



## AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CHALLENGES FACED BY A FUNDING AGENCY IN DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING A SUCCESSION PLANNING PROGRAMME

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### ABSTRACT

*Succession planning is a key component in talent management and it is defined broadly as a strategic process within an organisation focusing on identifying, training and developing, mentoring and preparing potential talent for future leadership positions. This study sought to understand the succession planning activities at the agency and the challenges associated with the implementation thereof. The theoretical models of succession planning will form the basis for recommending necessary improvements to the agency. A qualitative research approach was adopted for this study using a self-administered questionnaire to collect primary data from the participants. Secondary data was used as a triangulation strategy to enhance validity and reliability of this study. The scope of this study is limited to the agency and the findings cannot be generalised. The target population in this study was limited to HR managers and managing directors at business units. Therefore there is a potential for further research by extending the target population to include all levels of employees within the agency. This dissertation is the first of its kind within the agency. It will provide ideas for other researchers to expand on this study within the agency.*

**Keywords:** Succession planning, Talent management.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Succession planning and talent management have become imperative more than ever before as leadership in organisations is required to devise strategies which will sustain organisations into the future. A leadership legacy is that which creates sustainable valued institutions contributing not only to organisations' bottom line, but to long term development of people who will drive the organisation into the future (Kouzes and Posner, 2007). One of the critical success factors contributing to the sustainability of organisations is the ability of organisations to align their leadership pipeline strategies to drive their sustainability agenda (Ernst and Young, 2013). Historically, succession planning efforts were focused on the inevitable replacement of senior leadership due to retirement or career change rather than replacement of all key roles within the organisations in all levels and this focus missed the opportunity to develop key personnel in the lower ranks within the organisations (Hill, 2010). The vacuum that will be created by the so called "baby boomers" when they retire should not be ignored as they will leave with knowledge and experience, which makes it even more important to develop and retain talent at every level within the organisation (Hill, 2010). One of the main key roles of leaders in the organisations is to create the leadership pipeline aligned to the sustainability beliefs which carries forward the organisations' vision and mission in the future (Ernst and Young, 2013). This research investigates how the agency approaches its succession planning programme, including the challenges they are faced with in pursuing a successful succession planning programme. Their approach in

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performing a succession planning exercise will be examined using relevant research methods and assessed in terms of the available literature about succession planning and implementation strategies. Recommendations will be suggested to the agency where gaps have been identified between how they approach and implement their succession planning programme and the available literature on succession planning.

### 1.1. Background to the Problem

The agency, like any other organisation, strives to exist into the future and embrace sustainability. The Agency is a dynamic and unique South African public entity embodying eight distinct Business Units (BUs) defined as follows: Research and Innovation Support and Advancement (RISA) which is defined as a grant making programme within the agency, translating the science and technology strategies and policies of government into initiatives that support research, researchers and research infrastructure. The South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAATA) which is bestowed with a mandate to interact with the public on issues of science, engineering and technology and to inspire young minds into careers in science, engineering and technology; The South African Institute of Aquatic Biodiversity (SAIAB) which is described as an internationally recognised centre for research into aquatic biodiversity focused on a broad spectrum of aquatic environments, from marine offshore to continental freshwater catchments. The South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON) which is bestowed with a mandate to establish capacity building and education in the environmental science to instil an appreciation of environmental science in society; iThemba Laboratory for Accelerator Based Sciences (iThemba LABS) which not only plays a valuable role in the field of basic applied nuclear research, but also provides services such as particle radio therapy for the treatment of cancer and the supply of accelerator-produced radioactive isotopes for nuclear medicine and research; National Zoological Gardens of South Africa (NZG), which is ranked among the top ten zoological gardens in the world, plays a dual role of housing a diversity of animals for the benefit of the public as well as providing vital resources for research into terrestrial biodiversity; Square Kilometre Array South Africa (SKA SA) which is mandated to build and manage the world's largest and most sensitive radio telescope designed to lead the way in space science discovery; Hartebeesthoek Radio Astronomy Observatory (HartRAO) which is focusing on providing research platforms and accessibility of fundamental astronomy to excite young minds into pursuing careers mainly in radio astronomy; and South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) which is a facility focusing on research in optical and infrared astronomy. The senior leadership in these specialised and strategic BUs has been characterised by highly qualified individuals with PhD's, extensive knowledge, specialised skills and experience unique to each BU's operations. The challenge facing the agency is identifying and nurturing a pool of talent that is required to sustain the organisation into the future. This challenge requires a cohesive effort from the current leadership to design and implement a consistent and integrated succession planning programme. The cohesive efforts by the current leadership should time the succession planning programme with the retirement of the current leadership to ensure a smooth transition of new leadership. Another challenge is whether the agency has enough resources and capacity to design and implement an appropriate succession planning programme. The resources and capacity include the availability and willingness of current leadership to mentor potential leadership protégés, the existence of identifiable potential candidates from both within the agency and externally to take up leadership roles, and the availability of funds to implement a succession planning programme. The proposed study will look at how the agency implements its succession planning programme, what challenges are facing the organisation with regards to succession planning and what recommendations, based on the available literature could be made to the agency to overcome or mitigate their challenges.

## 1.2. Research Problem

The agency is a unique and complex government institution focused on providing world class research infrastructure platforms and research support nationally and internationally. Research infrastructure platforms refer to the equipment, machinery and the technology used to conduct science at various facilities within the agency. To operate and maintain these research infrastructure platforms requires people skilled in science and engineering. In South Africa it is within the public domain that there is shortage of scientists and engineers. The high demand for science and engineers is making it difficult for some organisations to retain skilled scientists and engineers due to the high salaries paid by their competitors to lure and retain such skills. The agency is faced with a challenge of identifying, nurturing and retaining a pool of talent that will sustain the organisation far into the future. The leadership at the agency will require a robust approach to design and implement a consistent and an integrated succession planning programme. The issue of limited resources such as funding could hamper growth in some organisations. The agency should undertake continuous assessment of its limited resources and its capacity to design and implement appropriate succession planning programmes as well as how to deploy or allocate the FOP (Factors of Production) amongst the various functions (Middle Management). The resources and capacity include the availability and willingness of current leadership to mentor potential leadership protégés, the existence of identifiable potential candidates from both within the agency and externally to take up leadership roles, and the availability of funds to implement a succession planning programme. It is very motivating to promote from within the organisation, but if you do not have a pool of possible prospects, then you may have to recruit from outside the organisation. One of the advantages of this is that you are bringing in “new blood” with new ideas and perspectives. A number of American companies are recalling their retired executives back into their respective organisations to act as mentors to the young, upcoming executives. This situation could point to the consequences of a poor or lack of effective succession planning during the tenure of these retired executives.

## 1.3. Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate how the agency executes its succession planning initiatives, what are the challenges facing the institution in the implementation of its succession planning programme and what recommendations can be suggested to improve the effectiveness of their succession planning programme..

## 1.4. Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are as follows:

- To investigate how the agency implements its succession planning programme.
- To investigate the challenges faced by the agency in implementing the succession planning programme.
- To investigate literature covering relevant theory on effective succession planning with a view to establish an understanding of succession planning best practice.
- To recommend established strategies for implementing an integrated and effective succession planning programme.

## 1.5. Research Questions

To achieve the above objectives four primary questions have been formulated as follows:

- How does the agency engage its succession planning programme?
- What are the challenges faced by the agency in implementing a succession planning programme?
- What is the best practice for implementing an effective succession planning programme?
- Which strategies can the agency employ to improve its implementation of effective succession planning programme?

## 1.6. Significance of the Study

The study is inspired by the challenges that exist in the agency as far as succession planning and talent management is concerned, more so at its research facilities. It has been reported that in South Africa there is a shortage of scientists and engineers, let alone the number of scientists in the field of for example space probing and marine biodiversity. This is also perpetuated by perhaps a lack of a sound understanding of mathematics and science at schools which might mean that few students will follow science as a potential career path. South African learners are rated as the worst performers in Maths and Science as compared to learners in the same school grades in other countries where those in grade 8 in particular are reported to scoring less than 50% in science and achieving 33% on average in maths (Gauteng Department of Education, 2010). Given the reports that have been made by various institutions in the public domain about the skills vacuum in science and engineering, the agency needs to be strategic in how they go about attracting talent and how they nurture and manage that talent. Therefore this study highlights the challenges the agency is faced with in the development and implementation of the succession planning programme. More importantly the study provides recommendations to the agency about strategies that could be deployed to enhance the chances of success of their talent management programmes thus enhancing their knowledge about best practices in succession planning. It is important to remember that in terms of a retention strategy in any organisation, having a robust succession plan is in fact regarded by many employees as a potential “intrinsic reward”.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Definition of Succession Planning

Rothwell (2010) defines succession planning as: “A means of identifying critical management positions starting at the level of project manager and supervisor and extending up to the highest position in the organisation. Succession planning also describes management positions to provide flexibility in lateral management moves and to ensure that as individuals achieve greater seniority, their management skills will broaden and become more generalized in relation to total organizational objectives rather than to purely departmental objectives.” Armstrong (2006) views succession planning as a process of assessing and auditing the talent in the organization in order to answer three fundamental questions i.e. “Are there enough potential successors available who can take key roles in the longer term? Are they good enough? Do they have the right skills and attributes for the future?” One must remember that it all starts at the recruitment stage of employing new staff members, with the right mix of “production-centric” as well as “people-centric” attributes. It is also vital to consider the organisation’s culture, and indeed the culture in each “Functional Department”, be it HR, Production, Finance, Marketing and so on. Succession planning differs from the traditional replacement planning in that it is focused on identifying and developing potential talent throughout the organisation instead of just one position or department or division (Carnegie, 2007). A view is also expressed that succession planning programmes should do away with the historical focus of planning for the replacement of senior executives only, but it should ideally be stretched to include even lower levels of key personnel within the organisation (Carnegie, 2007). Succession planning requires that potential replacement should be considered by levels on the organogram and the talent pool should be identified beneath each level with the aim to develop as many successors as possible to be ready and immediately available for promotion to any position at the next level on the organogram (Carnegie, 2007). Madnick and Morgan (2012) perceive succession planning as:

- A systematic process for identifying, assessing and developing staff – *it all starts with recruitment;*
- A tool vital to future success of an organisation – *developing leaders now to fill future leadership roles;*
- A strategic planning for human capital - *treating employees as assets not ordinary costs;*
- An investment in your future leaders – *building a capacity for competitive edge;*
- A proactive and not reactive process– *the ability to plan for the inevitable replacement of key personnel;* and

- Providing a sustainability that creates motivated and capable employees – *ensures business continuity*.

Hill (2010) asserts that in implementing succession planning the focus should be on creating a match between the organisation's future needs and the aspirations of individual employees and when this is well developed it has the potential for increasing the retention of the most talented employees. As a strategic human resources management tool succession planning can provide organisations with a competitive edge, help organisations to improve the retention of talented employees and lower the risk of losing critical knowledge when people leave due to resignation or retirement (Government of Alberta, 2012). On a strategic level effective succession planning will ensure that organisations have the right people in the right place at the right time, a qualified pool of candidates is developed and ready to fill key positions, employees are inspired to realise their careers plans and full potential, employees are ready to respond to changes in the workplace, and create a conducive environment for the transfer of knowledge at the corporate level (GoA, 2012). Mehrabani and Mohamad (2011) perceive succession planning as a helpful approach to find suitable people who are needed for leadership positions or key positions in the organisations and organisations need to contribute to the development of their employees' knowledge, skills, talents and capabilities. It is important to promote employees from within the organisation as opposed to externally. Historically, organisations only paid attention to replace employees exactly before they were to leave the organisation which was rather a reactive effort which in many cases did cost a lot for the organisation (Mehrabani and Mohamad, 2011). Mehrabani and Mohamad (2011) also contend that today's organisations should be proactive and focus on developing employees for future human capital needs. In a broader view Mehrabani and Mohamad define succession planning as a vital structure that takes into account the organisation's resources for the maintenance and development of high potential employees. One must be cognisant that organisations that are fairly large (more than 150 employees), must have a Workplace Skills Plan in place, which is aligned to the Skills Development Act of 1998. This is also closely aligned to the skills development gap. Krishna (2014) states that succession planning is a core element of the talent strategy in building the quantity and quality of executives for future vacancies, and it should span job levels to create a pool of talent that will meet the needs of the organisation at multiple levels. Krishna (2014) further argues that a strong succession plan enables the organisation to understand the skills and behaviour it needs to execute its business strategy, see the talent gaps and then determine how to fill them. Organisations' long term sustainability is the driver of business strategy and, succession plans should be crafted with this in mind. Hill (2010) claims that succession planning can have positive spin-offs for an organisation, such as assisting organisations to transform how they manage their talent from top to bottom in order to positively impact bottom line results and productivity. He further asserts that done well, succession planning can foster an ongoing proactive dialogue between manager and senior executives that identifies and track individual's talents in key positions. Lamoureux *et al.* (2009) noted that succession management has become an important talent management initiative at companies around the world. Their view is that for some companies, succession management is a strategic process that minimizes leadership gaps for critical positions and provides opportunities for top talent to develop the skills necessary for future roles, whereas with other companies, succession planning is rather a constant struggle, viewed as an administrative exercise rather than as a competitive advantage. Church (2014) argues that the idea of having a formal succession planning process where leaders are classified according to some in-house definition of future potential, placed on the bench list for specific class jobs with a subjective assignment of "readiness" once a year and presented to the chief executive officer (CEO) and board of director seems rather out-dated at best. Krell (2010) asserts that a lack of succession planning in the organisation puts the sustainability of an organisation at risk and on the other hand the existence of succession planning reinforces leadership behaviours that help organisations to achieve business objectives and address weak areas preventing organisations from having a deep broad talent pipeline. Succession planning entails three distinct processes such as: planning the recruitment of human capital in senior executive position, early identification of leadership talent and grooming that talent through interventions such training, action learning, mentoring, job rotation, and other

developmental programs, tracking and evaluating senior leaders through a performance evaluation system is designed to sustain a succession planning programme and to prepare the organisation to fill vacancies when they occur (PricewaterCoopers, 2006). Through succession planning organisations will be better positioned to: identify where to focus much needed resources to maximise current and future performance requirements, recognise and prepare for retirements, resignations, and market conditions, proactively respond to stakeholder needs and work requirements, prepare for organisational changes and mission, ensure that the organisation is viable and positioned for future needs, build internal employee and organisational competencies and capabilities, and adjusting spontaneously to the changing work and political environment (NASA, 2003). Price (2008) views succession planning as a continuous and carefully planned process that is integrated into the organisation's overall strategic planning processes. Furthermore it will be challenging to develop and implement a successful succession planning programme without acknowledging a shared responsibility based on a solid partnership built on trust between the executive directors, the staff and the board of directors (Price, 2008). For non-profit organisations in particular, Price (2008) suggest three main types of succession planning as: emergency succession planning, strategic leadership development and departure defined succession planning. According to Price (2008) emergency succession planning is a plan to address an unanticipated departure of key personnel, usually occurring suddenly in a very short notice, while strategic leadership development is an ongoing process that identifies the core competencies, skills and knowledge needed by the organisation in the long run along with the development plan to cultivate those competencies in the existing staff or recruit new talent, and lastly, departure defined transition planning is a course of action that boards and executives employ when an executive begins thinking about leaving an organisation.

## 2.2. The Elements of Successions Planning Framework

Succession planning is an integral part of strategic human resource management and it plays a major role in a broader spectrum of talent management as it provides a platform for a structured career management programme aimed at providing organisations with a pool of future leadership which would sustain the competitiveness of the organisations in the long run. Talent management starts with a very crucial step of identifying the skills and competencies required to achieve business objectives. This is followed by the selection and recruitment of human resources needs in the organisation. Once successful candidates are placed in their positions, job objectives must be set for individual employees and their actual performance measured against the set objectives. The top achievers are then identified and put on a structured programme of leadership development for the purpose of creating a pool of talent of future leaders needed to sustain the organisation in the long term. The culture and values of the organisation needs to be entrenched in the potential leadership successors so that they continuously live and promote the aspirations and value systems of the organisation. Rothwell (2010) argues that though organisations may vary in terms of national culture, organisational culture and management values, one way to carry out a systematic succession planning and management is to follow a seven pointed star model. Rothwell's seven pointed star model highlights the following seven systematic steps:

**Step 1:** Make the commitment: This step requires decision makers in the organisation to commit to the succession planning and management programme. The decision makers should, among other activities, assess current problems and practices, determine the organisations succession planning and management programme requirements, formulate a programme mission statement, and establish a policy and procedures to guide the programme.

**Step 2:** Assess present work and people requirements: Decision makers should assess present work requirements in key positions. Rothwell argues that only in this stage can individuals get prepared for advancement in a way that is solidly grounded on work competencies. This step may also clarify the key individuals who would be exceptionally difficult to replace due to their unique talents and special knowledge.

**Step 3:** Appraise individual performance: Rothwell argues that this step is critical because most succession planning and management programmes assume that individuals must be performing well in their current job in order to qualify for advancement. This process should begin to provide the organisation with an overview of inventory of talent.

**Step 4:** Assess future work and people requirements: Rothwell argues that decision makers should make an effort to assess future work requirements and competencies (in key leadership positions) to align with the organisation's strategic direction. In this manner future leaders may be prepared to cope with changing requirements and organisational strategic objectives.

**Step 5:** Assess future individual potential: In this step the organisation seeks to gauge the current existing talent to match future work requirements. Questions like, how well individuals are prepared for advancement may be considered. Rothwell emphasises that organisations must establish an objective process, or a series of processes to assess future individual potential.

**Step 6:** Close the development gap: Rothwell emphasises that organisations should establish a continuing programme of leadership development to cultivate future leaders internally. Rothwell also argues that decision makers should also explore alternatives to traditional promotion from within methods of meeting succession needs.

**Step 7:** Evaluate the succession planning programme: Rothwell argues that to improve, the succession planning and management programme must be subjected to continual evaluation to assess how well it is working and the results from the assessment should in turn be used to make continuous programme improvement and to maintain a commitment to systematic succession planning and management.

Church (2014) describes four step level components of basic talent review and succession planning framework. In his four step level components model Church asserts that the first step in succession management process is in determining the future talent requirement for the business, the second step is characterised by quantifying and categorising existing talent against those future requirements so that gaps can be identified to inform the succession strategy and, step three and four involves building realistic talent plans to close development gaps internally through capability building or sourcing talent externally, and ensuring execution and accountability of the process. It must be reiterated that the talent plans must be realistic. NASA's Human Resources Development Branch has adopted a model which facilitates a better methodology for understanding where future talent will come from and how they can retain high potential employees so as to not interrupt continuity in organisational performance. According to NASA (2003) ensuring the recruitment and retention of a talented, diverse work force, and, continuously sharpening human capital knowledge, work force capabilities and competencies, as well as aligning these areas to the organisation's strategic goals, performance metrics and work force compensation is a way to gain the edge. NASA's HRDB adopted a model which includes five component phases as follows:

**Phase 1.** Conduct of a human capital and organisational business scan. In this aspect the organisation assesses the capability of the current work realities and aligns workforce requirements to business objectives.

**Phase 2.** Determination of critical performance area and conducting human work force gap analysis. In this aspect the organisation identifies the future competencies required to achieve future objectives against the current work force and then the competency gap.

**Phase 3.** Creation and communication of the organisation's succession management plan based upon the data and information reviewed resulting from phase 1 and 2.

**Phase 4.** Evaluation of the effectiveness of the organisation's succession management plan after a designated period of time. The evaluation of the effectiveness of the succession planning can be achieved by measuring flows such as staff turnover, new hires, promotions and success in role placement.

**Phase 5.** Conducting a system feedback and lessons learned review so as to update and/or modify the plan on a periodic basis.

Any exceptional succession planning programme will be organised around a roadmap that integrates all its components and emphasizes the internal development of existing employees in the organisation (Carnegie, 2007). According Carnegie (2007) the succession planning framework can be defined in terms of six steps as follows:

**Step 1.** Carnegie (2007) claims that no succession planning programme can work without managers and employees at all levels clearly understanding why a succession planning programme is needed and all stakeholders must clearly understand their role in the program.

**Step 2.** Involves analysing work and people and Carnegie (2007) upholds that managers must have the knowledge about the work being done, how it is done and what kind of people do it best, and to achieve this, creation of up to date job specs, clear deliverables and accountabilities, and job competency models to describe the characteristics of the people who do the work best are paramount.

In **Step 3** of the road map Carnegie (2007) argues that a performance evaluation process is important in a good succession planning programme because individuals must be held accountable for the work they do, the responsibilities they shoulder, and the competencies they demonstrate. Carnegie (2007) also warns that a good performance management system is the one that must measure people against what they are expected to do, what results are expected from their work, and what competencies and behaviours they are expected to demonstrate.

**Step 4** involves the analysis of the work and people needed in the future, and in this step Carnegie (2007) argues that decision makers must align the organisation's strategic objectives with the work and the competencies needed to realise those objectives and furthermore the organisation's future resource requirements should be driven down to each level, job and function.

**Step 5** involves evaluating potential candidates for promotion to higher level responsibilities and Carnegie (2007) argues that this should be considered against the backdrop of the organisation's future requirements.

**Step 6** involves people development with a focus on closing developmental gaps found by contrasting steps 4 to 5., and Carnegie (2007) argues that a successful people development programme requires organisational leaders to establish an individual development plan (IDP) for each employee to narrow the gaps between what the individual does now and he or she must do successfully in the future to function at higher levels of responsibility. Carnegie (2007) asserts that an IDP must be a negotiated learning contract between an individual and his or her supervisor on an annual basis, and individuals are encouraged to identify and plan resources needed to help them build the set of competencies they will require to function at higher level of responsibilities. According Carnegie (2007) resources which may be identified include training courses inside the organisation, seminars or conferences outside the organisation, internal job rotation experiences, and other competency building efforts. Step 7 of the road map succession planning involves the evaluation of the programme's results. In evaluating the results of the succession planning programme Carnegie (2007) asserts that the results must be measured against the objectives established for the programme in Step 1.

Hill (2010) claims that many organisations see the value of building a succession planning strategy, but simply don't know where to start. Organisations should assess, as a first step in building a succession planning strategy, what efforts are being undertaken now to manage the future talent (Hill, 2010). As a launch to building a foundation for effective succession planning (Hill, 2010) suggests that formulating a set of key questions with regards to effective succession planning could help organisations to get started. According to Hill (2010) organisations should formulate questions with regards to the average age of employees in their organisation, the ratio of employee retiring within the five year period, the existing systems for identifying employees with a high potential to fill in leadership roles, the systems for identifying the internal talent that may be ready to fill in roles immediately, the effectiveness of the current system in evaluating and identifying the right individual for the leadership roles and measuring them accordingly, the availability of candidates to replace a key contributor or member of the executive team at short notice, and furthermore Hill (2010) claims that gathering such information can help organisations identify potential areas of liability in the succession planning process and reinforce the significance of investing in a



succession planning programme. Hill (2010) also asserts that these questions will provide a platform for crafting and implementing a succession strategy and processes a custom-made to organisational talent pool.

### 2.3. Common Challenges in Succession Planning

Rothwell (2010) identified lack of support by top management, corporate politics, quick fix attitudes, low visibility, rapid pace of organisational change, too much paperwork and too many meetings, as the most common problems affecting a Succession Planning and Management programme. Rothwell (2010) asserts that if top managers are unwilling to support a systematic approach to succession planning it cannot work and that corporate politics are bound to displace performance and potential as an advancement criterion if not managed properly. Managers could be found implementing subjective methods by promoting friends instead of employees with the most potential and the temptation to employ quick fix attitudes tends to sacrifice effectiveness to expediency which could have dismal consequences due to ill-chosen leaders (Rothwell, 2010). Furthermore Rothwell (2010) adds that excellent leaders can only be cultivated over time and not overnight and that the succession plan must be visible and must enjoy the active support and participation of workers at all levels. A rapid pace of organisational change has raised new challenges for succession planning as predicting succession in an era of constant change is fast becoming impossible (Rothwell, 2010). Traditional approaches to succession planning is characterised by too much paper work which creates an additional problem for managers who are already swamped with other reporting requirements (Rothwell, 2010).

### 2.4. Best Practice in Succession Planning

There is a common view among HR professionals and human capital experts to what should constitute the best practices for effective succession planning in all types of industries (Hill, 2010). At a high level Hill (2010) groups these best practices into three broad categories viz. designing the process, continuous review and using technology, and provides a summary of what each category entails as follows:

*Designing the process:* This category entails the assessment of key positions that are critical to the business as a first step. Second is the assessment of key talent in the organisation at every level. Third is the establishment of carefully thought out plans for developing individuals and entrenching the bench strength in all the critical areas of the organisation. The final step involves a consistent, continuous monitoring and review process by all key stakeholders.

*Continuous review:* Managers should have a good idea of the depth and scope of available talent. Succession planning, as a guiding tool for managers to identify, develop and retain talent within the organisation, requires constant review and measurement by the leadership for effectiveness otherwise the process might break down and not achieve its strategic objective.

*Using technology:* The traditional methods of using a paper based system when designing, implementing, and executing succession planning process can be time consuming and challenging to manage. Paper based systems are not flexible enough to keep information current, centralised and easily accessible to managers. Smart organisations seize the opportunity to invest in innovative performance and talent management technology solutions to facilitate the entire succession planning process and, allow managers to have spontaneous information and provide them with a better understanding of the status of their team including readiness and possible early warning of threats to implementation. In today's high-tech environment, we talk about a paperless environment and email archiving, in order to save space, conserve forests, as well as making communicating information between divisions or branches that much easier. Succession planning impacts on both strategic and tactical activities in the organisation and there is a methodology which PricewaterCoopers (2006) propagates which will maximise succession planning efforts. PricewaterhouseCoopers outlines this methodology and its six elements as follows:

*Understand the current state of the pipeline:* According to PricewaterhouseCoopers' methodology understanding the current state of the talent pipeline marks the starting point for the succession planning process. The assessment of the talent pool inventory requires the direct involvement of senior management in the appraisal of the current talent pipeline. The direct involvement of senior managers in this process will solidify the commitment to succession planning initiatives. However, PricewaterhouseCoopers also warns about the potential bias and prejudice in the evaluation process of the potential leadership pipeline. However the solution to minimising potential bias and prejudice in the process could be to invite independent evaluators to partake in the process rather than to have only the usual evaluators. PricewaterhouseCoopers states that the outcome of the talent inventory evaluation may be presented in terms of quantitative and qualitative metrics. The table below gives contrasting insights which could be drawn from the talent evaluation process based on whether quantitative or qualitative metrics is used present the outcome.

Talent inventory evaluation metrics

Quantitative	Qualitative
The sum quantity of existing leaders and those showing interest in larger leadership roles. The quantity of individuals recognised as prospective candidates for larger roles. The quantity of critical roles against the number of recognised candidates available as potentially able to occupy critical roles. The demographics of the current pipeline in terms of race and nationality. The proportion of persons in the pipeline due for retirement and the average period remaining to retirement of the existing pipeline. The education level of persons in the pipeline. The proportion of pipeline members showing interest in increased management and leadership roles.	The quantity of individuals who received special awards and recognition in the pipeline. The cumulative evaluation of the whole talent pool on the leadership characteristics necessary in the future state of the organisation. The quantity of persons in the leadership pipeline who have acquired work experience in industry prior to their current role. The feedback of employees concerning the leadership effectiveness of present pipeline members. The quantity and the proportion of staff turnover due to better job opportunities elsewhere.

*Understand the process of leadership development:* The second element provides for the understanding of the leadership development process by evaluating the nature and state of the current process for developing leaders and also provides clarity about the state of tools, processes, and methods employed for leadership development. To achieve this PricewaterhouseCoopers claims there are two primary process reviews which may be useful in understanding the leadership development process viz. the qualitative assessment of various tools available and used to enhance leadership development. These various tools includes training courses, assignments, coaching, mentoring, action learning, e-learning and other methods which may be used in qualitative evaluation. PricewaterhouseCoopers asserts that the second primary process review is quantitative by nature and is concerned with the assessment of the effectiveness and throughput of training. The effectiveness of the leadership development programme may also be assessed by measuring the ratio of persons placed into leadership roles following the endorsed training coupled with performance compared to those not receiving training. PricewaterhouseCoopers asserts that the aim of information gathering in this process should be to improve the effectiveness of leadership development initiatives and to influence the budgetary processes in relation to leadership development interventions.

*Know how to fill the pipeline:* PricewaterhouseCoopers claims that to have an insight of how to fill the pipeline is preceded by first assessing the pool of potentials in both internal and external sources. Furthermore PricewaterhouseCoopers asserts that a longitudinal system of monitoring individuals from various sources and tracking them up to the points of entry into their present roles and performance levels is imperative. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers assessing the source of candidates will also help in the understanding of the availability of

candidates for important leadership roles which could also point to the level of candidates available for current or future leadership roles.

*Track the talent within the pipeline:* According to PricewaterhouseCoopers the tracking talent within the pipeline requires open discussion about key talents based on the requisite data on display. PricewaterhouseCoopers asserts that the establishment and maintenance of an accurate database about individuals and their talent is imperative in tracking the talent within the pipeline. In the advent of sophisticated technology there are a number of software solutions which could be employed to establish and maintain effective database warehouses. However PricewaterhouseCoopers suggest that prior to investing in such available technologies to support the monitoring of the pipeline, organisations should assess the ability of these software solutions to:

- Store and retrieve individual information over a period time
- Handle and manage qualitative information
- Edit information about an individual from previous work experience
- Managing the performance and competence of individuals
- Provide an audit trail on transaction date, the reason for the transaction and the particulars of the person who captured the transaction
- To deal with security of and access rights to the data.

*Use the talent pipeline data:* According to PricewaterhouseCoopers the use of a talent pipeline inventory and information is fundamental in the leadership development and forms the foundation for the processes in the previous four elements. PricewaterhouseCoopers argue that organisations struggle to integrate the information with regards to selection and promotion, placements to key roles, knowledge of talent gaps, and longitudinal development of individuals to the talent pipeline. PricewaterhouseCoopers state that it is important to establish a committee which will be accountable for carrying out the efforts for developing a leadership pipeline, and furthermore the success of the leadership development programs should be a dual responsibility of the committee and the local recruiting manager. PricewaterhouseCoopers emphasise that it is critical that the development committees should not fail to provide continuous feedback to individuals about their status in the organisation and to communicate back to the organisation about the state of the talent pipeline. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers the use of talent pipeline data is necessitated by the desire to monitor and understand the ratio of pipeline candidates who were selected, the need to analyse the success rate of pipeline candidates, the need to regularly give feedback, and updates to senior management about the pool of talent in the pipeline, and the opportunity to review and redesign the development and training strategies to address the skills gap.

*Add a leadership position and focus resources to support the pipeline:* PricewaterhouseCoopers argue that in many instances leadership development activities in organisations lack the focus that other organisation wide initiatives enjoy. Furthermore PricewaterhouseCoopers is of the view that many organisations, particularly in the public sector, do not have a dedicated manager focusing on the development leadership pipeline. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers the existence of a focused resource such as manager of the leadership pipeline could allow the organisation to consolidate all key elements for the succession planning process in an accountable rather than merely “reporting oriented fashion”. The role should be seen as the one that unifies the management of traditional roles focused on leadership training, external recruitment and performance management, rather than as a replacement of these roles.

In broad terms the various literature reviewed concur that succession planning involves the process of identifying, assessing and developing employees for current and future leadership roles. The literature reviewed highlighted what is being perceived by various authors as best practices in implementing succession planning and there is a common view from various authors that a continuous review of the succession planning process by senior leadership for the purpose of measuring its effectiveness is very important, otherwise the process might fail to achieve its objective of creating the pool of talent needed to sustain the organisations into the future. Lack of

commitment from leadership, coupled with a lack of understanding of the current talent within the organisation, came across as common challenges in implementing succession planning.

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

In the Oxford Concise Dictionary, the word “research” is defined as “the systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions”. Systematic investigations would then mean an inquiry into a phenomenon based on a fixed plan or system. Kothari (2004) states that the subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviours is suited to qualitative approach. The approach adopted for this study is qualitative.

#### 3.1. Research Philosophy

There are two fundamental research paradigms broadly recognised by the research community. These two research paradigms are commonly known as positivist (quantitative) and phenomenological (qualitative).

**Positivist (Quantitative):** According to Welman *et al.* (2001) positivism is the philosophical approach underlying the natural scientific method. The quantitative research approach tends to employ a highly structured methodology in order to facilitate replication and it emphasises quantifiable observations requiring statistical analysis (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). According to Kothari (2004) the quantitative approach resorts to generating data in quantitative form which can be subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis in a formal and inelastic manner. Positivists are more concerned with uncovering general laws of relationship and causality that apply to all people, and the phenomenon being studied can be objectively observable and measurable (Welman *et al.*, 2001).

**Phenomenological (Qualitative):** Unlike the positivists who are focused on exposing laws of relationship that apply to all people all the time, the phenomenologist considers the proponents of understanding human behaviour from the perspectives of the people involved, Welman *et al.* (2001). According to Kothari (2004) the qualitative approach is focused on the assessment of opinions, attitudes and behaviour rather than the description of the phenomenon.

#### 3.2. Research Approach

The quantitative approach is characterised by the generation of data in a quantitative form which can be subjected to rigorous quantitative in a formal and rigid way (Kothari, 2004). This is in a sense more empirical by nature. The Qualitative approach was considered to be appropriate in this study because the research problem depended on an analysis of qualitative data collected from survey questions assessing opinions, attitudes and behaviours about the succession planning at the agency. This study followed a single case study with embedded units. This type of case study provides the ability to look at sub-units that are situated within a larger case (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). While this study sought to understand the succession planning environment within the agency as a whole, participants in the research questions are business units with the agency.

#### 3.3. Research Strategies

There are number of research strategies which can be employed in qualitative research approach viz. case study, action research, grounded theory, ethnography, etc. A *case study* is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The case study strategy is considered to have the ability to generate answers to research questions such as why? what? and how?, and for this reason it is most used in explanatory and exploratory research. According to Welman *et al.* (2001) a case study is focused on an intensive study of limited number of units of analysis, individuals, or an institution, and the researcher is directed towards understanding the uniqueness and the idiosyncrasy of a particular case in all its complexity. This study followed a

single case study with embedded units. This type of case study provides the ability to look at sub-units that are situated within a larger case (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

### 3.4. Target Population

The population in this study was made up of managing directors and HR managers in all 9 business units within the agency. The target population was chosen because the participants are entrusted with a high level of responsibility for ensuring adequate and appropriate human resource capacity that will competitively sustain the organisation. The target population size in this study is 13 consisting of HR managers and Managing Directors only.

### 3.5. Sampling Strategy

There are two basic methods of sampling viz., probability sampling and non-probability sampling. In this study non-probability sampling was used. *Probability* based sampling includes any selection method where the sample members are selected from the target population on purely a random (chance) basis (Wegner, 2012). Wegner states that under random sampling every member of the target population has a chance of being selected for the sample. *Non-probability sampling* is a non-random sampling method. This method does not require a sampling frame i.e. it provides the researcher with an opportunity to select his/her sample purposively. Purposive sampling enables the researcher to use his/her judgement in selecting cases that best address research questions and objectives (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). In this study, HR Managers and Managing Directors were purposively selected because of the roles and responsibilities with regards to succession planning activities at their respective divisions. According to Saunders *et al.* 2009 this form of sampling is often used when working in small samples such as in this case study research. Furthermore Saunders *et al.* 2009 states that if data can be collected from the entire population there is no need to sample. For this research the targeted population consists of heads of business units within the agency and HR Managers within the agency business units bringing the entire target population size to 13. Because of the small number of the target population, in this study the sample size equals the target population size.

### 3.6. The Research Instrument

There are numerous methods of data collection which can be used in research. Kothari (2004) described some of these methods as: observation method, which is commonly used in studies relating to behavioural science; interview (face-to-face or telephonically) method which involves presentation of oral-verbal stimuli and reply in terms of oral-verbal responses; questionnaires; schedules; etc. Of all methods mentioned, interviews and questionnaires are the two most commonly used research instruments. In this study a self-administered questionnaire was chosen as an appropriate method for collecting primary data. Self-administered questionnaires allows respondents to independently answer questions, which is an element that makes responses trustworthy (Kothari, 2004). Two sets of questionnaires are used in this study. One set was designed to collect data from the managing directors of each business unit, and the other set was designed to collect data from the HR managers. Both questionnaires used open-ended questions. The purpose of the questions was to assess the perception of respondents about the succession planning management in the organisations. The questionnaire to HR managers had three open-ended questions aimed at assessing their definition of succession planning, their perception about senior managers' attitude towards succession planning management and lastly, their perception of what the key challenges are in succession planning management at their business units. The questionnaire to managing directors had three to four questions also assessing their definition of succession planning, the preparedness of their facility to deal with a sudden death of a key employee, how are they logically directing their business units in performing succession planning activities and lastly how they would describe key challenges faced by their business units in implementing succession planning.

### 3.7. Pilot Study

A Pilot study in research refers to testing the effectiveness of the data collecting instrument on a small scale of the target population. Pilot testing is important as it helps the researcher to measure whether the data collection instruments will yield the desired outcome. Saunders *et al.* (2009) assert that the pilot testing provides the researcher with the potential to ensure that the research methods used to collect data are actually feasible. Based on the outcome of the pilot study the researcher is able to refine the questionnaire so that respondents in the main study will have no problem in answering the questions and there will be no problems in recording the data. In this study the questionnaire was piloted using a sample of 2 participants. Participants consisted of one managing director and one HR manager. Both respondents were from the same business unit. The result of the pilot study showed that the questionnaire achieved the objective for which it was designed. No amendments were made to the questionnaire.

### 3.8. Administration of Questionnaire

There are various means of distributing a questionnaire to respondents. A questionnaire can be web based, can be send via post or via email and it also be administered telephonically. In this study the questionnaire was sent via email to respondents across the agency's business units. Respondents were given 5 working days to complete and return the questionnaire via the email. The completed questionnaires were stored on a personal computer in a separate folder. Secondary data relevant to this study were gathered in the form of reports and presentation. The secondary data gathered was crucial in enhancing the understanding of succession planning problem at the agency. The secondary data included the agency wide consolidated succession planning reports from corporate HR, consolidated training and development plan, and presentations on transformation and employment equity presented at one of the workshops. The main purpose of secondary data was to provide support to the primary data thus enhancing the validity and reliability of the research.

### 3.9. Data Analysis

To be useful data collected needs to be analysed and the meanings understood. Qualitative data refers to non-numeric data and it can range from a shortlist of responses to open-ended questions in a questionnaire, to more complex data such as a transcript to policy documents (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Data collected were anonymised and separate codes were used for different participants. There are two approaches to qualitative analysis viz. the deductive approach and the inductive approach (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The deductive approach uses existing theory to frame the data analysis, whereas the inductive approach explores the collected data to see which themes should be followed up and concentrated on. The key feature of qualitative data is that there is no standardised procedure for analysing such data. According to Saunders *et al.* (2009) there are various inductively based analytical procedures to analyse qualitative data, namely: data display and analysis, template analysis, analytic induction, grounded theory, discourse analysis, and narrative analysis. In this study data were transcribed into a table and categorised around key topics. The data were analysed to identify patterns and themes which emerged from the data and finally the data were examined to determine how far they fitted the theoretical framework based on the existing body of knowledge in the subject area of succession planning.

### 3.10. Validity and Reliability

Validity in research is concerned with the accuracy and truthfulness of scientific findings, while reliability is concerned with the consistency, stability and repeatability (Brink, 1991). Content validity refers to the extent to which the research question provides adequate coverage of the research problem. The criterion-related validity is concerned with the ability of the research questions to make accurate prediction and often this is undertaken using

statistical analysis. This validity test is not applicable in this study as statistical analyses are akin to quantitative research.

Construct validity refers to the extent to which research questions actually measures the existence of theories which were intended to be measured. In this study the aim is not to test the existence of theories but to assess the opinions, attitudes and behaviours of respondents with regards to succession planning management in a workplace. Another method available for reinforcing validity in qualitative research is triangulation. Triangulation is typically a strategy for improving validity and reliability of research or the evaluation of findings (Golafshani, 2003) Triangulations refers to using more than one source of data for the investigation of a research problem in order to reinforce validity and credibility of findings. In this study secondary data in the form of internal reports, policies and presentations relevant to succession planning were used to corroborate data received from participants. Also a questionnaire contained similar questions to HR managers and MDs of the business units.

### 3.11. Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the agency only and the findings from the study cannot be generalised. The participation was also limited to managing directors and HR managers only. Therefore the opinions of the departmental managers, who are also responsible for succession planning in their respective span of control, cannot be revealed by this study The latter limitation provides an opportunity to assess the perceptions of a broader number of employees about the succession planning at the agency. Only a questionnaire method was used to collect primary data and the problem of low or non-response was a concern beyond the researcher's control. The study did not take demographics into consideration, nor was it concerned about the length of service of participants at the agency. The inherent limitation of qualitative research is that it almost impractical to make quantitative predictions from the data.

### 3.12. Elimination of Bias

In research bias affects the validity and reliability of findings. Because qualitative research depends on information provided by participants through interviews surveys or focus groups, bias is inevitable. However, bias must be reduced as far as possible. In qualitative research experiences, beliefs, feelings attitudes, wishes, state of mind, culture, error, references and personality can bias analysis and reporting. The recommended way of eliminating or reducing biased reporting is by triangulation.

### 3.13. Ethical Considerations of the Study

Saunders *et al.* (2009) asserts that the key ethical issues the researcher must take into consideration are:

**Ensuring participants have given consent:** In this study a cover letter addressing all the ethical issues mentioned was included in the distribution of questionnaire to the intended participants. Follow up calls were made to ensure that recipients of questionnaires understood the message contained in the cover letter and also allowing them to ask questions if there were any.

**Ensuring no harm comes to participants:** In this study there was no harm either psychological, financial or social that could occur to the participants. Participants were assured of this undertaking in the consent letter.

**Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity:** Questionnaires were sent individually to each participant. Neither the participants' names nor their business unit's names were disclosed anywhere on the questionnaire.

**Ensuring that permission is obtained:** Before the questionnaire were distributed to individual participants within the agency permission to conduct research using the agency as a study case was received from the CEO.

## 4. RESULTS

One business unit was purposely chosen to pilot the questionnaire. Two separate questionnaires were sent to targeted participants comprising of the managing director and the HR manager. The questionnaire to the managing director had four questions designed to answer the research question. All questions from both respondents were answered without any difficulty. The results showed that only nine out thirteen respondents returned their questionnaire fully completed. This represented about 69% of the target population. Only three of five targeted managing directors returned their questionnaires fully completed and only six of eight targeted HR managers returned their questionnaires fully completed. All managing directors were asked the same questions as in the pilot study and also all HR managers were asked the same set of questions.

### 4.1. Interpretation and Discussion

The questions which formulated in the questionnaires were used to lead the interpretation and discussion of the study's results

*Question: In your own words how would you define succession planning?*

This question was fairly answered by all respondents. It was clear from their responses that they understood the theoretical definition of succession planning. Although responses to this question were not exactly the same, they all identified succession planning as a process undertaken by organisations to develop and groom employees for future promotional prospects. This question was asked to determine whether managing directors and HR managers have a common understanding of a theoretical definition of succession planning.

*Question: Describe how you logically direct your facility in performing succession planning?*

This question was asked to managing directors of the business units. The responses received differed greatly from individual respondents. The question wanted to understand how and what approach is being followed by the heads of BUs in executing the succession planning.

*Question: Describe any key challenges your facility is faced with in managing succession planning?*

This question was asked to all participants i.e. MDs and the HR managers. What emerged from the results is that 3 out of 6 HR managers who responded said there is lack of understanding of what succession management really is. One HR manager said a lack of adequate mentoring and training is the main challenge. 2 of 6 HR managers cited the size or the organisation as a deterrent to succession planning. On the other hand all MDs hinted that a flat organisational structure was a main challenge and also many commented that a one man specialised department is a cause for concern. One HR manager said the succession plan at her BU is only management knowledge and managers are not engaging with their subordinates.

*Question: How prepared is your organisation to deal with sudden loss of key members?*

This question was asked to MDs. The question aimed at understating how effective is the succession planning at BUs. From the results it is evident that MDs do not have a succession plan in place to deal with sudden loss of key personnel.

*Question: How would you describe the attitude of your senior management toward succession planning?*

This question was asked to HR managers with the aim to gauge the opinions of HR managers about the MDs' attitude towards succession planning. The results to this question paints a rather sad picture. 4 of 6 HR managers gave an opinion that senior management at their respective BUs are not taking succession planning seriously, stating that managers are considering the succession planning as a mere paper exercise. One HR manager said "There is very little regard for training and development and a culture of 'no time to train' is quite prevalent at national facilities". The findings pointed out that there was a common understanding among the managing directors and the HR managers of what succession planning is and what it entails. The study also revealed that there was a common view on the lack of budget as a key challenge to achieving succession planning. However, HR managers were also of the view that there was minimum commitment from senior managers towards succession



planning. HR managers held a view that some senior managers treated succession planning as a paper exercise that needed to be done annually to comply with internal policies. The main study revealed that managing directors and HR managers both noted a lack of integration between the succession plan and the training intervention as also a key challenge. This is indicative of a lack of synergy, hence leading to a complete breakdown of the entire process.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from primary research showed that the HR managers and managing directors had a common perception of what succession planning is and what it should entail. Their perceptions were alike to the general definition of succession planning from the literature reviewed. The findings from the primary study revealed that there is no uniform approach of implementing succession planning programmes at various business units within the agency. Some business units were flagging the size of organisational structure as an influential element as to how succession planning is performed at business unit level. From the primary study the managing director concurred that their business units are not prepared to deal with a sudden loss of a key members as there are no readily available members who can be replacements. The findings showed that the execution of succession planning activities at business unit level is not in line with the theoretical framework from the literature reviewed which suggest that succession planning starts with getting adequate commitment from senior management, then followed by a proper analysis of current work and the existing talent, followed by evaluating the performance of current talent, then followed by proper analysis of work to be done and the people needed in the future (talent pool), followed by evaluating potential candidates for future leadership requirements, then followed by developing people through training and mentoring and lastly evaluating the succession planning. The findings also revealed that HR managers perceived that there is not enough commitment from senior managers towards succession planning and also they held a view that some managers see succession planning as an annual paper exercise that needs to be done to satisfy compliance to internal policies, and SOP's (Standard Operating Procedures). The managing director pointed out that the lack of depth in the management level, specialised key roles, and the limited size of the organisational structure are some of the challenges they face in the implementation of succession planning as this means there are not enough people to build the talent pool. The findings showed that the lack of budget to run the succession programme is also a limiting factor. The findings from literature reviewed provided a theoretical framework for building an effective succession planning in any industry. However the findings from the primary study revealed that business units within the agency are falling short of succession planning processes in line with the theoretical framework discussed in literature reviewed. The literature reviewed also highlighted key best practices that enhance the effective succession planning. Some of the challenges facing the business units within the agency are also highlighted in the literature reviewed as common challenges of succession planning. HR managers' perceptions about senior managers' lack of commitment and that some managers see the succession planning process as a paper exercise highlights weakness in the agency's succession processes. The findings from the secondary data revealed that the agency has a policy and procedures intended to guide business units' executives in establishing succession planning and yet business units seem to be battling with the implementation of succession planning.

### 5.1. Recommendations to Management

The findings from the primary study revealed that there are holes in the current succession planning processes at the agency. HR managers' view that there is a lack of commitment from senior managers at business units should be a concern to the agency. According to Rothwell's model of effective succession planning framework, the first and paramount step in advancing successful succession planning is commitment from senior management. There is also a concern raised by managing directors and HR managers at business units about the lack of integration between training interventions and succession planning. According to Hill (2010) one best practice of the succession

planning programme is generating plans for grooming and deepening the bench strength in all critical areas of the organisation. Another concern raised is that managers who are responsible for implementing succession planning are not held accountable and that those managers are not capacitated to implement succession planning. Madnick and Morgan (2012) states some of the challenges of succession as not offering training and development opportunities, not designing a developmental programme specifically for the position, and not holding managers leaders accountable and sharing information with employees as key concerns that hinder the effective execution of succession planning. The paper's primary contribution is finding that it might as well be that HR managers are also not adequately capacitated to train and develop those managers who are responsible for succession planning. If the agency is committed to effective succession planning, the starting point is to invest in professional resources dedicated to driving succession planning and management programmes throughout the organisation. According to PricewaterCoopers (2006) the existence of a focused resource, such as manager of the leadership pipeline, could allow the organisation to consolidate all key elements for succession planning process in an accountable rather than merely "reporting oriented fashion". Succession planning and management is supposed to be informed by strategic business objectives, therefore succession planning must be part of strategic management at the agency, and not a mere paper exercise done for compliance sake as is the case according to the results from primary data. The study contributes to existing literature by suggested that the recruitment of a senior specialist with a mandate to drive succession planning and management might be a step in the right direction. The officer's concern should be, and only be, to properly facilitate, capacitate, manage and monitor the succession planning program for the entire organisation. Using paper based systems to designing, implementing, and executing an effective succession planning process can be time consuming and challenging to manage (Hill, 2010). The study further contributes to current research by suggested that the officer be able identify appropriate technology solutions which will be able keep information current, centralise and be easily accessible to managers. Investing in innovative performance and talent technology solutions can facilitate the entire succession planning process and, allow managers to be intuitive and provide them with a better understanding of their team including readiness and the risk of someone dying (Hill, 2010). The agency must also try to integrate the succession planning with training and development. Once the talent is identified, the organisation's plans to grooming individuals and deepening the bench strength in all the critical areas of the organisation must be generated. This research concurs with Hill (2010) by suggesting that the agency try to continuously review the succession planning programme because while succession planning guides the identification, development and retention of talent within the organisation, if persistent review and measurement isn't adhered to, the process might break down. There is potential to expand on the study by extending the target population to include all levels of employees within the agency. This will further expand the insight of the challenges of succession planning within the agency.

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