

Original Research Article

Uncovering the Driving Forces Behind Succession Planning in Namibian Commercial Public Enterprises: A Look at Executive Leadership

Abstract

A robust succession plan for executive leadership is crucial for organizational growth and sustainability. This study investigates challenges faced by human resource managers in Namibia in maintaining effective executive leadership within Commercial Public Enterprises (CPEs). Adopting a constructivist philosophy, the research gauges managers' perspectives on executive leadership succession planning as a vital tool for learning and development in preparing the younger managerial cadre in Namibia's CPEs. Utilizing a convergent mixed-methods design, the study combines qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis in a single phase. Simple random sampling determines the quantitative sample, while purposive sampling selects the qualitative sample. The study involves 210 participants from 22 commercial public enterprises, resulting in a sample of 63 participants. Findings emphasize the importance of education, mentoring, and training in influencing the planning and implementation of executive leadership succession in CPEs. The study reveals that Chief Executive Leadership charisma, and a transactional leadership style are crucial for sustaining long-term organizational success through effective succession development. In conclusion, the study recommends a strategic focus on educational programs, mentorship initiatives, and training opportunities to enhance executive leadership succession planning in Namibia's Commercial Public Enterprises. Recognizing the significance of Chief Executive Leadership charisma and a transactional leadership style is vital for fostering a culture of upright succession development, ensuring enduring prosperity. The insights contribute to the broader discourse on organizational leadership and succession planning, particularly in Namibia's commercial public sector. Implementing these recommendations can help other African nations shape resilient, skilled, and dynamic leadership for the sustained effectiveness of public sector institutions.

JEL Classification: M10, M12,

Key words: Succession planning; Executive leadership; Public enterprises; Leadership charisma; Transactional leadership style; Commercial Public Enterprises

Introduction

Executive leadership succession planning is a crucial aspect of managing a successful commercial public enterprise (Malloy, 2016). It refers to the process of identifying, developing, and preparing individuals to assume key leadership positions within an organization, with the aim of ensuring a smooth and seamless transition of power and responsibility (Kotter, 2015). Succession planning is an important factor in ensuring that an organization remains competitive, resilient, and sustainable over the long-term, regardless of unexpected departures, retirements, or other leadership transitions (Cadwell, 2018). The purpose of executive leadership succession planning is to ensure that the organization has the leadership talent it needs to achieve its strategic goals and objectives, both now and in the future (Kotter, 2015). This involves developing a pipeline of internal talent, identifying leadership strengths and weaknesses, and preparing individuals for future leadership roles (Malloy, 2016). The goal is to ensure that the organization has a continuous supply of strong leaders to drive its success, both today and in the future (Cadwell, 2018).

Comprehensive executive leadership succession planning process includes several key components, including:

- a) **Assessment of Current Leadership Needs:** The first step in the succession planning process is to assess the current and future leadership needs of the organization (Kotter, 2015). This includes identifying the critical positions that need to be filled and the skills and experience required for those positions (Malloy, 2016).
- b) **Identification of Internal Talent:** The next step is to identify the internal talent within the organization that can fill these critical positions (Cadwell, 2018). This includes identifying high-potential individuals who have the skills and experience required for future leadership roles, as well as those who need additional development to be ready for these roles (Malloy, 2016).
- c) **Development and Training:** Once potential successors have been identified, the next step is to provide them with the development and training they need to prepare for future

leadership roles (Kotter, 2015). This may include formal training programs, mentoring, coaching, and other development activities (Malloy, 2016).

- d) Performance Management: Performance management is an important part of the executive leadership succession planning process (Cadwell, 2018). This includes setting performance expectations, providing regular feedback, and evaluating the performance of potential successors to ensure they are on track to meet the organization's leadership needs (Kotter, 2015).
- e) Succession Planning Strategy: The final step in the executive leadership succession planning process is to develop a comprehensive succession planning strategy that outlines the steps that will be taken to ensure a smooth and seamless transition of power and responsibility (Malloy, 2016). This may include establishing a formal mentoring program, creating a leadership development program, and regularly reviewing and updating the succession planning strategy (Cadwell, 2018).

Several factors influence the success of executive leadership succession planning in commercial public enterprises, including the organization's culture, the level of support from senior leaders, and the resources available for developing and training potential successors (Kotter, 2015). Organizational culture plays a critical role in the success of executive leadership succession planning (Malloy, 2016). A culture that values and invests in the development of its employees is more likely to have a successful succession planning program (Cadwell, 2018). When employees feel that their careers are valued and their contributions are recognized, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated to take on new challenges and responsibilities (Kotter, 2015). Senior leaders also play a crucial role in the success of executive leadership succession planning (Malloy, 2016). When senior leaders are committed to the success of the program and provide their support and endorsement, it sends a strong message.

Public commercial enterprises in Namibia, as compared to other countries:

Namibian State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) hold a pivotal role in providing essential services, regulating economic sectors, and contributing to government revenue (Weylandt, 2016; Limbo,

2019). However, despite their vital functions, these entities face criticism for inefficient service delivery and a reliance on government transfers, leading to reputational damage and management challenges (Weylandt, 2016; Limbo, 2019). The regulatory framework is governed by legislation such as the Public Enterprises Governance Act 2 of 2006 (as amended).

In South Africa, the Department of Public Enterprises oversees key sectors and SOEs, aspiring to drive economic transformation, industrialization, and import substitution (Nellis, 2015). Despite significant contributions to sectors like electricity, transportation, and telecommunications, South African SOEs grapple with challenges, including competition issues and a potential deterrent to foreign investment (South Africa - State Owned Enterprises, 2017; 2018).

Zooming out to the broader African context, the performance of parastatals raises concerns. In Kenya, Ghana, Burundi, Uganda, and beyond, despite substantial investments, many parastatals yield minimal or no returns (Nellis, 2015). Reforms to enhance parastatal performance have been ongoing for over two decades, involving initiatives such as sound accounting systems, clarified commercial objectives, and managerial autonomy. However, these efforts have produced modest results, with weak financial performance and persistent challenges in providing efficient services (Nellis, 2015).

Addressing the issues faced by public commercial enterprises in Namibia and across Africa demands a multifaceted approach. Implementing enduring reforms, ensuring transparency, promoting competition, and enhancing the accountability of management are crucial steps. Fostering a culture of efficiency and innovation is essential for achieving sustained success amidst complex economic and operational challenges. Drawing lessons from both successes and shortcomings in various African nations is imperative for devising tailored solutions that support the growth and sustainability of public commercial enterprises on the continent.

Research objectives

The research objectives of the study are twofold:

- To explore the factors that influence executive leadership succession planning in CPEs in Namibia,
- To describe the most significant factors that influence executive leadership succession planning in CPEs,

Literature review

Importance of succession planning in commercial public enterprises

Succession planning is a critical aspect of managing a successful commercial public enterprise. It refers to the process of identifying, developing, and preparing individuals to assume key leadership positions within an organization, with the aim of ensuring a smooth and seamless transition of power and responsibility. The importance of succession planning in commercial public enterprises cannot be overstated, as it has a significant impact on the long-term stability and success of the organization. One of the key reasons why succession planning is important in commercial public enterprises is to ensure continuity of operations. When key leaders within an organization depart, whether it is due to retirement, resignation, or unexpected circumstances, the loss of their knowledge, expertise, and leadership skills can have a major impact on the organization's ability to continue to operate effectively (Cadwell, 2018). By having a pipeline of internal talent prepared to step into these leadership positions, an organization can avoid disruptions and maintain its momentum, allowing it to continue to achieve its strategic goals and objectives (Kotter, 2015).

Another important aspect of succession planning is that it helps to ensure that the organization has the leadership talent it needs to be competitive, resilient, and sustainable over the long-term (Robinson & Pearce, 2012). By developing a pipeline of internal talent, identifying leadership strengths and weaknesses, and providing the development and training required to prepare individuals for future leadership roles, an organization can ensure that it has a continuous supply of strong leaders to drive its success, both today and in the future (Kotter, 2015).

Succession planning is also important in commercial public enterprises because it helps to foster a positive organizational culture (Cadwell, 2018). A culture that values and invests in the development of its employees is more likely to have a successful succession planning program (Malloy, 2016). When employees feel that their careers are valued and their contributions are recognized, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated to take on new challenges and responsibilities (Robinson & Pearce, 2012). This, in turn, helps to ensure that the organization has

a strong, motivated, and committed workforce that is ready and able to meet the leadership needs of the organization, both now and in the future.

Succession planning is important in commercial public enterprises because it helps to ensure that the organization has the resources it needs to achieve its strategic goals and objectives (Kotter, 2015). By providing a clear roadmap for the development and training of potential successors, an organization can allocate its resources effectively and efficiently, ensuring that it has the talent and expertise it needs to achieve its goals (Robinson & Pearce, 2012).

Executive leadership succession planning

Executive leadership succession planning has been the subject of much research in recent years, as organizations recognize the importance of having a plan in place to ensure the smooth transition of leadership in the event of retirement, resignation, or other unexpected departures. A literature review of existing research on executive leadership succession planning highlights several key themes and trends in the field.

One theme that emerges in the literature is the need for a comprehensive and proactive approach to succession planning. Many studies have emphasized the importance of early and ongoing preparation, with a focus on developing a pipeline of internal talent and creating a culture that supports and encourages the development of future leaders (Cadwell, 2018; Malloy, 2016). Some researchers have also highlighted the need for organizations to identify and address any potential barriers to succession planning, such as a lack of understanding of the benefits of succession planning, or a lack of commitment from key stakeholders (Robinson & Pearce, 2012).

Executive leadership succession planning

Another key theme in the literature is the importance of involving stakeholders in the succession planning process. Many studies have emphasized the need for organizations to engage employees, board members, and other key stakeholders in the process, to ensure that the succession plan reflects the needs and perspectives of all relevant parties (Cadwell, 2018; Malloy, 2016).

A third theme in the literature is the importance of aligning succession planning with the organization's overall strategic goals and objectives. Many studies have emphasized the need for organizations to ensure that their succession planning efforts are aligned with their long-term strategic vision, and that the development of future leaders is integrated into the organization's

overall talent management strategy (Cadwell, 2018; Kotter, 2015). Some researchers have also highlighted the need for organizations to regularly review and revise their succession plans to ensure that they remain relevant and effective over time (Robinson & Pearce, 2012).

In summary, the existing research on executive leadership succession planning highlights the importance of a comprehensive and proactive approach to succession planning, the need for involving key stakeholders in the process, and the importance of aligning succession planning efforts with the organization's overall strategic goals and objectives. These themes provide important insights for organizations looking to develop and implement effective succession planning programs and demonstrate the need for continued research and attention in this area.

Executive leadership succession planning in Africa

The 2018 Ibrahim Forum Report reveals a concerning scenario within Africa's public sector, indicating that public employees, on average, possess higher educational qualifications compared to their private sector counterparts. However, a significant challenge arises as these public servants are, on average, twice as old as the population they serve, signalling an impending succession crisis (Ibrahim Forum Report, 2018).

Succession Crisis:

Across the continent, civil service and public sector institutions are grappling with the imminent retirement of an aging workforce, with a glaring absence of succession planning. This lack of foresight raises the alarming prospect of a loss of institutional memory at a pan-African level (Ibrahim Forum Report, 2018). The absence of an effective knowledge transfer mechanism between retiring civil servants and younger professionals poses a threat to Africa's future institutional delivery capacity, diminishing the ability to integrate accumulated experience with new ideas and technological competencies.

Talent Pipeline Constraints:

Compounding the succession crisis is a shortage of young Africans equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills to assume leadership roles. According to PwC, 75 percent of African CEOs identify the availability of key skills, such as technology, people management, leadership, and strategic planning, as a threat to growth (PwC, Year). Young professionals and youth

organizations, primarily engaged in advocacy rather than implementation, contribute to a scenario where future African leaders may lack the necessary preparation to contribute effectively at decision-making tables (Ibrahim Forum Report, 2018).

Technological Oversight:

The challenge extends beyond barriers preventing young professionals from entering government service. The failure to adopt new technologies and processes, such as geographical information systems for policy development, hampers service improvement. In particular, inefficiencies persist in program delivery, notably within the natural resource sectors (Ibrahim Forum Report, 2018).

Reliance on External Expertise:

Furthermore, due to a lack of home-grown expertise, African institutions heavily rely on external, short-term consultants. Although non-African consultants provide valuable technical assistance, their solutions may lack local context or cultural nuance. Existing capacity-building initiatives are often project-based, leading to trained staff leaving their positions due to a lack of retention policies and long-term prospects (Ibrahim Forum Report, 2018).

Executive leadership succession planning is a critical aspect of ensuring the continued effectiveness and stability of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in Southern African countries (Smith, 2022). Succession planning involves identifying and developing internal talent to fill key leadership positions as current executives retire or move on. This process is vital for maintaining organizational continuity, fostering innovation, and addressing the unique challenges faced by SOEs. In this context, a thorough examination of executive leadership succession planning in Southern African countries is essential.

Current State of Executive Leadership Succession Planning in Africa:

Southern African countries, with their diverse economic landscapes, face specific challenges in implementing effective succession planning within state-owned enterprises. Challenges include political interference, limited transparency, and the need to balance social and economic objectives (Jones, 2020). Despite these challenges, recognizing the importance of leadership continuity, several countries have initiated measures to improve succession planning.

Case Studies:

South Africa:

In South Africa, executive leadership succession planning in SOEs has gained prominence. The government has implemented policies to ensure transparent and merit-based appointments, emphasizing the importance of developing a pool of skilled leaders (DPE South Africa, 2021). The Eskom example illustrates ongoing efforts to address leadership gaps and enhance organizational stability.

Zimbabwe:

Zimbabwe has faced challenges in its SOE sector, with historical instances of political interference affecting leadership transitions. Recent reforms, however, have aimed at depoliticizing appointments and establishing clear criteria for leadership selection, indicating a shift towards a more transparent and accountable succession planning process (The Herald, Zimbabwe, 2023).

Botswana:

Botswana has been recognized for its comparatively stable and transparent governance structures. The country's approach to executive leadership succession planning involves a mix of talent development programs, mentorship initiatives, and regular performance evaluations to identify and groom potential leaders within SOEs (BIDPA, 2021).

Transparency and Meritocracy:

Emphasizing transparent and merit-based appointments ensures that leadership positions are filled by individuals with the necessary skills and qualifications, reducing the likelihood of political interference (Smith, 2022).

Talent Development Programs:

Establishing robust talent development programs, including training, mentorship, and leadership development initiatives, helps build a pipeline of capable leaders ready to step into key roles (Jones, 2020).

Stakeholder Engagement:

Involving various stakeholders, including government entities, industry experts, and the public, in the succession planning process enhances accountability and helps align leadership choices with the broader socio-economic objectives (DPE South Africa, 2021).

Conclusion:

Executive leadership succession planning in Southern African state-owned enterprises is a multifaceted challenge. While progress has been made in some countries, ongoing efforts are necessary to address political interference, enhance transparency, and develop a consistent framework for identifying and grooming future leaders. By learning from both successes and challenges, Southern African countries, including Namibia, can strengthen their executive leadership succession planning processes, ensuring the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of state-owned enterprises.

In conclusion, the challenges faced by African public sector institutions present a complex landscape that demands urgent attention and strategic intervention. The revelations from the 2018 Ibrahim Forum Report underscore the critical need for comprehensive succession planning as aging public servants prepare to exit the workforce. The absence of a structured approach to passing on institutional knowledge not only risks a loss of valuable experience but also poses a threat to Africa's future institutional delivery capacity.

The scarcity of young professionals equipped with essential skills exacerbates the situation, as highlighted by PwC's findings on the perceived threat to growth due to a lack of key skills. The focus of young professionals and youth organizations on advocacy, rather than implementation, further contributes to a potential leadership gap in decision-making spheres.

Moreover, the failure to embrace new technologies and processes impedes progress in program delivery, particularly within critical sectors like natural resources. The reluctance to adopt innovations, such as geographical information systems, results in inefficiencies that hinder overall service improvement.

A significant concern is the heavy reliance on external consultants due to a dearth of local expertise. While external assistance is valuable, it often lacks the nuanced understanding of local contexts and cultures. The prevalent project-based nature of capacity-building initiatives adds to the challenge, as trained staff may leave positions in the absence of retention policies and long-term prospects.

To overcome these obstacles, concerted efforts are required. Implementing robust succession planning strategies, investing in skills development for the youth, fostering a culture of innovation and technological adoption, and creating sustainable capacity-building programs are imperative. Collaborative efforts between public and private sectors, as well as international organizations, are crucial to developing tailored solutions that address the unique needs of African public sector institutions. By taking these steps, Africa can pave the way for a more resilient, skilled, and dynamic leadership capable of steering its institutions towards a sustainable and prosperous future.

Methodology

The research adopted a constructivist philosophy. This philosophy was appropriate because the research gaged the views and comprehension of managers regarding executive leadership succession planning as a learning and development tool in the succession planning of preparation of younger managers in commercial public enterprises in Namibia. Furthermore, the research applied a convergent mixed method design. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected in a single phase and the analysis was done separately after which the results were compared (Creswell, 2018).

Sampling procedure

The researcher first obtained an endorsement from the Ministry of Public Enterprises for the study to have access to the participants. The research applied a simple random sampling technique in deciding the sample for the study, in which the purposive sampling technique was adopted. The sample size was calculated at 30% of the total population of the study which was 210 participants derived from the 22 commercial public enterprises to get 63 participants.

Research instrument

The research instruments were an online questionnaire and an interview guide. The questionnaire had 5 sections with the first section being on respondents' demographics. The other 4 sections were on understanding of succession planning, existence of succession planning policy, criteria for selecting a successor and the challenges of succession planning at commercial public enterprises of Namibia. The questionnaire had open ended and multiple-choice questions where participants were supposed to choose answers to show their understanding of succession planning.

The questionnaire contained different Likert scales to measure different factors. The questions on benefits of succession planning were presented and the challenges that are perceived to limit succession planning on the scale ranging from SA= strongly Agree A= Agree, U= Undecided DA= disagree, SD= strongly disagree. Participants were also asked to rate the methods of developing employees according to the scales very good, good, not sure, fair, poor and the effectiveness of the methods was also rated using the scales most effective, effective, neutral, least effective, not effective.

Administration of the questionnaire and interviews

The researcher was involved in the administration of the research instruments, conducting online surveys and oral interviews with the help of an enumerator. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, semi-structured questionnaires were administered through online google forms <https://forms.gle/1WEAFmcvqoJbPkfk9>. For oral interviews (face-to-face interviews) data collection was done by the researcher at a centralised, controlled location convenient to participants while strictly observing the COVID-19 protocols implemented by the Ministry of Health and Social Services as mitigation measures to the pandemic. Some interviews with key participants were conducted over the telephone due to COVID-19 protocols emphasised by the government. The individual interviews were conducted to collect data from at least 15 participants until the saturation point was reached.

Data Collection

The research had two data sets, both qualitative and quantitative primary data. The researcher collected primary data from the participants by using semi-structured research questionnaires and an interview guide for the key informants who were the board of directors and chief executive

officers. The research instruments were created so that participants may answer questions about their personal experiences. The research scales that were used to develop the semi-structured questionnaire and interview guide were adopted from the modelled research instrument (Taylor, 2004). The rationale for employing semi-structured questionnaires was driven by the assertion that they were easy to administer to participants and that they fitted the purpose of the mixed-method research approach used.

The interview guide controlled the direction of the interviews and created a consistent framework for each interview. The success of a research project is determined by the quality of data collected and the cooperation of the participants. By combining qualitative and quantitative data, the researcher gained detailed, contextualized insights, as well as generalizable, externally valid insights (Shorten & Smith, 2017). In many cases, the strengths of one data type mitigate the weaknesses of another.

Data analysis

Data analysis follows the three distinct levels of analytical engagement found in Thomson's (2011) model of empirical analysis. First came the descriptive stage, then came a more in-depth analytical level, and lastly came the theorised stage. The analytic stage focuses on identifying the patterns that can be found in the data, whereas stage three theorisations link these to questions about why these patterns are occurring and how they might be related to the ultimate "so-what" imperative that places the creation of new knowledge (Thomson, 2011). To ensure that the analysis was robust and did not run the risk of self-referential, it was crucial to triangulate the interpretations made while acting as the researcher's research instrument with other criteria.

When the executive leadership succession planning and implementation framework was subjected to a more in-depth degree of analysis utilising the Logical Framework Analysis Model, data exploration for indications of experience and observation of the results were conducted next (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). A qualitative and interpretive analysis of the data can be made using this matrix-based analytical method, which promotes meticulous and open qualitative data management. The choice of the logical framework analysis was made due to its long history of use in social science and business research initiatives (Klautzer *et al.*, 2011) including management (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009). It emphasises that qualitative analysis is a continuous and iterative

process by making a significant distinction between the two crucial phases of an interpretative research. These two crucial phases include organising the data for the first, and interpreting the evidence through exploratory or descriptive accounts for the second (Ritchie, 2003).

Validity

In ensuring the validity, several measures were taken. The qualitative data collection methods, such as interviews and focus groups, were carefully designed to capture the richness and depth of participants' experiences and perspectives on executive leadership succession planning (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Additionally, the quantitative survey instruments were pilot-tested to ensure clarity and appropriateness for the study's objectives, contributing to the overall validity of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Reliability

To enhance the reliability of the study, consistent and standardized data collection procedures were employed across both qualitative and quantitative phases. The survey instruments and interview protocols were meticulously crafted and followed to maintain consistency and minimize variations in data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Moreover, reliability checks were conducted during the qualitative coding process to ensure consistent interpretation and categorization of data (Miles et al., 2014).

Credibility

Credibility, or the trustworthiness of the study, was established through multiple means. Triangulation, involving the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods, contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the research question (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The researcher maintained prolonged engagement with the participants, fostering a deeper understanding of their perspectives and experiences. Member checking, wherein participants were invited to review and validate the findings, further enhanced the credibility of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Dependability:

Dependability, or the stability and consistency of the study's findings over time, was ensured through transparent documentation of the research process. Detailed records were maintained regarding data collection, analysis, and interpretation, allowing for an audit trail to be established (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The study's procedures were clearly documented, enabling future researchers to replicate the study and assess its dependability (Miles et al., 2014).

Confirmability:

Confirmability, which pertains to the neutrality and objectivity of the study, was maintained through an explicit and reflexive research stance. The researcher's positionality and potential biases were acknowledged and addressed transparently throughout the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Confirmability was further ensured by employing an external audit, wherein an independent researcher reviewed the study's process, analysis, and findings to verify their alignment with the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In conclusion, the study observed rigorous measures to uphold the principles of validity, reliability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability, thereby enhancing the overall robustness and trustworthiness of the research findings.

Findings and discussions

1.1 Factors that influence executive leadership succession planning and recruitment in CPEs

The main elements to consider while selecting a successor in an organisation were ranked as shown in Table 1. below.

Table 1. Factors influencing succession planning and recruitment.

Sample	N	Scale	n	Rel. frequency (%)
Age of successor	47	1	4	8.5
		2	1	2.1
		3	15	31.9
		4	19	40.4
		5	8	17.0
Gender of successor	47	1	18	38.3
		2	2	4.3
		3	10	21.3
		4	16	34.0
		5	1	2.1
Education of successor	47	1	1	2.1
		3	3	6.4
		4	22	46.8
		5	21	44.7
Experience in Pes	47	1	1	2.1
		3	5	10.6
		4	13	27.7
		5	28	59.6
Outside management experience	47	2	3	6.5
		3	8	17.4
		4	26	56.5
		5	9	19.6
Past performance	47	3	2	4.3
		4	24	51.1
		5	21	44.7
Knowledge and skills in marketing, finance, and strategic planning	47	3	5	10.6
		4	19	40.4
		5	23	48.9
Interpersonal skills	47	3	2	4.3
		4	29	61.7

Sample	N	Scale	n	Rel. frequency (%)
		5	16	34.0
Technical knowledge and skills	47	2	2	4.3
		3	2	4.3
		4	15	31.9
		5	28	59.6
Decision-making abilities and experience	47	3	5	10.6
		4	20	42.6
		5	22	46.8
Compatibility of goals with current CEO/MD	47	1	1	2.1
		2	5	10.6
		3	16	34.0
		4	20	42.6
		5	5	10.6
Commitment to business	47	2	1	2.1
		3	2	4.3
		4	21	44.7
		5	23	48.9
Psychological traits	47	3	9	19.1
		4	32	68.1
		5	6	12.8
A personal relationship with CEO/MD	47	1	15	31.9
		2	16	34.0
		3	10	21.3
		4	5	10.6
		5	1	2.1
Respect from employees	47	1	1	2.1
		2	2	4.3
		3	25	53.2
		4	17	36.2
		5	2	4.3
Trust by employees	47	1	1	2.1
		3	13	27.7

Sample	N	Scale	n	Rel. frequency (%)
		4	26	55.3
		5	7	14.9

Scale: 1 – less important to 5 – very important.

1.1.1 Age of successor

In Table 1, 40.4% of the respondents agreed that the age of the successor is an important factor in identifying the potential successor of an organisation. Only 17% said age is critically important whilst 31.9% were not sure. Age is critical because at the age of 55 most workers will be near retirement and tacit knowledge must be passed from one generation of workers to another and by doing so, it reduces learning curves for critical positions. Succession planning allows this sharing to occur simultaneously between the worker and the potential successor, allowing the successor to gain knowledge and skills without undergoing extensive on-the-job training.

1.1.2 Gender of successor

The results show that 38.3% of the respondents said that gender is not important when choosing a successor. Table 1 shows that 21.3% were not sure about the importance of gender whilst 34% indicated that gender is important and 2.1% responded that it is critically important. The major conclusion is that, while gender is not considered a hindrance to becoming a successor, male successors outnumber female successors (Aldamiz-Echevarría et al., 2017). Ellemers et al. (2012) asserts that more studies have shown that discrepancies in promotion rates and underrepresentation of women in leadership positions cannot be attributed to their lack of ambition. Women, on the other hand, are less positive about their chances of attaining a leadership position than men, and they anticipate more challenges once in such roles, leading them to doubt their leadership abilities (Keller, 2018).

Gender bias has been linked to internalised gendered attitudes (or stereotypes) about the qualities that make a good leader (Heilman, 2001). Offermann & Foley (2020) state that it is common for

men and women to believe that a good leader should have agentic or masculine characteristics. Also, when it comes to succession of leadership, those at the top, mostly men, prefer to promote those with similar traits and attributes or with whom they have a good interpersonal relationship.

According to Rink et al. (2019), stereotypical behaviour and interpersonal likeness reinforce each other. In this approach, the desire to have successors who reflect traditional (male) leadership ideals increases organisational similarity. Therefore, those who do not fit into a masculine culture have limited career options (Offermann & Foley, 2020). However, it is uncertain if women, once in positions of leadership, make succession selections based on interpersonal liking as a result of shared social experiences or important characteristics (ibid).

1.1.3 Education

The survey results show that 44.8% of the respondents' supposed education is important when selecting a successor and 44.7% agreed that education is critically important. Success and growth in the long run are directly related to education (Yartey & Adjasi, 2007). Although companies invest a lot in hiring and on-boarding skilled and competent employees, many executives neglect the need to nurture and develop them (Kotter, 2012). Kruger & Steyn (2020) state that many firms are struggling to keep up with rapid innovation in the workplace due to the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the astounding digital transformation. These factors, along with expanding skill gaps, make education and training essential for the growth of businesses and the workers who drive it. Upskilling and education can make the difference between thriving and barely surviving in the workplace.

1.1.4 Experience in CPEs

Results showed that 59.6% of respondents said that experience in commercial public enterprises is critically important whilst 27.7% said that it is important. Clegg (2012) argues that, usually, experience takes precedence over education. Studies show that it is best to choose someone with real-world experience as a successor. These individuals are solution-oriented a greater part of the time; they are capable of resolving problems without the need for heavy supervision.

The right experience enables spontaneous crisis management, budget reduction and overall workplace culture management (Andrews et al., 2008). What distinguishes one organisation from another is the knowledge and insight gained through experience. There are few shortcuts to acquiring a competitive advantage over competitors and experience is one way to be on top. In his or her field, the successor should have business experience. A successful successor is aware of changing trends and demands (Herstatt & Von Hippel, 1992). This understanding leads to the creation of effective products that appeal to the target market.

1.1.5 Outside management experience

Table.2 indicates that 56.5% of the respondents indicated that it is important to consider outside management experience in selecting a successor and 19.6% responded that it is critically important. According to Stoddart (2020), choosing a successor is never simple even with a superb succession plan or filling the position with an internal or external candidate. With maximum productivity as the goal, a filled position will always have some downtime, as the new hire can never fully prepare for the job's specific requirements (Rynes *et al.*, 1991). The background of the successor determines the time at which they get to optimal productivity. In comparison to a student or someone who was previously unemployed, the time to optimal production is substantially decreased if the employee is transferring firms in the same sector.

Internal successors, on the other hand, are already established personnel who have been part of the company for years and are thoroughly familiar with the company's goals, beliefs, employees and best working practices (Drucker, 2017). Whether recruiting a successor internally or externally is not so important since performance is dependent on the function and the proper environment for that role to be filled (Stoddart, 2020). The purpose of a succession plan is to be ready for theoretical circumstances that could affect the business. Studies show that employees who are cared for and developed are more likely to stay loyal and engaged. Therefore, it is critical to incorporate robust training protocols in the succession plan to get the most promising employees ready to take on a more advanced role as this will also make them feel like valuable members of the firm (Phillips & Roper, 2009). Studies show that internal employees are more likely to succeed than external candidates. Before bringing in an external hire, it is critical to assess the benefits and drawbacks.

According to Gomez-Mejia et al. (2018), external hires are frequently paid more and have poorer performance ratings in their first two years on the job.

Stoddart (2020) listed the critical conditions to consider when hiring either an external or internal successor. Some of the factors to consider when hiring an external candidate include the availability of a great candidate already in mind who can fill in quickly, the delicacy of the internal structure stability such that transferring employees may cause problems and the required skills/experience for the position are not available/reachable internally. When hiring an internal candidate, the conditions include having promising workers in the organisation that could fit the position. There is a long lead time/notice period during which to promote from the inside. The business must be prospering, internal shifts are viable and there must be a surplus of employees. Internal personnel have a wealth of talents and expertise for the role. If there is a lack of onboarding training in the organisation, then there should be an external hire (Stoddart, 2020).

1.1.6 Past performance

The results show that 51.1% of the respondents agreed that past performance is important in the selection process of the successor and 44.7% indicated it is critically important. On the contrary, studies show that past performance does not guarantee future results. Nonetheless, in the world of recruitment, candidates' prior experiences are likely the most important factor in determining their fitness for a position (Dixon, 2017; Krapivin, 2019). Pre-hire experience appears to be a hopeless measure of a person's likelihood of succeeding in their new position because the circumstances in their past job and the new one are highly likely not to be comparable (Krapivin, 2019).

Some companies focus on a candidate's ability to learn and grow rather than their past work history to find someone who fits their culture and has strong technical skills (Dixon, 2017). However, to signify that an applicant is ready for the workplace, several occupations require some form of experience. This experience usually refers to the number of years spent on the job, but it can also refer to the seniority of those roles, the kind of firms they worked for and the schools they attended (Krapivin, 2019). A smart starting step would be to lessen reliance on past performance as a criterion for evaluation and instead use other methods. Participation in succession planning by employees, and achieving succession planning goals, should all be considered as part of

performance management. It is relatively simple to incorporate important goals into development plans (Hart, 2011).

1.1.7 Strategic planning, marketing, and finance knowledge

The survey indicates that 48.9% of the respondents indicated that marketing, finance and strategic planning expertise are critically important while 40.4% indicated that they are important in choosing a successor. A manager should be able to plan strategically for the future as well as perform the current tasks well. Reviewing systems and procedures, attending training, and managing the team's daily activities are all part of the process.

In order to increase productivity and profitability, strategic thinkers foster innovation and change within the team and the company as a whole (Smith, 2021). Either the candidate must be a visionary or must be able to collaborate with someone in the firm who is. It is crucial to retain continuity in succession, and preserving essential relationships is crucial in this regard. In the event that the successor stresses or breaks business connections, it could jeopardise the company's stability, causing staff to leave or putting the organisation at risk of bankruptcy (Jaffe *et al.*, 1998). Managers and business owners are frequently required to understand and manage the company's financial needs (Kirsten, 2018). The ability to understand the current market, understand investments and risks, plan effectively and on time, and identify anything that adversely affects the bottom line are all financial management skills. Financial management skills are required of business analysts, accountants, and bank personnel.

The successor should be aware of the client's needs as well as their perceptions of the organisation. It would be ideal to develop relationships with customers that are mutually beneficial by talking to them about their future needs and discussing how to develop the products or services to satisfy their demands (Thakur & Thakur, 2003). Knowledge of the market is also important, that is knowing the competitors' performance, their ways of charging and if the market has any new entrants. The successor must also be well-versed in the business environment as the business can be disrupted by many external factors. Politics, economics, environment, society and technology can all impact the company's growth, so one needs to be informed. The corporate sector could be

monitored by forming a group of employees to monitor and report on changes (Thakur & Thakur, 2003).

1.1.8 Interpersonal skills

In Table 1, 61.7% of the respondents agreed that interpersonal skills are important in selecting a successor, 34% said they are critically important whilst 4.3% said they are not sure. The ability to connect, work or relate with others is an interpersonal skill. In order to maximize a company's human resources, managers need these abilities (Matthews, 2001). A manager who inspires and motivates his or her team is a valuable asset for their organisations. This form of contact not only boosts productivity and contentment among employees but also sets a good example.

Some studies rank personality as the most considered factor before other factors such as financial analysis capability, and the ability to think strategically and manage other executives, among others (Finkelstein et al., 2009). While certain fundamental competencies are universal, such as the ability to communicate effectively, it is also important to consider those that are unique to the industry or situation (Matthews, 2001). The successor must be able to communicate both orally and in writing. Rushed memos full of typographical errors and confusing meetings are detrimental to the success of the successor. An excellent manager is always able to communicate clearly and communicate useful, easy-to-understand information that assists with the task at hand. These managers' meetings are well focussed and aptly timed.

1.1.9 Technical knowledge and skills

The results show that 59.6% of the respondents agreed that technical knowledge and skills are critically important in the selection of the successor whilst 31.9% said they are important, 4.3% were not sure and 4.3% thought that technical skills are not important. The skills and experience of their employees and their understanding of customers' needs make all businesses a valuable source of knowledge. Information can have a significant impact on an organization's ability to grow. This is not limited to large multinational corporations, but from a local newsstand to a manufacturing firm, knowledge management can help everyone (Smith, 2021).

Low-level managers' technical skills are more important than those at the top of the chain (Hernandez-Marrero, 2006). To attain their aims, managers need technical skills which include knowledge and abilities. These qualities include the ability to enhance sales, develop diverse products and services, and advertise them. The successor must show an understanding of the whole business, for example, to oversee a team of IT professionals, one must know how to navigate the company's programming systems (Hernandez-Marrero, 2006). The manager should be in a position to guide subordinates, help them to achieve higher levels of success and impart practical advice and use trade secrets.

1.1.10 Decision-making abilities and experience

Results show that 46.8% of the participants indicated that decision-making abilities and experience are critically important for the successor to have and 42.6% held the view that it is important. Problem detection and problem solving are part of an executive's daily duties. In order to achieve this, one must be meticulous as well as able to remain calm under stress. Maintaining productivity and smooth workflow requires quick thinking when problems arise. Creativity is a key to producing unique solutions that impact the company as a whole and the team as little as possible. It helps to think on your feet when deciding how to accomplish a task. Analysing benefits and drawbacks of a scenario rapidly is essential (Smith, 2021).

1.1.11 Compatibility of goals with current CEO/MD

Looking at the compatibility of goals with the current CEO/MD factor in choosing a successor in CPEs, 34% were not sure about its importance, 42.6% viewed it as important and 10.6% indicated that it was critically important. It is critical to find a successor who excels at collaborative management or collaborative leadership (Linden, 2003). It is critical to embrace skills that vary from that of the current CEO/MD but help them achieve their strategic goals. For instance, when considering a successor, they may consider hiring someone who specialises in communications and outreach if they want to raise their company's brand awareness and if they do not know the difference between public relations and marketing.

1.1.12 *Commitment to business*

The results in Table.2 show that 48.9% of the respondents indicated that the successor should be highly committed to the business while 44.7% agreed that commitment to the business is important and a paltry 4.3% were not sure. According to Ibrahim et al. (2001), a common blunder is selecting a replacement without committing to a target. The successor must uphold the same values upon which the company was founded. The candidate should show that he or she embodies those values rather than simply agreeing with them (Matthews, 2001) to avoid the chances of changing the culture through the development of a new culture. High-level commitment and support will benefit succession planning. In addition to allocating time for people to learn, succession planning also involves removing barriers and establishing a learning culture (Lynn, 2001).

1.1.13 *Psychological traits*

Studies show that the link between personality and behaviour is symbolised by observable behaviours which shows that the individual's cognitive state and personality play significant roles in job success (Kurz & Bartram, 2002). In this study, 69.6% of the respondents viewed psychological traits as important when selecting a successor, 13% indicated critically important and 17.4% were not sure of the importance. Sackett & Walmsley (2014) based their research on the Big Five personality model, which is a well-known paradigm for assessing personality. Conscientiousness, agreeability, emotional stability, extraversion, and openness to experience are the Big Five personality traits. The researchers analysed a lot of data from job interviews to determine what companies looked for. Employers use systematic job interviews to examine candidates' personality qualities for the job and workplace fit. When hiring a salesman, a company may check for extraversion and friendliness in prospects to guarantee that they can work well with customers.

1.1.14 *A personal relationship with CEO/MD*

The survey shows that 31% of the participants indicated that the personal relationship with the CEO/MD of the successor is critically not important, 34% ranked it as not important, 21.3% were not sure and 10.6% viewed it as important. Most participants highlighted the need to shun

corruption or nepotism by not selecting successors who have personal relationships with the current managers. However, the extent of personal relationships varies as some may be linked merely by the job which may be an advantage as the successor will be aware of the company's strategic plan and culture and may in turn influence his performance together with that of the organisation.

1.1.15 Respect from employees

Table 1 shows that 53.2% of the respondents were not sure how respect from employees correlates with choosing a successor in CPEs while 36.2% viewed respect from employees as important and only 4.3% indicated that it is critically important. Studies show that it is important to select someone who is not only qualified for the position but also has respect from important team members and the ability to lead the firm forward (Hunt et al., 2015). Smith *et al.* (2001) argue that relationships are the essence of management and are crucial for success. Before a manager can lead a team, he or she must acquire the respect of the members of that team. Effective communication is crucial to achieving this. The goal is to win team members' respect while maintaining professional boundaries by getting to know them personally and professionally. Despite being a manager, the successor must also be able to contribute as a team player (Smith *et al.*, 2001).

1.1.16 Trust by employees

The results show that trust by employees was ranked critically important by 14.9% of the respondents, 55.3% ranked it important and 27.7% were not sure. The successor should inspire trust and confidence among the company's owners. According to Matthews (2001), there is a need for a different type of successor for every scenario. For example, for public enterprises, the successor must have that experience and if the organisation is owned by a family, the successor must be someone with whom they are comfortable. For organisations with investors, it is most likely that the stakeholders will want to have input in the selection of the successor (Matthews, 2001). Good managers hold themselves to the highest standards so that their subordinates can see what they should aspire to (Argyris, 2002). Strong managers must have the qualities of integrity, honesty and professionalism. When it comes to working ethics and temperament, it is best to show

than tell as a leader. Hiring managers seek candidates who follow a tight moral code and who provide a good example for others.

Theoretical findings

Leadership Succession Planning (LSP) is a key tool for assessing and developing the leadership talent of an organisation (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). Many leaders are interested in the continued performance of business organisations which depend heavily on strong leadership. Literature findings show that transformative, well-trained and proactive leadership has a positive impact on organisational performance (Avey *et al.*, 2011).

According to Shaw (2012), transformational leadership is an important component of a new paradigm of leadership that meets the needs of the group in times of insecurity. Transformational leadership is efficient in leadership development and it is linked to results that are worthy of most organisations, employees and leaders (McLaggan *et al.*, 2013). The organisation could become involved in the succession planning process and its success over time through leaders with the features of transforming leadership, namely idealised influence, inspiring drive, intellectual encouragement and individualisation (Hart, 2011).

Another factor that influences executive leadership succession planning in CPEs is the identification of successful candidates within the company. The main aim is to identify which persons are interested and have the potential to fill major assets or to find skills in the pool so that they can gain the skills they need to fill in the gaps when the opportunities are available (Terry, 2018). It is important to inform internal candidates that are not originally considered for accelerated development that they can be considered in the future to develop their careers or that alternatives are available (Chan, 2018). The use of various forms of evaluating employees and multiple points of view will minimise subjectivity.

Talent management is another factor that influences executive leadership succession planning and this is aligned with three main perspectives, which are exclusive employees (key high-performance workers or potential employees regardless of position), exclusive position (the right strategic jobs

employees) and inclusive employees (every employee of the organisation, given the opportunity and the direction, shall be considered as actual or potential talent) (Armstrong, 2009).

Talent management's sub-factors include talent attraction, talent development, and talent retention. Sastry (2013) and Pila *et al.* (2016) argue that talent management should create an environment where people develop skills for a range of future opportunities through a transparent and equitable process. Talent management, training and development were also seen by respondents as extremely important. Baqutayan (2014) argues that a large number of HR professionals worldwide believe the management of talent is an important challenge for organizations because it represents a major source of competitive advantage.

Executive leadership succession planning in CPEs is also influenced by education and mentoring or training and development. The literature shows that effective management growth can be achieved by providing the management and leaders of the organisation with proper training programmes. Training and development sub-factors include on-the-job training, coaching, e-learning and guidance. Practical examples can help practitioners to develop leadership through coaching, personality skills development, understudy, case study and more (Chan, 2018). These arrangements do not have to be necessarily formal. Chan (2018) states that providing individual case tasks can provide young producers with an opportunity to gain experience at a senior level by partnering them with a senior producer.

Orphan policies offer an excellent opportunity to implement this strategy and provide both producers with a mutual benefit. Rothwell (2010) asserts that succession planning requires new knowledge and skills from internal talent. Employee training ensures that their new roles are effective and efficient. Tahir *et al.* (2014) stress the important factors of education and development for managing human resources since they can improve performance at an individual and corporate level. Furthermore, training and development can play an important role in HR management. Lessons must also be applied. In terms of a growing knowledge base and a global economy, the development of human resources is an important matter for the public and private sectors (Mirsepassi *et al.*, 2013). Training must therefore be seen as a strategic priority and as a

resource for the measurement and management of the lack of skills in an organisation (Rajasekar & Khan, 2013).

Performance management is another factor that influences executive leadership succession planning in public enterprises. Yadav & Dabhade (2013) contend that performance management involves an organisation's understanding of and actions on performance issues at all levels, including staff, teams, departments, and the organisation itself. The three theories that support performance management include the Goal theory (emphasises establishing and agreeing on targets to measure and manage performance), the Control theory (focuses on feedback as a way to shape behaviour) and the Social cognitive theory (based on the self-efficacy concept where employees think that their performance has an impact on them) (Armstrong, 2019). Although performance management was considered important by most of the respondents, Hvidman & Andersen (2014) conclude that the results of performance management rely on the managers' use of performance data in their activities. The difference indicates that in public organisations performance management is less effective.

For organisations to have successful succession plans, they must have good financial resources for several things such as training and development or hiring employees. In a study conducted by Terry (2018) participants who were board members indicated that financial resources influenced their ability to plan succession. Funders who built confidence and comfort with an agency employing a specific leader can get an indication that an executive could leave soon causing them to pull back (Lowan & Chisoro, 2016).

An important finding of the study was that age matters when planning executive leadership succession. There was no significant effect of gender on executive leadership succession planning in Namibian CPEs. The study also found that the level of education of the potential successor was very important when it comes to executive leadership succession planning. Education as a critical factor for executive leadership succession planning was echoed by Yartey & Adjasi (2007) who see the factor as critical for long-term corporate success and growth. Past performance was considered important, but not guaranteed for future results. Decision-making abilities and experience were critically important for the successor to have as this was important.

Future research avenues

The author proposes a multi-case study approach for both large and small organizations in exploring future research paths. This method could be extended to include candidates for middle and executive management within a focus group, offering a comprehensive understanding of succession planning dynamics. Researchers may find value in conducting a quantitative correlational study, building upon earlier case study results and providing a broader perspective for analysis. Subsequent projections and insights could then be drawn from evidence gathered across multiple case studies.

In addressing organizational entrenchment, this study delved into effective succession planning implementation. However, potential alternative sources of organizational entrenchment remain unexplored. Future research could investigate the impact of organizationally induced entrenchment resulting from gender bias, racial and ethnic discrimination, shedding light on how these factors influence succession planning. Additionally, examining government policies as a potential source of organizational entrenchment could contribute valuable insights.

Acknowledging the scarcity of research in leadership succession mentoring, this study highlights a need to bolster mentoring practices. Future investigations should delve into the impact of mentoring on leadership succession at various organizational levels. Understanding the motivations driving managers' active participation in leadership succession planning, a critical aspect identified

Conclusion

Effective executive leadership succession planning within Commercial Public Enterprises (CPEs) is notably influenced by the meticulous identification of adept candidates within the organization. This study contends that fostering talent management entails creating an environment that facilitates skill development for diverse future opportunities through a transparent and equitable process. The pivotal role of education in executive leadership succession planning is emphasized, highlighting its significance for the sustained success and growth of corporations in the long term.

Leadership Succession Planning (LSP) emerges as a crucial tool for both assessing and cultivating an organization's leadership talent.

The educational background of potential successors assumes substantial importance in the realm of executive leadership succession planning. Additionally, performance management emerges as a key factor shaping the trajectory of executive leadership succession planning in public enterprises. The intertwining influences of education, mentoring, and training and development further underscore their paramount role in steering executive leadership succession planning within CPEs.

The efficacy of transformational leadership in fostering leadership development is underscored, with evident links to outcomes that align with the objectives of most organizations. Notably, talent management, training, and development are identified as integral components contributing significantly to the success of a robust succession plan. Within the ambit of talent management, sub-factors such as talent attraction, development, and retention are highlighted as critical elements in crafting a successful succession strategy. It is imperative to recognize that effective succession planning necessitates the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, primarily derived from internal talent sources. Consequently, succession planning emerges not merely as a beneficial practice but as an indispensable factor for the sustained success of Namibia's CPEs and other organizations alike.

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