Factors Affecting Effective Succession Management in the Civil Service in Kenya: A Case of Ministry of Water and Irrigation

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Abstract
Effective succession management can play a very important role in ensuring positive growth in an organization. However, in Kenyan context especially in the civil service this issue has received less attention from past researchers hence the need to undertake this study. Organizations all over the world are faced with succession challenges prompted by, among other factors; demographic shifts, stagnation in one level in employment and effects of natural attrition. The affected institutions respond by instituting necessary succession management measures aimed at ensuring availability of capable human resources for consistent service delivery. The Kenya Civil Service faces career succession and stagnation management problems manifested by the ageing Civil Servants with an estimate of 58% of the total workforce aged thirty five years and above. The purpose of this study was to examine the factors affecting succession management in the civil service. This study was carried out in the Ministry of Water and Irrigation headquarters in Nairobi. The target population was 300 civil servants in the middle and senior management level (job groups K and above) in the ministry of water and irrigation headquarters. Seventeen percent (17%) of the target population were sampled for the purpose of this study. The data had been analyzed using quantitative methods that involve simple descriptive statistics based on frequency tables and percentages and SPSS package for data analysis. The study has revealed that there is lack of effective succession management in the ministry of water and irrigation. Succession management initiatives were reported to be inconspicuous and incongruous owing to the fact that majority of the human resource management functions are performed by external agencies namely the public service commission of Kenya and Directorate of personnel Management. The Ministry should explore the possibility of forming a succession management committee to streamline succession issues and make provisions for outgoing officers to pass-on special skills to the likely successors in programmes akin to apprenticeships. It is also recommended that human resources managers should be empowered to carry out comprehensive Human resource management functions in their respective ministries
Keywords: Succession Management,Stagnation,Civil service,Apprenticeships,Human Resources,Kenya

1.INTRODUCTION

All over the world succession management has been identified as a key strategy for addressing a number of critical Human Resource (HR) issues such as aging of the workforce, increasing retirement rates, tight labour market, limited competitiveness, fast-paced changes in work and the need for a diverse workforce at all levels (Nova Scotia Public Service Commission, 2005). Organizations search for new and/or better means of achieving competitive advantage through optimizing the capacity of every functional area to improve organizational performance. Succession management programs in human resource management (HRM) systems are an indicative strategic response to these pressures (Taylor, 2004).

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As organizations strive to implement systems that address the current and predicted high levels of management attrition and turnover, succession management programs are receiving increasing attention (Baruch, 1999). The projected successions challenges are precipitated by demographic shifts as the populations' world over are aging. For instance, it is projected that by the year 2050, the proportion of persons aged 60 years and older is expected to double, and will account for 21% of the total global population (UN, 2002). At the same time, birth rates are falling: in the year 2000, children represented 30% of the world's population, but by 2050, they will account for only 21%. Developed countries, in particular, have a significantly older population and have birth rates lower than the level needed to replace generations (ILO, 2000).

'Identifying and developing specific managers to fill key leadership positions is one of the three components of succession management critical for organization, the second is identifying and developing a pool of talented managers who could be leaders and the third is ensuring employees have developmental opportunities to meet their career goals' (Hausdorf, 2007). The whole practice of identifying managers with high potentials is relatively new. It should be noted that when organizations have to select leaders under crisis situations, that's when they are at risk. If they have to find someone very quickly and haven't prepared one within their organization, they're probably going to make a bad decision.

Succession is not simply a single transfer of a baton; it is a multi-staged process consuming time with most starting before heirs even enters the business. The effectiveness of succession is not limited to whether a president has been designated, but includes the ongoing health of the firm, quality of life, and family dynamics

(Handler, 1994)

1.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Succession management programs strive to develop and retain high potential employees, and thus provide the organization with a guaranteed managerial talent source and competitive human resource (HR) advantage. According to the Government of Kenya(GOK), (2007) report, the Kenya Civil Service faces career succession and stagnation management problems manifested by the ageing Civil Service where more than 58% of the total workforce is aged thirty five years and above. Other succession challenges the Civil Service faces include, succession management gaps due to staff reduction through the Civil Service Reform Program, lack of comprehensive schemes of service, unsustainable wage bill and recruitment embargo in the Civil Service among others.

It is projected that in the five year period between 2010 and 2015, approximately sixteen thousand four hundred and ninety six (16,496) officers will exit the Civil Service upon attainment of the mandatory age of 60 years while a further sixteen thousand (16,000) officers will be exiting through other forms of attrition (GoK, 2007). This underscores the need to have in place an effective succession management program. The proposed study therefore seeks to make available information about the status of succession management program in the Ministry of Water and Irrigation.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Thinking ahead is a cardinal rule in business. And as difficult as it may be it is important to envision the day when you no longer will be in charge. Succession management ensures that there are highly qualified people in all positions, not just today, but tomorrow, next year, and even five years from now.(www.dpm.gov).

2.1 Traditional Succession Management

All organizations, whether in the private or public sectors, need to be able to find people with the right skills to fill key and top leadership jobs. This process needs to be managed, and traditionally, large blue chip companies run a highly-structured, mechanistic, and secretive top- down schemes aimed at identifying internal successors for key posts and planning their career paths to provide the necessary range and experience. These schemes worked reasonably well in a stable environment where structures were fixed and careers were long-term. However, with growing uncertainty, increasing speed of change in the business environment, and flatter structures, succession planning of this sort declined in the 1990'S. It was argued that, how could one plan ahead for jobs which might not exist next year? One apparent result was that more and more people came to be appointed to top jobs from outside organizations. In a climate of growing skills shortages and lack of confidence in the leadership potential of existing workforce, interest in succession planning has revived. But the new succession planning looks quite different from the old version, with a broader vision and far closer links to wider talent management practices (Cannel 2000).

The major purpose of any succession planning program is to have timely availability of experienced and diverse employees prepared to fill leadership positions as they become available. According to (Seward, 2005) such a succession program will firstly Prepare current and future employees to lead the organization in coming years secondly help us "grow our own" leadership rather than recruiting from outside the organization thirdly it establish guidelines and standards for selection and participation fourthly it help in achieving improved workforce capabilities and performance fifthly it increase professional commitment and retention of management positions and finally it focus on leadership continuity and improved knowledge shared and it leads to Shift from job progression to job expansion;

2.2 Contemporary Succession Management

Succession planning can be broadly defined as the art of identifying future potential leaders to fill key positions. Wendy Hirsh (2000) defines succession planning as 'a process by which one or more successors are identified for key post and career moves and/or development activities are planned for these successors.

Organizations differ in size, scope and type, so it is difficult to point to any single model of succession planning. However, it is most common for succession planning to cover only the most senior jobs in the organization. Unlike the old succession planning which was purely about organization needs, modern version takes account of the growing recognition that people increasingly should make their own career decisions and to balance career and family responsibilities.

We are currently witnessing the impact of new breed of succession management systems. Contemporary systems no longer think just about the replacement of talent, but also focus on development. These new approach take a more systematic approach towards an organization's human capital (www.humanresourcesmagazine.com). Most organizations have renewed interest in succession systems and have changed them in dramatic ways because leadership is and has always been a relatively scarce commodity within companies. To lose a strong, effective

leader is a serious blow to any organization.

2.3 Best Practice In Succession Management

Good succession management systems are easy to use. Winning systems are non-bureaucratic, uncomplicated processes-with a unified approach to ensure consistency and maintain objectivity across business units, organizational levels and geographic areas. The best systems are developmentally oriented rather than simply replacement oriented. Highly effective systems always actively involve the very top management in the organization. Senior executives view effective succession management as a tool for attracting and retaining talents.

A good succession system is effective at spotting gaps in talents and identifying important lynchpin positions. It does the job of monitoring the succession process, enabling the organization to ensure that the right people are moving into the right jobs at the right time and that gaps are being spotted early on.

2.4 The Succession Management In The Civil Service In Kenya

In the public service the schemes of service provide career progression guideline for all the serving officers and hence promote smooth succession management. Executive appointments to key positions have also been an important aspect of succession management. However, succession planning has not been adequately addressed in the service.

In order to promote effective succession planning and management ministries/Departments and other public service organizations will put in place appropriate schemes of service and career progression guidelines for all cadres; ensure that all vacancies are filled promptly to eliminate succession gaps; put in place appropriate performance appraisal system to identify suitable competencies; prepare comprehensive succession management plans; and enforce strict adherence of the mandatory retirement age.

2.5 Conceptual Framework
Figure 1: Conceptual model of factors influencing effective succession management
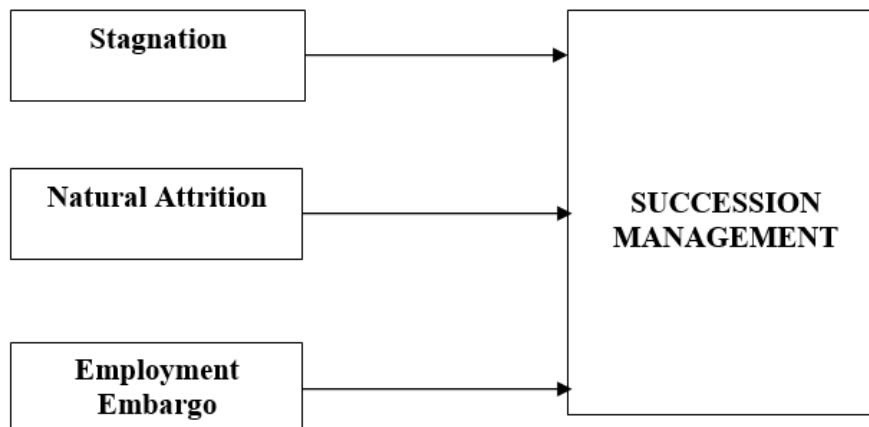
Source: Researcher, 2007

The Conceptual Framework seeks to portray the linkages and relationships of the factors affecting effective succession management. The productivity of the workforce would be determined by the equilibrium poised by the experience and dexterity of the workers drawn from the many years of service and the state of well being given their advancing age.

Succession management is therefore enforced to bring about the desired balance and foster effectiveness and productivity in the workforce. Its effectiveness is influenced by strategies geared to perpetually developing the skills and honing of talents of the employees. An effective succession program would govern the recruitment of staff; give opportunities for career development of the staff based on the needs and potential of the workers. Leadership development ensures the organization has a steady supply of leaders sourced from within and ready to perpetuate its goals and objectives. Proper succession management ensures availability of well trained human capital to replace those leaving the service through natural attrition and other means.

3.RESEACH METHODOLGY
3.1 Study Design
The study adopted a case study approach .Sharma (1989) recommended case studies pointing out that they are able to consider all pertinent aspects of a situation employing a group as a unit of study and intensively investigating it. Other reasons that necessitated case study approach includes those advanced by scholars such as (Hill and Karber, 1967) and (Nicet and Watt, 1987) that a case study is able to give a clear insight into the phenomenon

under study. It is suitable for an individual researcher and that it draws attention to the role of each independent factor in relation to others

The study was confined to all the civil servants in the middle and senior management level (job groups K and above) in the ministry of water and irrigation headquarters. The Ministry of Water and Irrigation has a total compliment of 5330 employees and those in job group K and above are about 927 and out of this only 300 are station in Nairobi (source IPPD Ministry of water and irrigation).

A systematic random sampling was used to select 17% of the total number of employees in job group K and above stationed in the ministry's headquarters.

The researcher employed personal interviews and research questionnaires to collect data

3.DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION
Profile of Respondents
The demographic information of the respondents is as shown in Table 4.1 below.
Table 3.1: Respondents Demographic Information

	Frequency (N=35)	Percent
Sex		
Male	26	74.3
Female	9	25.7
Age group		
26-35	3	8.6
36-45	17	48.6
46-55	15	42.9
Educational level		
Secondary	5	14.3
College	13	37.1
Bachelors degree	10	28.6
Masters degree	7	20.0

Source survey study (2007)

As shown in the table 4.1, majority of the respondents were male (74.3 percent) and were aged above 36 years (91.4 percent). As anticipated majority of the respondents (86.7 percent) had at least college level of education implying they would be expected to have an informed opinion regarding the subject. The length of service in the civil service was given by the respondents as shown in Table 4.2

Table 3.2: Period worked in the civil service

| Duration (years)	Frequency	Percent
0-5	2	5.71
6-10	1	2.86
11 and above	32	91.42
Total	**35**	**100.0**

Source survey study (2007)

Majority of the respondents (91.42 percent) have worked in the civil service for more than 10 years. In fact the average length of service is 20.47 years. This implies that there were minimal displacements in the staffing ranks within the civil service or that there were not many officers leaving the service to seek careers elsewhere hence the long stay within the service.

In addition, it was observed that majority of the respondents had been in the Service for over 10 years. This is probably due to the civil service employment freeze of the 90's whose effects are in coupled with an ineffective career progression system that could have presided over stagnation of officers in the lower job cadres that were not targeted in this study.

3.2 Succession Preparation
The study investigated the respondent perceptions with regard to the need for an effective succession programme at their work place. A question was posed as to whether they thought one would need special training to do their job. The responses obtained are as shown in Figure 3.1 below shows that majority of the respondents (82.9 %) reported that one needed special training to be able to do the job that they did. This finding reiterates the need for an effective succession planning programme to ensure continuity in the absence the employees.

Figure 3.1: To do your job does one need special training
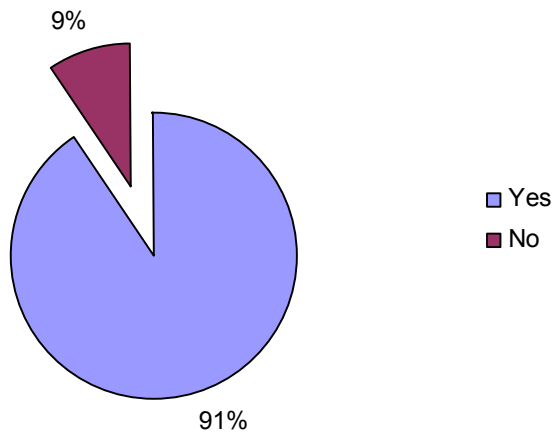
Source survey study (2007)

The respondents were asked if they were delegated to work for their bosses when they were away. Findings in Table 3.3 below were elicited.

Table 3.3: Respondent response whether they were delegated duties

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	28	80
No	5	14.28
Neutral	2	5.7%
Total	**35**	**100.0**

Source survey study (2007)

According to findings in Table 3.3, majority of the respondents (80%) had their seniors delegate to them some work while 14.28 % did not. The extent of this delegation was not however investigated. Only 5% of the respondents were non committal in this question showing that they are not sure or they don't understand what delegation means.

An opinion was sought from the respondents on whether training of a successor was apparent in the Ministry. The responses in Table 3.4 were obtained.

Table 3.4: Training of a successor is carried out in the ministry

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	16	45.7
No	19	54.3
Total	35	100.0

Source survey study (2007)

Findings in Table 3.4 show that less than one-half of the respondents stated that successor training was witnessed in the ministry while 54.3% responded to the contrary. This shows that whatever successor training programme that was in place (if any) was not conspicuous enough to be witnessed by all. This by extension suggests that succession procedures and criteria were a mystery to a majority of the respondents.

Those that had witnessed successor training efforts were asked to give its description and the responses below were obtained.

3.3 Involvement of Outgoing Officers in the Succession Process

One of the objectives of this study was to investigate the extent to which outgoing officers get involved in identification of their successors and the findings are as below;

Table 3.5: Extent to which outgoing officers train/groom successors

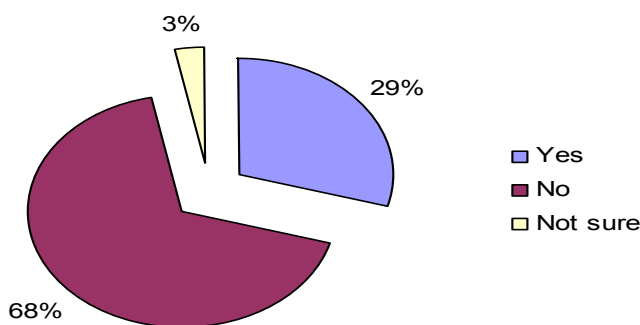|	Frequency	Percent
Greatly involved	3	8.57
Involved	4	11.42
Slightly involved	10	28.57
Not involved	8	22.85
Not sure	10	28.57
Total	**35**	**100**

Source survey study (2007)

Table 4.7 shows that only 19.99% of the respondents indicated that outgoing officers were

involved/greatly involved in the grooming of successors. This indicates that to a large extent the ministry doesn't have provisions for outgoing officers to pass-on special skills to the likely successors. Respondents clarified that it was not practical to make arrangements for the outgoing officers to groom or train successors as circumstances of departure may not allow always for this.

3.4 Succession programmes in the ministry

Slightly more than two thirds of the respondents indicated that there were no apparent succession programmes in the ministry. This is in spite of the fact that only Job group 'K' and above employees were sampled for this study. Asked to give a rating of the extent to which the Ministry carried out an assessments to enable it better able to make projections on future staffing needs, the following responses were obtained.

Figure 3.2: Are there visible succession programmes in ministry?

Source survey study (2007)

The respondents gave the following recommendations to enhance the Ministry's succession management process.

Table 3.6: Recommendations to improve succession management

	Frequency	Percent
Have clear guidelines on succession	9	25.7
Reduce salary gap to motivate deputies	7	20
Maintain and regularly update staff data	4	11.4
Involve outgoing officer and other stakeholders	3	8.6
Revise service of scheme	4	11.4
Form a succession management committee	4	11.4
Train staff	4	11.4
Total	**35**	**100**

Source survey study (2007)

Respondents gave several useful suggestions for improving the succession management process in the Ministry. As shown in Table 3.6 having clear guidelines on succession made up 25.7% of the responses obtained. Reduce salary gap to motivate deputies (20%) was another main suggestion given.

It can be seen that 11.4% of the responses favored the formation of a succession management committee to streamline succession issues. This would also effectively accord due attention to the issue.

4. Conclusion

The importance of having an effective succession management process is critical in any organization. In the Ministry of Water and Irrigation efforts to introduce succession management initiatives were reported to be difficult owing to the fact that major human resource management functions including succession management are performed by external agencies namely the PSC (K) and DPM.

The study has also revealed that the ministry of water and irrigation does not involve outgoing officers in the succession process. The outgoing officers should be encouraged to pass on the skills they have acquired in their long service to the incoming officers.

4.1 Recommendations

The Ministry should explore the possibility of forming a succession management committee to streamline succession issues.

It was found out that successor training programme that was in place (if any) was not conspicuous enough to be witnessed by all. It is recommended that the ministry clearly spells out succession procedures and criteria.

This can stir positive competition among staff and can result in improved performance.

The ministry should also make provisions for outgoing officers to pass-on special skills to the likely successors in programmes akin to apprenticeships.

It is recommended that HR departments in the ministries are empowered to carry out comprehensive Human resource management functions in their respective ministries.

4.2 Suggestion for Further Studies

The study was conducted in one ministry. A further study in other ministries is very important so as to provide insights on succession management in public sector organizations.

Related studies in the newly developed countries should be undertaken for developing countries like Kenya to benchmark.

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