

**IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE SUCCESSION PLANNING WITHIN A  
DIRECTORATE OF A PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT**

by

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## **Declaration**

I, Buyisiwe Phathela (student number: 2009106762), hereby declare that this research project dissertation submitted by me in fulfilment of the requirement of the Master's Degree in Business Administration at the University of the Free State Business School is my original work and that the intellectual property of the authors cited in this product was not compromised. I also hereby declare that I give the copyright of this work to the University of the Free State.

Date: November 2022

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## **Abstract**

This study looked at succession planning implemented within a directorate of a public service organisation. The focus was on selecting, retaining, and developing a high-potential talent pipeline to improve future leadership growth in the public sector. Succession planning is often rarely and, if so, poorly used in public sector organisations, mainly because the pre-selection of appointees is often looked down upon in the public sector. This study investigated employees' perceptions of implementing succession planning efforts within a directorate in a Free State provincial government department and their effectiveness in grooming talent pipelines, talent management, and staff retention strategies.

Using the census method, the researcher in this study obtained information directly from the people in charge of judging employee performance and figuring out what training they needed to improve in a directorate in the Free State provincial government department. The study used an in-depth semi-structured interview design. The interview questions were open-ended and covered all effective succession planning concerns. The "safety net" question was included to allow participants to add information they believed was vital to the study. This type of interview was meant to cover all areas of concern and give people a chance to say more about what they thought was vital in succession planning.

The main contribution of this study is to help choose and train a pipeline of high-potential and talented people to help the public sector keep and grow its leaders in the future. The benefit relation for this study is on three levels: First, all public servants, including participants, will benefit if the department implements more effective succession planning. Second, to implement succession planning to retain highly skilled individuals to realise the directorate's mandate. Lastly, all government employees could benefit if the Department of Public Service and Administration, which is in charge of establishing norms and standards for all public service functions, could recommend implementing succession planning across all government departments in the country.

The Directorate in the Free State provincial government department, which was the focus of this research study, asked for the study to be anonymous.

**Keywords:** succession planning, the role of provincial government departments, talent pipeline, staff retention, succession planning practices, talent management framework.

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## **CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXTUALISATION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Succession planning is crucial to successfully implementing an integrated talent management system that seeks to lead, retain and groom qualified individuals with essential and rare skills to reduce the risk of losing institutional knowledge (Shabane, 2017). Shabane (2017) said that experienced employees named successors who must be ready to take over essential jobs if the people in those jobs retire or leave – voluntarily or involuntarily – a public service department. Proper succession planning practices are critical to successfully managing successors for critical roles throughout the employee lifecycle. In the researcher's experience, the selected Free State provincial government department directorate lacks viable succession planning to manage and retain essential and scarce key talent and leadership positions.

Since 1994, many experienced employees have resigned or opted for early retirement schemes due to the transformation of government departments in South Africa. This decision led to some departments lacking experienced leaders to manage vital infrastructures such as construction, drinking water supply, power supply, transport systems, road maintenance, and proper administration of libraries, clinics, and community facilities (Le Roes, 2017). The national government has implemented some projects and initiatives to address this issue. However, efforts to “right-size” and “downsize” the political and institutional landscape were subject to shared responsibility rather than individual autonomy in terms of the provision of services, which hindered the design of the three structural spheres of government, namely local government, the provincial government, and national government.

The Free State provincial government department directorate investigated is part of an organisation undergoing organisational structural adjustments required to address vacant posts in strategic positions due to a lack of qualified candidates to assume duty. In the researcher's experience, the shortage of key and new skills has created a misalignment between the department and the citizens of the Free State. Accordingly, Ahmad, Ming and Sapry (2020) indicated that organisations are currently on the verge of a management crisis due to the absence of potential leaders and the need for a

systematic succession plan to ensure future leadership continuity in the organisation. The community is the beneficiary of the infrastructure development that the department provides. The current departmental structure consists of seven directorates. However, only one directorate will be the focus of the research study.

Within the directorate under investigation, the researcher noticed a palpable sense of uncertainty among employees, caused by them not knowing their future growth prospects. The directorate does not currently have a chief director (CD). The position has been unfilled for more than two years and recruitment procedures have been put in place multiple times in the last year, but they have not been successful. Employee morale suffers as a result and the community receives subpar services. Counteroffering a worker and accepting a job elsewhere is uncommon in the mainstream corporate world. Instead, the directorate would appoint new candidates from other government entities. This behaviour resulted in the department losing institutional knowledge.

Moreover, the researcher observed newly appointed candidates getting accustomed to the directorate's job, processes and procedures. Middle managers provided on-the-job training to new candidates to acquaint them with the culture and business processes of the directorate. This external recruiting has led to tension between newly appointed and existing middle managers who were overlooked for management positions.

Ballaro and Polk (2017) asserted that developing trends in the corporate world highlight the need for future directorates' leaders' investment and development. However, although most senior managers are beginning to understand the need for succession planning, few actively empower key department staff as future leaders. Ballaro and Polk (2017) suggested that the management within a directorate in the Free State provincial government department seems unlikely to consider talented and ambitious people who are unlikely to stay in a department that does not provide opportunities for advancement for a long time. If the Free State provincial government department directorate does not take succession planning into account – then, there is a chance of losing critical future employees and coping with disgruntled, disengaged, and dissatisfied employees (Koketso, 2011).

The directorate follows the employment equality plan, which specifies that employers must end unjust discrimination per the Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998 (“the Act”). It also provides a framework for employers to recruit, train, advance, and retain human resource (HR) talent. Organisations can increase workplace productivity, motivation, and resourcefulness by investing in their employees and treating them fairly and equally. The *Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report*, published by the Department of Labour (2020), indicates that government departments have experienced a 21.4% barrier to implementing effective succession in the 2019/20 financial year (p. 36).

Therefore, this research aimed to determine why the directorate within the Free State provincial government department in Bloemfontein lacks policies and practices for effective succession planning to ensure staff retention and skills transfer from an ageing workforce to preserve institutional knowledge. This study aimed to analyse whether there is a need for succession planning methods to be incorporated into an integrated HR management strategy, as stipulated by employment equity policies (Department of Labour, 2005). It also includes procedures, guidelines and processes that the directorate within the Free State provincial government department could follow when identifying a successor.

## **1.2 Background to the problem**

At the time of the research, the Free State provincial government department directorate had many aged employees who would soon be retiring. The directorate generally does not have strategies and practices for succession planning to retain institutional knowledge. For the department to expand and achieve the required standards for service delivery, it must be able to attract and retain the next generation of skilled employees. The Standard and Poor’s rating agencies demoted South Africa to junk status following the global economic crisis of 2008 (Karodia, 2016). As a result, planning for the future shifted into dealing with the current situation and shrinking government revenue sources (Fulla, 2013). According to Mboweni (2020), public servant wages are too high and should decrease.

If, for instance, the “Free State provincial government department” thought about its employee retention and succession planning programmes and how they may be successful in the current restricted financial conditions, this problem might be alleviated on a provincial level (Fulla, 2013). There has been a surge in the number of government workers taking early retirement, with 22% of workers reportedly doing so. This trend of early retirement rose after the government announced that all public employees aged 55 years and older could take retirement packages without facing pension penalties (Rilityane, 2019). It has become vital that the directorate within the Free State provincial government department recognise that integration, suitable appointments and the retention of its employees have become a requirement for the always-changing public sector to function while putting the ideas above into practice (Fulla, 2013).

Dobberowsky (2016) described “succession planning as the processes by which organisations plans for and substitute managers, senior managers and other crucial personnel who leave their positions” (para. 1). Succession planning is defined as “the identification and development of prospective successors within the organisation with the plan to prepare for future critical vacancies of management positions by predicting the skills that will be important for those roles to keep the organisation’s strategic goals on track” (Oduwusi, 2018, p. 1).

“Succession planning is a model to develop employees to ensure that the institute has a highly qualified workforce capable of filling critical positions.” Hence, succession planning is crucial to workforce and strategic planning in every sector (Rollinson, 2017, p. 475). “Succession planning is a process whereby organisations ensure that employees are being recruited and continuously developed to fill key roles” (Javed & Jaffar, 2019, p. 10).

Dobberowsky (2016) emphasised that evaluating the potential of organisational talent through increasing its talent pipeline, recruiting new and innovative ways, establishing leaders at all levels and empowering people is crucial for the organisation’s continuity and future success. Numerous Millennials are joining the workforce. With the reality of this shift in employment priorities, it is more important than ever to have procedures and adequate succession planning.

Additionally, it is safe to state that planning career movements for credible succession and identifying successors for critical positions are vital to ensuring employee satisfaction and engagement in the workplace. Employee engagement will be improved by developing less experienced personnel and providing a capable workforce prepared to fill key or core positions (Oduwusi, 2018). The Free State provincial government directorate may use succession planning as a continuous process to help match its objectives with its HR requirements. It might be making preparations for potential openings in middle and senior management.

According to Pita (2016), inadequate succession planning and employee turnover result in anxious and insecure workplace environments, which frequently then lead to decreased productivity. He defines turnover as “the departure of an employee from the organisation”. Various demographic characteristics – including age, gender, marital status, education level and length of employment – are linked to employee turnover. Pita (2016) brought up several additional reasons for turnover, including mismatched talents, a lack of advancement and unclear growth opportunities.

Conner and Armitage’s theoretical framework for planned behaviour predicts an individual’s intention to engage in a behaviour at a specific time and place. The theory was intended to explain all behaviours over which people can exert self-control. This refers to a person’s perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour of interest (Conner & Armitage, 1998). Therefore, a succession plan to be a planned behaviour within the directorate of the Free State provincial government department that incorporates its beliefs and control to develop coherent action. The deliberate use of mentoring, coaching, and grooming of employees for key positions to advance when vacancies occur, states that there should be process initiators which are usually senior managers. The process creators who engage in this plan should believe that the behaviour will produce the desired results (Nomalinge Amelia Pita, 2016). Therefore, the chief director typically needs to be an initiator for succession planning to be a planned behaviour. According to Mejbri and Affes (2012), the likelihood that behaviour, which is purposeful engagement in succession planning, will succeed depends on the creator’s control and a sense of belief. The effectiveness of the succession process is guaranteed by the positive attitude of the management in the directorate, which will be

reflected in succession planning as a planned behaviour (Gakure, Ngugi, Waititu & Kerero, 2013).

Succession planning deals with handing over responsibilities rather than simply filling a vacancy where or when possible. Donner, Gridley, Ulreich and Bluth (2017) encourage government departments to mould their future leaders. The only way to have a dependable and effective succession plan is to map out succession to the internal talent who is already accessible, identify their weaknesses and then establish and implement development plans to address those weaknesses (Donner et al., 2017). A succession plan that works should emphasise the development of the management skills of future managers.

In addition, HR directorates and top management must view succession planning as critical because skilled and competent personnel in the public sector and other sectors are in high demand. As a result, there is a demand and opportunity to investigate further the practices and strategies for implementing successful succession planning in the stated directorate within the Free State provincial government department in Bloemfontein.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

The broader issue is that various government departments are concerned about their leadership pool. Additionally, due to factors such as poor succession planning, poor career planning and a chronic lack of alignment between employees' professional and personal objectives, and talent management is generally lacking in public sector departments. According to Pita (2016), public sector employees do little to transfer employee abilities before people depart, partly due to the insufficient attention given to succession planning and talent retention.

The directorate of the Free State provincial government department does not prioritise succession planning because of the high rates of management attrition visible in all ranks. The impending retirement of many Baby Boomers, as well as turnover in organisations, will create a significant skills gap in strategic positions (Wesner, 2015).

The directorate has a high turnover rate, seemingly due to a lack of strategies and procedures for effective succession planning and talent management.

Furthermore, the directorate lacks explicit action plans to address succession concerns due to a lack of awareness of line managers' succession planning techniques and processes (Maphisa, Zwane & Nyide, 2017). Employees who departed the department after retiring at age 60 or 65 did not leave any successors. It is also not obvious how succession planning procedures would be incorporated into a comprehensive personnel management strategy. An increasing number of voluntary detachments of officials at the early retirement age of 55 or 60 are also placing the directorate of the Free State provincial government department under tremendous pressure because there are no plans for these separations states (Maphisa et al., 2017). Consequently, no successors are available and this then creates pressure on current employees to share the workload and meet service delivery standards.

The proposed research's specific problem statement is the rising level of uncertainty among employees of the directorate of the Free State provincial government department due to a perceived lack of succession planning for career growth, which leads to disengagement and job dissatisfaction.

#### **1.4 Primary and secondary research questions**

The primary and secondary research questions in this study address the problem statement of the research.

##### **1.4.1 Primary research question**

- What are the critical success factors for implementing effective succession planning in a directorate of the Free State provincial government department?

### **1.4.2 Secondary research questions**

The following three secondary research questions are in support of the primary research question:

- What are the current challenges in implementing succession planning strategies and practices that limit the retention and transfer of institutional knowledge?
- What role does the implementation of a talent management framework play as a tool to support succession planning?
- What role does management play in professional development and training to support succession planning?

### **1.5 Primary and secondary research objectives**

#### **1.5.1 Primary research objectives**

- To identify the critical success factors for implementing effective succession planning in the Free State provincial government department directorate.

#### **1.5.2 Secondary research objectives**

- To determine the current challenges in implementing succession planning strategies and practices that limit the retention and transfer of institutional knowledge.
- To assess the role that the implementation of a talent management framework plays as a tool to support succession planning.
- To determine the role management plays in professional development and training to support succession planning.

### **1.6 Literature objectives**

The study's literature objectives were as follows:

- To investigate the literature about implementing effective succession planning.

- To investigate the literature on current challenges that limit the retention and transfer of institutional knowledge.
- To investigate the literature on the role of the talent management framework as a tool to support succession planning.
- To investigate the literature on the role management plays in developing and training subordinates.

## **1.7 Research methodology**

“Research methodology simply refers to how a researcher designs a study to produce accurate and trustworthy results that address the study’s objectives and questions” (Jansen & Warren, 2020, para. 1). Igwenagu (2016) defined research methodology as “a collection of systematic research techniques” (p. 5). Research methodology explains how to conduct a study and which procedures to use for analysis.

The researcher followed a qualitative research approach for this study. Qualitative research collects and analyses textual, spoken, and written data (Jansen & Warren, 2020). Because the research study’s objectives and questions were exploratory, the researcher used a qualitative approach. Jansen and Warren (2020) defined exploratory research as a qualitative method for learning about people’s reactions to a particular event.

The researcher only received permission to collect data from 10 research participants (see Annexure C), all of whom were middle managers in the stated directorate who could answer the research questions to address the research problem. This implies that the study’s sample and population are all middle managers. Therefore, data was gathered from all 10 participants in the intended research project using the census method.

Byjus (2022) defined the “census method” as a statistical list process that analyses all members of a population. This method is also known as complete enumeration, 100% enumeration or complete survey because it is a statistical investigation method that collects data for every element/unit of the population. This method is proper when the area of study is limited.

In the research study, it was essential to detail the main demographic characteristics because it gives a comprehensive overview of the participants so that researchers and readers can decide to whom research findings can be applied. It also enables contrasts between studies replicating their results (Hammer, 2011). Therefore, before the start of the interview in this study, each participant was asked to complete a pre-interview questionnaire to collect demographic data (see Appendix B). It was necessary to fill out this questionnaire to pre-screen participants and use it as a strategy to allow the researcher and participants to establish a working relationship. The relation enabled them to ask questions, carry out the developed research proceeds and offer contextual data on the topic of interest.

The researcher gathered data through a comprehensive semi-structured interview approach for this study. There were face-to-face interviews with the participants. The world is still battling the Covid-19 pandemic. However, to stop the spread of Covid-19, the study allowed participants to conduct interviews online using Zoom or Microsoft Teams. The interview guide, including open-ended questions, was prepared to ensure that the main topic of interest was addressed (see Appendix A). The researcher confirmed that the interview guide consisted of a safety net question that allowed participants to elaborate on topics not covered in the interview guide.

The researcher used thematic analysis, a qualitative data analysis method that comprises looking for recurring patterns in a data collection, analysing them and reporting on those patterns as the study's purpose and questions are essentially exploratory (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). It is a technique for interpreting data that includes data coding and theme development.

## **1.8 Demarcation of study**

The research occurred within a directorate in a Free State provincial government department, where the researcher observed that succession planning is not implemented sufficiently to retain and preserve institutional knowledge. It is worth mentioning that the department operates in the public sector, where all public sector departments are subject to the same application and execution of policies; hence the

lack of an effective succession plan might also be prevalent in other departments. Many senior government officials are appointed for political reasons rather than for their qualifications, making succession planning challenging (Selden, Schimmoeller, & Thompson, 2013). HR management seems to find it difficult to see succession planning as a tool the division should implement and monitor.

Even though permission was granted that allowed for the interview of only specific research participants, it was encouraging that the study could focus on the middle managers entrusted with evaluating individual performance and identifying, if necessary, any personal development training for their subordinates. Within the selected directorate of the Free State provincial government department, they are in charge of and liable for integrated talent management and other competency areas at their level. The use of succession planning as a tool for change depends on some variables, including the managers' willingness to coach or mentor the staff members who report to them to improve their performance and implement succession plans that will foster the future skills that the directorate of the Free State provincial government department will need.

### **1.9 Ethical considerations of the study**

Ten middle managers from a directorate of the Free State provincial government were made available to the researcher as study participants. The sample size included all 10 middle managers in this study. The researcher's role was an "insider-outsider" because the researcher works in the directorate under study. The researcher's position implied potential risk relations and conflicts of interest within the study. An insider researcher must become an "observationalist" and separate themselves from the study. As a result, everyone involved in the study becomes an outsider (Salmons, 2022).

The researcher aimed to remove herself and her biases from data collection to mitigate unethical behaviour that may have jeopardised the study's validity.

### **1.9.1 Risk relation of the study**

The researcher's possible breach of confidentiality was the primary risk of this study. However, measures were taken to eradicate this risk as far as possible. Personal and identifiable information was kept private and included in the study records. Transcripts of the interviews were kept apart from the consent forms and real names did not appear in the transcripts; pseudonyms were used instead. As a result, there was no risk anticipated for the study's participants and the researcher maintained good ethical conduct to ensure that the study produced credible findings.

### **1.9.2 Conflict of interest**

The researcher directly reports to one manager who formed part of the study sample. None of the participants is under the researcher's immediate supervision, nor does she work directly with them. The researcher approached the immediate supervisor and requested her to be part of the participants to ensure that there would be equal feedback.

The researcher also disclosed that no financial gains or personal career advancements would be generated from this study. Therefore, there was no conflict of interest in collecting and analysing the data.

## 1.10 Chapter arrangement

The study's composition is shown in Table 1:

**Table 1: Segregation of chapters**

CHAPTER	CONTENT
Chapter 1 <b>Background and contextualisation</b>	This chapter describes the context of the study's problem. It also defines the research questions, study objectives, methodology and study demarcation.
Chapter 2 <b>Review of the literature</b>	This chapter begins with the study's theoretical framework and expands on the literature review about succession planning. Elements influencing effective succession planning implementation, barriers and talent management as a succession plan framework are also covered.
Chapter 3 <b>Methodology of research</b>	This chapter deals with the study's research methodology and the reasons for adopting the census method to examine the effectiveness of implementing succession planning. Data collection and the data analysis tools, such as coding, thematic analysis and transcription processes, are discussed. Finally, the researcher examined the ethical consideration that followed.
Chapter 4 <b>Data interpretation and analysis</b>	This chapter analyses the collected data using thematic analysis and presents the collected results.
Chapter 5 <b>Conclusions and recommendations</b>	Concluding answers addressing the research questions, objectives of the study, as well as recommendations, are stated in the final chapter.

## 1.11 Conclusion

Senior management can use succession planning to deploy individuals in a precise manner at the appropriate time and location. Any government department must have a succession plan in place as it helps to ensure that the right people are appointed in critical positions where all department-related decisions are made. Professional implementation of succession planning can result in high employee engagement in a department, which is crucial in building a talent pipeline in an organisation.

In-house succession planning has evident benefits compared with an outsider. A ready-now candidate does not exist. An outsider chosen as the successor must learn the job and make mistakes while learning. This learning process could be costly to the directorate. The appointment of a talented, well-trained internal succession candidate would be less disruptive because the department will provide relevant training and mentoring to groom them to the expected performance level. Thus, it might be less risky than an outside candidate. The directorate can improve employee morale and retention by selecting an internal candidate.

However, there are times when external replacements are needed because internal candidates lack the essential expertise. If the directorate of the Free State provincial government department struggles with internal conflict or a talent gap, an outsider may be necessary to find solutions. A new perspective can be refreshing sometimes. Any internal candidate may not be as qualified to lead as an experience outsider candidate. The Free State provincial government department directorate should know that developing internal talent is less expensive than recruiting from the outside. The recruitment process has obvious financial implications, but external successors might have disruptive non-financial costs. To avoid these, the Free State provincial government department directorate might have to select the best successor from an internal talent-rich pool of employees accustomed to the department's culture, nurtured and mentored to create knowledge of the workings of the department. When all these factors are considered, a compelling future leadership pool can be groomed to support the organisation's sustainability.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Introduction**

According to Buthelezi (2017), after identifying research questions, the researcher reviews relevant literature related to the study area. The review notifies the reader that the investigator understands the primary theoretical and empirical research problems. The thought of literature serves the following four comprehensive purposes: First, “it demonstrates the underlying assumptions behind the general research question; secondly, it points out that the researcher is knowledgeable about related material and the intellectual traditions that surround and support the study; thirdly, it shows that the researcher has identified some gaps in previous research and that the proposed study will fill a demonstrated need; and lastly, the review refines and redefines the research questions by embedding those questions within more extensive empirical traditions” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 43).

The following research questions guided the literature analysis in this study: (i) What are the critical success factors for implementing effective succession planning in the Free State provincial government directorate? (ii) What are the current challenges in implementing succession planning strategies and practices that limit the retention and transfer of institutional knowledge? (iii) What role does the implementation of the talent management framework play as a tool to support succession planning? (iv) What role does management play in professional development and training to support succession planning?

The literature review covers the following areas:

- 2.2 Overview of succession planning
- 2.3 The role of provincial government departments
- 2.4 Challenges in implementing succession planning
- 2.5 Critical success factors for implementing effective succession planning
- 2.6 Talent pipeline
- 2.7 Talent management and staff retention
- 2.8 Succession planning practices in organisations

## 2.9 The purpose of using frameworks.

### **2.2 Overview of succession planning**

Today's environment is changing rapidly and many government departments face severe volatility and uncertainties, leading to instability in service delivery standards. In this volatile environment, these departments must rely primarily on their vital assets: their employees. Public sector departments need strategies to connect with their staff to generate competitive advantages and achieve higher performance standards. Most private-sector organisations have systems that continually retain their managerial and technical competence. This approach aids in identifying, selecting, retraining and advancing future leaders into critical positions. This system is called succession planning (Ghasemi, Derakhshani, Derakhshani & Salari, 2013).

According to Ali and Mehreen (2019a), the identification and availability of potential leaders significantly impacted the organisation's productivity and workers. Companies create and implement succession plans because of the rising need for skilled leaders and their effect on organisational sustainability. According to the authors, succession planning – which they define as “a deliberate and systematic effort by an organisation to ensure leadership continuity in the key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement” – is one of the core aspects of management improvement (p. 2). Modern organisational cultures recognise succession planning as a crucial contextual concept that can improve employees' well-being and encourage them to participate in growth activities.

Nkondola (2019) asserted that “succession planning prepares a workforce pool with the required abilities and competencies to become successors of senior managers leaving the institution for reasons such as transfer, termination, retirement, resignation, death or any other form of separation” (p. 60). Ghasemi et al. (2013) affirmed the above statement by stating that succession planning means that the organisation has made measured and systematic attempts to ensure the continuation of leadership in critical positions. They highlight that an organisation must deliberately prepare ways

to identify, preserve and retain dedicated employees for the future. This is called “systematic succession planning” (Ghasemi et al., 2013, p.320).

According to Nkondola (2019), public services are under pressure to increase service delivery standards and worldwide efficiency. For the government to overcome performance challenges resulting from a lack of adequate human capital, Nkondola (2019) cited that succession planning is one of the most excellent methods for guaranteeing a steady supply of capable and experienced successors to various roles in an organisation. Nkondola (2019) said that many government leaders have a long service tenure and believe no one else can lead the relevant government department. Hence, there are few reliable succession models for the public sector. The problem seems widespread in high-income countries, where public service employment increased from the 1970s to the early 1980s. Many public service employees hired during those years have retired or are about to do so.

Lowan & Chisoro (2016) concurs with the above paragraph that if succession planning is standardised across all organisations, the business will be stronger and better able to have an influence on the communities it works with. In order to develop the humanitarian network and increase the influence on the people and communities they serve, organisations must implement succession planning. However, government institutions are hesitant to practise effective techniques like succession planning to replace the ageing workforce.

In a modern and vibrant world with high competition, an unpredictable environment, a flatter organisation, fluid work and frequently changing organisational configuration, the view of replacement planning that defines a specific job does not work. Nowadays, an organisation needs a pool of high-potential people at all levels. Therefore, developing general competencies in today’s organisations is wise and advisable to create flexible leadership potential. Despite the importance of succession planning for departmental leadership, the bureaucracy in the public sector limits the knowledge of succession planning.

Kamami (2017) added that the resource-based view (RBV) theory argues that organisations should aim to maximise their internal resources, create dominant future

opportunities and not only try to achieve strategic fit with the external environment. According to Kamami (2017), the theory's central proposition is for organisations to obtain and maintain control of unique, uncommon and irreplaceable HR skills. As a result, people are viewed as an investment rather than a cost. Employees are a unique and unrivalled resource that, if used effectively, can create a competitive advantage. Buthelezi (2017) stated that the South African public sector must groom its leadership pool to support the above statement. Grooming is a strategic approach to leadership development, known as "grow your leader" (p. 26). It is more desirable for an organisation to groom internal talent as successors for senior leadership than to find experienced outsiders.

The performance and effectiveness of the public sector's delivery system are relatively dependent on its ability to gain a competitive advantage on a global scale. The industry must have a high-performing workforce to deliver excellent service to survive in a volatile market (Ahmad & Saad, 2020). One of the most frequently used components of succession planning is high potential recognition and production, which forms the basis for the internal development of leadership successors. Any succession planning and management strategy is based on expansion, with great potential. However, progress cannot occur until the great potential is sufficiently recognised. A current performer is highly regarded for current and future success and can climb several levels above their current position (Abd & Nazia, 2019).

This research study is related to the succession planning of a directorate of the Free State provincial government department, preparing its workforce talents for its future success and ensuring that it has more high-quality employees than its competitors through career progression. The HR management strategy must adequately replace managers and key employees who leave the directorate to enhance the department's business continuity and future success.

Buthelezi (2017) affirmed that the succession planning concept is about filling future positions, but also about more than that. It is a structured process that involves selecting potential internal candidates, targeting development, committing resources to enhance, identifying essential personnel requisites and competencies, tracking those candidates and ultimately choosing a successor. One of an organisation's best

practices is finding potential employees and exposing them to leadership development programmes, project-based learning opportunities, workshops and forums for various stakeholders and supportive organisational culture.

Hence, Abd and Nazia (2019) emphasised that it is essential to compare each employee's current performance to the anticipated, as this might help reveal the hidden potential for usage in future leadership roles. Furthermore, to comprehend how to teach future leaders, it is vital to determine the abilities and competencies needed for each level of leadership and job. This activity also includes determining an entity's key positions' competence and requirements for current and future work. Therefore, the benefits offered by succession planning are as follows:

a) ***Assist in identifying future leaders***

Succession planning assists in identifying employees with unique skills and capabilities to promote them to higher leadership positions. The process of succession planning also assists in determining employees' pain points, where training and development are required to improve performance results. Rehmani (2020) stated that employee pain points are work-related frustrations that could negatively impact the organisation's productivity if not addressed. Candidates within the organisation understand its operations from the top down and are in a better position to fulfil identified leadership roles, especially in companies that require specialised knowledge. When changes to the organisational structure occur, senior management makes replacements without suffering from a lack of qualified personnel (Corporate Finance Institute, 2022). As a result, senior managers should take appropriate actions to establish a succession planning programme within their organisation. Inefficient organisations may result from a failure to organise human capital. Hence an effective succession programme is an essential mechanism for staff retention and is required (Ahmad & Saad, 2020).

**b) *Minimises costs of recruitment***

Organisations can save costs spent on external recruitment by implementing succession planning. A significant portion of an organisation's budget is spent on external recruitment every year. Hiring an external senior executive may be considerably more costly than finding potential internal candidates. Additionally, it is beneficial and more economical for the organisation to persuade an employee to work alongside a senior manager who is about to retire before the knowledge leaks out of the organisation (Corporate Finance Institute, 2022).

In the event of an employee's sudden or immediate resignation, succession planning allows management to mobilise skilled and talented employees. This strategy supports internal recruiting from a pool of qualified workers, saving the company money on hiring and development while also boosting employee morale (discouraging hiring from outside). Such development methods would also reduce the possibility of employees quitting (Ali & Mehreen, 2019).

**c) *Helps to address and understand competency gaps***

Succession planning assists organisations in understanding and addressing strategic competency gaps among their employees. Skills gaps occur due to a lack of employees with the talent required to handle current needs for critical public sector positions or essential skills that may be needed internally. This skills shortage creates a competency gap, distinguishing between the employees' present and future required competencies. Organisations must address competency gaps in training or talent management programmes to ensure that employees are equipped with the needed skills to perform future leadership duties (Corporate Finance Institute, 2022). Every organisation is responsible for safeguarding its expertise and long-term viability. Matching internal skills with people who have higher degrees is necessary to maintain a robust talent pipeline (Ahmad & Saad, 2020).

d) ***It keeps the business healthy***

Changes can be disruptive to any organisation. Succession planning helps an organisation to have a skilful successor who can perform tasks better, should a critical member of senior management depart. The lack of skilled internal talent could pose a challenge that can harm service delivery standards if not addressed promptly. Effective succession planning prepares employees for career advancement, encouraging employees to remain loyal to the organisation (Corporate Finance Institute, 2022).

Therefore, the process to realise future leaders with the potential and skills to take senior positions to assist the directorate of the Free State provincial government department should be designed. However, the process might be acknowledgeable without investing time in succession planning. It also notably affects the development and retention of excellent gender diversity in senior roles. Therefore, doing it well should inspire employee engagement in different public sector departments.

### **2.3 Role of provincial government departments**

African public sector. The South African public sector currently employs approximately 1.2 million people, which is 13% of all the workers in the country, making it the most significant organisation (Staff Writer, 2022). The administration of the South African government is this sector's responsibility. The national government departments' role is to develop policies, norms and standards, while provincial government departments are primarily responsible for implementing those policies. However, in practice, responsibility and accountability lines are often blurred. Provincial government departments play a complementary role in reducing inequality and eradicating poverty. The province's health, education and housing departments encourage positive community growth and build the foundation for accelerated economic growth.

Additionally, they oversee substantial public road systems and promote infrastructure growth, public transportation and other services to quicken social transformation. They are also responsible for overseeing elements of the planning and regulatory frameworks that govern land use, determine the location of the infrastructure and

promote economic development. Furthermore, provincial government departments collect revenue from the public, accounting for 3% of the Free State province's overall revenue (National Treasury, 2014).

## **2.4 Challenges in establishing succession planning**

Four out of 10 public sector departments in the next five years may lose 20% or more of their workforce to retirement, according to the *IPMA-HR Benchmarking Report* (2014) on talent management (p. 2). In the same study, 86% of participants were municipal or local government employees and 65% of participants claimed they lacked a succession plan. In addition, 10 000 Baby Boomers will also turn 65 years old daily over the next 10 years, bringing them closer to retirement age, according to Smith, Hoyer and DeSousa (n.d.). The public sector experiences issues when succession planning is ignored or neglected, making it more challenging to carry out its purpose owing to crucial leadership disruptions. Senior managers are aware of the imminent retirement of the Baby Boomer generation. However, succession planning is rarely, if ever, addressed by government departments.

Due to the average age of its workforce being higher than that of the private sector, the public sector is more susceptible to losing key personnel with vital institutional knowledge to retirement if there is no proper implementation of succession planning. Therefore, the public sector is "unequipped" to attract, keep and train workers with the skills necessary to fill crucial posts in the future (Nkondola, 2019, p. 61). Departments in the public sector are unprepared for the rapid changes in their staff. Nkondola (2019, p. 61) added that they can still not decide where to start the succession planning process.

The shifting demographics of the global village, alternative options and immigration deregulation legislation increase the loss of critical public sector employees. Any sudden departures of essential staff can cripple the day-to-day operations of the directorate of the Free State provincial government department, primarily if no appropriate replacement plan is in place. The directorate must anticipate the departure

of critical staff or leaders by ensuring a pool of skilled and talented successors is available within the business. The reality in the department today is that most young graduates are not keen on working for the government, leading to a decreasing pool of skilled workers from which they can recruit their essential employees. Young people prefer to be engaged, make a difference and feel aligned with their work. They do not perceive the government sector as giving them the flexibility and autonomy to choose where and how to work (Fulla, 2013). In the public sector, most senior management positions are occupied by people approaching retirement. However, the government departments have not invested in adequate successors and this will significantly affect the day-to-day operating activities of the directorate of the Free State provincial government department.

In his study, Nkondola (2019) indicated that organisations struggle with succession planning due to the large proportion of older employees. Nevertheless, succession requirements, however, do not align with their intentions. Barra (2007), cited in Nkondola (2019), asserted that from the experience of the United States of America (USA), the challenges that departments face when developing succession plans and building an internal talent pipeline. With a lack of executive ownership, time, resources, long-term strategic planning and a sharp decline in tenure, the ageing workforce is a more worrying factor for departments. To prevent the loss of institutional knowledge, it is vital that the directorate of the Free State provincial government department engage in good succession planning. There are additional barriers/challenges that the directorate of the Free State provincial government department has to confront daily, which include the following:

a) **Structural barriers** include a lack of evaluation and monitoring methods to measure progress, understanding which job roles to incorporate into a succession plan or skills and abilities required for an unexpected future. According to Rosenthal, Rouch, Monahan and Doherty (2018), government departments do not want the succession planning process to imply low trust in their senior managers, which reduces the usefulness of the exercise. Senior managers are also hesitant to pursue the topic of succession planning for fear that it will be interpreted as an indication of their plans. By contrast, Rosenthal et al. (2018) also noted that there

is no clarity on who is responsible for planning and grooming successors. Is it the HR unit or functional managers of the department? Rosenthal et al. (2018) said that, naturally, succession planning is a lifetime process that is abandoned because it cannot keep up with the strategic time frames of most directorates. Managers are frequently too busy with daily struggles to afford the time or thought on long-term decisions that could easily influence political dynamics.

Consequently, succession planning is still low on their priority list. Lastly, they indicate that most staff and directorate managers frequently believe that succession leadership planning is secret, with no clarity and ease needed to inspire trust. Suspicions may easily cause unacceptable workplace behaviours and employee disengagement.

- b) **Organisational barriers** encompass the absence of a proper succession-making plans framework, constrained help from pinnacle management, unavailability of a policy, lack of sustaining innovation programmes in the face of changing political administration and priorities and denied know-how because of the lack of schooling on the subject of succession-making plans (Du Plessis, 2019).
- c) **Behavioural barriers** are the resistance of leaders to giving up power that leads to nepotism and disruptive communication among senior managers, the HR department and frontline management. Additionally, release time and financial constraints are succession planning's main barriers. Favouritism, low morale at work and limited subordinate interest in leading positions are additional behavioural barriers that impede succession planning (Du-Plessis, 2019).
- d) **Political dynamics** is when stakeholders succumb to fighting, ignoring or delaying solutions that will benefit the directorate of the Free State provincial government department in the long run, since solutions might create an actual or perceived crisis. Sometimes, a cheaper solution that offers immediate and imperfect outcomes is preferable to a long-term solution for constituents' satisfaction. Furthermore, the long-term remedies may conflict with already implemented tactics or policies that are seen to be of higher priority (Du-Plessis, 2019).

- e) **Lack of expertise** is when the departments do not know where to start to establish the succession planning process. There is no one within the directorate of the Free State provincial government department to guide the strategy. Naturally, organisations turn to the HR department, which has a limited understanding of the matter and has other work commitments (Du-Plessis, 2019).
  
- f) **Limited resources** – most of the time, public sector departments constantly expect to deliver more service with fewer resources. Thus, it forces employees to concentrate more on “low-hanging, short-term fruit”. The emphasis is on daily or weekly pressing operational matters rather than more strategic long-term priorities. Therefore, the transition from one-to-one replacement mapping to developing a pool of potential leaders who can meet the succession needs of organisations will remain a challenge (Du-Plessis, 2019).
  
- g) **Recruiting the next generation to public service** – This will always be the most significant challenge for government entities to attract the best people. Highly skilled employees perceive the private sector as the most important source of talent. Furthermore, Smith et al. (n.d.) quoted that competitive salary proves a barrier for Millennials to work in the public sector compared to the private sector. Millennials prefer entry-level positions in the private sector with high wages. Minimal wage is a massive issue for government departments, bearing in mind that by 2030, the last Baby Boomers’ generation will be retiring while Gen X will be pre-retirement. Failure to attract Millennials to the public sector means there will not be a pool of high-potential, fast-tracked or emerging leaders available to fill positions, should they become open – whether planned or unplanned.

Tan (2009) declared that succession planning is less important in the public sector. Instead of succession leadership, management is more interested in developing the management’s willingness to resume departmental duties whenever the need arises, which is then processed ad hoc, which is more like a management replacement and involves replacing managers who leave public sector departments. Also, Smith et al. (n.d.) highlighted that the public sector takes more lengthy recruitment procedures than the private sector. For this reason, Millennials, who otherwise would be interested

in working for the government, eventually accept job offers from the private sector when they get job offers from government departments.

## **2.5 Critical success factors for implementing effective succession planning**

According to Wiesman and Baker (2013), a structured approach to succession planning and management enhances operational continuity and stability, particularly during periods of organisational upheaval. In the public sector, organisational change occurs at a never-before-seen pace. A deliberate strategy for leadership transition is, therefore, essential. Furthermore, according to these experts, systematic knowledge and wisdom transfer between present and future leadership can be achieved through orderly succession planning and management.

Wiesman and Baker (2013) also stated that developing and training methods such as stretch assignments, training, retaining and mentoring can enhance the new leadership talent. This process could benefit the entire organisation, send a message of stability and emphasise critical success factors for the future. The three essential elements of success identified by Wiesman and Baker (2013) in the successful implementation of management and succession planning management programmes are:

- Develop a systematic talent pool of high-potential leaders and high-performers.
- Senior managers must be personally involved and committed.
- There must be a link between the organisation's strategic planning process and direction, succession planning and management.

These critical success factors emphasise the importance of developing a system to manage succession planning and ensure progress. As a result, Olowoyeye (2020) advised that succession processes must include top-level management changes and a variety of other aspects, such as internal talent search. Procedures for a successful transfer are also covered, as are legal and financial concerns, psychological issues, leadership growth and exit plans. The first step in succession planning is to take proactive steps to guarantee the firm's seamless transition from the owner to a dedicated successor.

Phillips (2020) attested to the statement above by stating that succession planning uses these three elements to address the significance of succession planning for future organisational growth: (a) identification of future leaders who are visionary, open-minded and risk-takers who respect the core values of the organisation, (b) engagement and development of employees at all organisational levels, which include mentoring and coaching to grow new talent, and (c) retention of those identified as high-achievers. As a result, regardless of the ownership structure, the success of succession from one leader or generation to the next is essential to a company's competitive advantage and long-term viability.

However, programmes for succession planning should resist executive cloning, which attempts to copy the existing leader's attributes and create a comfortable match for current operations (Wiesman & Baker, 2013, p. 101). Planning for succession should instead concentrate on future demands while acknowledging that these needs might necessitate a different leadership style. There can be too much focus on finding talent and not enough on developing it. "Headhunting" is simply the start of creating a talent pool for leaders. The organisation must integrate strategic goals and leadership succession planning to achieve the strategic direction.

Puljic (2019) cautioned that failure to engage in succession planning promptly in the organisation may harm decisions, potentially leading to discontinuity after the first generation. As a result of the increasing attrition rate, succession planning has become critical for all public-sector organisations. A succession plan is also necessary for mitigating risk and improving departmental efficiency. As a result, managers should work to identify, cultivate and retain staff members with the leadership skills required to advance present and future organisational objectives. Studies have also connected variables like a strong passion and emotional tie to the organisation, incapacity or fear of retirement to most managers' resistance to succession plans. As a result, it is not surprising that most public sector managers will prefer to manage the department until the exact retirement age rather than retire early. However, to ensure uninterrupted service delivery standards to South African citizens, the public sector, with future continuity, needs to make succession planning a critical part of their business process by integrating it as part of their overall business strategy (Torres, 2020). Building

capacity that is lacking, particularly in the public sector, impedes formulating a long-term plan that ensures the necessary human capital for the survival and long-term growth of the government sector, affirms Torres (2020).

## **2.6 Talent pipeline**

A ready pool of competent and prepared candidates to step up and fill pertinent, crucial positions in the organisation as soon as they become vacant is known as a talent pipeline (Ghosh, 2021). This on-hold talent pool comprises skilled internal candidates and personnel who have potential and can be promoted.

With a pipeline of competent individuals waiting in the wings, the cost and time of hiring can be significantly reduced. Despite operating in a primarily candidate-led market, organisations today do not have the luxury of waiting for candidates to take the initiative and apply. Before a position becomes available, they need to have potential people ready to fill it. An essential component of success has a solid talent pipeline.

An organisation with a talent pipeline may cultivate and develop relationships with potential applicants before a position becomes available. The talent stream, however, cannot remain static. In the very disruptive climate of today, complacency is the killer of growth. According to (Ghosh, 2021), managers may keep up with changing organisational demands and personnel trends by periodically re-evaluating the talent pipeline and ensuring it remains dynamic. Managers must offer training opportunities to continuously encourage the talent pipeline to expand its skill set.

Succession planning is dependent on senior management's support and commitment. An institution requires existing managers to assist with succession planning, hiring, evaluating and other procedures related to creating future leaders. This process will motivate employees and ensure that senior managers devote effort and time to the succession plans. Top management's involvement should thus motivate employees to participate in succession planning programmes and encourage them to seek career advancement (Abd & Nazia, 2019).

Ghosh (2021) mentioned that building a relevant talent pipeline involves having senior management's buy-in, which will assist an organisation in improving metrics other than turnover and revenue. Since Millennials are more prepared to switch careers quickly than previous generations of workers, career advancement is emphasised by 52% of Millennials as the most desired promise in the workplace. The organisation will have a pipeline of motivated, devoted candidates because of engagement growth.

A practical method to future-proof the company is to build a talent pipeline. Creating a dynamic, flexible and agile talent pipeline that is fit for the critical mission and requirements of both the present and the future should be prioritised (Ghosh, 2021). To further affirm the importance of having a sustainable talent pipeline for the overall success of the directorate of the Free State provincial government department, the researcher agrees with the notion that the first step in managing talents and planning succession is to prepare a workforce plan. Without a planned and intentional approach, the public sector organisation may not deliver its services at the expected level of quality. Departments without effective talent management and succession planning processes face untapped potential and reduced efficiency risks, critical personnel loss, essential skills and knowledge, and difficulty rapidly recruiting new employees with the same abilities. Ghosh (2021) accentuated that talent and succession management are, therefore, necessary for public sector organisations for them to:

- safeguard critical operational needs;
- provide a maximum contribution from high-potential employees;
- aid employee career growth and ensure greater employee engagement;
- offer a variety of training and development opportunities;
- formalise training and career growth paths;
- form key element in formal workforce planning of systems; and
- offer a highly skilled future pool of managers.

A strong talent pipeline that can support the directorate of the Free State provincial government department results from a prospective effectively implemented succession planning process (Cheney & Nienaber, 2009). According to these authors,

the main goal of succession planning is to ensure that successors are ready for their new roles and to encourage quick adaptation. (Cheney & Nienaber, 2009) continued to say that “succession planning and talent management are an essential part of talent management practices that influence the selection, employment, mentoring, career development, leadership development, recognition and rewarding initiatives to ensure that organisations sustain competitive advantage” (p. 443).

## **2.7 Talent management and staff retention**

Talent management has prompted organisations to review their retention strategies to retain talent in a worldwide shortage of skilled workers. Henry Ford, an American industrialist, underlined the importance of human capital by stating: “Take my business, burn up my building, but give me my people and I will build the business right back again” (Khan, Aslam & Lohdi, 2011, p. 90).

For a long time, organisations have realised that their key asset is their human capital. To affirm this, Rani and Kumar (2014) add that “retaining talented employees is a critical part of an organisation’s broader approach to talent management, which is defined as the implementation of strategies or integrated systems to increase productivity in the workplace through the design of improved processes to attract, develop, retain and use people with the appropriate skills needed to meet current and future business needs” (p. 20).

“Talent management” refers to institutions recruiting, developing and retaining successors (Du-Plessis, 2019). It assists organisations in deciding on identifying and planning for existing and future leadership needs. It identifies strategies and interventions to draw in, keep and oversee a talent pool of reliable leaders. Establishing current and future talent pipelines requires strong management competencies. Du Plessis (2019) emphasised that talent management is fundamental to retaining internal successors.

Nevertheless, the directorate of the Free State provincial government department faces the challenge of developing staff members by paying for their tertiary education.

Then, they leave the directorate because there is no guarantee for career growth, which becomes a fruitless expenditure on behalf of the organisation. To assert the previous statement, Mthembu (2012) mentioned that in 2008, the health department in South Africa lost highly skilled nurses due to globalisation.

Therefore, the stated directorate of the Free State provincial government department requires urgent remedial action to prevent such a loss from occurring again. To mitigate the problem and reduce staff turnover, it needs to implement retention strategies such as succession planning. Figure 1 indicates the talent management retention framework the department could implement to mitigate identified risks (Jinda & Shaikh, 2020).

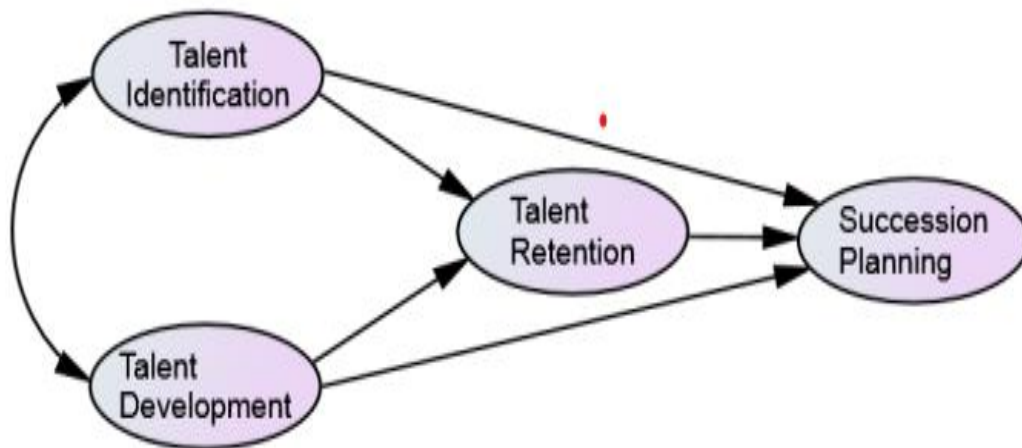


Figure 1: Talent management retention framework – Source (Jinda & Shaikh, 2020)

Talent identification and succession planning are the most critical HR management activities, claimed Hughson, Loree and Frost (2019, para. 1). They maintain that for companies to be competitive in the rapidly changing global labour market, they must identify talented people who can fill key leadership roles (Hughson et al., 2019). The concepts mentioned above in the talent management framework can be defined as follows:

- **Talent identification** is a systematic performance management process used to determine whether a group of employees can advance to key leadership positions.

- **Talent development** builds knowledge, skills and attitudes and develops a pool of highly qualified personnel to occupy crucial leadership positions.
- **Talent retention** keeps talented and skilled employees and ensures **organisational growth**.

Therefore, succession planning is the key factor that links the framework's concepts and ensures that organisations can meet their future talent needs. Kamami (2017) also emphasised that investing in employees' development through education and training enhances their effectiveness by imparting practical knowledge and skills. Higher training and education costs are investments as they increase personal income. For this reason, the directorate of the Free State provincial government department must ensure that it retains a talented workforce motivated to be part of an institution that invests in the education of its employees and this will lead to better departmental performance. Therefore, effective talent management processes for potential successors are required.

Historically, government departments deliberately replaced critical employees before they left the organisation. Mehrabani and Mohamad (2011) pointed out that replacing employees and not developing them is the public sector's biggest and most common mistake, which results in the loss of institutional knowledge. For decades, the private sector department's concern has been replacing people needed for the organisation's future, not skills and talents, according to Mehrabani and Mohamad (2011). The directorate's recruitment strategy should target and identify necessary successors to replace their predecessors for a particular job, focusing on senior leaders.

Therefore, Mehrabani and Mohamad (2011) defined "replacement planning as risk management that focuses on replacing key executives before leaving the organisation" (p. 371). They continued to say that many problems arise from replacing processes, such as the difficulty of finding the right candidate for a new vacancy in a short period. The purpose of replacement planning is to enable a smooth transition brought on by the unexpected loss of a key leader, which should not be confused with succession planning. Replacement planning is a reactive means of filling vacancies as opposed to succession planning, which is a proactive method of equipping an

organisation with a surplus of talent by assisting individuals in realising their leadership potential through planned growth activities (Phillips, 2020).

Suppose the Free State provincial government department directorate cannot find suitable candidates internally, then they must hire externally, which will cost more for the department. Therefore, the directorate must consider enhancing its employees' knowledge, skills, talents and capabilities by establishing succession planning to address problems caused by replacement planning that is only intended to replace employees and ignores talents and skills required for the future.

An effective talent management strategy includes attaching successors to senior roles during the transition period and exposing lower-level employees to organisational activities that foster change to prepare them to assume higher responsibilities. Succession planning is critical because it provides opportunities to influence organisational performance through growth and development and ensures that potential successors can handle the job responsibilities.

The state directorate of the Free State provincial government department can use a retention strategy to mitigate the challenges of losing institutional knowledge. Public sector departments have many challenges relating to retention, like a lack of staff, a shortage of skilled personnel, a lack of experienced teams, high staff turnover due to increased mobility and an ageing workforce (Vermeulen, 2007). Rani and Kumar (2014) agreed that senior managers could also use employee retention primarily for addressing factors that affect talent management practices, such as planning for succession, age, seniority, level of education, salary and benefits, and training and development. Vermeulen (2007) further asserted that senior managers need to understand staff turnover costs before establishing a suitable retention strategy and comparing it with the expenses involved in staff turnover, staff retention costs may be easier to justify.

The following are the factors that influence the practices of talent management discussed by Rani and Kumar (2014):

a) ***Planning for succession***

Several viewpoints on succession planning exist, but almost all have a common standpoint: succession planning is the future-proof strategy that allows organisations to develop and groom a successor for their future sustainability. It is a one-of-a-kind foundation that ensures the hiring of appropriate individuals. Human capital investment necessitates careful planning for developing and retaining talent under talent management's purview.

b) ***Age, seniority and educational level***

Regarding talented individuals' intentions to remain with the organisation, age and retention positively correlate. The older an employee is, the more likely they will stay in the organisation. Employees with more than 20 years of seniority are also more likely to stay than those with less seniority. Furthermore, young employees are job-hopping at the start of their careers in any organisation, whereas it is difficult for an older employee to get another job. Educational level has no discernible effect on retention.

c) ***Wage and benefits***

Another factor that affects employee retention is the relationship between benefits and salary. Fair compensation and rewards significantly affect employees' intentions to leave an organisation. Compared to other industries, the major causes of attrition in the public sector are always proportional to the amount of money received. The high attrition rate in government is primarily due to this. Poor remuneration and reward schemes contribute to talent loss in the public sector.

d) ***Training and development***

The critical factor in retaining talented employees of any age is training. Employee retention rates increase when training programmes are made available to all employees. In contrast, career growth is the cultivation and accumulation of knowledge and skills that allow experts to grow in their chosen fields. Higher wages

are not the sole key to encouraging talented employees to work for a company. Other incentives, like career development, growth and open communication, are essential. Employees will be less likely to leave if they believe they are learning and growing.

On the other hand, employees begin to look outside the company for new job opportunities when they feel they are no longer growing. Coaching is another aspect that can effectively motivate talented employees. High-performing employees are less inclined to leave an organisation with coaching, engagement and motivation.

#### e) **Leadership**

Yukl and Gardner III (2020) stated that “leadership is the process of persuading others to understand and agree on what to do and how to do it, as well as the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to achieve shared objectives” (p. 18). The role of the leader also includes conveying the philosophy of talent management throughout the organisation and becoming familiar with the industry rivalry. Organisations will be more efficient in talent management if they encourage managers to take active leadership roles. The nature of leadership styles influences employee morale and turnover.

#### f) **Organisational culture**

Talent management activities significantly influence whether they thrive and contribute to improved outcomes. An organisation must manage its knowledge better to influence individuals’ commitment and motivation.

Succession planning is a crucial advantage for a growing pool of leaders. It sends positive messages across government departments and is suitable for maintaining staff morale (Koketso, 2011).

Koketso (2011) directly stated that the following are reasons for the acceleration of talent pool and succession planning (pp 65–66):

- Provide a base of in-house replacements for vital management positions.
- Preserve crucial talent.

- Develop personnel for future challenges.
- Intensify the department's human capital.
- Accelerate the development of key individuals.
- Provide exciting, growth-oriented and rewarding career prospects.
- Safeguard continuity of management culture, which is difficult to preserve when many managers are brought in from outside.
- Avoid service delivery disruption while the new candidate is learning a job.
- Control costs: developing internal talent is less expensive than hiring from the outside (e.g. costs of recruitment and relocation, higher starting salary).
- Make the department more appealing to job seekers.
- Monitor and help achieve diversity goals.

Talent management is one of the utmost strategies for giving organisations a competitive advantage. It is essential to creating a business strategy since it manages the organisation's most important asset – its employees.

The lack of competent employees would result in 85 million job positions remaining unfilled by 2030, according to a recent study by Negi and Patel (2021, para. 1). Talent management helps the company create an educated staff prepared for the future. It increases team productivity, raises employee satisfaction and supports talent retention. As a result, companies should work to effectively manage their workforce to help employees develop their skills and competencies over time.

## **2.8 Succession planning practices in different sectors**

As organisations lose senior managers due to retirement, resignations and restructuring, prospective future leaders also decrease. Because of their lack of experience or the necessary skills, middle managers may have trouble being promoted to senior management positions if organisations do not have an effective succession plan (Lowan & Chisoro, 2016). Regarding succession planning procedures, there are similarities and differences between the private, public and non-profit sectors. In terms of succession planning, a comparison between leaders from the private, public and non-profit sectors can be made as follows:

### a) ***Succession planning in the public sector***

Succession planning initiatives for government and non-government sectors differ in two critical ways. The first distinction is that certain public institutions have state administration policies that forbid appointing individuals to positions without a transparent recruitment process (Rothwell, 2006). Individual successors may not be able to be identified ahead of time using this method. The second distinction, according to Rothwell (2006), is who may be considered an active champion of succession. The CEO is the most crucial active champion in the corporate world, simplifying the implementation of a succession plan. The accounting officer (HOD) is a political appointee who executes the directives of an elected official party while working in the public sector. This composition makes it hard for government departments to identify successors ahead of time.

On the other hand, government representatives are viewed as the most significant custodians of the process of succession planning, since they remain stable despite electoral changes. When a new government assumes office, it changes because it implements new plans and policies to overthrow the previous administration. That condition does not provide for succession planning. As a result, there is insufficient effective succession planning in government.

Lowan and Chisoro (2016) asserted that government departments also require succession planning programmes, similar to profit-making organisations. The succession plan for the directorate of the Free State provincial government department should be tailored to the institution's requirements. The department's accounting officer and the chief director should adopt procedures encouraging the directors to address succession planning problems.

It is worth noting that heads of departments (HODs) are hired on five-year fixed-term contracts to lead government departments in South Africa. Then there are chief directors, who lead directorates and directors, who lead sections/units with the help of deputy and assistant directors. A succession planning process may be implemented, given this structure. The deputy and assistant directors may be groomed and trained to become the following directors or chief directors of the same institution. As a result,

it cannot be accurate that the government department cannot identify and develop potential future leaders (Rothwell, 2006).

b) ***Succession planning in the private sector***

Every organisation will have to cope with leadership transitions at some point. CEO turnover has increased in the previous two years, according to Challenger, Gray and Christmas (2020). Leadership transitions handled inappropriately may expose companies, causing stock values to plummet, employees to get nervous about the changes and investors to lose faith in the firm. The number of CEOs who quit their jobs in the USA increased by 37%, from 160 in December to 219 at the start of the year (Challenger Gray & Christmas, 2020).

With the preceding statement in mind, Groves (2019) claimed that most businesses either fail to create formal succession planning strategies or do so on an ad hoc basis. Challenger et al. (2020) reported that 107 of the 198 CFO appointments observed in the USA since January were external recruitment, with 91 from within the organisation. It is a growing trend in companies to hire external applicants rather than develop their talent pipeline. As a result, businesses must have a well-thought-out succession strategy in place. This trend demonstrates how ill-prepared organisations are for planned and unanticipated leadership changes. Even organisations with formal succession plans focus primarily on the CEO, ignoring other critical senior positions (Groves, 2019).

In summary, most businesses across industries have failed to build comprehensive succession management skills that reach well beyond the board of directors and away from positions more powerful than the CEO. Several inconsistencies in CEO succession frequently delay or undermine efforts to develop formal succession planning strategies, according to Groves (2019), and they are:

- A common misconception is that succession planning is just for the CEO's position.

- The false perception derives from the erroneous belief that the CEO is solely responsible for identifying their successors, obviating the necessity for a company-wide succession plan.
- The misperception comes from a fear that CEOs who oversee any succession planning process are signalling their retirement and, as a result, risk causing market turbulence.
- The incorrect assumption is that the expenses of establishing succession management capabilities outweigh the advantages or profits. On a related point, the erroneous belief that HR is responsible for succession planning stifles the company's overall commitment to a substantial range of talents.

c) ***Succession planning in the non-profit sector***

Business executives must consider the need for organisational survival while handling succession planning, whether the organisation in question is profit-making or non-profit. A successful succession plan should be in place at every organisation. Numerous traits of commercial and governmental entities and non-profit organisations are shared (Lowan & Chisoro, 2016). Consequently, a non-profit organisation's succession plan will probably operate like a government agency or a private firm. Therefore effective succession planning must consider the country's cultural differences in this prominent world. With 11 official languages, South Africa is a diverse country. Organisational cultures, not individual cultural backgrounds, should be used to establish succession plans (Lowan & Chisoro, 2016).

In a non-profit organisation, succession planning may be a tricky subject. For example, with a love for looking after their neighbourhood, one person created a few non-profit organisations. The leader creates an organisation with assistance from friends and family members. Members of the same family may start some businesses or organisations (Rothwell, 2006). They assume that the company's founders are unaware that it serves a particular group. It becomes difficult in this situation to discuss succession planning with someone who founded the company. Therefore, CEOs need to think about succession planning to ensure their passion and objectives continues when they get sick or leave the company.

## **2.9 The purpose of using frameworks**

Talent management frameworks are specialised structures used to satisfy the various needs of HR. People, not organisations, are ultimately responsible for creating value and making money (BountiXP Team, 2021). To improve organisational performance, managers must thoroughly understand the people working there. Therefore, using frameworks enables the organisation to manage and optimise the most critical asset, its people.

Customisation aims to raise an organisation's talent pool's efficiency levels and attract and retain talented workers. BountiXP Team (2021) highlighted that "financial capital investment has always been a key propeller for organisational growth and success". "Lesser known is the value that investing in human capital could have to drive organisational growth" (para. 15). People are the organisation's most valuable resource in the modern workplace and there is fierce competition for the best personnel. The framework makes it easier to choose the best candidates with the best talents for development and retention.

The "Free State provincial government department" may use a talent management framework to recruit top talent, effectively motivate workers, identify skills shortages, enhance employee performance, engage the workforce, retain the best personnel and improve the organisation's performance.

Talent and organisational value are connected and are used to serve as the foundation of the talent management system. Therefore, BountiXP Team (2021, para. 20) defined "talent management framework as the ability to apply strategic human resource insights and tools to enable the organisation to realise its goals".

## **2.10 Conclusion**

The researcher argued that any department needs leadership succession. Organisations should examine and understand elements that enhance or hinder succession processes and, when necessary, implement or prevent them. Tan (2009) asserted that the implementation of succession leadership at all levels of management

is an ongoing process rather than a static one. The researcher of the current study believed that a manager who has no aspiration to advance the interests of his subordinates and whose sole interest is to achieve follower compliance for attaining the department's objectives is unlikely to invest the time and effort in grooming successors.

In the meantime, some leaders believe that, in addition to achieving follower compliance and departmental goals, they must transform and develop their followers for further responsibilities and senior positions. Such managers believe that transformation and duplication of leadership roles are necessary for leading and are more inclined to use succession planning to train and groom their subordinates. Bass (1985) proposed the notion of transformational leadership as a method of comprehending the leadership change model required for a succession plan. Transformational managers, according to Bass (1985), can motivate their subordinates more than transactional managers by cultivating associate awareness of the importance of their jobs, encouraging subordinates to integrate their self-interests under the department's interests and activating the higher-order needs of their subsidiaries.

Succession refers to the transfer of power from one leadership generation to the next. It encompasses the patterns that arise before the shift occurs and its changing effects (Olowoyeye, 2020). As a result, succession planning is a mechanism through which appropriate and eligible applicants who can occupy key executive positions in a company are selected and trained. Succession planning begins with establishing the company and increasing the availability of competent workers willing to fill these positions as they become available.

Based on the above statement, the researcher has observed that the stated directorate in the Free State government department up skills its employees by paying for their tertiary education to effectively equip them to perform their current duties. However, the department has failed to retain those employees whom it empowered due to a lack of employee growth into new positions, obligations and responsibilities. Directorates' managers are unwilling to coach and mentor the next generation of employees, especially those who furthered their studies through departmental

bursaries to impart organisational knowledge, work policies and procedures and softer skills such as employee management. Instead, they view this potential talent pipeline as threatening their position. If the senior managers do not concentrate on knowledge transfer to preserve and pass on the institutional knowledge they have to the next generation, the directorate of the Free State provincial government department will always have a skills gap. It will continue to impact the service delivery standards for the current government.

Tan (2009) asserted that employees who work for managers prepared to put money, time and effort into their transformation and progress are more likely to feel that their higher-order needs are satisfied. As a result, employee engagement and work satisfaction would increase. Still, those who work under managers concerned with achieving the targets without considering the empowerment of their followers will experience high turnover and resistance among their subordinates. The following chapter will discuss the methodology of the research study.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the research technique for the study. The researcher was permitted to conduct a study in their present directorate rather than the entire department, as was the initial idea. To avoid potential ethical problems, the researcher used “voluntary consent because it respects human dignity and means that people have chosen to participate in research following their values, preferences and wishes”. In the “disclosure of consent”, the primary responsibility falls on the researcher to inform the participants of all useful information about the research, particularly the risks if there are any (Knifed, Lipsman, Mason & Bernstein, 2008, p. 348).

Therefore, this chapter discusses the research design and approach, philosophy, sampling strategy, data collection, coding, thematic analysis and ethical considerations. The comprehension of the researcher’s perspective on information analysis and processing, and the rationale behind the necessity of the research study and its intended results, were built based on the information provided. Understanding the qualitative research method will set the stage for the conversation, the rationale for its selection and the data-collection techniques applied. The methods for determining population and sampling are presented, along with the tools and procedure for collecting data. There was transparency in the process employed and the analysis of pertinent data. Finally, there is a discussion of the ethics that guided the research and the researcher’s conduct.

### **3.2 Research design**

Only a few studies that examined the whole range of succession planning’s applications in talent management were found in the literature search in the context of the South African public sector. The research review covered the public and private sectors in the USA, the United Kingdom (UK) and the Far East publications and articles. However, because the situation in these countries is not identical to the labour

and talent issues in South Africa, theoretical research content on the topic provides a limited context (Le Roes, 2017).

Given the remarks above, it is evident that the researcher had to select the most effective method of investigation to fully understand the perspectives of those confronted with the realities of succession planning within the chosen directorate of the Free State provincial government department. The researcher chose a qualitative research methodology. The phrase “qualitative research” is defined by Levitt, Bamberg, Creswell, Frost, Josselson and Suárez-Orozco (2018) as “a group of methodologies that analyse data in the form of natural language (words) and manifestations of experiences, like social interactions and artistic displays” (p. 2). According to Braun and Clarke (2013), “gathering and analysis of words as data in a variety of methods” are what qualitative research refers to (p. 20).

Consideration was given to people with first-hand experience and those who must comprehend, organise, implement and manage the process while analysing the research problem. Therefore, “research design can be defined as one of the various frameworks used to collect and analyse data” (Bryman, Bell, Hirschsohn, Dos Santos, Du Toit & Masenge, 2014, p. 100). Inductive and exploratory research methods were used in this study to achieve depth rather than breadth through rich and personal results (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Meanings derived from the data were gathered using an inductive analytical method to find patterns and relationships. The creation of a theory results from such inquiry. This research study examined the government department’s effective succession planning methods to offer recommendations for their practical application.

The intrinsic approaches of qualitative research, inductive analytical techniques and interpretivism were thus the best strategies for fulfilling the study’s goals. The study followed a descriptive design. Aggarwal and Ranganathan (2019) defined descriptive design as the “distribution of one or more variables, without regard to any casual or other hypotheses” (p. 34). Following this statement, the researcher was able to draw some well-founded findings from the research study.

### **3.3 Research philosophy**

A foundation for conducting research is provided by a research philosophy, which is based on concepts about reality and the nature of knowledge (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The two primary ontologies for research are positivism and interpretivism. These ideologies stand for two very distinct ways that humans interpret the world. According to positivism, reality exists independently of us and can be studied objectively by scholars. According to Collis and Hussey (2014), interpretivism holds that facts are highly subjective since they affect how people see the world.

The interpretive research theory underlies this study's research. Collis and Hussey (2014) examined the complexities of social phenomena using data from a relatively small sample size while keeping an empathic awareness of how the research subjects perceive their surroundings.

### **3.4 Sampling strategy**

The sample makeup and size examination were motivated by the population within the directorate of the Free State provincial government department. The received permission determined the sample size for this study (see Annexure C). The overall population was 10 middle managers within the directorate. The composition of the population was six deputy directors and four assistant directors within the directorate. Middle managers have more in-depth exposure to implementing talent management framework and how to use it. If necessary, middle managers evaluate individual performance and identify any personal development training for their subordinates. They are responsible and accountable for integrated talent management, among other competence areas of their work. Since middle managers could respond to all of the research topics this study seeks to address, they were a pertinent sample for this study. This investigation used the census method.

#### **3.4.1 Population**

The population "is a large collection of individuals or objects that is the main focus of a scientific study" (Bryman et al., 2014). Ten middle managers of the Free State

provincial government department directorate were predetermined as the population for this study. In the census method, a population is a group of people or a specific area where data will be collected. Therefore, all 10 research participants in this study were interviewed because the census method represents complete enumeration.

The focus was on the middle managers because they form part of the operational team and are responsible for evaluating employees' performance and identifying any personal development training that could assist employees in achieving directorate goals and future growth. Regarding career growth, the department's assistant directors and deputy directors have specific expectations. As a result, this management group was the subject of attention.

### **3.4.2 Sample size**

Bryman et al. (2014) defined sample size as "several subjects included in the study" (p. 170). The sample size for the study was all 10 middle managers of the directorate. All 10 research participants were interviewed for this study because of the small population that equals the sample size. The sample was predetermined to achieve desired research outcomes and data saturation.

According to Guest, Namey and Chen (2020), a sample of eight to 12 people is suggested for qualitative research. The authors emphasised that fewer samples are typically used in qualitative research since sample quality is more significant than the sample size. To attest to the statement above, Morgan, Fischhoff, Bostrom and Atman (2002) conducted a study on environmental risks and discovered that a new dataset was produced in the first five to six interviews and that as the sample size increased to around 10 interviews, there was little new data added. In-depth interviews were also done in West Africa by Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006), who found that 70% of the 114 themes surfaced within the first six interviews and 92% within the first 12. Therefore, with the responses of 10 participants, the researcher was able to reach data saturation. In qualitative research, saturation signals the end of data gathering or analysis (Saunders et al., 2018).

### **3.4.2 The recruitment strategy**

The recruitment strategy determines the level of permission granted by the department to collect data for this study on 10 middle managers of the directorate of the Free State provincial government department. To explore the complex meaning and achieve data saturation, Cleary, Horsfall and Hayter (2014) noted that choosing participants based on the researcher's primary questions, framework and purposefulness is essential. In a qualitative study, a researcher frequently concentrates on participants who are most likely to offer in-depth insights into the objectives and research questions and improve comprehension of the topic under study.

The research participants conformed to the following recruitment criteria:

- a middle manager within a directorate in the Free State provincial government department;
- employed within a directorate in the Free State provincial government department for at least five years;
- employed in at least one, but preferably all two levels of middle management within a directorate in the Free State provincial government department (lower management and middle management); and
- knowledgeable in what a succession plan is.

Given the conformance to these criteria by all 10 research participants, the researcher is confident that rich and valuable feedback was provided to sufficiently answer all the research questions in this study.

### **3.4.3 Sampling method**

The researcher used the census research method as a sampling technique to collect data in the study. However, the census method implies that the primary data, as first-hand information, is collected by the researcher from the entire population of participants (Byjus, 2022). The sampling frame included the whole population. Data collection was done by asking participants questions face-to-face and online to get quick and accurate information.

Van der Westhuizen and Hewitt (2021) stated that it is essential in the research study to detail key demographic characteristics before the commencement of the interview by requesting each participant to complete a pre-interview questionnaire to gather demographic data (see Appendix B). The completion of this questionnaire in advance was necessary. The researcher used it as a strategy to establish a working relationship with the participants that would provide an opportunity for them to ask questions and for the researcher to provide background information about the topic of interest (Parks, 2018).

The researcher received formal approval from the department (see Annexure C.1) to conduct the study in the directorate. Therefore, the researcher used the company's intranet to obtain the office contact numbers and e-mail addresses of the research participants. The department approved this (see Annexure C.2). The researcher sent an e-mail to middle managers requesting them to participate in the study and to collect participants' demographic data (see Appendix B).

### **3.5 Data collection method**

Tegan (2022) defined "a semi-structured interview as a data collection method that relies on asking open-ended questions within a predetermined thematic framework" (para. 1). The researcher used in-depth semi-structured interviews to collect the data from the participants. The interviews were conducted face-to-face during office hours. Although the world is still battling the Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher also made the option of online interviews via Zoom or Microsoft Teams available for the participants to contain the spread of Covid-19. To focus entirely on the interactions with the participants, the researcher did not take notes throughout the interviews. Alternatively, with the participant's consent, the researcher audio-recorded the interviews and transcribed them. A second audio recorder was used as a backup to mitigate any risk of data loss during the interview sessions. The questions in the interview guide were designed in such a manner to ensure that they provided answers to all the research questions and address the main topics of interest (see Appendix A). However, the researcher expanded on some of the original interview questions by adding one safety net question to let the participants elaborate more on areas that the interview questions did not cover.

The researcher aimed to conduct the interviews over 10 working days during the day to minimise travelling costs for the participants for 30 to 45 minutes. The researcher requested to conduct interviews during the participant's lunch break not to hamper working hours. However, some participants opted for Microsoft Teams interviews. In these cases, the interview timeframe was five working days because, for those participants, interviews were conducted after hours at a time convenient to them.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

In qualitative research, "data analysis refers to carefully searching and organising interview transcripts, observation notes and other non-textual resources gathered by the researcher to understand better the phenomenon" (Wong, 2008, p. 14). The majority of the time, the analytical procedure includes qualitative coding data. A logical chain of evidence must be built by first reducing the volume of raw data, then identifying pertinent patterns and finally extrapolating meaning from the data.

#### **a) Coding**

In the process of analysing qualitative data, coding is one of the critical processes. Coding and data analysis are not the same, but they are both essential to qualitative data analysis. Coding separates raw data or information into smaller pieces, classifying each component (Gibbs, 2018). It is coding to find a paragraph in a text, search for and identify concepts and figure out how they relate to one another. To create a framework of themes and concepts, Gibbs (2018) described coding as a means of classifying or categorising a text. According to Gibbs (2018), transcription, data coding and theme identification are the essential phases in qualitative coding data.

Therefore, the researcher engaged Gibbs's essential phases of qualitative coding as follows:

- Transcript preparation – the researcher transcribe interview recordings verbatim, then edited them on Microsoft Word for accuracy and analyses.

- Data coding – the researcher used transcribed interview recordings to colour-code or identify common phrases.
- Themes – common phrases identified by the researcher were used to construct themes that were analysed on Chapter 4.

The researcher looked at the themes in the interview transcripts using only Microsoft Word to code the data and no other software, using thematic analysis to find and collect information from different interviews that fit together. These similarities connect the data themes and help the researcher to understand those themes

#### **b) Thematic analysis**

In a qualitative data analysis technique called thematic analysis, recurring patterns in data collection are looked for, analysed and reported (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Although it is a method for summarising data, it also incorporates interpretation when selecting codes and creating themes. The ability to use it with a wide range of research objectives, study designs, sample sizes and within different theoretical and epistemological frameworks makes thematic analysis special.

Because theme analysis is more flexible than a more rigidly established approach, the researcher employed the following procedures to analyse the data collected, as identified by Braun and Clarke (2006):

- Familiarisation - the researcher read and re-read the transcripts extracted from the interview recordings to familiarise herself with the collected data before the analyses. She also marked or noted phrases of interest that highlighted something from the research questions.
- Coding – the researcher colour-coded phrases that captured something interesting about the research questions to organise them into meaningful and systematic codes or labels to explain their substance. For this study, the researcher used open coding, which means that there were no pre-set codes.

The codes were developed and modified as the researcher worked through the coding process.

- Development of themes – the researcher used patterns discovered among the codes to assist in writing and developing preliminary themes. At this stage, the researcher finds that most codes are associated with one or more themes.
- Reviewing themes - during this state, the researcher reviewed and modified identified themes to ensure that the themes produced are relevant and accurately address the research questions.
- Naming and defining themes – this is a final refinement of the themes where the researcher documented and redefined identified themes to discover the precise meaning of each theme, deciding how it will help in addressing the research questions and coming up with a concise and easily accessible name for each theme.
- Writing up – this last stage is writing chapter 4: data interpretation and analysis where the researcher documented the findings from the interviews in detail.

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

According to Bhandari (2021), ethical concerns are a collection of guidelines that direct the research design and study procedures when gathering data from participants. The factors uphold scientific integrity, improve study validity and safeguard participant rights. Table 2 summarises the principles of ethical conduct applied in this research study:

**Table 2: Principles of ethical conduct**

Principles of ethical conduct	
Permission obtained	The researcher obtained prior permission from the Head of the “Free State provincial government department” to conduct a research study and collect data.
Informed consent	Informed consent means that participants knew the study’s purpose, benefits, funding and risks. They were able to consent or decline to participate in the research, based on the information provided, and were not obligated to participate.
Voluntary participation	The study was optional and participants could opt in or out anytime.
Confidentiality and anonymity	<p>The terms “anonymity” and “confidentiality” are interchangeable, claim Saunders, Kitzinger* and Kitzinger** (2015). The authors stated that one type of secrecy that safeguards participants’ identities is anonymity, which they defined as all information kept private from all parties aside from the principal researcher (p. 618). The face-to-face study is inadmissible because participant confidentiality is jeopardised by the researcher’s knowledge of their identities and access to them directly.</p> <p>Therefore, anonymisation is not entirely achievable in face-to-face studies based on the above statement. Thus, to ensure that responses did not link to any specific participant, the researcher strove to protect participants’ identities as much as possible. To maintain confidentiality, only the researcher and the external coder/transcriber had access to the data collected.</p>
No harm	The study was conducted ethically and following the principles of truthfulness, transparency, thoroughness, accountability and openness to public review. The least possible harm was done, including physical, social and psychological.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

Ten middle managers served as the “research participants” in the study with the help of the research described in this study paper. A representative sample of the study’s population, consisting of 10 middle managers, was used and was interviewed to obtain the intended objectives and findings. A specific directorate within a Free State provincial government department was the focus of this study, using an inductive design and a qualitative research approach. The census method aided in realising the study’s goals using identified participants – data obtained using in-depth semi-structured interviews. The participants’ responses were categorised and thematically organised to determine the crucial outcomes and respond to the study questions.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the focus was on the data collection, the research design method and the research methodology for the study. This chapter will explain more about the findings from 10 interviews with middle managers about how to plan for the future of a directorate of a provincial government department in the Free State. The information was collected from the participants using a detailed, semi-structured interview guide with 12 questions (see Appendix A). Gathering details that enable the reader to learn more about each participant, a demographic information sheet was given to each one (see Appendix B).

### 4.2 Analysis and interpretation of demographic data

Employment status, years of experience, position and expertise of the issue were all critical demographic data for data analysis. These demographic elements helped to determine how personnel in the department's middle management evaluate the implementation of effective succession planning and how they grasp the benefits associated with it. These factors are provided in Table 3 and explained further:

**Table 3: Participants' demographic information**

Research Participants	Employment Status	Position in the department	Years in service	Knowledgeable about the topic
RP_1	Yes	Deputy Director	16 – 20	Yes
RP_2	Yes	Assistant Director	16 – 20	Yes
RP_3	Yes	Deputy Director	20+	Yes
RP_4	Yes	Assistant Director	16 – 20	Yes
RP_5	Yes	Deputy Director	20+	No
RP_6	Yes	Assistant Director	20+	Yes
RP_7	Yes	Deputy Director	10 – 15	Yes
RP_8	Yes	Deputy Director	10 – 15	Yes
RP_9	Yes	Assistant Director	5 – 10	Yes
RP_10	Yes	Deputy Director	10 – 15	Yes

#### a) **Employment status**

A total of 10 participants participated in the research study and all are permanent employees of the directorate of the provincial government department in the Free State.

#### b) **Position in the department**

Table 3 shows the different levels of participants employed by the directorate of the provincial government department in the Free State. The study targeted officials in middle management. Six participants were assistant directors, while four were deputy directors.

#### c) **Years in service**

The work experience ranged between five and 20-plus years of service in the public sector. Three participants had experience ranging between 10 to 15 years, three had experience between 16 to 20 years, the other three participants had an experience of 20-plus years and only one employee had experience between five to 10 years.

#### d) **Knowledgeable about the topic**

Nine of the 10 participants were familiar with the notion of succession planning. Before the interview, one person needed to become acquainted with the subject.

### **4.3 Content analysis**

Participants were sent email invitations to participate in the study with a consent letter attached and they were also requested to sign the letter. The participant expressed interest in participating in the study and learning more about its goals and purpose through this letter (see Appendix G). The researcher planned the interviews with all 10 participants. Based on the participant's preference, the researcher had eight face-to-face and two online interviews using the Microsoft Teams platform. The interviews,

which took between 15 and 20 minutes, were recorded. The researcher did the transcription every day after each interview.

The researcher looked at the themes in the interview transcripts using only Microsoft Word to code the data and no other software, using thematic analysis to find and collect information from different interviews that fit together. These similarities connect the data themes and help the researcher to understand those themes (Boyatzis, 1998). Before looking for patterns or themes that kept coming up in the interviews, the researcher carefully analysed the data. Using theme analysis, the researcher learned more about the patterns and trends in succession planning in a directorate of the provincial government department in the Free State.

The following primary themes showed the patterns and trends in the data. As part of the thematic analysis process, the researcher found patterns among respondents and linked similarities and differences in the raw data from each interview. The results are based on the patterns from the interviews and were used to make the following themes. Figure 2 shows a picture of four different themes:

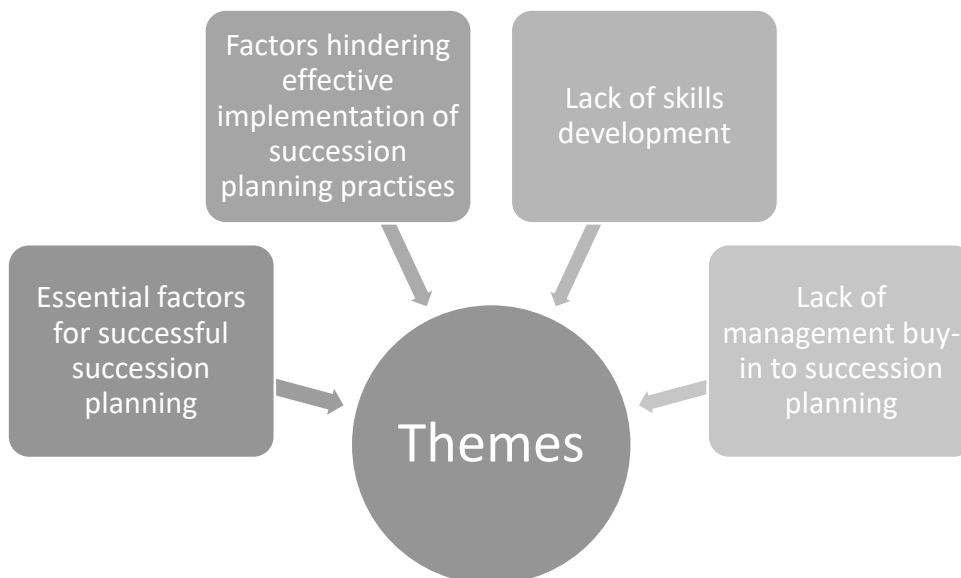


Figure 2: Thematic map – (Source: Own)

#### **4.4 Analysis and Interpretation of data on responses from participants**

The interviews aimed to address the study's research questions and obtain the perspective of participants in implementing an effective succession planning policy within the directorate. The key fundamentals of the research questions were to identify (i) how the policy could benefit the directorate, (ii) what would be the challenges in implementing it, also to assert if (iii) succession planning could be sustained using talent management and lastly (iv) to determine the role that senior managers could play to support the establishment of the policy. To affirm the fundamentals mentioned above, the researcher categorised the interview questions in the interview guide into four subject matters that would address the research questions.

The interpretation of themes derived from the codes identified from the interview transcripts on implementing effective succession planning within a directorate of a provincial government department in the Free State can be set out as follows:

##### **a) Theme one: Essential factors for implementing successful succession planning**

C1: is the category of questions that support the first theme:

**C1:** *How important is it for the directorate to establish an effective succession policy? Why?*

*What benefits will effective succession planning provide for the directorate?*

During the interviews, the participants were asked the above questions to find out more about how succession planning can help the directorate. Responses from the participants showed the most important things the directorate would benefit from if succession planning were implemented. These factors generated the first theme from the patterns or participants' responses. Those factors are preserving institutional knowledge, career advancement and employee satisfaction and minimising expenditure on external recruitment, as depicted in Figure 3.

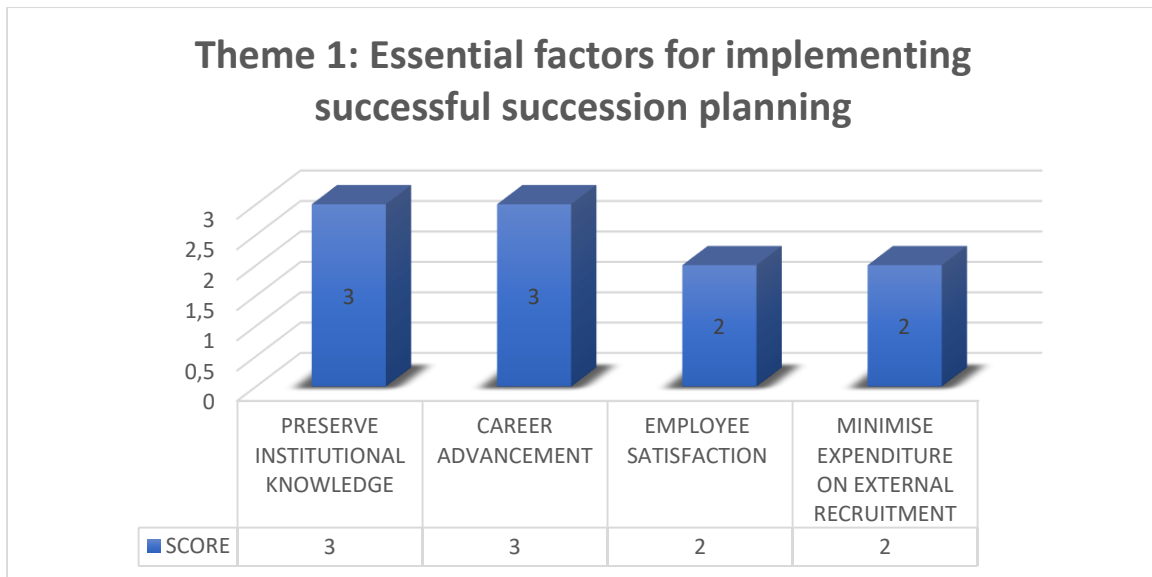


Figure 3: Theme 1: Essentials factors for implementing successful succession planning – (Source: Own)

Participants articulated that succession planning could benefit the directorate as a retention tool. In particular, participants said it is essential to have a succession policy because, if done correctly, it could positively affect the directorate. Here are what the participants said about what they thought were the most important parts or benefits of a successful succession plan:

- **Preserve institutional knowledge**

*RP\_1: "It is important to have because it will maintain or preserve institutional memory or knowledge for the organisation and maintain its culture."*

*RP\_2: "It is important to have because it will mean that people will leave a trail or legacy of clear guidelines for those left in a certain section or department to perform better."*

*RP\_3: "It is very important to have this succession policy because it will assist in effective and efficient work or functions even after the person has left."*

*RP\_5: "the benefits will be to promote knowledge transfers."*

*RP\_6: “The department has called a few people after they have resigned and employed them on a contract basis that could assist in retaining institutional knowledge.”*

- **Career advancement**

*RP\_4: “It is important as it will assist our internal employee’s career development and train them to assume new roles within the directorate.”*

*RP\_5: “It is important because it will assist to demonstrate short and long-term potential for succession into key positions.”*

*RP\_6: “It is important to establish it to ensure that the employees already in the department, those in the junior positions will be able to be uplifted to higher positions. At least they’ll be able to move from junior to middle positions and/or senior positions. The department should consider having a succession policy.”*

*RP\_7: “It is important to establish succession planning so that qualifying and competent people can be able to get an opportunity to be promoted.”*

*RP\_8: “It is very important because it is possible that there are people who can be identified and trained for leadership positions by the current managers who are working there before the position becomes available.”*

- **Employee satisfaction**

*RP\_2: “People will be motivated and feel valued.”*

*RP\_3: “Motivating and encouraging people and giving them hope beyond the current situation.”*

*RP\_4: “It will assist in building the morale and confidence of employees.”*

*RP\_8: “It will push people to up-skill themselves and also be a motivational factor that will make employees proactive.”*

- **Minimise expenditure on external recruitment**

*RP\_4: "Succession planning will minimise recruitment costs; therefore, fewer financial resources will be spent on external search and development of outside candidates."*

*RP\_10: "There are fewer resources that are spent on trying to replace the employees who have left and the business is protected from like a sudden and unexpected change."*

Therefore, effective succession planning implementation within a provincial government department directorate based on the participants' responses could potentially assist in preserving institutional knowledge and career advancement. Also, it could improve employee satisfaction, minimise expenditure on external recruitment, retain its current workforce and improve work performance.

**b) Theme two: Factors hindering effective implementation of succession planning practices**

C2: is the group of questions about the second theme:

**C2:** *Is there a succession planning policy in the directorate?*

*How many employees should leave the directorate over the next seven to 10 years due to retirement?*

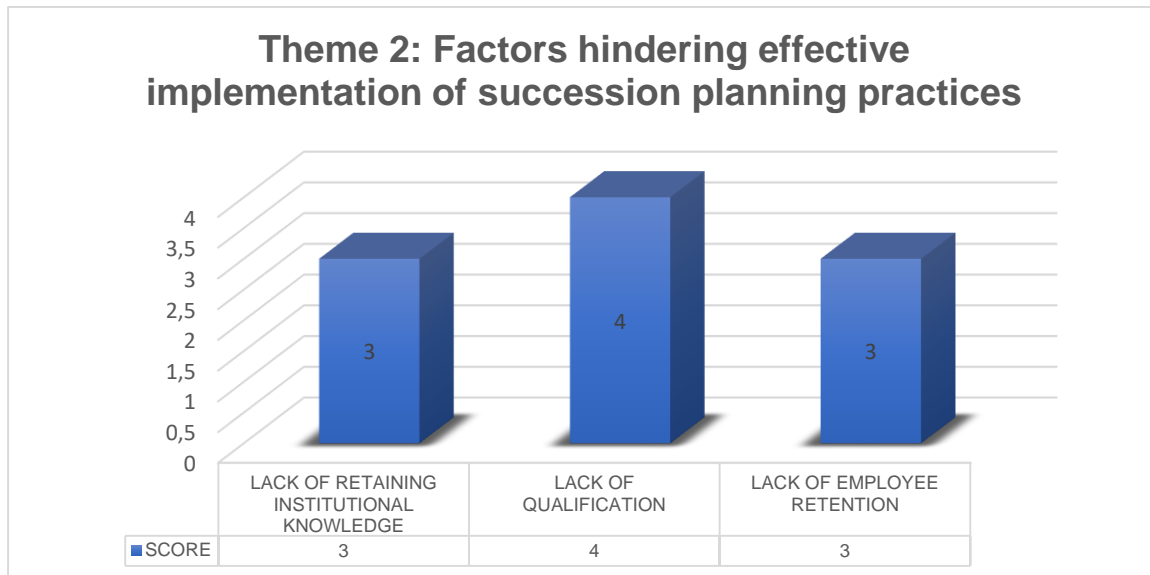
*What critical skill sets will those employees who are leaving take with them?*

*How does the directorate retain institutional knowledge of key employees who leave the directorate before retirement due to resignation?*

*What will be the challenges in implementing effective succession planning within your directorate?*

Participants were interviewed about the questions mentioned above in further detail to get their thoughts on existing difficulties that would make it difficult for the directorate to undertake succession planning. The second theme of the study was developed

using each of the points raised. Participants highlighted the following obstacles: failure to retain institutional knowledge, a shortage of qualifications and a failure to retain employees. The barriers participants mentioned are shown in Figure 4.



*Figure 4: Theme 2: Factors hindering effective implementation of succession planning – (Source: Own)*

Participants stated that, currently, the directorate does nothing to retain the institutional knowledge from employees who are leaving due to retirement, termination, resignation and declining health. They indicated that no succession planning policy within the directorate could assist in mitigating this risk of losing institutional knowledge. They also mentioned the lack of qualifications in officials at senior management positions as a huge hindrance that affect employee morale and contributes to high employee turnover that leads to the directorate failing to retain its employees. The following responses attest to this.

- ***Lack of retaining institutional knowledge***

*RP\_3: “Currently, this process of retaining institutional knowledge is minimal if it happens at all.”*

*RP\_5: “Nothing is being done to get the knowledge from people who are leaving.”*

*RP\_7: "The directorate is doing absolutely nothing to retain the skill or to prevent people from leaving the department."*

- **Lack of qualifications**

*RP\_1: "People are afraid for their positions. They think that, when you come up with succession planning or training those up-and-coming employees, they will take their positions. The new employees entering the workplace have higher education levels than those in high positions."*

*RP\_2: "External recruitment of people to higher positions who are not familiar with the duties of that particular directorate."*

*RP\_4: "To be honest, the challenges will be juniors report to seniors who do not have any qualifications in our directorate, and I think the fear of those seniors to empower or to give the juniors the skills is going to be a problem."*

*RP\_8: "Qualifications of officials in high positions will be challenged because officials like this will never give a position to other officials with higher qualifications than them."*

- **Lack of employee retention**

*RP\_4: "In our directorate, we lose skilled workers, especially our departmental bursary holders who leave the department because there is no succession plan in place. Then the department will appoint people who have retired on a contract basis to address services delivery issues from time to time."*

*RP\_6: "The department has called a very few people after they have resigned and employed them on a contract. But then the problem is when they have employed them on a contract basis they do not transfer skills. They have been employed to do that job and when they are done, they go without properly imparting their knowledge to the people still employed by the government."*

*RP\_9: “The lack of building the pool of trained works who are ready to fill the key roles when leaders or key employees leaves indicate that the directorate has no mentoring programmes.”*

*RP\_10: “Resignation and ill health are things that are abrupt and it seems like you cannot really plan for them, but essentially knowledge is something that can still be continuously shared so the continuous sharing of knowledge could be through rotating new employees in different departments to ensure that at all times knowledge is being shared.”*

**c) Theme 3: Lack of skills development**

C3: is the set of questions that relate to the third theme:

**C3:** *How should the directorate retain institutional knowledge of people who retire?*

*What is the link between succession planning and talent management?*

These two questions were asked to determine ways for the directorate to retain knowledge and how to link succession planning with talent management. Based on the participants' responses, lack of skills development emerged as the third theme. The goal of skill development as a value-added component is to motivate employees to stay within the directorate. All participants understood this. They emphasised that providing employees with development opportunities positions them for future progress within the company and improves job satisfaction. However, participants indicated that senior managers within the directorate recognise the gaps but fail to compile a long-term plan for ways to address those gaps. Instead, they opt for temporary solutions to a permanent problem. Figure 5 indicates the codes used to generate Theme 3.

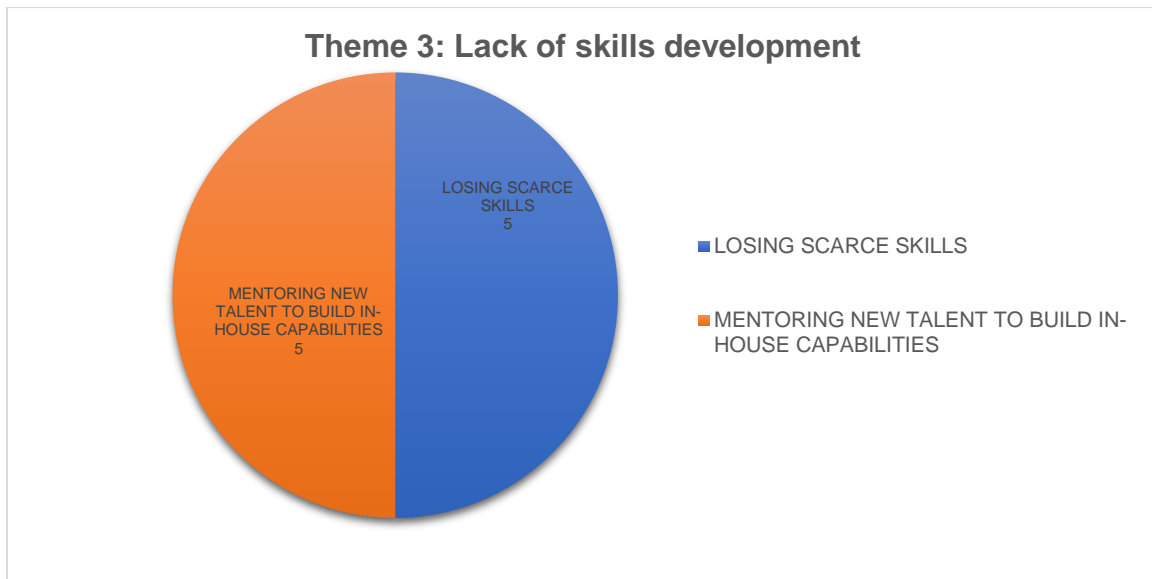


Figure 5: Theme 3: Lack of skills development – (Source: Own)

The participants stated the following to indicate that lack of understanding of the critical significance of proper skills development and a lack of mentoring new talent by senior managers would result in the directorate losing the scarce skills of the ageing workforce who will retire in the next seven years.

- **Losing scarce skills**

*RP\_2: “I think they will be taking the knowledge that they have since most of the things are not documented as to the procedures and how certain activities are performed, and also, there is a lack of shared knowledge or expertise due to external recruitment.”*

*RP\_3: “Those people will take vast experience in the directorate in acquisition and disposal, as well as knowledge of regulations and policies such as treasury regulations and GIAMA.”*

*RP\_5: “They will leave with in-house work experience.”*

*RP\_7: “They will take job knowledge acquired over years of working in the department and financial management skills.”*

*RP\_9: "Succession planning protects the business from unexpected leadership changes that could reveal business vulnerabilities."*

*RP\_10: "The biggest loss is experience and knowledge because I think you can study for a specific kind of job, but you can't beat somebody who has experience because they have a lot of expertise that they possess because of the experience that they have from working in the company for the set amount of."*

- **Lack of mentoring of new talent to build in-house capabilities**

*RP\_1: "A directorate must develop a plan to preserve institutional knowledge by orientating incoming new talent to the tradition and culture of that particular directorate."*

*RP\_4: "Appoint those people who are retired or about to retire on a contract basis so that those who are still learning or who are still acquiring skills can learn from them."*

*RP\_6: "Pair the ones who are due to go on retirement to work with those who will be staying so that they can be able to transfer the skill by training other employees."*

*RP\_8: "They need to teach the younger generation who is coming. Also, they can write journals that employees who are within the department can use as references."*

*RP\_10: "There's this new method of cross-training employees, by training new employees in different departments. So over a set amount of time, new employees should be moved from one department to another, there should also be a protection of knowledge by having maybe the experienced and the older employees share their experience with new employees and also to consider the alternative of full retirement may be to have the employees who are meant to be retiring, to work part-time".*

**d) Theme 4: Lack of management buy-in to succession planning**

C4: is the class of questions that complement the fourth theme:

- C4:** *What is your understanding of succession planning?*  
*Is there a succession planning policy in the directorate?*

*How does the directorate retain institutional knowledge of key employees who leave the directorate before retirement due to resignation?*

*What type of training opportunities does the directorate need to provide to ensure its current employees have the skills required?*

*What else would you like to share about succession planning in general?*

When participants were asked the above questions about the role that management plays in support of succession planning, they all shared the sentiment that senior directorate managers are the custodians of the succession planning implementation. Participants acknowledge that senior managers are the drivers of succession planning. Only with their assistance and initiative can succession planning be appropriately implemented and managed. All participants concurred, however, that the lack of support from senior management in the directorate for succession planning was impeding development and training initiatives that could close skill gaps. Figure 6 depicts the codes that were used to generate the fourth theme.



*Figure 6: Theme 4: Lack of management buy-in to succession planning – (Source: Own)*

The responses of the following participants indicated that senior managers' buy-in is imperative in ensuring the effective implementation of succession planning within a directorate of the provincial government department in the Free State.

- **Lack of developing a deliberate plan for work continuation by management**

*RP\_1: "Succession plan should be a deliberate plan of the management to sustain the company when other employees are living through retirement or maybe when they passed on or when they get another job opportunity somewhere else. So it must be a well-thought plan by the management."*

*RP\_2: "There should be manuals that, are drafted that clearly outline each and every step as to how to achieve a particular task and that will lead the directorate to better performance."*

*RP\_6: "Succession planning is having a plan for your employees who you already have in your employment, how you will give them the opportunity for promotion or putting them in new levels for promotion when other employees go on to retire or resign."*

*RP\_7: "Succession planning is a continuation of a better running of an organisation by identifying suitable candidates for either mentoring or coaching so that they can become effective leaders or managers of the organisation."*

*RP\_9: "Managers should highlight skill gaps and provide training and development."*

*RP\_10: "Succession plan allocates resources and develops obvious future leaders for critical roles. It means that you get to decide now in the present, who will assume the reins of the organisation in the future."*

- **Lack of leadership continuation**

*RP\_5: "There is a risk of a sudden leadership change and lack of passing leadership roles to another employee or group of employees."*

*RP\_6: "Shortage of skilled people in the right positions and this leads to the department appointing people for the sake of appointing and not matching skills to the position."*

*RP\_7: "Lack of future pool that grew within the organisation that are knowledgeable about the culture of the organisation."*

*RP\_9: "Directorate does not have plans to mitigate the risk of sudden leadership changes that could disrupt the service delivered to the committee."*

*RP\_10: "There is no passing of leadership roles to ensure that there is a continuation of responsibility and power so that the higher positions are filled in an organisation."*

#### **4.5 Summary of the findings**

The data analysis revealed vital elements for successfully implementing succession planning within the sampled directorate of the provincial government department in the Free State. The ineffective implementation of succession planning practices was hampered by issues such as a lack of institutional knowledge retention and qualifications, which adversely influenced staff morale, employee retention and service delivery. The lack of talent pools comprising qualified successors prepared to fill openings and accept promotions in this directorate was highlighted by the participants' claims of a lack of skills development and management support for succession planning.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The chapter presented a detailed analysis of the research study. The data analysis uncovered the benefits and challenges of implementing succession planning practices in a directorate of a provincial government department in the Free State. The findings also indicated a lack of skills retention strategies due to a lack of management buy-in to the policy. Findings also revealed a strong link between succession planning and talent management. The fact that departmental bursary holders are leaving the directorate because there is no room for career advancement, as one participant pointed out, means that this link is not used to the directorate's advantage. Participants came up with things that could help the directorate if senior managers, who are in charge of the policy, put succession planning into action and kept an eye on whether it is relevant to the study's findings.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The current research study sought to determine the extent of the problem statement within a directorate of a Free State provincial government department, which is the rising level of uncertainty among employees due to a lack of succession planning for career growth, which leads to disengagement and job dissatisfaction. The study aimed to report on the primary and secondary research questions, trends and patterns in this context. Overall, the findings revealed one pattern: succession planning is not happening within the directorate, although the directorate can benefit from implementing a succession policy. As part of the research, the researcher gained a middle management perspective on the issues that supported and hindered succession planning implementation in the directorate and how it impacted talent retention, transfer of institutional knowledge and management role in the well-being of the staff. Also, the researcher highlights the reliability of the study, indicating the transferability of the findings and recommendations to other provincial and national government departments in South Africa. Finally, suggestions on how the succession planning processes could be improved are covered in this chapter.

### **5.2 Discussion**

Pursuing the appropriate competitive strategies would stabilise the organisation's position in the relevant industry in the current dynamic and competitive environment (Isfahani, Barzoki, & Hosseini, 2018). The environment around the public sector has become more dynamic and for the industry to succeed, it must embrace change. This study examined how the directorate of the Free State provincial government department implemented successful succession planning. The data show there is not enough succession planning in place at the directorate.

#### **5.2.1 Addressing the research problem**

The study's research problem statement is the rising level of uncertainty among employees of the directorate of a Free State provincial government department due to

a lack of succession planning for career growth, which leads to disengagement and job dissatisfaction.

Results indicated that succession planning is a process of motivating and encouraging people or giving people hope. However, the directorate does not have a successful succession plan, so people will always just come to work demotivated. Also, it was discovered that succession planning would assist the directorate in filling vacant positions as the HR process takes a long time before filling a vacancy. When HR fill the jobs, they bring external people. This process bypasses people inside the department who might be able to do the work. Therefore, these factors indicate a lack of career growth that perpetuates disengagement and job dissatisfaction within the directorate under study.

### **5.2.2 Providing answers to the primary research question**

The primary purpose posed of this study seeks to discover if there are any critical success factors for implementing effective succession planning in a directorate of the Free State provincial government department.

When the strength of the association between succession planning implementation and crucial success variables within a directorate was studied, there was a positive correlation. According to the findings, succession planning shields the organisation from unanticipated leadership changes by guaranteeing a new pool of trained leaders prepared to succeed managers who are due to retire. Qualified personnel will be available to take over. Finally, the organisation realises decreased expenditure on attempting to hire people to replace those who have left. The factors above are consistent with the findings of Pita and Dhurup (2019), which showed that organisations that offer grooming opportunities cherish their employees and encourage them to stay with the company.

### **5.2.3 Providing answers to the secondary research questions**

The following three secondary research questions are in support of the primary research question:

- What are the current challenges in implementing succession planning strategies and practices that limit the retention and transfer of institutional knowledge?

- *Role clarification*

Within the directorate, there is a rising tendency among executives and staff to assume several roles. This kind of task sharing can keep workers productive and lean, but it can also obscure functions and pose a considerable obstacle to succession. It is challenging to find or train a replacement for a jack-of-all-trades.

- *Internal promotion*

The capacity to promote from within is among the finest measures of successful succession planning. Unfortunately, the directorate does not have the necessary internal talent.

- *Upholding morale*

A critical strategic process that invariably affects personnel is succession planning. The effectiveness of succession planning will determine whether or not it boosts or lowers staff morale.

- What role does the implementation of a talent management framework play as a tool to support succession planning?

- The talent management framework involves the systematic identification, development, engagement/retention, and deployment of people of particular value to the organisation, either because they have a high potential for the future or because they are performing roles that are essential to the organisation's operations (Haziazi, 2021). The framework for talent management offers managers a disciplined method for maximising employee potential and keeping talent within the

company. The framework is designed to be used throughout the organisation and is meant to foster an inclusive approach rather than placing a premium on a small group of people. These are the framework's guiding principles:

- The process of talent identification involves regularly conducting talent reviews to uncover talent among the organisation's current workforce (Jindal & Shaikh, 2021).
- Talent development is a nurturing activity characterised by formal learning models or on-the-job coaching and mentoring (Jindal & Shaikh, 2021).
- Retention management prevents employee churn by building a strong employer brand that sets it apart from rivals, developing an employee value proposition (EVP) that attracts outside talent, and the extent to which organisations take specific steps to increase loyalty (Jindal & Shaikh, 2021).
- Lastly, career management and succession planning is an activity designed to make sure that organisations make the best use of their bright people by enabling their flow into suitable professions by focusing on their talent pool's upward mobility. By doing this, the company will be able to provide employees with clear career paths that specify whether the organisation focuses on vertical or horizontal growth and places them in the appropriate positions (Jindal & Shaikh, 2021).

The directorate of the Free State government department appears to place more of an emphasis on developing talent through formal learning models, as evidenced by the fact that employees are given bursaries to pursue further education in any subject related to the environment of the public sector, according to the study's findings. The directorate excels at talent

development, but ignoring other framework principles makes the talent management framework ineffective.

- What role does management play in professional development and training to support succession planning?
  - The role of senior managers when it comes to succession planning is to identify skills gaps within the directorate and create employee development plans to empower junior staff through coaching, mentoring and where necessary formal training. Senior managers are the ones who should be change agents within the directorate to ensure leadership continuity. Prior studies have demonstrated the significance of senior management in implementing successful succession planning (Hall-Ellis, 2015). The senior management team can affect whether such a method is adopted and successful (Mfeka, 2021). Additionally, senior managers must set aside time and resources to ensure execution for the organisation to have effective succession planning (Rothwell, 2005). The middle managers who were interviewed acknowledged that the support, dedication, and participation of senior managers in the directorate of the Free State provincial government department would be necessary for implementing effective succession planning.

However, the directorate of the Free State provincial government lacks leadership buy-in into the succession planning concept that could improve effective succession planning practices identified by participants. The current study showed that, due to a lack of senior management buy-in, the directorate does not fully optimise the following succession planning process concepts, which are: a) the aptitude for identifying new talent, b) the aptitude to develop new talent, c) the aptitude to adopt required organisational culture, d) the aptitude to sustain core capabilities, and e) the aptitude to initiate change management when necessary (Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2011).

### **5.3 Conclusions of the findings**

The research's conclusions indicate that middle managers from the interviewed directorate were aware of the purpose of implementing effective succession planning. They accepted that succession planning is a tactic for long-term talent management and guarantees organisational HR sustainability. Despite this, senior managers are not putting succession planning into practice.

The interview identified the following challenges: (i) lack of retaining institutional knowledge, (ii) lack of qualifications, (iii) lack of skills development and (iv) lack of management buy-in. The following section covers each component in detail.

#### **a) Lack of retaining instructional knowledge**

Participants indicated that losing institutional knowledge is a substantial organisational constraint because it hampers the services delivery mandate of the directorate. To mitigate this risk, participants suggested that the directorate introduce up skilling, coaching and mentoring programmes for junior employees. Each senior manager about to retire should be assigned a junior employee to train and develop while imparting the skills and knowledge acquired during their employment with the directorate. Participants also suggested job rotation among employees within the directorate. To support the statement above, Mfeka (2021) indicated that rotating employees allows them to gain experience in various organisational positions, which could promote employee flexibility.

#### **b) Lack of qualifications**

The participants raised the issue of senior managers with no qualifications as a hindrance to the proper implementation of succession planning. They have stated that senior managers are more focused on day-to-day pressing issues than to focus on the directorate's future leadership plans. Mfeka (2021) suggested that senior managers should be up-skilled in soft skills like emotional intelligence and change management

to promote succession. These skills will enable them to identify skill gaps and create personal development plans to fill them in the organisation.

### **c) Lack of skills development**

As stated by the participants, succession planning and talent management are not short-term retention strategies, such as hiring people who have retired on a contract basis. Failure to focus on skills development may result in an attention shift from people. Participants concurred that the directorate must offer and encourage succession exposure opportunities that can strengthen the emphasis on ongoing talent development by giving internal staff members opportunities to expand their abilities. For the stability and sustainability of the organisation, Mfeka (2021) advised that there should be a talent management procedure that emphasises developing employees' agile and flexible capabilities.

### **e) Lack of management buy-in**

According to the participants, the main issue preventing the implementation of succession planning is the lack of management buy-in. Studies have shown that senior management plays a crucial part in succession planning (Hall-Ellis, 2015). Senior managers ultimately choose whether and how such a method is successfully adopted. Furthermore, senior managers must also devote time and resources to implement succession planning for the organisation to succeed (Rothwell, 2006). The middle managers who were interviewed agreed with this notion and stated that they also believed that the senior management of the directorate of the Free State provincial government department would be the custodians of implementing succession planning, so their support, commitment and involvement would be essential. To eliminate this hindrance, Mfeka (2021) suggested that senior managers should facilitate the development of a succession policy that contains clear instructions on:

- i. The execution of the plan;
- ii. How supportive senior management will direct the human resources processes; and
- iii. What role they will play in the process?

## **5.4 Strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the study**

Four strategies were provided by Bryman et al. (2014, pp 44-45) to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. The researcher followed the following measures to ensure the trustworthiness of this research study:

### **5.4.1 Credibility**

Reporting an accurate picture of the topic under investigation and believable findings establishes credibility (Guba, 1981). The researcher utilised in-depth, semi-structured interviews to collect data. This technique is well-established in qualitative research and has been effectively applied in several prior studies on related subjects. In the current study, the researcher also conducted interviews with all ten available individuals. Still, beyond the sixth interview, no additional information was gleaned from the interviews. This demonstrated that the study's data saturation goal had been met.

### **5.4.2 Transferability**

Transferability is achieved by giving the reader access to a sufficiently thorough audit trail of the study so they may judge whether or not the results are transferable to other contexts (Guba, 1981). The researcher contends that the middle managers of the directorate were subject matter experts in the area under investigation, even though transferability cannot be refuted by demonstrating that the conclusions of this research study could be applied to other provincial or national public sector departments. Therefore, the study's findings may apply to different contexts and be valuable in the public sector.

### **5.4.3 Dependability**

The researcher establishes dependability, allowing other researchers to replicate the work in the future (Guba, 1981). The researcher presented the study with a sufficient explanation of the research design, its implementation as the means of data collection,

and reflective evaluation. Given the amount of detail, similar results should be obtained if the study were repeated with the same methods and individuals in the same setting.

#### **5.4.4 Conformability**

To establish that the findings are based on fact and not just the researcher's opinion or subjective interpretation, the researcher should explain how conclusions were reached (Guba, 1981). To reduce researcher biases and ensure that the research's conclusions accurately represented the experiences and viewpoints of its participants, the following actions were followed. All of the extensive semi-structured interviews were recorded, and verbatim transcripts were written. Finally, unaltered quotes accurately depict the individuals' experiences and ideas

#### **5.5 Summary of recommendations**

- a) Due to the lack of knowledge among junior employees, it is crucial for the directorate to maintain employee motivation and competitiveness through coaching, upskilling and mentoring, as well as by enabling job rotation so that employees may get familiar with various departments divisions.
- b) Senior management and employees can create short or long-term career progression goals using individual development plans. Individual development plans provide input for succession planning, which creates internal promotion opportunities and retention of skilled workers.
- c) Developing and building employee capacities will improve performance and equip them with the competencies, knowledge and skills required to confront current and future challenges.
- d) To formalise and ensure effective succession planning, change management measures like developing a succession policy and framework must be conducted to gain senior management's support.

## **5.6 Limitations of the study**

The study's limitations are acknowledged as follows:

A directorate of a provincial government department in the Free State was the subject of this study, which may have limited the applicability of results if the entire department had been examined. The study concentrated only on the directorate's middle managers because the researcher has only been granted permission to focus on this area in her organisation. A second limitation is the possibility of biased sampling due to the small sample size and predetermined participants due to the permission received to collect data at the directorate where the researcher works. The research study reached data saturation despite the low sample size.

## **5.7 Further study**

The research study has revealed several limitations where the additional investigation would be beneficial.

- a) For findings to be applicable, a research study that concentrates on all provincial government departments would be beneficial.
- b) The findings from a study with a bigger sample size and access to the department's senior management will be favourable because senior managers are the guardians of successfully implementing a succession policy.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

The researcher if there are any critical success factors for implementing effective succession planning in a directorate of the Free State provincial government department. Through interviews, participants' assessments of their understanding of succession planning's benefits, its challenges, talent management's role in supporting it and senior managers' role in preparing junior staff for directorate posts were obtained. Despite what they said, the study's outcomes indicate that the middle

managers who participated in the sampling group understood succession planning, recognised its value and also its hinders of an ineffective use of it.

If one considers that senior management is supposed to be the drivers and custodians of this process, then based on their comments, the management buy-in within the directorate appeared to be insufficient, which harmed any potential of effective implementation of succession planning. Additional impediments to the implementation of succession planning have been identified as but not limited to, a failure to preserve institutional knowledge, an absence of qualifications and an absence of continued skill development within this particular directorate.

The public sector is currently unstable and there is a shortage of talented employees who can deliver on the service delivery mandates of the directorate, according to the findings of interviews with a relatively small sample of middle managers from a directorate of a provincial government department. These factors contribute to the directorate's difficulty in planning long-term projects, leading to inadequate service provision. The findings point to the negative repercussions that failure to undertake appropriate talent management framework as a tool to enhance succession planning, particularly plans to identify talent pool that will be trained for retention, can have long-term negative effects on sustainability, not only of the individuals but on a specific directorate and the entire public sectors industry.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Interview Guide**

I am Buyisiwe Phathela, a student at the UFS Business School. This study partially satisfies the criteria to obtain a Master of Business Administration degree (MBA). I want to talk to you about implementing effective succession planning within a directorate of the Free State provincial government department.

It should take 30 to 60 minutes to complete the interview. I will record the session since I do not want to forget any of your suggestions and I will use the backup recording device in case the first one fails to reduce any potential risks. All responses will be kept private, so any information I include in my report will not identify you.

**Remember that you can stop the interview and that participation in the study is entirely voluntary.**

1. What is your understanding of succession planning?
2. Is there a succession planning policy in the directorate?
3. How many employees should leave the directorate over the next seven to 10 years due to retirement?
4. What critical skill sets will those employees who are leaving take with them?
5. How should the directorate retain institutional knowledge of people who retire?
6. How important is it for the directorate to establish an effective succession policy? Why?
7. How does the directorate retain institutional knowledge of key employees who leave the directorate before retirement due to resignation?
8. What is the link between succession planning and talent management?
9. What will be the challenges in implementing effective succession planning within your directorate?
10. What type of training opportunities does the directorate need to provide to ensure its current employees have the skills required?
11. What benefits will effective succession planning provide for the directorate?
12. What else would you like to share about succession planning in general?

## Appendix B

### Participants' demographics and selection criteria form

1. Name and surname:

2. Are you a middle manager in the directorate of the Free State provincial government department? (Yes/No) \_\_\_\_\_

3. How long have you been a full-time middle manager in the directorate? (Years/Months) \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

4. As defined, have you been employed in at least one, but preferably all two, middle management levels in the directorate of the Free State provincial government department? (Yes/No) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you know what succession planning is and what it is used for?

6. Confirmation that the confidential information provided in this questionnaire is accurate:


\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Annexures

### Annexure A

#### Permission to conduct the study

**public works & infrastructure**  
Department of  
Public Works & Infrastructure  
FREE STATE PROVINCE

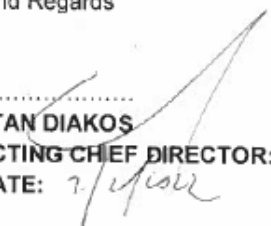
**MS B. PHATHELA**  
C/o DIRECTOR: OPERATIONAL PROPERTY AND HOUSEKEEPING  
HAMILTON

Dear Ms Phathela

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

1. Your request for the abovementioned refers.
2. Permission has been granted for Ms Buyisiwe Phathela, a bursary holder studying Masters of Business Administration (MBA) at the University of the Free State to conduct a study for a period of 1 week.
3. The study will target middle managers (Assistant and Deputy Directors) of Property Management where she as the researcher will collect data by making a face-to-face interview with the participants. Ms Phathela's research is on "establishment of effective of succession planning in the Free State Department of Public Works and Infrastructure".
4. The interviews will be conducted at Hamilton Offices during working hours for 60 minutes where two people will be interviewed per day.
5. The department wishes you luck on your research.

Kind Regards

  
.....  
**STAN DIAKOS**  
ACTING CHIEF DIRECTOR: CORPORATE SERVICES  
DATE: 2/4/2012

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*→ file*

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OR Tando House, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Room 144  
Tel: +27 (0)51 492 3811, Fax: +27(0)51 403 3879, E-mail: diakoss@faworks.gov.za

## Annexure B

### Permission to obtain participant's contact details



**public works &  
infrastructure**

Department of  
Public Works & Infrastructure  
FREE STATE PROVINCE

**To: All Property Management Middle Managers  
C/o Director: Operational Property and Housekeeping  
Hamilton**

#### **ACCESS TO CONTACT DETAILS FOR RESEARCH DATA COLLECTION PURPOSES**

Dear Colleagues

1. With reference to the permission granted to conduct research at the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure to Ms B. Phathela (refer to Annexure C).
2. I wish to inform you that Ms B. Phathela is granted permission to access the intranet to get the email addresses and telephone numbers of the identified middle managers selected as research participants to secure appointments to collect necessary data for the research study through interviews.
3. The purpose of the study is to fulfil the requirements of the Master of Business Management degree at the University of the Free State.

Your support in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Kind Regards

.....  
**STAN DIAKOS**  
**ACTING CHIEF DIRECTOR: CORPORATE SERVICES**

**DATE: 16 September 2022**

**Annexure C**  
**Language Editing Certificate**

**Jacqueline Kraamwinkel**

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PO Box 38824 Garsfontein 0060 | +27 72 709 4463 | jackykraamwinkel@gmail.com

18/11/2022

**To whom it may concern**

This is to certify that the field study **IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE SUCCESSION PLANNING WITHIN A DIRECTORATE OF A PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT** by **BUYISIWE PHATHELA** has been copy-edited and proofread by a professional language editor in accordance with the requirements of the partial fulfilment of the degree **MAGISTER IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION** at the **FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES** at the **UFS BUSINESS SCHOOL**. The onus is on the author to attend to the suggested changes. Furthermore, I do not take responsibility for any changes in the document after the fact.

**Sincerely,**




---

**Jacky Kraamwinkel**

BA (English and Psychology) – UJ  
BA (Hons) English Literature – UJ  
PEG membership no: KRA002

## Annexure D

### Supervisor's Declaration Form




**UFS** BUSINESS SCHOOL  
BE WORTH MORE

<b>Student name:</b>	Buyisiwe Phathela	<b>Student number:</b>	2009106762
<b>Module code:</b>	MBRP7900	<b>Department:</b>	Business School
<b>Project title:</b>	Implementing Effective Succession Planning Within a Directorate of a Provincial Government Department		


I, Dr Hekkie van der Westhuizen, hereby declare that:

		Yes	No
1.	I have reviewed Chapter 1 of the above-mentioned student	X	
2.	I have reviewed Chapter 2 of the above-mentioned student	X	
3.	I have reviewed Chapter 3 of the above-mentioned student	X	
4.	I have reviewed Chapter 4 of the above-mentioned student	X	
5.	I have reviewed Chapter 5 of the above-mentioned student	X	
6.	I have reviewed the data collection instruments of the above-mentioned student	X	
7.	I am satisfied that the standard of the above-mentioned documents is on the expected level	X	
8.	I hereby approve the documents for the above-mentioned student	X	

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Supervisor

19 November 2022

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of declaration



UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE  
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE VRYSTAAT  
YUNIVESITHI YA FREISTATA