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Succession Planning Strategies at the Bahamas' Ministry of Education: A Case Study

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Abstract

An exploratory single-case study was conducted to explore how government executives perceive the strategies for the current succession planning process, which include a competency model and the needed changes within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas. The theoretical foundations for this study were the competency model and the five-step succession planning model. A qualitative methodology and single case study research design addressed the research questions. For this study, purposive sampling was used to choose a sample from a given population unit comprised of 12 executives. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups. Thematic analysis was used to discover emerging themes and organize the study using qualitative data. The following eight themes emerged from the data: 1) building capacity through succession planning strategies; 2) recognition of staff training and mentoring; 3) ultimate leadership preparation; 4) transformation through organizational growth changes; 5) required changes at the Ministry regarding weaknesses in the current succession planning system; 6) coaching techniques; 7) individual factors/development; and 8) skills development and skills set. Recommendations for future research that include the model and the theoretical foundations for this study are presented.

Keywords

Succession Planning, Competency Model, Executives, Succession Planning Strategies

1. Introduction

Globally, today's organizations operate in an environment of constant change. According to Domínguez-CC and Barroso-Castro (2017), 21st-century organizations are characterized by ever-increasing global competition and constant

change. Public-sector organizations in many nations, including The Bahamas, are confronted with numerous challenges. These include the shrinking and aging of the national workforce, difficulties in applying a change management approach to workforce transitions, and an increased need for succession planning (Kuipers et al., 2014; Truxillo, Cadiz, & Hammer, 2015). Further, Carpio-Vázquez and Lysenko (2017) stated that organizations must now have the right talent to succeed in a hypercompetitive and increasingly multifaceted global economy. These higher demands faced by organizations in global markets, the retirement of baby boomers—the generation of Americans born between 1946 and 1964 (Wiedmer, 2015), widening talent gaps, intensifying skill requirements, and challenges to knowledge management, require employees and organizations to define succession planning requirements in relation to their strategy.

Succession planning is essential for management executives to implement business and human resource strategies designed to achieve their organizational objectives. Burney (2012) observed that succession planning involves an ongoing process to foresee future staffing needs and to identify future leaders within the organization while selecting, training, and developing human capital for key positions. The aim of succession planning is also to have the right leadership for those key positions at all levels in the organization.

Nearly all organizations will soon confront issues related to an aging workforce; however, the public sector will be the most profoundly affected. Succession planning is a risk mitigation strategy intended to lessen structural leadership damage. Payne, Hovarter, Howell, Draws and Gieryn (2018) found that today's leaders are faced with an increased level of retirement and a continuing shift in demographics in the replacement of the workforce. In addition, Johnson, Pepper, Adkins and Emejom (2018) stated that succession planning is imperative for all entities wishing to continue in business for a substantial number of years. This research paper focused on succession planning strategies at the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas. The study used a qualitative exploratory single-case study—built on an existing body of knowledge—to explore the question: "How do government executives perceive the strategies for the current succession planning process, which include a competency model, and the needed changes within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas?"

A review of the literature found that there was a gap in the research around succession planning, which needed to be addressed. The following researchers found a lack of succession planning within organizations and noted that more research is required to explore succession planning strategies: Berns and Klarner (2017); Branden and Sharts-Hopko (2017); Darnell and Campbell (2015); Durst and Bruns (2016); Magasi (2016); Odengo and Bett (2016); Pila, Schultz and Dachapalli (2016) and Tabatabaee, Lakeh, and Tadi (2014). Pila et al. (2016) stated that additional research should be conducted on the effects of workforce planning within public service organizations and on other factors relating to succession planning within the organization. Based on Titzer, Shirey and Hauck

(2014), there is limited empirical evidence on succession planning business strategies, systematic evaluation, and sound research methods. Durst and Bruns (2016) stated that further research should explore succession planning strategies in different geographical locations and different public organizations. In a study by Santora, Sarros, Bozer, Esposito and Bassi (2015), the authors advocated for more extensive research relating to succession planning within other countries.

This study not only responded to this call for additional research; but also, was the first of its kind to be conducted on succession planning strategies in the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas, using a qualitative methodology. The primary value of the study was to empirically develop insight into the perception of the effectiveness of succession planning strategies and the competency model to expand knowledge in these areas; in doing so, this study addressed the existing gaps identified by the various researchers who highlighted a need for further research.

The research paper uses the following format. The first section discusses the research background, followed by the research questions, methodology, findings, results, recommendations, and conclusions.

2. Background of the Research

2.1. Organizational Challenges

A wide range of challenges confront organizations. These include, but are not limited to, technological changes, the rapid obsolescence of machinery, human resources, leadership challenges, wastage, resistance to change, baby boomer retirement, and high turnover of staff (Omotayo, 2015). Castelli (2016) pointed out that outdated leadership practices, business models, and traditional thinking no longer work; leaders must make meaningful changes and focus on long-term actions and decisions. As a result of the challenging nature of leadership positions, succession planning and management constitute one of the most significant issues within organizations. This is the conclusion reached by Oladipo, Adebakin and Iranloye (2016).

As the general background for this study, there continues to be a lack of succession planning within public-sector organizations, which makes these organizations more vulnerable. There was need for more research into this topic. Researchers have highlighted that succession planning has received scant attention within the public-sector (Badawy, Alaadin, & Magdy, 2016; Darnell & Campbell, 2015; Odengo & Bett, 2016). Other researchers have outlined the lack or absence of succession planning within organizations, including: Berns and Klarner (2017); Branden and Sharts-Hopko (2017); Darnell and Campbell (2015); Durst and Bruns (2016); Odengo and Bett (2016); Magasi (2016); Manning, Jones, Jones and Fernandez (2015); Pila et al. (2016) and Tabatabaee et al. (2014). Further research is needed to explore succession planning strategies in geographical locations other than those already studied, as outlined by Durst and

Bruns (2016) and Santora et al. (2015). To help fill this gap, the researcher aimed to conduct a qualitative single-case study to determine how government executives perceive the strategies for the current succession planning process, which include a competency model, and the needed changes within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas. These issues have not previously been examined in the literature.

Notably, the review of the literature found several documented societal problems, such as the retirement of the baby boomers, the loss of knowledge workers, the aging of workers, and other economic and technological changes. According to McDermott and Marshall (2016), many organizations are challenged by the "graying" of today's workforce. A study conducted by Pew Research revealed that about 10,000 baby boomers—will reach age 65 every day, for the next two decades (Payne et al., 2018).

As these baby boomers retire, there will be more job openings and fewer experienced workers to fill them. As experienced employees retire or leave an organization, many organizations are faced with the need to establish a succession plan. Jacobson (2010) warned that this generational shift would result in a loss of many government workers.

In addition, Wellner (2015) asserted that while baby boomers may have contributed to sustained economic growth and prosperity, their transition to retirement will lead to new challenges, such as labor shortages, shrinking pension funds, overburdened care systems, rising social tensions, and economic uncertainty in the future.

2.2. Lack of Succession Planning

As an asset to any organization, succession planning is the most expensive and critical function overlooked, bringing with it knowledge, experience, and people. Organizations that lack succession planning are placed in a vulnerable position (Badawy et al., 2016). According to Cole and Harbour (2015), the inclusion of succession planning within organizations is essential to the successful transfer of organizational knowledge and values. Berns and Klarner (2017) have illustrated that succession planning mainly takes effect when a newly hired chief executive officer is hired; however, additional empirical studies are required on the broader process of succession planning. Pila et al. (2016) have recommended that more research be conducted on the perceptions of workforce planning, as well as on other factors relating to succession planning, within public service organizations.

A continuous lack of succession planning remains evident. For example, Wadeson and Ciccotosto (2013) noted the continued lack of succession planning within small professional practices. Durst and Bruns (2016) pointed to the need for further research on succession planning strategies in different geographical locations and different public organizations. Santora et al. (2015) also noted the need for more research regarding succession planning, within various national

contexts. In the review of the literature, a larger quantity of research was found on international private sector succession planning. Yet research on the public sector was very limited (Chiocchio & Gharibpour, 2017). To fill this gap, the researcher's objective was to conduct a qualitative single-case study. The study aimed to determine how government executives perceive the strategies for the current succession planning process, which include a competency model. It also aimed to determine the needed changes within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas.

3. Problem Statement

It is not known how government executives perceive the strategies for the current succession planning process, which includes a competency model, and the needed changes within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas. Tropman and Blackburn (2017) highlighted the lack of succession planning and observed that most organizations do not have a plan in place, which is also applicable to many public-sector organizations, including the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas. The problem identified by the researcher laid in the lack of understanding around executives' perceptions of the effectiveness of succession planning strategies within the Ministry. ALTamimi, Agarwal and Hamner (2017) emphasized that there is no substantive research on succession planning in governmental organizations, and that no fundamental research and data exist.

The former Minister of Foreign Affairs of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas, Fred Mitchell, has highlighted The Bahamas' lack of overall succession planning,when compared to other countries (Rolle, 2014). A report funded by the Inter-American Development Bank found a lack of critical skills and competencies—linked with the lack of succession planning-in the Bahamian civil service (Underwood, 2018). The Minister of Transport and Local Government of The Bahamas, Frankie Campbell, stated that "this country has been lacking a succession plan" (Bahamas Government, 2016, 2017).

The critical importance of succession planning within government organizations has been noted by Zacher, Kooij and Beier (2018), who explain that it is vital within the context of a shrinking workforce. Public-sector agencies should prepare for the upcoming challenge of replacing the large numbers of baby boomers who will be leaving the workforce. About 60% of global government workers—comprising 1.6 million employees—will soon retire, according to Green and Roberts (2012). This will leave governmental agencies in precarious positions, worldwide. To fill the void, leaders need to identify, mentor, and develop future leaders; this is relevant for executives at the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas.

Approximately 20,000 people are employed by the public sector in The Bahamas. Of these, around 297 retired during the fiscal period of 2014 to 2015. Another 373 employees will retire during the 2015 to 2016 fiscal year, leaving a void that must be filled (Bahamas Government, 2016; Thompson, 2014). Cala-

reso (2013) postulated that succession planning should be a continuous process, applied within organizations to identify future leaders. This is an issue of major importance for the Ministry of Education. Within government entities, ensuring the continuity of the workforce is vital (Zacher et al., 2018). Yet the lack of succession planning within public-sector organizations is notable. Succession planning has received scant attention in the public sector, as a matter of strategic planning. Instead, it has been seen as a non-critical element of the organizational agenda.

This study focused on executives at the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas, employed in middle-level positions within the Ministry's organizational chart. These executives were key informants, since the succession planning strategies used within the Ministry were not known. For this study, forty executives from the Ministry were selected. This study played an essential role in addressing the topic of succession planning strategies in the public sector, which—as previous researchers observed—has received scant attention up to now (Darnell & Campbell, 2015; Odengo & Bett, 2016). As such, this study began to address the problem. It was not known how government executives perceive the strategies for the current succession planning process, which includes a competency model, and the needed changes within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas.

Various researchers have noted different angles on succession planning within the workplace, emphasizing their importance. Alvani, Souteh, Jandaghi and Inaloo (2016) stressed that succession planning is a critical and fundamental factor that should be associated with the organization's strategic goals while directly engaging managers and executives. Succession planning also plays a critical role in leadership path decisions, which have a direct impact on the long-term business profitability of goal attainment. In addition, Akani (2015) noted that all businesses have a motive for continuing business beyond one generation of leadership. Succession planning is, therefore, vital to smooth the way for continued business success and to provide a formalized plan for the future of the business.

Succession planning must be addressed within each organization. Seniwoliba (2015) observed that many public-sector organizations have historically done little to prepare internal key leaders for advancement. Easter and Brooks (2017) affirmed that succession planning activities are frequently put on the shelf within the organization, but that no excuses should be made for this lack of preparedness by the leaders. Sandada and Mangwandi (2015) stated that numerous researchers have stressed the importance of succession planning in ensuring future growth potential, survival, transparency, and for ensuring clarity of focus if a conflict arises in the organization. Amirkhani, Nazeryani and Faraz (2016) noted that succession planning could address several crucial areas within organizations—such as the identification and development of talented leaders, strategies for financial success, and the promotion of a positive organizational culture, as well as survival and change management. These insights were beneficial in ad-

dressing the problem statement within this research.

3.1. Literature Review

Succession planning continues to be a vital ingredient for organizations to include in their overall operations. Yashwant (2017) emphasized that the continuation of effective leadership should be the most critical component of the succession planning process. Succession planning allows organizations to identify future gaps and needs. The purpose of this section is to describe succession planning within organizations, especially in the public sector, and to explain its importance.

Succession planning. The literature review has revealed several definitions of succession planning. According to Weare Jr. (2015), this concept is referred to in the literature, by multiple terms. These include manpower planning, replacement planning, talent management, succession management, workforce development, and strategic human resource management. Succession planning is defined as a method in which one or more successors can be identified to fill the key present and future positions within all types of organizations as well as developing those identified as key leaders (Alter, 2013; Goel, 2015; Gray, 2014; Patidar et al., 2016). Galbraith et al. (2012) also defined succession planning as involving the internal selection and training of employees for central leadership positions, also known as talent management. Moreover, public organizations that have effective succession planning in place also provide employees with other opportunities to develop their leadership skills.

Organizations that practice succession planning aim to ensure that a pool of qualified employees is available to fill vacant positions. Succession planning may encourage the consideration of internal hires, when possible. Yet it does not intend to undermine the existing group expertise around hiring, and there are situations in which internal hires are not possible. Succession planning can be referred to as the lifeblood of an organization; key positions should not be left empty, nor filled by employees that are less than qualified. Succession planning is a priority for many organizations at this time because the baby boomer generation will retire in the next few years. Baby boomers currently hold positions as executives, department heads, permanent secretaries, and top-level management across the workforce. This is especially true of public organizations (Solaja & Ogunola, 2016). The departure of unprecedented numbers of baby boomers within the next 20 years is likely to create workforce gaps as well, according to Barr (2014). There will be more than 30,000 baby boomers entering the post-employment phase over the next 13 years (The Retirement Boom, 2016). Governments in various countries will be challenged to fill these jobs.

Changes in leadership affect succession planning. When there is a change of guard, succession planning is critical to ensuring that cooperative relationships are cultivated (Frost & Laing, 2015). Trepanier and Crenshaw (2013) added that succession planning is vital to an organization's business strategy, in promoting

effective leadership transitions and providing continuity of leadership. Burney (2012) emphasized that succession planning is a continuing process of predicting future staffing needs and selecting, training, and developing internal human capital. Madichie and Nyakang'o (2016), meanwhile, acknowledged two critical outputs of strategic workforce planning: succession planning and talent management. Succession planning should involve not just leadership positions but all positions contributing to organizational objectives. The future leadership pipeline is built through succession planning and leadership development, while certifying the leadership roles and promoting and creating a healthy work environment (Webb et al., 2017). Building and maintaining leadership through succession planning supports an organization's survival.

Preparing for succession planning is an essential element within organizations. According to Othman and Romle (2015), succession planning is a process of preparing and identifying people who are right for the job. With the overflow of retiring baby boomers, succession planning is becoming increasingly vital for public-sector success. Moreover, public organizations that have effective succession planning in place provide their employees with an opportunity to develop their leadership skills. Also, Tabatabaee et al. (2014) shared that succession planning should provide a structured approach to ensure consistency and continuous leadership within organizations. Succession planning can also be used to establish the number of executives and skilled workers needed, to cover occurrences like disease, promotion, death, and retirement. Gothard and Austin (2013), in turn, conveyed that succession planning, also known as replacement planning, has been around for many years, while recent research has mainly focused on traditional succession planning from a selective pool of internal candidates.

Years ago, the traditional approach to succession planning was relatively effective. Yet today's fast-changing environment involves major, ever-shifting structural and cultural changes. Due to these changes, organizations need more inclusive models of leadership succession, which may include:

1) An increase in external recruiting and career self-management.
2) Increased diversity concerns.
3) New technologies.
4) The flattening of organizations.
5) A reduction in middle management.

Leadership styles and characteristics are critical to the organizational strategy process of succession planning. Ahmad et al. (2017) investigated leadership characteristic in relation to succession planning in a public-sector organization in Malaysia. The authors used stratified random sampling and surveys as part of the methodology of their study. As discussed by Harper, Leider, Coronado and Beck (2018), succession planning is essential in the identification and development of high performing employees to assume leadership roles. They advocated for a comprehensive approach that ensures leadership continuity. Samuel and Amah (2018) postulated that the development of executives, within any organi-

zation, is equivalent to the development of the organization. The authors further elaborated that, for organizational survival, executives must prepare for the succession of leaders who will be outgoing. Organizations must resolve this matter to ensure organizational survival and continuity, which are vital goals of all establishments. Succession planning ensures that the relevant talent and skills are available when required and encourages employees to pass on the essential knowledge and abilities if they leave the organization.

3.2. Research Questions

The following research questions guided this qualitative exploratory single-case study:

RQ Overall: How do government executives perceive the strategies for the current succession planning process, which include a competency model, and the needed changes within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas?

RQ1: How do government executives perceive the strategies for the current succession planning process within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas?

RQ2: How do government executives perceive the competency model for the current succession planning process within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas?

RQ3: What are the government executives' recommended changes to the strategies and the competency model?

4. Methodology, Design, Population and Sample

4.1. Methodology

This study used a qualitative methodology to explore succession planning strategies in the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas. According to Park and Park (2016), there are two fundamental approaches to analyzing phenomena in the social sciences: qualitative and quantitative. Johnson (2015) posited that qualitative methods facilitate a discovery-oriented approach. This was relevant to the goal of this study because the discovery approach is useful for exploring topics on which there is a paucity of existing literature. Hancock and Algozzine (2015) expressed the belief that qualitative research is more useful when little is known about a topic. In the context of this study, little was known about the Ministry of Education executives' succession planning strategies. In addition, there was scant research on the government's use of succession planning strategies in The Bahamas. Park and Park (2016) also described several characteristics of a qualitative study that applied to this research. These characteristics included the following: the researcher interacted with the executives at the Ministry of Education through semi-structured interviews; the data analysis was non-statistical; the sample size was small; and the study did not seek statistical findings using hypothesis testing, structured questions, or larger sample sizes.

Qualitative research provides in-depth findings on the phenomena under study.

It allows for the examination of individual experiences as the unit of measurement and produces data that is rich in detail (Tracy, 2013). The use of a qualitative research method provided an opportunity to explore the succession planning strategies of executives at the Ministry. A qualitative approach enables an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon of interest without the constraints of quantified measurements (Merriam, 2009). Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2015) concluded that a qualitative study develops concepts, understanding, insights, and patterns from the collected data to facilitate the assessment of preconceived models. Through this qualitative research, the individual experiences of executives at the Ministry of Education, as gathered through the relevant data sources, offered insight to address the study's central questions. This led to a focus on succession planning strategies.

The qualitative information obtained by the researcher provided a clearer understanding of the phenomenon being studied. De la Cuesta Benjumea (2015) postulated that qualitative research presents new knowledge and ways of viewing the world. New ideas and themes regarding the strategies of executives can be generated from qualitative research. Williams (2015) stated that the qualitative approach permits the researcher to conduct an in-depth exploration and listen to participants' experiences, which then serve as the basis of the study. A qualitative study leaves an audit trail from the raw data of participants' interpretations, ensuring credibility and consistency in the findings of the research. Hammarberg et al. (2016) asserted that semi-structured interviews seek to provide background information on the participants' perspectives and a more comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences. This further supported the researchers' aims in the selection of a qualitative single-case study.

Recent studies in this field have applied a similar methodology, establishing support for a qualitative approach. Durst and Wilhelm (2012) used an exploratory qualitative method to illustrate the connections between knowledge management and succession planning, as well as the significance of having measures in place to address long-term absences or turnover challenges. Furthermore, Mehrtak et al. (2014) conducted a qualitative study to develop a conceptual framework for succession planning. Similarly, Cole and Harbour (2015) used a qualitative case study to explore the succession planning efforts of directors of rural public health clinics. Peters-Hawkins, Reed and Kingsberry (2018) also conducted a qualitative study of succession planning leadership trends. This research also adopted a qualitative approach, due to the nature of the research questions.

This study used an exploratory single-case study design. Research designs for qualitative research may include case studies, narrative inquiry, grounded theory, phenomenology, and/or several other approaches. Based on its purpose, this study followed an exploratory single-case study design. Thomas (2015) indicated that a case study design allows the researcher to utilize extensive research methods. These may result in a more comprehensive understanding of the case of

interest, particularly when bound to specific criteria. Yin (2014) stipulated that it is appropriate to make use of a single-case study when the researcher would like to study a group of people or an example of a person; hence, the researcher aimed to study a group of executives employed at the Ministry of Education. A case study seeks to understand the perception and interpretation of participants while offering them the opportunity to express their perceptions in their own manner (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) added that a single-case study is a detailed, in-depth investigation of the development of a single event or situation over time. A comprehensive collection procedure was used to ensure a high level of detail throughout this case study.

4.2. Design

Case studies are often used to explore and uncover complex issues. A case study is a research design that focuses on the in-depth exploration of knowledge of the perceptions of participants based on a group, individual, or organizational phenomenon (Yin, 2014). The goal of this study was to examine the phenomenon of how government executives perceive strategies for the current succession planning process, which include a competency model. In addition, it was to examine the needed changes within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas. Yin (2014) noted that the use of a case study is beneficial in gaining insights and perceptions around a phenomenon or a particular event. Yin (2014) outlined the case study design to be ideal for exploring and investigating organizational processes, which can include succession planning. An in-depth investigation of a community, a group, or a single person can be examined through a case study that involves variables of interest rather than data points (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, Yin (2014) pointed out that case study research contributes to a deeper understanding of an object or complex matter and adds further strength to findings from previous studies.

4.3. Population and Sample

During this qualitative case study, the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas served as the setting. There are about 14 public-sector organizations in various locations in The Bahamas, but this study focused on just one location: New Providence, the capital city of The Bahamas. This study's general population comprised executives employed at the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas. The target population was 45 executives currently employed by the Ministry of Education in New Providence. These potential executives included senior education officers, principals, vice-principals, senior mistresses, senior masters, and education officers within the Ministry.

The researcher used a final sample of 41 government executives for the questionnaire. A total of 20 potential executives were identified for the semi-structured interviews, with a final sample of 12 government executives. The researcher selected two focus groups of four to five executives. The specific requirements for

participation in this study were that the workers must be employed full-time at an executive level and must be geographically located in New Providence. The numbers complied with the requirements outlined by Robinson (2014) as guidelines for qualitative case studies. The selected sample thus met the requirements for this study. Table 1 lists the total number of executives who participated in the study by data sources.

In preparation for conducting the research, the researcher compiled written letters to be submitted for site authorizations. Of the 14 public sector organizations in The Bahamas, the researcher selected five to query as possible sites for a study on succession planning. Telephone calls were made to each organization to obtain the name of the person to whom the site letter should be addressed. The site authorization letters were then drafted and delivered to each ministry. Follow-up calls were made regarding the requests submitted by the researcher. Of the five public sector organizations selected by the researcher, permission was granted by the Ministry of Education to conduct the study.

The next step for the site authorization and recruitment process was to purposively select executives within the Ministry of Education, as participants in this study. The sample was identified by the Ministry's human resources office based on job titles. The office provided a list of names to the researcher based on the researcher's stated criteria for participation. Using the names of full-time employees with at least five years of experience holding executive positions at the Ministry, the human resources department staff developed a list of participants. Once the list was received from the human resources department, the researcher reviewed the list of full-time executives and purposively selected the executives who were invited to take part in this research. In addition, the researcher requested that the list provided by the human resource department included participants' email addresses and conveniently selected the first 40 or more participants who responded to be part of this research. Executives who did not work full-time were eliminated from the list. As a first step, the researcher emailed the letter requesting participation in the research. However, the response rate was slow, so the researcher reached out to the Ministry to solicit more participants. The researcher left several consent forms with potential participants. The researcher also visited several sites under the Ministry of Education to obtain the target number of 40.

Table 1. Number of participants with related data sources.

Data Sources	# of participants
Semi-structured interview	12
Questionnaire (online)	41
Focus Group (2)	10

Source: Created by author.

Purposive sampling is just one of the two techniques of non-probability sampling. This sampling was chosen for this study because it is commonly used in qualitative research to identify and select the information valuable to the core interest of the topic. Purposive sampling allows researchers to gather data that are vital to the research and contribute to an improved understanding of the project's theoretical frameworks.

Purposive sampling is also referred to as judgment sampling because the choice of participants is often related to the qualities the participant possesses. Examples of these qualities include whether they are proficient in or well informed about a phenomenon of interest, possess specialized knowledge and experience, or are available and willing to participate (Etikan et al., 2016). This critical sampling technique is widely used to help qualitative researchers identify and select information-rich cases (McNeeley, Beeton, & Ojima, 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015). Patton (2015) stated that the benefit of purposive sampling is to select participants who have extensive knowledge and expertise relevant to the research objectives of a specific study. The executives at the Ministry of Education provided detailed information regarding strategic succession planning events within the organization.

Purposive sampling is especially relevant for small samples. Jun and Bridges (2016) stated that qualitative studies often concentrate on small purposeful samples and carefully chosen case studies to gain a subjective understanding of the phenomena of interest. Non-probability sampling is convenient and relatively easy to use, is relatively low in cost, and may help obtain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon being explored (Cummings & Sibona, 2017; Palinkas et al., 2015; Sarstedt, Bengart, Shaltoni, & Lehmann, 2018). For these reasons, this research used purposive sampling.

The sample size plays an important role in reaching data saturation. Peters and Verboon (2017) acknowledged that after a target sample size has been reached, data saturation is determined when the data collection yields no additional insights. Therefore, additional data collection beyond the target sample size may be necessary. Similarly, Chatio and Akweongo (2017) argued that data saturation is attained when no new or additional information can be gleaned from the interviews. Khan (2014) asserted that researchers must obtain the data, analyze the data, and then repeat the process until the emergence of new data ceases or data saturation occurs. Researchers have found two exceptions: Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) and Francis et al. (2010) have identified when the saturation of concepts occurred in their theory-based interview studies. The study conducted by Guest et al. (2006) involved 60 in-depth interviews of subjects in two West African countries. Data saturation was documented during thematic analysis when the number of interviews required to obtain thematic exhaustion was identified, and the development of essential themes surfaced.

5. Data Sources Instruments

Three data tools were used for this study. The data tools for this qualitative sin-

gle-case study included semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups. Yin (2014) stated that having multiple data sources provides the researcher with diverse viewpoints from among the participants. Yin's views can be applied to a qualitative case study, which also pursues flexibility, purposive sampling, transferability, responsiveness, transparency, and triangulation within its qualitative methodology (Cook, Kuper, Hatala, & Ginsburg, 2016). All these attributes benefited the researcher in understanding how government executives perceive the current succession planning process strategies, which include a competency model, and the needed changes within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas.

Semi-structured interviews. The first data source was open-ended semi-structured interviews. A final sample of 12 government executives was used for the semi-structured interviews. Interviews enable more in-depth explorations of people's views. Alshenqeeti (2014) highlighted that interviews and open-ended questionnaires are some of the qualitative studies' most used tools. Semi-structured interviews encourage dialogue and allow for flexibility in following up on topics of importance (Brinkmann, 2014). Structured interviews ensure that researchers will ask each participant the same basic questions. In semi-structured interviews, the interviews will not be limited to those responses since some participants may offer responses that require additional probing by the researcher (Wilson, 2016). The questions in this study centered on the experiences of each of the ten interview subjects in the Bahamian Ministry of Education related to succession planning strategies. Each interview was about 45 to 50 minutes long.

Questionnaire. The second data source consisted of a questionnaire on current succession planning strategies. The researcher used a final sample of 41 government executives for the questionnaire. The questionnaire used for this study was adapted from previous studies from Rothwell's (2016) Systematic Reasons Succession Planning Questionnaire and Fenner's (2005) Succession Planning and Development. The researcher received approval to use their instruments with slight modifications. Three parts of the questionnaire were used to examine succession planning strategies at the Ministry of Education. It included sub-sections covering each participant's organizational career path, including competency and succession planning models, training activities, and the reasons for succession planning. The executives were required to select from an agreement Likert-type scale using a five-point response option. According to O'Neill (2017), the Likert scale is frequently used in research; it is a universal method for collecting data that is easy to respond to and understand. Moreover, Chyung, Roberts, Swanson and Hankinson (2017) highlighted how Likert scale wording has changed, over time, from *Approve* to *Agree*. As such, the researcher adopted the wording of the revised five-point Likert scale: *Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.*

Focus groups. The third data source consisted of focus groups. A final sample

of two focus groups comprised of four to five government executive participants was used. Focus groups are facilitated conversations among small groups on specific topics. They allow the researcher to observe agreements and disagreements around perspectives that may not have been apparent in individual interviews (De Wolf, 2016). The researcher can learn more about the participants and obtain input from them following the individual interviews offering additional insights into their experiences. Insights may have included noting the interactions of these executives with their employees, in-depth data, and replies to the proposed semi-structured interview questions (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). Armstrong, Mullins, Gronseth and Gagliardi (2017) mentioned that emerging themes could materialize from the openness of focus group participants while the researcher receives multiple perspectives on the presented questions. Fusch and Ness (2015) observed that focus groups could be used to explore individual and group perspectives offering a suitable strategy for capturing data over a short period.

6. Findings and Results from Study

The research questions for this study guided the investigation of how government executives perceive the strategies for the current succession planning process, which include a competency model, and the needed changes within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas. Results from the semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and focus groups contributed to a better understanding of the phenomena. The researcher organized the findings and conclusions of this study firstly by the research questions and then by the themes for each research question.

The theoretical foundations of this study originated from two models: David McClelland's (1973), competency model and Maria Shirey's, five-step succession planning model (Shirey, 2008). Sandhya (2017) defined competency as the skills and abilities required to achieve the desired level of performance. As indicated by Chang and Xue (2020), competency must be the core element in evaluating an employee's ability to perform at work. The competency model and the five-step succession planning model provided the base for the researchers to understand how succession planning strategies may contribute to the executive's current succession planning process strategies.

6.1. Research Question One

The overarching and first research question investigated was how government executives perceive the current succession planning process strategies, including a competency model, and the needed changes within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas. By analyzing the results of all three data sources, the researcher concluded five themes emerged from the data. The findings support the three components of the competency model. Executives identified that all three components, knowledge, skills, and attitudes, are essential. The findings further

supported prior literature on the importance of including the competency model through building capacity through succession planning strategies, individual factors/development, ultimate leadership preparation, required changes at the Ministry regarding weakness in the current succession planning system, and recognition of staff training and mentoring at the Ministry of Education. The executives' responses from semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups revealed five themes and answered the research questions. From the data analysis, five themes emerged, supporting the research questions. The themes are:

1) Building capacity through succession planning strategies (clear effective communications, efficiency changes, and team-building mechanism and focus on individual factors of their employees to develop ultimate leadership within the Ministry.)

2) Individual factors/development (clear effective communications, efficiency changes, and team-building mechanism and focus on individual factors of their employees to develop ultimate leadership within the Ministry.)

3) Ultimate leadership preparation (clear effective communications, efficiency changes, and team-building mechanism and focus on individual factors of their employees to develop ultimate leadership within the Ministry.)

4) Required changes at the Ministry regarding weakness in the current succession planning system (changes at the Ministry concerning weakness in the current succession planning through staff recognition through training and mentoring).

5) Recognition of staff training and mentoring at The Ministry of Education (changes at the Ministry concerning weakness in the current succession planning through staff recognition through training and mentoring.)

The researcher employed the use of alphanumeric codes, ranging from EXSP01 to EXSP40, to protect the identity of each participant in the study.

6.2. Theme One

Theme one: Building capacity through succession planning strategies. The researcher generated theme one with the data collected from all three data sources. When asked how government executives perceive the strategies for the current succession planning process, which included a competency model, and the needed changes within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas, participants in this study outlined that building capacity through succession planning strategies will sustain the Ministry of Education through effectiveness, team building, efficiency changes, alignment of succession planning, implementation of succession planning, effective strategies, succession procedures strategies, building capacity, and effective communication mentioned. Table 2 provides the codes for this theme. Some participants seemed not to be fully aware that there is an existing succession plan in place at the Ministry based on their responses or knowledge and its significance in building the capacity within the Ministry. For

Table 2. Codes for theme one.

| Code	Code counts from sources
Capacity building	11
Clear communications	10
Communication plans	12
Effective communications	12
Effective strategies	4
Efficiency changes	19
Implementation succession planning	11
Importance succession planning	4
Succession procedures strategies	42
Team building mechanisms	7
Unknowing	3

Source: Created by author.

example, participant EXSP09 stated, "there may be a succession planning policy in place, but not aware of it. Neither are any of my colleagues." Participants have indicated no policy or paperwork on succession planning to support if there is one currently in place at the Ministry.

Notably, many participants in this study repeatedly made it known that they were not aware of succession planning strategies at the Ministry. In some cases, participants mentioned policies which the public service oversees this process. Thus, these repeated statements from the participants further support the need for this study. Focus group participant EXSP22 stated "presently, the Ministry of Education has policies in place that govern succession planning, governed by the Public Service Commission." EXSP19 added, "unaware of any succession planning in place," and EXSP21 stated "not aware of succession planning in the Ministry of Education." More executives provided their views of their unawareness of succession planning at the Ministry.

Based on the responses from the executives, to build capacity will require change within the Ministry that includes all stakeholders. Hanlon et al. (2022) highlighted that capacity is about building a process of change to increase its effectiveness and address any insufficiencies of the organization. Therefore, this theme further aligns with the selected theoretical model, the competency model, in which organizational capacity building is a process focused on creating change to increase effectiveness and address the insufficiencies of an organization (Millar & Doherty, 2016). Thus, building capacity through succession planning strategies is a significant factor based on the government executive's responses from the three data sources.

The questionnaire responses verified the insight provided by participants in face-to-face interviews and focus groups. The responses further supported the theme related to the implementation of succession planning, the alignment, procedures, and strategies in building capacity at the Ministry of Education through succession planning. Question 25 found that 61% disagree their organization utilizes its succession plans as a tool to enhance employee morale. Question 26 found 49% agree their organization rarely uses succession planning to cope with the effects of early retirement and voluntary separation programs. Question 27 found that 54% disagree that their organization utilizes succession planning to improve employees' ability to respond to changing workload demands. Question 28 found 61% disagree that their organization utilizes succession planning to help deal with human capital shortfalls. Question 29 found that 54% agree that their organization does not utilize succession planning as a tool to help develop employee career pathing programs, skills, knowledge, and attitudes.

From the executives' responses to the questionnaire, some concerns were noted regarding how do government executives perceive the strategies for the current succession planning process, which include a competency model and the needed changes within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas? Notably, from the responses received by executives from the questionnaire, there is a continuous need for further capacity building at the Ministry. Additionally, the theoretical aspect of the first model for this study aligns with the executives' responses. Veliu and Manxhari (2017) stated that a competency model provides a combination of knowledge, skills, and other characteristics essential for task execution in the organization. For example, questions 25, 27, and 28 found high percentages numbers exceeding 50% in which participants responded to their disagreement that capacity building is apparent at the Ministry of Education. Figure 1 depicts a pie chart for question 25. According to Brix (2019), building capacity is defined as activities that strengthen individuals' knowledge, abilities,
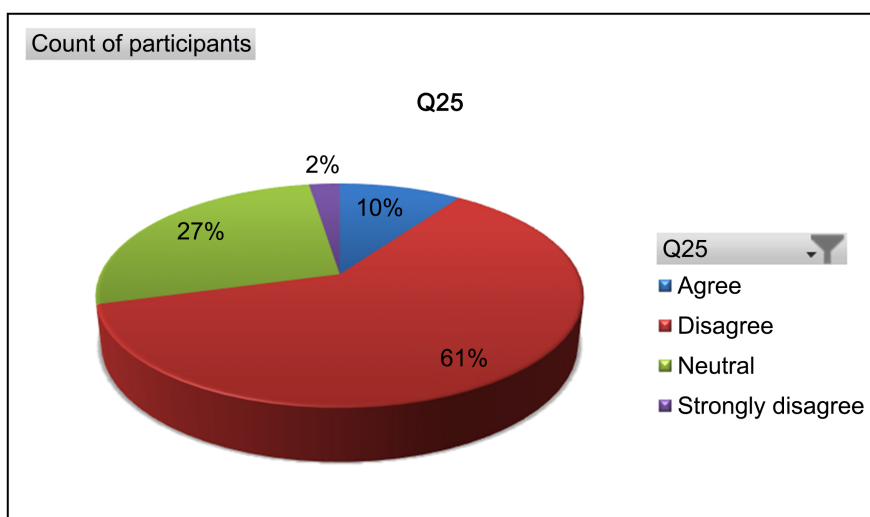
Figure 1. Applicants' responses to questionnaire question #25.

skills, and behavior and improve institutional structure and processes for organizations to meet their goals sustainably. Capacity building aims to continuously develop organizations and their employees in such a way for the intended strategy to be achieved or accomplished.

6.3. Theme Two

Theme two: individual factors/development. The researcher generated theme two with the data collected from all three data sources about individual factors and developmental factors regarding how government executives perceive the competency model for the current succession planning process within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas. The participants' responses highlighted the importance of focusing on the individual employee and, more importantly, their development within the Ministry as key. Table 3 illustrates the codes that were used to formulate this theme.

The individual and development factors were areas participants deemed essential related to their development and leadership role within the Ministry. According to Jehanzeb (2020), employees who perceive high or organizational support in terms of care and well-being exhibit high levels of organizational commitment to the job, performance, and job satisfaction. Therefore, the individual and development factors as outlined in this theme results from the participants are areas in which the Ministry of Education can use to determine: how do government executives perceive the strategies for the current succession planning process, which include a competency model, and the needed changes within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas?

Individual and development factors contribute elements for growth for any organization continuity, and the data results from participants outlined these findings. Participants for this theme outlined mentorship guidance, leadership aspirations, career opportunities, career aspirations, as some areas to support the results of this theme.

Likewise, the questionnaire results regarding the overarching andRQ1 question indicated a need for more individual and developmental factors based on the responses. The results showed that executives perceived a need for individual and developmental factors to be included in the current succession planning process, which include a competency model, and the needed changes within The Ministry of Education in the Bahamas. Regarding question 33, participants disagreed by 49% that the Ministry use of succession planning and competency model to target individual required skills and knowledge, career development for future positions. Figure 2 depicts the chart responses of participants' responses to the question.

The data collected from theme two emerged from the overarching and first research question. After the completion of the data analysis, themes were collected to answer each research question. Participants indicated the need for individual and development factors to target individuals within the Ministry in their

career and possibly elevation. Preparing employees or targeted employees will foster employees' empowerment, improve presented skills, and enhance the selection process in filling noted vacancies within the Ministry.

Table 3. Codes for theme two.

Code	Code counts from sources
Attitude	1
Attitude changes	9
Career in place	3
Career opportunities	12
Clear plan in place	1
Competency and development	8
Competency components evident	3
Continuous professional development	6
Individual development	7
Individual factors/development	61
Individual factors/development	1
Individual factors/development	11
Individual factors/development	6
Individual factors/development	5
Individual grooming	10
Individualized staff focus	7
Knowledge recognition	4
Leadership aspirations	10
Leadership development	11
Mentoring	12
Mentorship guidance	10
Mentorship	3
Motivation	2
Staff recognition	6
Strong competition	5
Shadowing	3

Source: Created by author.
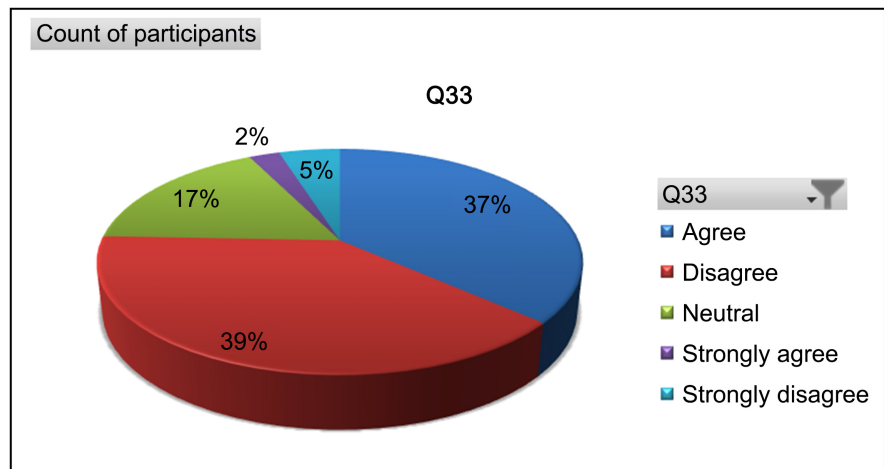
Figure 2. Applicants responses to Questionnaire question #33.

6.4. Theme Three

Theme three: ultimate leadership preparation. This theme pertained to the executives' ultimate leadership preparation within the Ministry. The study participants noted that ultimate leadership preparation is vital in securing leadership roles, especially when there is a vacancy. Participants within this study shared the importance of more focus on early leadership preparation as the key to succession planning strategies and filling the vacancy of jobs. The data sources used for collecting the data were semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups. The participants' responses in this study outlined that ultimate leadership preparation is vital in the sustainability of continued leadership through succession planning strategies at the Ministry of Education through leadership development, professional development, leadership focus changes, leadership aspirations, and preparation of leadership. Notably, ultimate leadership plays an integral role within any organization, which is essential for its growth and development and, more importantly, its employees. The following Table 4 outlined the codes generated to support this theme.

Executives identified the importance of having ultimate leadership preparation as a key factor for the organization's overall sustainability, filling leadership vacancies, and future leadership positions. As such, participants shared their views on the importance of leadership within the Ministry. Participant EXSP07 stated, "the emphasis coming from leadership as it relates to skills, as it relates to building your knowledge and your capacity." Participant EXSP03 added that it is vital that leadership be evenly distributed across the organization.

Participant EXSP01 described the role of the ultimate leader "as the person who is responsible for the assistance with this succession are individuals who are goal minded and have the vision to assist people going forward." Whereas, participant EXSP06 added, "helping a colleague, helping a member of the team to understand, his or her role fully also by giving that support that is required for successful leadership and continuity of leadership."

Table 4. Codes for theme three.

Code	Code counts from sources
Attitude	1
Attitude changes	9
Career opportunities	12
Leadership development	11
Leadership aspirations	10
Knowledge recognition	5
Performance review	2
Preparation for leadership	11
Preparation vacancy fulfillment	3
Professional development	16
Shadowing	3

Source: Created by author.

The data collected from theme three emerge from the overarching and first research question. Participants were able to highlight the importance of ensuring ultimate leadership preparation is fully utilized at all levels within the Ministry as to avoid or time lapse in the daily transaction of the organization. Notably, quick attention to vacancy filling and changes of staff are factors expressed as concerns from these participants. If positions are not filled, there is a delay in work and projects in the pipeline within the organization.

6.5. Theme Four

Required changes at the Ministry regarding weakness in the current succession planning system. This theme pertained to the executives' assessment of the Ministry's required changes regarding the current succession planning system. There searcher generated the theme with the data collected from all three data sources. Many of the participants highlighted areas that required changes or were considered weaknesses in the Ministry's present system. Table 5 presents the codes that pertain to the executives' experiences regarding theme four. Throughout the data collection process, executives frequently mentioned that required changes need to occur at the Ministry. Further details regarding the data collected from these executives can be found in the following paragraphs.

Data collected from the semi-structured interviews and focus group revealed the following participants collectively indicated that there need to be changes within the Ministry related to the current succession planning strategies. According to Davis and Dolson (2018), change is inevitable; however, it is necessary for growth and productivity, especially regarding an organizational setting.

Table 5. Codes for theme four.

Code	Code counts from sources
Assessment required	3
Clear career path	18
Clear communications	10
Continuous professional development	6
Favoritism	6
Governmental changes	2
Implementation succession planning	11
No succession planning	20
Open conversations	6
Organizational growth changes	13
Political interference	3
Preference for position	3
Required changes at the ministry	55
See progress	6
Selection process	1
Showing preference	7
System blockage	1

Source: Created by author.

During the succession process, an additional challenge comes into play regarding the leadership style. As such, participant EXSP02 indicated what need to be change is belief, if there is an adverse report on someone instead of just looking at one side and never look at one side of a coin a coin has no sides ahead and a tail, you will look at both sides and then you will draw a conclusion too many times.

In addition, the researcher noted that communication needs to be shared and documented by all stakeholders for guidelines to follow within the Ministry. This is another concern expressed by participants that needs to change. For example, participant EXSP02 responded that the "atmosphere needs to be change in terms of the communication needs, so they would improve communication." Participant EXSP03 said, "what is really needed at the ministry is more effective communication, they need to communicate these strategies. Write them, email them and put them on a Web site."Whereas, participant EXSP12 stated, "formulization of the plan and making sure that it is communicated to all stakeholders

know what is expected."

The data collected from theme four emerge from the overarching and first research question. Participants highlighted the importance of ensuring that the Ministry enacted changes regarding the weakness in the current succession planning system and the need to review all levels within the Ministry so as to avoid a continuous flow within the organization. Assessing the organization can facilitate a review of current operations and allow the organization to revise or implement current changes for more efficiency. Clear communication allows for all stakeholders to be fully informed and where necessary, generate communication so all will have full access to information. Having a clear career path allows for employees to target or project where they would like to be in their professional growth within an organization and the required qualifications one will need for this elevation. Clear career paths provide a sense of belonging within the organization.

6.6. Theme Five

Recognition of staff training and mentoring. The researcher generated theme one from the data collected from all three data sources. The researcher combined staff training and mentoring, which yielded a frequency in codes of 75. The participants from semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups explained their views of the importance of training and mentoring as they relate to how government executives perceive the strategies for the current succession planning process, which include a competency model, and the needed changes within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas. Executives from both semi-structured and focus groups responded to the importance of mentoring and training as it relates to training and mentoring within the Ministry. Notably, the participants outlined some areas related to this theme as mentorship guidance, staff recognition, and training to succeed. Table 6 illustrates the codes that were used to formulate this theme.

Table 6. Codes for theme five.

| Code	Code counts from sources
Mentoring	12
Mentorship guidance	10
Mentorship	3
Staff mentorship recognition	11
Training and mentoring	34
Training to succeed	14
Training	10

Source: Created by author.

Furthermore, the results from the questionnaire regarding the overarching RQ and RQ1 indicated that there is a need for more recognition of staff and mentoring based on the responses. The results showed executives perceived a need to include mentoring and training in the current succession planning process, which include a competency model, and the needed changes within The Ministry of Education in the Bahamas. Question 12 found 44% disagreed that the Ministry trains new supervisors a in managing the performance of subordinates. Figure 3 indicates the participants' responses. On the other hand, question 19 found that participants disagreed by 51% that the Ministry uses succession planning and competency model as a means of targeting necessary training, required skills and knowledge, career development, and education. The results showed that executives perceived a need for additional training and mentoring within the Ministry of Education.

The data collected from theme five emerge from the overarching and first research question. After completing the data analysis, the researcher compiled the themes to answer each research question. Participants indicated the importance of training and mentoring through succession planning strategies as a challenge facing the Ministry of Education. Executives were of the view that the Ministry requires further improvement in this area, especially as it relates to their portfolios. There is something in place for teachers but as executives move up in their career fields there is nothing designed for them specifically in their role and in their view that needs to change. This seems to be a great concern for these executives because as they came in as teachers, the training was there, but now as an executive there is no training. This imbalance is a big concern for these interviewed executives who advocated those concerns to the researcher.

The findings regarding the overarching and first research question were consistent with prior studies. Notably, Jindal and Shaikh (2020) stated the importance of replacing the old process with a new process of having a thriving workforce that includes succession planning with a systematic way that includes the
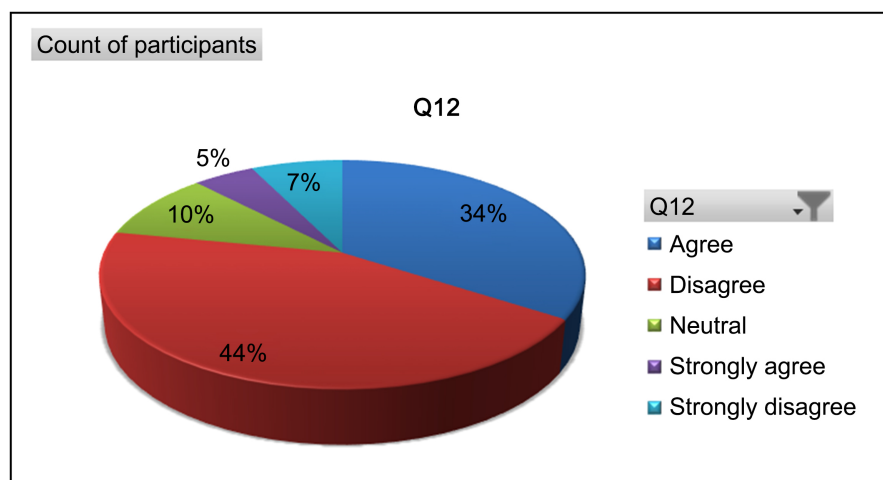
Figure 3. Response from questionnaire question #12.

identification of competencies that will be required to grow the organization and obtaining prospects and developing those strategies for future labor creation. Further, Francis (2020) stated that organizations implementing step-by-step succession planning incorporate competencies as an excellent way to demonstrate a commitment to mentoring and developing promising employees. Encompassing succession planning includes continuous identification, training, promoting, and identifying those essential competencies, and communicating those required skills (Jindal & Shaikh, 2020). Chang and Xue (2020) stated that "competency" must be the central element when evaluating an employee's ability to perform at work. The use of competency models provides an array of advantages to organizations, such as succession planning, assessment programs, job description development, training identification programs, and recruitment of candidates (Zain, Radzi, Lahap, & Abdullah, 2016). The use of the competency model continues to be a contributing factor within organizations.

The competency model continues to add value to human resource systems. Beheshtifar and Moghadam (2011) outlined that competency models should reflect the present and future needs of the organization, which play a vital role in individual and organizational levels in ensuring that individual competencies are about the organizational strategy. The competency model and succession planning models present a plan in building the needed competency for present and future measuring of personal improvement requirements (Beheshtifar & Moghadam, 2011). Competency models aligned with organizational objectives to help define the performance criteria in measuring the effectiveness, team effectiveness, and success in a particular role (Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Maduka et al. 2018). Bhatia, Rao and Bhatia (2019) stated that the competency model serves several purposes, such as a guiding tool to hire, train and create a highly effective tool for human resources. A study conducted by Ennis (2008) found that the competency model is an essential factor in changing the individual and organizational structure that supports training empowerment plans, performance management, and succession planning. The application of the competency model to succession planning strategies continues to add value to organizations' effective leadership.

As cited by Bazneshini et al. (2020) the core competency approach has a vital role in the entire process of the succession planning system. Al-Mannaee and Ryan (2018) conducted a study in a large oil factory of 375 participants using competency model as the theoretical framework. Therefore, based on the presented results and the findings in this study, it is evident that applying the competency model to succession planning strategies provides added value to organizations.

6.7. Research Question Two

The second research question of this study was: How do government executives perceive the competency model for the current succession planning process within

the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas? This question was essential to explore the perceived strategies for the current succession planning process at the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas. The executives' responses from semistructured interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups revealed two themes. From the data analysis, two themes emerged supporting the research question. The themes are skills development/skills set and coaching techniques. A brief description of the two themes is executives using skills development, skills set, and coaching is considered key for the overall employee development.

6.8. Theme Six

Skills development. The researcher generated theme six with the data collected from all three data sources as it relates to the responses of participants regarding executives' skills development perceived as the competency model for the current succession planning process within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas. Karim, Choudhury and Latif (2019) highlighted that employees are assets to any organization. Organizations need well trained employees that perform activities effectively and efficiently. These continuous process organizations help to develop skills, knowledge, and abilities. These concepts further generated participants' views and responses on the importance of focusing on the individual employee and, more importantly, their skills development within the Ministry as key. Table 7 illustrates the codes that were used to formulate this theme.

The results gathered highlighted the importance and need for more skills development within the Ministry. Derakhshan and Zandi (2018) pinpointed that skills development leads to improved performance quality, which is an essential factor for sustained growth and productivity. Conversely, the development of skills focuses on building organizational members' knowledge and skills to be

Table 7. Codes for theme six.

Code	Code counts from sources
Competency and development	8
Competency components evident	3
Continuous professional development	6
Job performance evaluation	3
Job performance indicators	8
Skills development	58
Skills recognition	11
Skills sets	19

Source: Created by author.

prepared and equipped to take on new responsibilities and challenges (Karim, Choudhury, & Latif, 2019). The initial identified codes skills development, skills recognition, skills set, and competency components) reflected the results from participants in the following paragraphs. As it relates to skills development, participant EXSP05 stated:

> The document that catering to the appraisals from teachers and that allows you to see the skills and the competencies of the teacher with a view that if they want to go on a career path track or want to go on the administrative/executive track.

Responses from the questionnaires further endorsed the responses from the semi-structured interview and focus groups. The responses further reinforced the relatedness of skills development at the Ministry of Education through succession planning. Furthermore, the questionnaire's results regarding RQ2 indicated a need for more recognition of skills development and skills set based on the responses.

Question 17 found that 34% agree linking employee skills, knowledge, attitudes, training, and development to the organization's succession plans will be better supported if management and subordinate employees receive monetary awards. Question 18 found that 59% disagree the organization has developed a training database that captures and tracks all skills, knowledge, attitudes, training, and development activities that needed to support the organization's current and future business and succession needs. Question 19 found that 51% disagree their organization uses succession planning and competency model as a means of targeting necessary training, required skills and knowledge, career development, and education. Question 29 found 54% agree their organization does not utilize succession planning as a tool to help develop employee career path programs, skills, knowledge, and attitudes. Therefore, this study's participants viewed skills and development at the Ministry of Education as vital, especially for identifying employees' skills gap, empowering employees to work more efficiently, developing and improving their skills for the overall improvement of work productivity.

Similarly, the questionnaire results regarding RQ2 indicated a need for more skills development based on the responses. The results showed that executives are of the view that additional focus should be placed on skills development within the Ministry of Education. Question 29 further validated the responses of the participants' agreement by 54% that the Ministry needs to do more as it relates to career path, skills, and knowledge development within the Ministry. Figure 4 depicts the chart responses of participants to the question.

The data collected from theme six emerge from research question two. After the completion of the data analysis, the researcher collected the themes to answer each research question. Participants indicated the need for skills development to assist individuals within the Ministry in their career and possibly elevation.
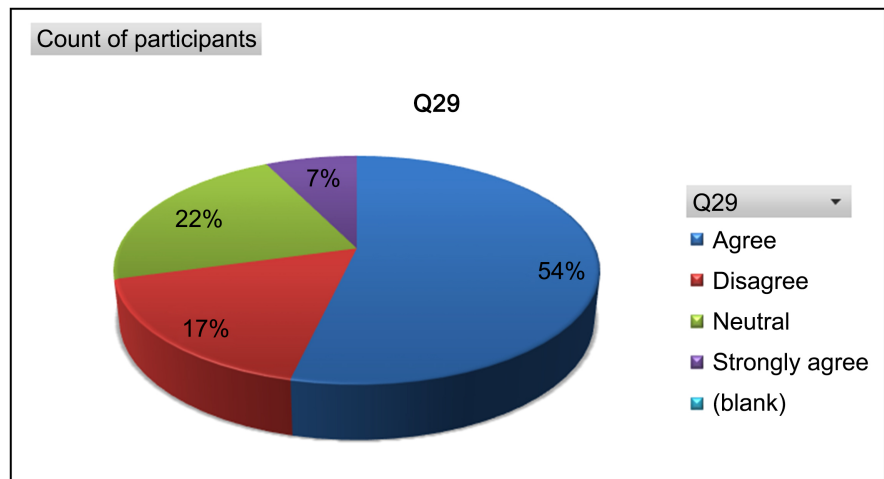
Figure 4. Participants' responses to questionnaire question #29.

As such, preparing executives' skills development will lead to employees' improved performance, motivation, and retention on the job within the Ministry. As outlined by Karim, Choudhury and Latif (2019) the developmental programs are regarded as specific frameworks for helping employees to develop their personal and professional skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behavior and consequently improve their abilities to perform specific tasks in the organization.

The second research question investigated how government executives perceive the competency model for the current succession planning process within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas. By analyzing the results of all three sources of data, the researcher concluded five themes emerged from the data. The findings support the components of the competency model. Executives identified that all three components, knowledge, skills, and attitudes are essential. The findings further supported prior literature on the importance of including skills development/skills set and coaching techniques. The executives perceive the competency model for the current succession planning process within the Ministry of Education as an essential factor. The findings for research question two align with previous studies/research. Subramaniam et al. (2016) advocated for employees' skills and competencies to be shaped through sequences of training and development programs. The competency model supports initiatives such as recruiting, performance management, career development, succession planning, and other human resource business processes (Francis, 2020). Building competency helps identify skills and abilities associated with career goals; thus, creating a competency framework is vital for both the employee's and the system's success (Francis, 2020). Skills development triumphs as a research issue as substantial competitive and is perceived as a strategic management tool in coping with the current business environment (Sousa & Rocha, 2019). The study conducted by Morreale, Valenzano and Bauer (2017) concluded that communication skills, and specifically oral communication, are critical to students' future personal and professional success. According to Hamid

and Younus (2021), communication skills play an integral role in improving work performance. The competency model, skills development, and communication continue to be essential within organizational growth strategies.

Liske and Holladay (2016) found that individuals who participated in a coaching program did not demonstrate improved leadership competencies. They also found that the competency model distinguishes excellent performers from average performers in their proficiency levels. Uddin, Tanchi and Alam (2012) added that competency mapping could be used for coaching and succession planning, significant for individual and organizational growth. Therefore, based on prior research, the conclusion made for research question two is credible.

6.9. Theme Seven

Coaching techniques. The researcher generated theme seven with the data collected from all three data sources on various coaching techniques used by participants or used within the Ministry. The researcher received an array of responses on coaching technique requirements at the Ministry from the semi-structured and focus group interviews. Notably, EXSP01 indicated that they allow their coordinators to shadow them in all aspects at the executive level. Other coaching techniques mentioned by participant EXSP01 are encouragement, engaging, and grooming. Table 8 illustrates the codes for theme seven.

The questionnaire results concerning RQ2 indicate that the executives view that there is a need for more coaching techniques at the Ministry based on their overall responses to the questions. The results show the executives perceived a need to include more coaching techniques in the current succession planning process, which include a competency model and the needed changes within the Ministry of Education in the Bahamas. The following paragraphs outlined the executives' responses' regarding RQ2.

As it relates to question 18, participants disagreed by 51% that the Ministry utilizes succession planning and competency model to target necessary training; this is further supported by question 15 in which 44% of the participants also disagreed that the Ministry does not provide training activities such as shadowing assignments. Overall, this theme highlighted how participants perceived the Ministry needed to include more coaching techniques in the succession planning strategies at the Ministry of Education.

Table 8. Codes for theme seven.

Code	Code counts from sources
Coaching methods	9
Coaching techniques	58
Shadowing	3

Source: Created by author.

The data collected from theme seven emerge from the RQ2. After completing the data analysis, the researcher compiled the themes to answer each research question. Participants indicated the need for more coaching techniques that will target individuals within the Ministry and, more importantly, assist in their elevation in various positions and preparedness to execute their duties in those acquired positions. Through coaching, executives look at means to enhance their improved job performance that will further expand their skills, knowledge, and attitudes which are components of the competency model that will change their outlook on a positive performance at work.

6.10. Research Question Three

The third research question of this study was: What are the government executives recommended changes to the strategies and the competency model? This question was essential to explore the executives' recommended changes to the strategies and the competency model. The executives' responses from semistructured interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups revealed one theme. From the data analysis, one theme emerged supporting the research question. The theme is transformation through organizational growth changes. An overview of this theme demonstrates that organizations must utilize transformation and organizational growth for survival in a highly competitive environment.

6.11. Theme Eight

Theme eight: transformation through organizational growth changes. There searcher generated theme eight using all three data sources. Participants responded that there needs to be a transformation within the Ministry as it relates to succession planning. There also needs to be a change in growth as well in the overall process of succession planning. As highlighted by Ján and Veronika (2017), successful changes are vitalto any organization that strives to survive or succeed in this highly competitive environment.

A variety of reasons can be presented for a decision to change something. The change can be internal as well as external factors. These concepts further generated participants' views that some current practice or process needs to change for the Ministry's organizational growth as key. Table 9 illustrates the codes that were used to formulate this theme.

When the researcher asked the participants what the government executives' recommended changes to the strategies and the competency model were, participants were quick to note the many changes and cite examples of what they would like to see in the Ministry based on their responses on transformation through organizational growth changes within the Ministry. Notably, some of those changes outlined by participants' results are an assessment is required, removal of favoritism, political interference, and retirement package/preparations. The above are some notable organizational growth changes required by the Ministry of Education.

Question 40 found 54% agree their organization does not utilize succession planning as a tool to help develop employee career pathing programs, organizational and individual factors, development, execution, evaluation, and dissemination in its strategic planning. Figure 5 depicts the chart responses of participants' responses to the question. Particularly, this theme brought to light the need for more transformation through organizational growth changes to be integrated into succession planning strategies at the Ministry of Education.

The third research question investigated the government executives' recommended changes to the strategies and the competency model. Through thematic analysis, one theme emerged: transformation through organizational growth changes. Participants repeatedly highlighted this theme regarding changes to the strategies and the competency model. The theme supported the competency model as well as prior research.

Table 9. Codes for theme eight.

Code	Code counts from sources
Assessment required	3
Cherry picking	4
Clear career path	18
Clear communications	10
Effective communications	12
Efficiency changes	19
Favoritism	6
Organizational growth changes	13

Source: Created by author.
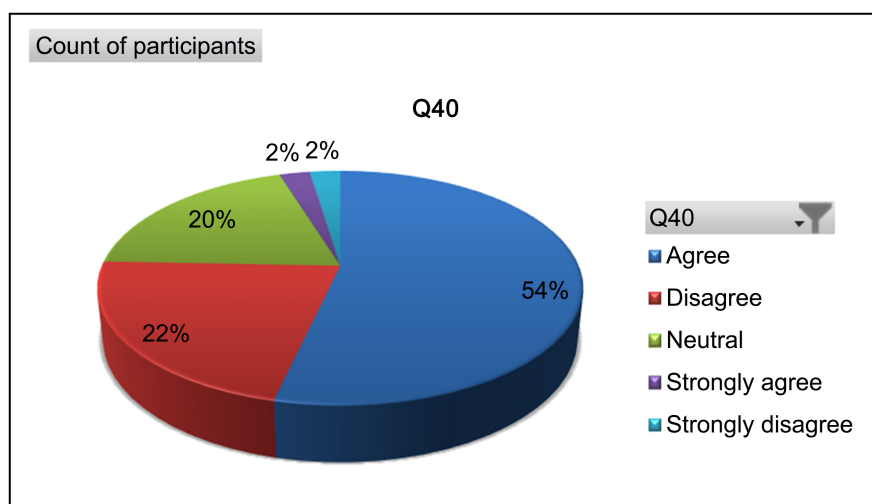
Figure 5. Questionnaire response to question #40.

As outlined by Brown et al. (2018), the nature of business and the demands that organizations must embrace to survive and thrive from a functional perspective should incorporate a competency model, which is the framework for companies to effectively design the implementation of their talent and underpin successful integration into human resource management. A competency model is also a tool to cope with organizational change (Mohd Ali, Shafii, & Shahimi, 2020). The competency model acts as the proficiency evaluator, facilitating the organization for appraisal or succession planning (Mohd Ali et al., 2020). Shet, Patil and Chandawarkar (2019) stipulated competency models offer executives the opportunity to observe, analyze behaviors, and discuss performance deficiencies. Thus, the performance appraisal discussion is enhanced through competency models. Bazneshini, Golafshani, Rahmanseresht and Rabiei (2020) explained that the critical competencies needed at any leadership level enable selecting and evaluating the present and future competent leaders. The competency model supports organizational change in developing systematic strategies to support the organization.

The competency model continues to be a strategic key for the organizational movement of an employee. Hosseini, Pourkiyani and Sheikhi (2019) asserted that the competency model is essential in terms of succession planning in the creation of relationships among the organizational competencies. Brown et al. (2018) stated that a competency model is a framework for organizations to effectively design and implement their talent management systems. Shet et al. (2019) highlighted that integrating competency models in performance management systems will focus on goals and the capabilities that drive those goals. Baker, Mapes, New and Szwejczewski (1997) outlined several classifications of competencies which every successful organization should possess, and they are strategic, functional, individual, competitive, and distinctive competencies. Brown et al. (2018) stipulated that the success of any competency-based model is the inter-linkages between the individual (micro) and the organizational (macro) level of competencies. The results from research question three added to the body of knowledge. The findings from research question three also provided qualitative data regarding both theoretical models for this study, which are David McClelland (1973), Competency Model and Maria Shirey, The Five-step succession planning model (Shirey, 2008).

Overall, the findings and results demonstrated that government executives are unaware or unsure of the existence of a succession planning process which include a competency model, and the needed changes within the Ministry of Education in The Bahamas. The researcher also found that the executives described the importance of succession planning within the Ministry of Education.

7. Recommendations and Conclusion

Findings from this study indicate that executives perceived succession planning strategies as an essential factor in the overall development of the Ministry. The

study provided insight into participants' views as they relate to the current process within the Ministry. A recommendation for future practice for executive leaders is the integration of succession planning with the organizational overall strategic plan. This approach will assist leaders in creating an effective succession plan that embraces the organization's culture. A second recommendation for future practice is the introduction of a professional career tracking system. This will allow the organization to know the skills of their workforce. This tracking system will further allow the organization to know the qualifications and skills sets of their employees in preparation of filling and preparing individuals for new or future positions. According to Church et al. (2015), succession planning has shown significant influence on shaping future leaders' career development.

A third recommendation would be implementing a vigorous mentoring program for executives in leadership and including those desiring elevation to leadership roles within the organization. As outlined by Khojah and Asif (2020) mentoring is an essential and effective structure of supporting professional advancement. Mentoring is key in supporting the professional advancement of executives and increasing the efficiency of these employees. Mentoring also provides personal growth for executives and finding solutions to any challenges that may be presented. A fourth recommendation would be identifying executives nearing retirement and starting early preparation or preparing individuals to fill those vacancies. Identifying and preparing future leaders is a significant factor for recognizing these individuals and, more importantly, grooming early to fill any void through succession planning strategies.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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