>		<b><math>\chi^2</math> statistic = 15.46, df (2), p value =0.001&lt;0.05</b>		

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)



**Table 16: Descriptive Statistics on Board Fiduciary and Oversight****Responsibilities**

Indicators	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Determining the mission and purpose of the organisation	148	2.2365	1.49540
The selection of new executive director	148	1.7703	1.71069
Supporting and evaluating the performance of the executive director	148	2.1216	1.66968
Managing the compensation of the executive/ management	148	2.1284	1.46747
Monitoring and strengthening the programmes and services of the organisation	148	2.0541	1.86549
Ensuring adequate financial resource mobilization	148	2.0743	1.70669
Providing financial oversight	148	1.9865	1.36520
Ensuring effective planning for executive succession	148	1.2162	1.41200
Managing its own activities as a board	148	2.6486	1.69780
The board is actively involved in planning the direction and priorities of the organisation	148	2.1351	1.75603
The board does a good job of evaluating the performance of the ED/CEO (Measuring results against objectives)	148	2.1892	1.70773
The board members demonstrate clear understanding of their own roles and those of the ED/CEO	148	2.5811	1.28843
This organisation is financially viable and stable	148	2.6149	1.27521
The organisation's resources are used efficiently (good value for money spent)	148	3.1622	1.33531
Board members demonstrate commitment to this organisation's mission and values	148	3.0000	1.13689

**Table 16 continued**

My organisation has a planned orientation programme for its board members	144	1.7778	1.45056
This organisation’s orientation for board members adequately prepares them to fulfil their governance responsibilities	144	1.6319	1.48063
The board has high credibility with key stakeholders (e.g., funders, donors, consumers, collateral organisations or professionals, community, staff)	148	3.6081	1.04741
Valid N (listwise)	144		

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)

**Table 17: Relationship Between Estimated Population Served or Reached and Respondents’ Rating of Governance Effectiveness**

Estimated Number reached/served by organisation	General performance		
	Low	High	Total
Less than 50,000	11 39.3%	17 60.7%	28 100.0%
50,000-100,000	45 64.3%	25 35.7%	70 100.0%
More than 100,000	40 87.0%	6 13.0%	46 100.0%
Total	96 66.7%	48 33.3%	144 100.0%

$\chi^2$  statistic = 18.15, df (2), p value =0.0001<0.05

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)

**Table 18: Relationship Between Number of Paid Employees and Respondents' Rating of Governance Effectiveness**

Staff Strength	General performance		Total
	Low	High	
Less than 6	65	12	77
	84.4%	15.6%	100.0%
6-10	31	17	48
	64.6%	35.4%	100.0%
More than 10	0	19	19
	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total	96	48	144
	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%

$\chi^2$  statistic = 49.01, df (2), p value = 0.0001 < 0.05

Source: Fieldwork, Amoah (2019)

