



SUCCESSION PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY OF FAMILY-OWNED PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE

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-----ABSTRACT-----

This study investigates the relationship succession planning and sustainability of family-owned schools, specifically in Rivers State. The target population is the entire family-owned school in Rivers State. However, the accessible population comprises of ten (10) family-owned registered/government approved schools in Rivers State, drawn from the three senatorial districts. The population and sample size is one hundred and nine (109) owing to the adoption of census study. The two null hypotheses were rejected and the alternate accepted, indicating a significant positive relationship between the dimensions of succession planning (successor selection and successor preparation) and sustainability. It was concluded that, family-owned school stand a better chance at optimizing economical and social sustainability level. Thus, the study recommends that: Successor selection increases commitment to firm goals, encourages individual development, and ensures business continuity towards high sustainability. Hence, successor selection should be encouraged. Successor preparation retains and develops intellectual capital better career development, and enhances on-the-job learning with focus on increased sustainability. Therefore, Successor preparation should be institutionalized.

KEYWORDS: *Succession Planning, Succession Selection, Succession Preparation and Sustainability*

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge and education are the basic tools that have evolved and advanced mankind since the beginning of the world. It is true that this screaming twin variables are key to the development and advancement of any society. Hence, government irrespective of its status; central/federal, state/regional, local/municipal or global are expected to invest heavily in education to expand knowledge and improve on the wellbeing of mankind. Although this responsibility is huge, as such should not be left in the hands of the government alone. This is part of the reasons private individuals are licensed to open and run private schools to balance-up for possible loop-holes. In the wake of 1872 for instance, the British colonial government attempted to furnish educational system in (what was known as the Northern and Southern protectorates of the Niger area) Nigeria through her missionary societies (Fafunwa, 2018). In 1882, the British colonial government introduced the Education Ordinance which was like a decree to seeming positively shape educational activities at the time. Although, this was greeted with some challenges at the print of implementation owing to the cumbersome nature of the documents and Nigerian at the time tend to find it a little different to go by at. Hence the document was thrown out similarly, in 1887, mother education ordinance was re-introduced. This time, this document was implemented which explains why Nigeria had foreign teachers, in the early years after the independent (Daniel-Kalio, 2018, Fafunwa, 2018; Oluwaseun, 2018).



In the light of the above, the license of the establishment of private schools in Nigeria is traceable to educational ordinance of the British colonial government in 1887. Today, the license for the establishment, operation, and supervision of public and private schools in Nigeria is the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Education at every level (Federal, state, and local government), with the aid of sister government agencies and parastatals (Olawale, 2017). No doubt, the education sector like every other sector has its peculiar challenges that seem to have bedeviled educational activities in Nigeria. Some of these challenges includes; lack of responsibility and control, poor governance systems, poor infrastructure, poor teachers' welfare, lack of teaching aid and poor training facility, unstable curriculum due to lack of focus, poor parenting and guidance, indiscipline (Uriah, 2016). In specific terms, these and other issue has negatively affected the educational system in Nigeria. However, some specific factors have bedeviled the sustainability of family-owned private schools in Nigeria, especially in Rivers State. These issues include, but are not limited to; unaffordability for low income earners, unfriendly policies, maladministration, poor public perception, overemphasis on standardization, and over-proliferation of private schools leading to higher unhealthy competition (Meador, 2019). Interestingly, some of these private schools are handed down from generation-to-generation in these sorry states. This is an obvious lack of economical and social sustainability (Gudaganarar & Halayanava, 2014; Migual & Kseria, 2015).

Succession planning entails a process of identifying and developing talents of prospective leaders who will be equipped to take over from or replace the current leaders of the organization or institution whom they retire or die (Eshiteti, Okaka, Maragia, Odera & Akerele, 2013; Onuoha, 2016). This thus connotes a process in which individual within the organization with great talents and skills are identified and developed with the hope to replace a member of the management team whom they retire from the job or die (Akani, 2015). This is done to prevent administrative vacuum that may occur in the future if such steps are not taken at the right time. This is however instituted to ensure business succession and continuity. For instance, a family that have establish some businesses have taken of upon itself to identify, train, and develop younger members of such a family to take over from the older ones when they are no more. This seems to explain why some children tend to choose the career part of their parents. Similarly, Onuoha (2016) citing Gupta et al revealed that family business is defined by; (1) ownership control by family members or a consortium of families, (2) strategic influence of a family in the leadership of the firm, (3) Great concern for continuous family relationship, and (4) The dream of business continuity across generations. These principles enable an organization to informally source for a good replacement especially amongst individuals who are conversant with the culture and direction of the business.

Scholars (Ogundele, Idris & Ahmed-Ogundipe 2012; Adedayo, Olanipekun & Ojo, 2016) have averred that succession planning is one factor responsible for the sustainability of family owned businesses. In the views of Ward (2006), the ability to foresee and retort to change is an attribute of sustainability for any family owned business. This change can be seen economically, socially, environmentally, and politically or legally. Other forms of changes include: leadership, ownership or management change. Thus, as businesses adapt to any of these changes, their sustainability potential become stronger (Fahed-Sreih, & Djoundourian, 2008). The concept of sustainability in business requires the necessities for existence and perpetuation of the business in order for it to last. Theoretically, sustainability denotes resilient or dependable competitive advantage (Ifekwem, Oghojafor & Kuye, 2011).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The sustainability of family-owned businesses and succession planning are largely linked to the talents or traits demonstrated by potential successors of these businesses. Hence, the trait leadership theory was adopted to serve as an underpinning theory in this study. Historically, Gordon in Allport, had been given the credit for the proposition of trait theory in 1974 (Allport, 1961; Abel, 2018). The trait theory of leadership holds that some natural personality qualities in a person tend to create and/or demonstrate good leadership characteristics. Although, a prevalence, these natural personality qualities does not necessary indicate strong leadership skills/potentials. These traits could be identified, developed and enhanced in preparation for some leadership position/responsibilities (Allport, 1961). For instance, subordinates who have been perceived to have excellent interpersonal and conceptual skills. Such employees need to be identified, and these traits developed and enhanced in preparation for leadership positions and responsibilities in an attempt to plan for leadership succession and business continuity.

Family Business and Succession Planning

The primary purpose of establishing a business is to create value, value creation leaders to profitability within this domain. Hence, must businesses are determined to create value and continue doing so on the long run. A key strategy for business and leadership continuity is having a concrete plan for leadership succession in family business. Family business is one aspect of entrepreneurship that has gained attention in recent years. This may be



because of the growing number of ailing and failing businesses especially when the original owner of the business retires or passes. Although, there is no universally acceptable definition of family business in literature (Onuoha, 2016). This lack of uniformity or obvious heterogeneity surfaces as in terms of the size, level of technology, staff strength, business environment, capital available at its disposal. These are the issues that tend to determine the definitional route of family-owned businesses. Hence, family business is considered as a business in which its ownership and control lies within a family, and permits such family members to get involved in the daily operational activities of the business, and such businesses are transferred from generation to generation to achieve a sound succession planning. Succession planning represent a leadership process in which sound talented leadership traits are identified, developed, and enhanced in subordinates in a bid to equip them with the skills necessary to take over leadership responsibilities whom the current leadership retires or become redundant (Garg & Van Wede, 2012; Onuoha, 2016; Mhlongo & Harunavamwe, 2017). Succession planning is designed to induce the continuity and success of business enterprises. It thus prepares the organization for future endeavors through a formal planning process for leadership succession (Sally, 2012; Tende & Alagah, 2017; Ezemedolu, Tende, Princewill & Maru, 2020). Succession planning allows for an adjustment in management and leadership of an organization which creates and opportunity new set of potential. Leaders to take over, it sues for continuity, stability, and replacement of key personnel when their tenure has seemingly elapse; as it gives room for smooth handover of leadership and management duties.

Successor Selection: This process entails sourcing and detecting a pool of talented employees who are gifted with certain skills in certain areas that are needed and/or required in the organization. This can be achieved by assigning tasks and responsibilities to high-potential employees who have stood out in the crowd of employees to demonstrate or showcase that special or outstanding leadership trait that are not easily noticed in the personality of other employees. These characteristics are required to enable organization adequately fill any skill gap that may be needed to achieve stated objectives for the organization. A collection of these kind of talents or traits is what is referred to as the talent bench in this paper. In this sense, extent literature on succession planning and family business has pointed out the need for the organization's business founders to select those who will succeed them while they are in active service (Buang, Ganefri & Sidek, 2013; Garg & Van Weele, 2012). This point is where the founders of the business can easily pick subordinates who tend to share their vision. This will give business founders the opportunity to meticulously select those who they (founders) deem fit to man such sensitive positions. This process tend to give them the assurance that when they are out of service, people who will most likely be in charge of these sensitive positions in their organizations. This takes care of one of the greatest weaknesses of business founders which is too much attachment to the business to the point that they fail to think about the future of the business (Garg & Van Weele, 2012; Buang, Ganefri & Sidek, 2013; Hall-Ellis, 2015).

Successor Preparation: Indeed, selecting competent future leaders of the organization by the business founder cannot achieve anything on its own as the process is incomplete without proper training and development of subordinates in preparation of such future leaders to competently perform their duties and responsibilities. The collection of the talents and traits from high-potential employees could be identified, nurtured, developed, entranced, and utilized, this process is also referred to as "building of talent bench". Although, there are several ways in which these identified talents could be harnessed in furtherance of organizational existence. One of such ways is through experiential learning. In this scenario, high-potential employees are assigned task that requires the practically getting involve in the process of performing the task. By so doing, the actually learn by their experiences gained in performing that tasks and responsibilities. This process also covers "on the job learning". On a similar note, another method that could be adopted to build identified talents is through courses, workshops, seminars, and training in the area in which the skills will be needed in the future to perform tasks and responsibilities that will move the firm forward (Garg & Van Weele, 2012; Hall-Ellis, 2015). This process of preparation is designed to equip business successors with the much needed knowledge and skills to take charge when power has been transferred. This process is considered important because the founder of the business is given the opportunity to personally groom such subordinates. Although, some other family members of the business founder are also allowed to train and mentor future leaders of the organization if they have the required skill-set.

Sustainability

Sustainability as a concept denotes the maintaining or ensuring the existence of something is unabated. It thus allow an organization to compare its existence as against the period of formation, which considers the extent to which an organization's (e.g., Family Owned Business) life span can be elongated while achieving its purpose



(Ogundele, Idris & Ahmed-Ogundipe, 2012). A business is sustainable if it continues to exist despite the odds (market threats and internal change), and also when leaders can develop strategies to increase market share, talent, stakeholders' benefits, and lower operational cost and workforce turnover (Banker, Mashruwala & Tripathy, 2014). Nkam, Sena and Ndamsa (2017) states that sustainability represents how resilient a business is over a duration of time, and upon its existence or survival by absorbing disturbance as long as it is economically, socially and environmentally healthy. Within the context of this work, it will not be out of place to measure sustainability in terms of economic and social outcome. On one hand, economical sustainability connotes the overall growth, development, profitability and return on investment of the organisation (Khan, 2014), while social sustainability depicts the overall interactions between the student, institution and the environment in all academic exercise (empowerment, accessibility, participation, sharing, cultural identity, and institutional stability) (Beate & Erich, 2005; Adedayo, Olanipekun & Ojo, 2016).

The importance of sustainability to organizations cannot be over emphasized because presently it is considered as a vital strategy for competitiveness, sustenance and existence. Over 72% of executives in various organizations believe it aids the existence of their organization, while 32% believe it will be in the future and also encourages the conservation and enhancement of an organization's resource base (Haanaes, 2017). It creates a firm interaction between human activities and the environment (Wilshusen & MacDonald, 2017).

Thus, sustainability in terms of family-owned businesses as alleged by Ogundele, Idris and Ahmed-Ogundipe, is the degree to which its existence can be elongated while accomplishing its purpose, which can be affected by proper succession planning (Ogundele, Idris & Ahmed-Ogundipe, 2012), ability to foresee and react to adjustments, running the business as a separate being, which requires separating individual accounts and assets from business accounts; ensuring there is a structure good enough that is independent of the proprietor to continue with the running of the business; developing, improving the human capability and furnishing the successor with the core running of the firm or business (Nnabuife & Okoli, 2017).

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Akani (2015) proposed a conceptual framework of succession planning consisting of talent retention, turnover rate, career development, supervisors' support, organisational conflicts and nepotism, and to explain the relationship among these variables regarding corporate survival of organisations. The results indicate that talent retention, organisational conflict and nepotism positively and significantly correlated with organisational sustainability. On the other hand, variables such as turnover rate, career development and supervisors' supervision are insignificantly correlated with organisational sustainability. The results of this study are significant in that they help to inform the leadership (management) team with essential insight into the relationship among the study variables (independent and dependent).

Garg and Van Weele (2012) examined the influence of succession planning performance of Small, Micro, and Medium Enterprises (SMME's) in Johannesburg, South Africa. Using a survey technique, a population of 30 companies, and a gap analysis to analyse the findings. It was revealed that, the level of succession planning within the sector is still below expectations. The authors also revealed that there were discrepancies that surfaced between the added value and implementation as experienced by senior officials. It was concluded that succession planning, business strategy, and skills development should be taken serious to enhance performance.

Nnabuife and Okoli (2017) investigated the effect of succession planning on the sustainability of some family-owned businesses in Anambra State, Nigeria. Data was collected by survey from 275 participants and analysed with the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient while the paired sample t-test was used to establish the mean variance. The findings revealed a high positive and significant correlation between mentorship and sustainability ($r = 0.858$, $p < 0.05$), and showed an insignificant relationship between the views of incorporated family-owned businesses and unincorporated family-owned businesses on succession planning ($t = -218$, $p > 0.05$). It was concluded that mentorship is significant in the continued existence of family-owned businesses and should be incorporated to achieve sustainability.

Operational Framework

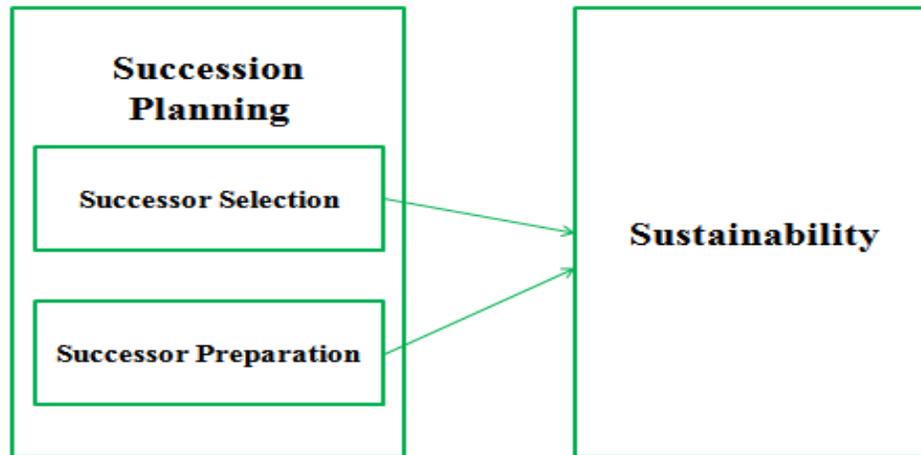


Figure 1: Operational Framework

HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses for this study are formulated as follows:

Ho₁ There is no significant relationship between successor selection and sustainability of family-owned private schools in Rivers State.

Ho₂ There is no significant relationship between successor preparation and sustainability of family-owned private schools in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts the quasi-experimental research design, specifically, the cross-sectional research design. The quasi-experimental research design is suitable for this study since it is descriptive in nature and the researcher does not have control over the respondents. The cross-sectional survey design is appropriate given that the study areas are in different locations and the sample elements are measured at a single point in time.

The target population for the study is the entire family-owned private school in Rivers State. Given the difficulty in reaching the target population for the study, an accessible population was drawn, which comprised of 10 family-owned private school registered/government approved schools in Rivers State (Source: Rivers State Yellow Pages 2013/2014 ed.). The census study technique was adopted. Hence, the population size of one hundred and nine (109) family-owned private school was adopted as the sample size. The stratified sampling technique was employed for the study, while observing validity and reliability. The data analysis techniques to be used for the study are basically descriptive statistical measures which include tables, frequencies, and simple percentages, and the hypotheses will be tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. This technique was adopted due to the need to establish a linear relationship between the predictor and criterion variables with the aid of the questionnaire items and the ordinal nature of the responses required. Also, the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used in analyzing the research data. The formula is stated thus;

$$\text{Rho} = \frac{6 \sum di^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

Where;

d = Difference between the two ranks of each observation

n = Number of observations.



DATA ANALYSIS

Bivariate Data Analysis

This section examines the association between the dimensions of succession planning and sustainability which constitutes the objective of the study. Two null hypotheses were formulated and tested in this section using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient statistical technique at a 95% confidence interval. The decision rule is set at a critical region of $p > 0.05$ for acceptance of the null hypothesis and $p < 0.05$ for rejection of the null hypothesis. Although, one hundred and nine (109) copies of the questionnaire were administered, only ninety-five (95) were retrieved and analyzed.

Ho₁: Successor Selection and Sustainability

		Succession Selection	Sustainability
Spearman's rho	Succession Selection	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.962**
		N	95
	Sustainability	Correlation Coefficient	.962**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
		N	95

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between successor selection and sustainability in family-owned private schools in Rivers State. The table above reveals that there is a moderately significant relationship between successor selection and sustainability (where $\rho = .962$ and $p = 0.000$) and based on the decision rule of $p < 0.05$ for null rejection. Hence, there is a significant relationship between successor selection and sustainability.

Ho₂: Succession Preparation and Sustainability

		Succession Preparation	Sustainability
Spearman's rho	Succession Preparation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.746**
		N	95
	Sustainability	Correlation Coefficient	.746**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
		N	95

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between successor preparation and sustainability in family-owned private schools in Rivers State. The table above reveals that there is a significant relationship between successor preparation and sustainability (where $\rho = .746$ and $p = 0.000$) and based on the decision rule of $p < 0.05$ for null rejection. Hence, there is a significant relationship between successor preparation and sustainability.

DISCUSSION FINDINGS

Test of hypothesis one revealed a significant positive nexus between successor selection and sustainability in family-owned private schools in Rivers State. This is in synchronization with the observation of various scholars that selecting talented potential leaders to take over leadership, reinforces articulate learned behaviours needed to take the institution to greater heights (Buang, Ganefri & Sidek, 2013). Also, that successor selection facilitates better understanding of the kind of business that the family is involve in and the nature of the environment within which



this business operates. Consequently, this study reaffirms extant position on the positive relationship between successor selection and sustainability. Test of hypothesis two revealed a significant positive link amid successor preparation and sustainability in family-owned private schools in Rivers State. This finding corroborates with extant studies revealing that preparing potential organizational leaders has the tendency of preparing the organization for a continuum irrespective of what transitional events that takes place within the organization. Also, it aligns with the outcome of the study of Garg and Van Weele (2012). As such this study gives further empirical credence to the existence of a relationship between successor preparation and sustainability.

Final Thoughts and Policy Implications

Conclusively, sound succession planning can enhance sustainability. In essence, family-owned private school stand a better chance at optimizing their sustainability level if they prioritize succession planning such as successor selection, successor preparation and allocate ample time to studies. From the research analysis and conclusions above, the following recommendations were made to enhance the sustainability of family-owned private schools: Successor selection increases commitment to firm goals, encourages individual development, and ensures business continuity towards high sustainability. Hence, successor selection should be encouraged. Successor preparation retains and develops intellectual capital, better career development, and enhances on-the-job learning with focus on increased sustainability. Therefore, successor preparation should be institutionalized.

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