



A THEMATIC APPROACH TO SUCCESSION PLANNING, LEADERSHIP CONTINUITY, AND ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH: SPOTLIGHT ON CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS IN GHANAIAN INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examines how Succession Planning (SP) for Chief Executive Officers (CEO) of high-performing organizations in emerging markets ensures the steady success of business continuity through competitive advantage and organizational growth. It also takes a keen interest in the role of the board of directors in perpetuating succession planning practices and the key qualities expected of future CEOs which include value-added competencies, specialized knowledge, leadership capabilities, and performance-based success.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This study adopts a qualitative and exploratory approach using a thematic approach to analyze the data.

Findings: Through a qualitative lens, the study found that most organizations have no succession-planning practices. Again, those that have it had a weak one, and only a few organizations have a mildly strong succession-planning policy. Furthermore, the board of directors plays a crucial role in the succession-planning processes of these organizations.

Research Limitation: There were some constraints during the study and writing of this paper which are indicated. The outbreak of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic caused the closing down of targeted companies for research.

Practical Implications: Companies should have strategic initiatives to enable the identification of a talent pool for training in all divisions.

Social Implications: Training activities such as seminars and workshops should be implemented to improve the understanding of leadership and succession planning.

Originality: Studies on succession planning did not consider the role of the board of directors which this study sheds light on. Finally, studies on SP have not emphasized how important it is for chief executive officers to understand the crucial role that strategic decision-making and succession planning play in guaranteeing the long-term growth of organizations in sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: *Board of directors. chief executive officer. contingency theory. leadership. succession planning. thematic approach*

INTRODUCTION

In a competitive business climate, leadership and succession planning (SP) are essential to

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ensure the continuity and survival of an organization (Cavanaugh, 2017). Employees' availability and long-term value must be considered in an organization's human resource strategy. Consequently, simply having a workforce (human capital) is no longer sufficient to provide a company with a competitive advantage. To preserve a competitive edge, a company's personnel must be considered a strategic resource (Hamadamin & Atan, 2019). In a well-organized firm, there is a conscious and planned effort to prepare personnel for executive-level duties. This is necessary to manage complications, such as leadership vacancies caused by retirement, disease, death, or resignation from shocking the organization (Boyd *et al*, 2015; Mokhber *et al*, 2017).

Previous studies have looked into the economic and behavioural factors that influence Chief Executive Officers' turnover (Jenter & Kanaan, 2015; Gorton *et al*, 2017; Chyz & Gaertner, 2018; Jenter, & Lewellen, 2021) and have concluded that approximately 10% to 15% of organizations need to find a new CEO every year (Harrell, 2016). SP-related research and activities are dispersed across various domains. Literature on SP includes studies by practitioners from various backgrounds, and they address areas such as relevance, overall consideration, and recommendations for SP implementation (McKee & Froelich, 2016; Seniwoliba, 2015). Most of these studies are case studies that examine the influence of SP on companies and their characteristics (Garman & Glawe, 2004; Ip & Jacobs, 2006). Other research has been conducted on family business succession (Gagné *et al.*, 2021; Mokhber *et al.*, 2017) and the hiring of new CEO (Liang, 2016). Research on SP systems and activities is scattered across various fields. The succession processes for the selection of retiring partners were conducted by researchers on SP (Sinkin, 2013). Unfortunately, these studies are foreign-based and did not reflect the Ghanaian cultural situation. Even though the following studies were carried out in Ghana: Saan *et al.* (2018) studied SME succession by the adoption of the agency and stakeholders' theories in Wa Municipality. Creating a culture of enterprising women through succession planning (Ganu & Boateng, 2012) and approaches to succession management of non-academic leaders in higher educational institutions with evidence from the University of Cape Coast was researched by (Oppong, Oduro-Asabere, & Owusu, 2016). What is lacking is the Ghanaian context of CEO succession planning within various sectors, and how it affects organizational growth through the external environment which this study seeks to fill.

The SP in an organization is an intentional and thorough effort to ensure leadership continuity. Its goal is to preserve and enhance intellectual and knowledge capital for the future as well as promote human progress (Al-Ghazali, 2020). According to Adewale *et al.* (2011), SP guarantees that an organization is perpetuated by supplying a leadership pipeline with high-performing employees. Leaders must forecast the sustainability of their organizations after their tenure. Succession planning refers to a deliberate and systematic process of ensuring the storage of valuable corporate knowledge needed for business continuity by identifying and grooming future leaders to replace current leaders when they die, retire or leave the organization (Soares *et al*, 2021). This is because the sudden demise of key personnel in organizations leads to the loss of invaluable corporate knowledge, which can have devastating effects on the long-term survival of any organization (Arslan, 2021).

Some researchers believe that SP, in large businesses, cannot be done in isolation but needs to be a part of the organization's broader strategic plan, or ethos (Essien, 2022; Gwakwa, 2020).

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Again, SP should be a continuous process linked to the organization's ability to learn (George et al., 2019).

All succession-related operations should be overseen by a competent individual, group, or sector of an organization (Force et al., 2022). In the case of a small private enterprise, professional advisors may occasionally oversee the succession of leadership to avoid the costs of establishing a unit within the company (Harmon, 2007), Gandossy and Verma (2006), who researched SP, propose the following five foundations for succession management implementation: They include alignment of current and future staffing needs, leadership commitment to finding and developing talents, long-term evaluation of essential jobs in developing a talent pool, and long-term development of leadership prospective candidates through various programmes.

According to Barton and Rouse-Jones (2007), succession planning may be accomplished by determining an organization's strategic direction (Stadler, 2011; Garg & Van, 2012), which requires SP to be linked to the firm's corporate business plan and culture (Mckee, 2021) and also included in the SP strategy (George *et al*, 2019). Identifying critical management and technical positions requires an organization's next-generation leaders to have the appropriate abilities, knowledge, talent, and experience. This arrangement ensures a consistent supply of skilled individuals with the various technical competencies necessary for company continuity (Rothwell, 2005 & 2010; Harmon, 2007). Future vacancies are projected by assessing the staff who are future leaders on how long they anticipate staying in the firm and their current and prospective abilities in the light of future growth opportunities (Adewale et al., 2011). An organization should determine executive descriptors for future leaders. This is achieved by assigning an individual or team to conduct research and design the SP model or by acquiring human resource staff or a consultant to help with model creation (Johnson et al., 2018). Staffing holes should be identified by evaluating a company's future leadership needs to know who could be available to fill the vacancies (LeCounte et al., 2017; Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018). Developmental needs must be diagnosed by comparing the potential to the job description, including qualifications, to identify developmental gaps (Rothwell, 2005). The organization must create a deliberate development plan by allowing all leaders to go through a gestation phase for at least two years. This allows them to benefit from their experiences while developing a large number of high-potential prospects (Atwood, 2020). The progress of these potential SP candidates must be reviewed and new assignments allocated by giving them feedback on their progress and suggestions for improvement (Rothwell 2005). If they are not making progress or meeting expectations, extra assignments should be assigned to help them learn more (Barton & Rouse-Jones, 2007; Atwood, 2020).

In practice, as soon as a company is profitable enough to have a future, owners must begin to think about SP. The criteria for selecting successors (i.e., successor selection criteria) involve a list of qualities to look for in a potential successor. The selection process begins when a position becomes vacant. To qualify an applicant for the open position, the recruiter looks for the applicant's specific features (Ogbu, 2019). The SP establishes the requirements for each position and enables the identification of the best candidate for the job from the talent pool (Atwood, 2020).



The board of directors of a public corporation has a fiduciary duty to shareholders to develop and implement a succession plan. On the other hand, owners of privately held companies must think beyond themselves and provide succession plans for the benefit of employees, families, customers, and suppliers (Jabr, 2013; Rothwell, 2005). Jabr (2013) posited that in the event of early death or disability, the loss of a key employee, or when the owner no longer wishes to be a leader, succession planning deals with choosing who takes over. Contingency theory asserts that when managers or boards of directors need to make a decision, they must be critical of the aspects of the situation and act on the factors that are crucial to the situation (Zamoum & Gorpe, 2018). SP has evolved from a replacement strategy to a more methodical and proactive strategy that focuses on future organizational leadership needs (Charan et al., 2010). According to Okwakpam (2019), the beneficial influence of succession is most visible when the new leader's human capital matches the enterprise's organizational circumstances. An ideal leadership style depends on the situation at hand (Muga et al, 2017) as suggested by the contingency theory.

Over the years, researchers have attempted to develop the SP process in the body of literature. Some have tried to move away from replacement planning toward a more proactive strategy that focuses on future organizational leadership requirements (Charan et al., 2010). Efforts have been made to identify the best practices in the SP domain (Ali et al., 2019; Karaki, 2022). Leibman et al. (1996) examined the organizational environment, pushing the topic away from a restricted perspective of SP towards a more expansive idea of succession management. Rothwell (2005) expanded the scope of SP and provided advice on many aspects of succession planning and management programs. Best practices for Succession Planning Management (SPM) according to the researcher, include measuring an organization's SP programme, developing leadership talents and promoting from within, outsourcing work, reorganizing the organizational structure, outsourcing services from within, using experts, and collaborating with similar organizations (Rothwell, 2010). Experts in succession planning and decision-making must decide whether to hire a new executive from within or outside the organization (Dersano et al., 2021).

Zhang & Rajagopalan (2004) stated that well-groomed internal candidates or relay successors have a positive impact on a firm's growth as opposed to external non-relay replacements. This has been confirmed by many researchers (Giacomara & al, 2021). The first justification for this claim is that internally groomed CEOs boost shareholder value by 1.9% annually (Gandossy & Verma, 2006). Secondly, internal hiring is less expensive than external sourcing which has a 65% failure rate within two years of taking office (Hamza et al., 2021). Thirdly, external recruiting might cause internal talent to become dormant, resulting in attrition, demotivation, and higher staff turnover (Gandossy & Verma, 2006). Fourthly, against the concern that internal grooming will prepare the prospect for competition, the benefits of succession outweigh this concern, as SP reduces disruption during leadership transitions, preserves the firm's knowledge, culture, and institutional memory, and makes use of internal talent (Wallin, 2007). Internal talent development results in executives with historical knowledge, institutional experience, and a level of confidence in the organization, which allows them to be accepted as competent, skilled leaders (Harrison et al., 2006). The employment of external candidates needs far stronger due diligence (Camuffo et al., 2022) compared to those who do not already hold leadership positions. Leaders who are hired away from their existing jobs will supply the



recruiting firm with more data on their potential. When selecting a new CEO, senior executives with a track record aim to minimize the risk of bad selection (Buchholz et al., 2020).

The board has fiduciary responsibilities to guarantee that SP programmes are in place to identify and develop prospective leaders for future leadership roles within the business (Wierseman 2002). Berke (2005) suggests that boards establish monitoring tools to guarantee that current executives do not undermine prospective successors. They also ensured that a well-developed in-house talent pipeline was implemented to meet future employment requirements. The context and substance of the company should be considered when accounting. Context refers to the company's main operations, whereas content refers to a firm's connected decisions (Conger & Nadler, 2004).

THE THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING OF THE STUDY.

In this study, the leadership theories related to CEO succession planning are trait and contingency.

Trait Theory

The trait approach view stresses leaders' human attributes such as physical and personality attributes, competencies, and values. It views leadership purely from the standpoint of the individual leader. This technique is based on the notion that attributes result in consistent behavioural patterns across contexts. In other words, leadership characteristics are viewed as inherited and tend to remain relatively consistent over time. According to this belief, leaders have certain characteristics that make them good leaders (Amanchukwu et al. 2015). Trait theories rule out the possibility that leadership attributes are learned and that exceptional leaders share certain inherent character traits (Holdford, 2003). Munna (2021) identified two types of traits: emerging traits (traits that are heavily influenced by inheritance) such as height, intelligence, attractiveness, and self-confidence, and efficacy traits (traits that are influenced by experience or learning), including charisma, as a critical component of leadership. The leadership trait hypothesis is concerned with a leader's ideas and views, personality, desire for achievement or acceptability, orientation to power, gender, confidence, and mental, physical, and emotional characteristics (Branson & Marra, 2019). The Trait theory is an attempt to analyze effective combinations of human personality traits, so implying or defining a set of human characteristics that enable an individual to lead others effectively (Smaldino, 2014; Holdford, 2003)

For nearly a century, trait-based leadership theory remained practically unquestioned until the mid-20th century, when more modern leadership studies began to find certain contradictions in trait-based concepts. Stogdill (1948), as cited by Klenke (2004), investigated and contested the classic trait-based view of leadership qualities and discovered the following leadership characteristics: age, dominance, height, initiative, persistence, ambition, desire to excel, physique, energy, health, responsibility, appearance, integrity and conviction, fluency of speech, self-confidence, intelligence, happiness, sense of humour, academic performance, emotional stability and control, knowledge, social and economic status, judgment, and decision making. The author was among the first to recognise that a person does not become a successful



leader simply by possessing particular characteristics. He claimed that a successful leader's traits must be appropriate to the leadership situation's requirements, that is, the specific obstacles encountered and followers' abilities, hopes, ideals, and worries. Despite criticism of this theory, trait-based approaches to leadership continue to have an impact on leadership. In summary, the trait-based theory implies that the best leaders are born leaders and that if a person lacks the 'right' leadership characteristics, he or she will be unable to lead effectively, or at the very least, will not lead as well as a natural-born leader. Hence, it is believed that a possible CEO's attributes and personality traits can contribute to his selection for an SP programme.

Contingency Theory

Fiedler (1967) established the contingency theory of leadership effectiveness in response to flaws revealed in the trait theory. This approach was developed to incorporate situational variables into the leadership equation (Chemers, 2014). Numerous studies on this subject have revealed that the situation is an unpredictable component of leadership that plays a role not only in defining the boundaries of interaction between leaders and their followers but also in determining the leadership behaviours of leaders (Lussier & Achua, 2015). Leaders' ability to appraise situations or contexts influences their success and effectiveness in accomplishing organisational goals. Under contingency theory, Fiedler argues that a leader's effectiveness is influenced to a great extent by the style of the leader and the situational characteristics that lead to three situations (i.e., very favourable, unfavourable, and intermediate favourableness). Based on this, Fiedler outlined three assumptions that should be considered when determining situational leadership. These are leader-member relations or the degree of trust and support which exists between followers and leaders, task structure, which is the extent to which the goals and procedures for accomplishing the group's task are defined, position power, and the degree to which the leader has authority to reward and punish followers.

Using these assumptions as a foundation, Fiedler went on to propose two leadership Task-oriented (TO) and relationship-oriented (RO) (Bertocci, 2009) leaders tend to be more effective than relationship-oriented leaders in highly favourable and unfavourable situations, while relationship-oriented leaders tend to be more effective than task-oriented leaders in situations of intermediate favourableness (Peretomode, 2012). However, contingency theory was criticised on the grounds of some glaring weaknesses in its consistency, continuity, and conformity (Safari & Saleh, 2020). Despite the limitations of this theory, several studies have effectively demonstrated the usefulness of the contingency leadership approach in achieving effective leadership performance. For instance, Avery and Ryan's (2002) study, in which they applied the situational leadership model to 17 managers from diverse organisations in Australia using a qualitative research technique, revealed that situational leadership has beneficial effects on the respondents. The notion of situational leadership is well suited to management jobs, such that they feel secure. Again, the approach is straightforward, intuitive, and simple to implement, as well as a rational notion that makes sense and works effectively for the response.

The theory states that there is no right way to lead/organize, and that, in some cases, the organizational leadership style may not be effective in others (Khan, 2016). CEOs' promotion



from within the firm through SP has an impact on organisational growth. The selected CEO is affected by environmental situations, such as economic, sociocultural, and technological. The CEO must, therefore, formulate strategies and blend his/her leadership style by considering these environmental situations that will give the firm a competitive advantage for organisational growth. No leadership style suits every scenario. The best style will be the one that you match with specific conditions and individuals. The most successful leaders seamlessly switch between various leadership styles.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study's research design was qualitative. The case study was utilized because results about the research topics were produced using data-gathering techniques such as interviews, observation, and focus group discussions within the case industries.

Participants and the Study Area

The study was conducted in the regional capital of Ghana, Accra, and Tema which is prevalent with the very respondents needed for this study. The respondents comprised 21 senior executives from 10 organizations within the construction, aviation, financial, transport, telecommunication, hospitality, agricultural, oil and gas, insurance, and automobile industries in Ghana's Accra and Tema metropolises in the Greater Accra Region. The study adopted purposive sampling techniques to reach 21 respondents for the interviews.

The researchers settled on 21 respondents when they reached the data saturation point. The point when no new information, codes, or themes develop as researchers interview new respondents (Boddy, 2016; Malterud et al., 2016). This study deemed it necessary to explore the respondents' demographic characteristics to ascertain relevant information in support of the study findings. Two out of the twenty-one respondents who are between the ages of forty (40) and sixty (60) years are top-non-executive directors. The other nineteen (19), comprised of seven females and twelve males, were members of the management team in their firms. They had an average work experience of at least 20 years. Their main job titles border the director of HR, managers, and chief operating officers. They are predominant in corporate affairs, marketing, administration, and human resource management.

Data Collection

Data collection involves the implementation of various procedures to generate information to support claims (Preetha et al, 2020). A primary technique for acquiring data involves personal interviews with the sampled respondents. Semi-structured interview questions were prepared following a review of the literature and preliminary discussions with key stakeholders for comments and adjustments. Arrangements were made for the respondents according to their convenient schedules. To reel in their commitment, assurance was made of their anonymity, and their responses were in line with the study patterns and themes. Thus, the ethical standards and uniqueness of the research were not compromised. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted for approximately an hour for each respondent. Interviews were recorded



and transcribed verbatim to capture respondents' sentiments.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis which involved examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial proposition of the study. It focused on identifying, analyzing, and recording forms or themes within the collected data. The thematic analysis allows for the interpretation of themes supported by data. Adopting the thematic analysis approach also allows researchers to go beyond the surface connotations of data to gain an understanding of the data and give a precise story of what the information entails (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The thematic analysis was conducted in an orderly and organized manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study are presented according to the themes identified in the data.

Succession Planning Practices in the Firm

In this section, six running themes are used to present SP practices in the various industries under investigation.

Identification of Leadership Traits and Talents for The Top Post

The study respondents indicated that the CEO, mostly at the behest of the board of directors, must ensure that the company has potential candidates with the required leadership traits. One HR Manager commented on the identification of leadership traits in potential CEOs:

“First, we ensure that the current CEO gives priority to succession planning practices. This is difficult because personality, ego, power, and morality are at the heart of this type of planning. Some CEOs find succession planning depressing.”

Additionally, the study respondents implied that there is no need to rest on the firm's laurels; the focus is on the company's future needs. Examining several talent profiles is a wise SP approach. The emphasis is on identifying leaders with the skills and abilities required in the future while providing visibility and exposure. The HR director had this to say,

“Changing responsibilities every two to four years allows our leading candidates to see the results of their work (good or bad) but does not keep them in one role for as long as they lose their motivation. Advantages are that rising executives will be exposed to more business staff at all levels and many new leaders will get an opportunity to see their talents”.

Succession Planning Strategies of the Board.

The board determines the type of SP strategy implemented in the company. According to observations from study respondents, companies prioritize SP to curb complications such as senior officials' abrupt deaths, ill health, or retirement, among others, which can halt business

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operations. Contingency theory gives credence to this prearrangement, as the company is presented with options when faced with any of the aforementioned adversities. When asked how the board of directors influences the activities involved in CEO succession planning, the Chief Human Resource Director had this to say,

“The replacement of the CEO is one of the main roles of the Board of Directors. Changing the company’s head changes the ethos of the firm, board/CEO connections, and the attitudes of various stakeholders inside and outside the sector. ensuring that the company produces succession-ready leaders for all senior roles, and to sit on the board of directors of the CEO succession, CEOs make sure that the planning for succession starts long before they consider leaving, embrace the best-in-class talent acquisition process”

Additionally, the board conceptualizes the essential factors that would affect the SP process. This is done by anticipating elements that may constrain the efficiency and effectiveness of the succession strategy. An example is the examination of key developments and trends in the marketplace or workplace that would demand new talent in crucial jobs. These activities typically identify a more diversified demographic, demanding new ways to nurture internal talent. The director of HR continued:

“We benchmark the skills of other market leaders to ensure the in-house talent pool is the most qualified for the job before a structured transition plan is done. This is done based on the situation to afford the selected person’s smooth transition to a new level of their career”.

The study respondents described SP strategies as a set of activities that serve as a roadmap for putting a succession plan in place. Because there is no universally accepted process for drafting a succession plan, businesses may adopt a variety of approaches to implementing succession plans based on their human resource needs. As a result, several techniques have been adopted to effectively implement succession plans. In a quest to know the process adopted by their organization in the implementation of SP the senior administrative director remarked:

“In our organization, we follow a four-step strategy for implementing succession plans. These include the systematic identification of organizational needs; discovering a pool of high-potential candidates, provision of learning experiences to increase the knowledge, skill, and abilities of potential leaders, and the selection of leaders from a pool of talents”.

The board also constitutes a team with diverse roles, job competencies, and skills charged with the creation of a succession strategy that will help create plans to better address the needs of the organization based on external influences. A general manager stated the following:

“Normally, we put together a succession-planning team. This is achieved by having the right mix of individuals in our company to be part of the succession-planning process. People who are process-oriented, effective communicators, knowledgeable about job competencies and skills development, and are connected across our organization in ways that will help build support for our plan are selected”.



Access to Succession Planning Programs in The Organization

Regarding succession planning in the organization, one respondent who has worked in the organization for more than fifteen years and is aspiring for higher positions intimated that the firm has succession plans in place internally, through coaching programs, and training workshops, among others. The study respondents viewed the programs as helpful in developing the knowledge and abilities to advance in the firm. The Director of HR indicated how his organization conducts SP internally:

“I am currently an HR director and aspiring to be the CEO. The organization is preparing me for this position through attachments, coaching programs, and sponsorship for further education. All these programs will help improve my performance in the position I aspire to. It would take five years for me to be adequately trained and prepared for the position, and I am very certain of getting the position”.

Prospects of Succession Planning in the Organization

A study respondent was uncertain as to whether management views staff aspiring to higher positions as potential candidates when there is a vacancy. According to the respondent, positions were often filled externally by the company. The responses gathered showed that although the staff was adequately prepared for vacant positions in the company, there were no well-structured training programs in place to prepare them for higher-level roles. A non-executive director stated the following:

“There should be clearly defined procedures in appointing staff to critical positions when they become vacant and not always favour external people over internal staff. Those within the company who were promoted to senior executive positions are doing a very good job. This was because they had been in the company for some time and knew the values, culture, and strategies of the organization”.

However, the situation was completely different for other organizations. According to another study respondent from a different organization, there were clearly defined procedures for appointing staff to critical vacant positions. There are well-structured training programs for staff earmarked for higher positions in the organization. Staff who are groomed for key positions are always assured of these positions when they become vacant. A general manager commented on the prospects of internal recruitment in his organization,

“In this organization, management has put in place SP programmes to groom employees for senior positions when they become vacant. This is a great motivation for us to aspire to higher positions”.

Criteria for SP

The respondents revealed that SP was carried out in consultation with several stakeholder

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organizations by the Board of Directors. The board of directors has a fiduciary responsibility to ensure that the SP is done efficiently. Competency, qualifications, experience, talent, and length of service are the most important elements to consider when hiring a CEO. Mentorship, training, and on-the-job growth are utilized to evaluate a candidate's capabilities. The Director of Human Resources indicated the following criteria for the post.

“... A prospective CEO should have leadership abilities, experience, competencies, education, talent, maturity, be industrious, possess firm knowledge, be well-trained in corporate governance, and have good communication skills. The person needs people skills and should be able to work in conjunction with the shareholders, board, and stakeholders, and be a servant leader who can learn from the experiences of their predecessors and return to meaningful working relationships before they leave the organization. be taken through a series of training within and outside the firm”.

In addition, the prospective leader should be innovative, as this propels modern enterprises and can help a corporation become extremely competitive. This is what the director of finance and administration had to say on the subject of the qualities of a potential CEO,

“Those aspiring for leadership positions must be first innovative, dedicated, and very hardworking”.

Criteria for the CEO selection process were identified. Trait and servant leadership theories posit these attributes. The deputy director of the administration commented:

“The CEO's job is all about leadership; judgment and honesty are the two most critical leadership requirements for a good CEO. These two attributes cannot be treated as all-inclusive determinants of success but rather as basic prerequisites that outweigh other factors. Judgment and honesty both serve as the basis for a variety of other leadership qualities that a successful CEO will learn and strive to display”.

The other measures used in the selection process for the CEO include willingness to serve as a role model for the organization and all stakeholders. As a role model, the CEO pursues the attainment of the organization's mission and fundamental principles. A CEO had this to say:

“Although other facets of the operation of most corporations are in a perpetual state of transition and transformation, the purpose and core values of an organization continue to be intact to serve as a cornerstone. Such core principles act as a social compass and can serve as a reference and guide for how a company works and how decisions are to be made. The CEO is supposed to be the key advocate and defender of mission and core values, and without that power, no one can successfully run a company”.

The Impact of CEO Succession Planning Practices on Business Growth

Organizations that use SP strategies have strong leadership, leading to increased growth. SP programs are also a fantastic motivator for employees. When asked about the impact of

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rigorous SPs on the growth of the organization, the strategic business unit manager stated the following,

“Our company started with one branch but now has three more branches. This can be attributed to its good leadership succession strategies over time. The company ensures a good balance between CSR and other stakeholders’ interests which has assisted in its growth. However, the core reason to account for these sterling results is the productive and dedicated demeanour of our branch leaders stemming from the long training they have received”.

Organizations with a named successor are more likely to succeed than those with no successor. A well-planned succession structure acts as a roadmap for the company employees. An HR manager indicated that the absence of a CEO heir-apparent affected workers' performance in the company.

“In our organization, we do not have a career progression structure and as a result, it is affecting our growth, and that of the company as well in terms of output and dedication, as staff cannot tell their future career path. There should be an SP in place to assure us of the future”.

Prospective CEO should be knowledgeable about successful company practices. This would enable him to formulate strategies that would make the organization competitive. An HR director stated the following:

“The first thing we do to link the CEO's succession planning to business strategy is to identify critical positions that are the focus of succession planning efforts. Without these roles, the organization... would not be able to meet its business objectives effectively. A systematic evaluation was also performed to compare existing and potential openings and to identify key roles within the organization”.

Discussion

SP Practices in Firms

To have an adequate SP system, the firm should formulate strategies for succession planning to account for any undesirable setbacks, as contingency theory asserts. The lack of SP is inimical to the growth of organizations. Employees cannot predict their future in the organization even if they have been with the organization for several years. There should be an SP in place to reassure the staff about their professional advancement. This study revealed that some organizations are not clear about the SP. This finding supports Rothwell's (2010) claim that SP practices are weak in businesses and are not receiving the attention they deserve, even though firms are losing CEOs each year.

The Criteria Used for Selecting an Employee for CEO Succession Planning

This study investigates the criteria used to select prospective CEOs for succession. Prospects

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were selected based on the identification of leadership ability, possession of talent for the top post, appraisal systems, and a good formal educational background. Prospects were then taken through a series of activities as part of preparation. These include delegation, apprenticeship, job extensions, mentoring, rotation, job enrichment, internships, seminars, workshops, and promotions. The research found that these processes can be highly competitive, as in certain cases, there are many people in the pipeline. The selection of the right candidates would be based on exhibitions of exceptional talents and leadership abilities.

The impact of SP on the growth of the firm

The study revealed that SP is highly relevant to firm growth. Its implementation assures employees of business continuity and career advancement paths which are motivators for individual employees. Within the industries that practised SP, grooming the best employee to take up this key role was easier. This has been confirmed by Zhang & Rajagopalan (2004) who stated that well-groomed internal candidates or relay successors have a good impact on the firm's growth as opposed to external non-relay replacements (Oppong & Oduro-Asabere, 2018; Giacomara et al, 2021).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study revealed that certain firms, owing to the efforts of their board of directors, have efficient succession-planning mechanisms in place. Other firms engage in SP on an informal basis but may not have official SP policies in place. The investigation also revealed that the organisations of the vast majority of participants lacked SP practices. In the case of these companies, a CEO's departure due to resignation, sickness, death, or an accident that renders the CEO unable to perform their duties would have a negative influence on the company's stability and growth. Practicing SP shows that CEO roles are critical to the organization's development and should not be left vacant or filled by anybody other than the best-qualified applicants. To the management and chief human resource officers, the board's duty to ensure that SP measures are implemented in most organizations is lacking.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

Succession planning should be part of a company's inception, the board of directors should determine the pace, and CEOs should assess it. Training activities such as seminars and workshops should be implemented to improve the understanding of leadership and succession planning. Companies should have strategic initiatives to enable the identification of a talent pool for training in all divisions for CEO SP.

Study Limitations

There were some constraints during the study and writing of this paper which is indicated. The outbreak of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic caused the closing down of targeted companies for research. This situation curtailed the initial targeted number of respondents



intended for the research. Hence, just a score of individuals occupying managerial positions. Also having access to top executives in the companies understudied was quite difficult due to their busy schedules, nevertheless, the researcher was able to book appointments through emails, phone calls, social media and interviews to collect the needed data required for the research. The unwillingness of some top executives to divulge information concerning their workplace practices made obtaining pertinent information very difficult.

Suggestions for Future Research

The study was a qualitative one hence a quantitative study can be conducted as a follow-up in the future to complement the qualitative viewpoint provided by this study. Additionally, future studies can include regular staff members as part of the respondents instead of top management to see another dimension of CEO Succession Planning.

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