

# Challenges Facing Succession Management in the Kenyan Civil Service: (A Case Study of Nairobi County in the Ministry of Education)

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**Abstract:** The literature review indicates that international business has hastened global competition for professionals and skilled labourforce subsequently leading to brain drain at times. The Kenyan Civil Service ‘inherited’ from colonial masters had unique succession difficulties, the succession was unique in that the dominant Europeans and Asians in the civil service were the majority compared to the majority Kenyan population of African origin, hence the succession process from the whites and the transition for majority Africans taking over key management positions was a challenge.

In this regard, a descriptive study conducted established challenges facing succession management which included political leadership. Overwhelming majority (79.0%) respondents were of the opinion that political leadership shakes succession process when key managerial appointments are made without considering prior investments in succession programmes. It is therefore recommended that sourcing of personnel to fill key and strategic management positions in the civil service be done by independent bodies.

**Key words:** leadership, key positions, performance appraisal, succession management, staff mentoring,

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Challenges are inevitable in every day-to-day undertaking in any organization. The challenges range from maintenance of quality services and/or products, acquiring and retention of market share, and attracting and retention of competent personnel. However, when challenges encountered are identified in time by the management in organizations, it acts as alerts to the management that there is need for creativity and innovations to counter the weaknesses hence prompt organizations to design strategies that address the hitches with the aim of minimizing them and consequently eliminate them in the long-run. Therefore, in organizational set ups, competent, specialized and skilled human resource as a factor of production is considered the most critical, vital, scarce and the much sought after resource for ensuring the firms acquire and retain a competitive edge over competitors. In addition, the quality of human resource and its management as a factor of production in any business venture also determines efficiency, effectiveness and optimality of the production processes.

International business having picked up the intercontinental scope of rivalry for competencies and skills, offers better income, availability of career opportunities and availability of decent living conditions have enticed the best and bright workers from developing countries to developed countries. The Global Human Capital Report[7](2008) reported that when demand goes up for specialists with highly demanded skills, the public sector in developing countries experience shortage of competent personnel. The report adds that this has made it a challenge to attract and retain talents for key positions in the public service for the developing countries.

It has therefore been a concern of development partners that many developing countries experience problems of attracting staff, providing them with training and development programmes for succession purpose. It is known in human resources management that good leaders are a scarce commodity and often a subject of competitive bidding from multiple organizations. Further, Landau [11](2010) affirmed that leadership succession is an enormous organizational problem, not only in Thailand, but all over the world and that unless companies develop and implement effective succession planning system for leadership that is ideal and owned by the top management of a company; leadership transition remains a high strategic risk. Hence, from the research findings of Nairobi County in Kenya; UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration report and Landau of Thailand, the findings are similar and points out to a fact that succession management is a strategic problem in many organizations including the Kenyan case.

### **1.1 Justification for the Research**

Professional human resource managers acknowledge the importance of succession planning and management in organizations. On the other hand, there is modest consideration that has been accorded to succession management in the civil service to remedy the situation. Thus the findings and recommendations of this study will benefit the ministry of education, other government ministries/departments, public service offices, line managers, administrators, and human resource managers. Without proper succession management practices, a successful business established in the long-run will easily fail.

### **1.2 Scope of the study**

The study was carried out in Nairobi County and targeted staff working in the ministry of education. The Nairobi County was considered and sampled since it is administratively centrally located and personnel deployed in it provide a fair representation of personnel in all grades and cadres in the ministry. The personnel in the County were also deemed to have access to the human resource management policy documents that are crucial for succession management purpose.

In addition, challenges of succession management at senior management positions are likely to affect filling of the senior posts established in the County to perform and supervise both technical and administrative duties in the ministry falls within the County. Finally, staffing records for all personnel are centrally preserved and managed from ministry headquarters (Nairobi) and thus made reference to secondary data easy.

## **2.0 POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND SUCCESSION MANAGEMENT**

Leadership is very important means of directing people, it influences work and behavior of subordinates in setting and attaining of specific objectives. According to Nizar [12](1997), good leadership is essential for effective management. Further, he stated that the wheels of an organization do not go around themselves but must be propelled by leadership. A leader is the fulcrum on which needs of organization and demands of individuals are balanced, and that more failures of businesses are attributable to poor leadership than to any other cause.

Therefore leadership and management in any organization plays vital role in the successful implementation of the human resource management policies, and succession management plans and programs. Research findings indicate that the labour markets globally have a wide range of competencies and skills available for organizations to recruit, nurture and develop their pools of talents for continuity, innovations and productivity. However, some organizations do not prepare for succession through recruitment, training and mentoring nor nurturing to maintain pools of talents and skills among their personnel. In these organizations, unexpected exits by staff in key positions compel them to hurriedly recruit personnel with relevant specifications and experience from other organizations. This often leads to further exits, interruptions of production processes, inefficiency of service delivery and lethargy among staff. Chartrand and Hagemann [4] (2009), mathematics tells us that we will not have enough people prepared to fill the impressive number of executive seats that will open over the next decade. It is not because of the sheer number of seats changing, the incoming group could have a greater impact on business than any other in recent history. The real issue being not that we cannot find people to put in the empty seats but that we cannot find enough people who are prepared to fill the seats.

## **3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The procedure for conducting research study was as follow: the researchers prepared a research design, identified target population, determined a sample and sampling technique, developed data collection instrument, collected data, analyzed, made conclusions and recommendations.

### **3.1 Research Design**

The study was a descriptive survey carried out to establish the challenges facing succession management system in the civil service. Burke and Larry [2] (2011) stated that the primary purpose of descriptive research is to provide an accurate description of the status or characteristics of a situation. The focus is on describing the relationship that exists among variables. The researchers analyzed data and describe the relationships between the variables and succession management in the civil service. Based on the findings, the researcher discussed and interpreted, made summaries discussed results, made conclusions and recommendations.

### **3.2 Target Population**

The study targeted personnel working in the ministry of education and deployed in Nairobi County. These personnel were drawn from the grades of job group 'H' and above. The target workers were drawn from various cadres were as follows:

Education officers, Quality Assurance and Standards officers, Adult Education officers, Adult Education Teachers and Support services.

### **3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique**

Garrett[6] (1962) in Koul[9](1992) pointed out that if the size of the sample is less than 25, there is often little reason for believing such a small group of units to be adequately descriptive of any population. Further, Koul[9](1992) a good sample must be as nearly representative of the entire population as possible and ideally it must provide the whole of the information about the population from which the sample has been drawn. Buckley and Caple[2](2008) stated that there is no easy answer to the question of the size of a sample. The sample should be small enough to make the study efficient but large enough to ensure that useful information is not lost.

Therefore to ensure fair representation of the various cadres in the study, a stratified random sampling technique was used to pick respondents from the various cadres of staff in the ministry. Koul [9](1992), it is necessary to make certain that the units included in the sample are selected in proportion to their occurrence in the population. In the ministry of education, technical and support personnel working in the county were found in various cadres and were as follows: Education officers, Quality Assurance and Standards officers, Adult Education officers, Adult education Teachers, Human Resource Management officers, Administrative officers, Records management officers and Finance officers/Accountants.

The study sampled one hundred and eleven (111) staff on job group 'H' and above. The sample was selected from a target population of five hundred and fifty seven (557) personnel (i.e. 152 Education personnel, 116 Quality Assurance and Standards personnel, 128 Human Resource Management personnel, 97 Administrative personnel and 64 Finance personnel). In the sample of 111 respondents, the researcher randomly identified respondents and the questionnaires administered.

### **3.4 Data Collection Instrument**

The research instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. Koul[9] (1992), stated that a questionnaire is a popular means of collecting all kinds of data in research'. A questionnaire consists of a list of questions; therefore each individual who answers the specific question reads an identical set of questions. This allows for consistency and precision in terms of the wording of questions and makes processing of the answers easier. The researcher preferred the instrument for the study as it is easy to administer and cost effective.

The questionnaires was divided into parts, the first part covered respondent's service profile, the second part collected data on political leadership dynamism and succession management, third part collected data on effects of executive management on succession management system and the fourth part collected data on staff training and development in relation to succession management.

### **3.5 Data collection Procedure**

A questionnaire was used as the survey instrument to collect data. The questionnaire was prepared using a 5 point Likert Scale along with open ended questions. The researcher administered the questionnaires to the respondents and collected them after four weeks. In addition, the researcher discussed the research questions in the questionnaire with the respondents to ensure that they do understand them before responding.

### **3.6 Data analysis Procedure**

Data collected was organized into manageable units, coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The descriptive statistics used in the analyses of data were percentages, mean and mode. Other descriptive statistics used were: tables, pie charts, bar graphs and the Spearman's rank correlation to measure the relationships for the variables. Finally, summaries, conclusions and recommendations were made.



#### **4.0 MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The major findings on the challenges that face succession management in relation to political leadership in the civil service were as discussed.

##### **4.1 Role of Management and Supervision in Leadership Development**

The respondents were asked whether their supervisors assist staff at the lower levels to develop and improve their leadership and managerial skills.

The results as indicated in table 4.5 showed that 9.7 % of the respondents totally agreed, 43.5% agreed, 16.1% were no sure, 24.2% disagreed and 6.5% totally disagreed. The findings in the table indicated that 53.3% of the respondents were in agreement with the statement, 16.1% not sure and 30.7% disagreed. Since 53.3% of the respondents who form the majority were in agreement with the statement and 30.7%, were against.

It can therefore be generally stated that the management and supervisors assist staff to grow in terms of leadership and managerial skills. The assistance to staff at the lower grades for performance and leadership development is a strategic objective of the civil service and its implementation is the way forward to address succession management challenge.

##### **4.2 Changes in Political Leadership and Succession**

The respondents were asked to indicate from the five point scale whether changes in political leadership affect succession appointments for senior management staff in the civil service.

The findings showed that 79.0% of the respondents were in agreement that changes in political leadership affect succession management, 11.3% not sure and 9.6% disagreed. The findings indicated that changes in political leadership affect succession management process, thus the executive management and the entire in the service.

Samford and Bois (1998) states that, Public Service is not a world in isolation, it faces external pressures and these too must be taken into account. Facts such as politicization of public service, the influence of media, the pressure of economic realization, arbitrary appointments to the public service and influence of interest groups affect the public service.

##### **4.3 Objectivity of Performance Appraisal System**

The respondents were also asked to state whether Performance appraisal system in the civil service is objectively done to identify performers for future leadership in the management. The findings indicated that 8.1% respondents totally disagreed, 22.6% agreed, 19.4% not sure, 32.3% disagreed, and 17.7% totally disagreed. The findings revealed that in aggregate, 30.6% of the respondents agreed that performance appraisal system in objective, 19.4 not sure and 50.0% disagreed. The majority of respondents 50.0% disagreed against 30.6% who agreed that the system is not considered as objective in identifying performers for appointments.

#### **5.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

##### **5.1 Changes in Political Leadership and Succession**

Like in any business venture, changes in leadership and management affect the success of succession processes. Thus changes in political leadership at any time in some countries have caused restructuring and realignment of staffing in key management positions. The restructuring and appointments for filling key management positions has been done through head hunting despite established succession plans and prior investments in the human resources for succession management purpose such as training and development, mentoring, delegation of responsibilities and facilitation of staff career growth through internal promotions. This approach is preferred and adopted in the appointments for filling key management positions during the transition period since it is deemed necessary for the incoming leadership to restructure and realign management with personnel who have a common understanding with the leadership's vision and demonstrates commitment to steer and quickly implement programmes with the aim of improving effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery.

In the study carried out of Nairobi County in the civil service, the findings indicated that 79.0% respondents were of the opinion that political leadership influences key appointment, 11.3% respondents were not sure and 9.6% respondents were in disagreement. The findings were similar to the findings of Arian and Shamir[1](2008) in Israel on civil service appointments; they also observed that recent years had witnessed a change in Israel discourse with regard to party

patronage and political appointments. Samford and Bois[1](1998) in addition observed that political appointments were a threat to Israel society and that it was synonymous with political corruption.

## **5.2 Performance Appraisal System**

Besides leadership effects on succession management, Performance Appraisal System (Form GP 247 A and GP 247 B) is considered a main tool adopted and used in the Kenya civil service to assess and evaluate individual employee's performance; the performance assessment annual reports along with performance contracting individual reports have been made mandatory requirements for performance evaluation in the public service while sourcing personnel for promotion appointments and appointments to key management positions, this twin mandatory requirements followed the introduction of performance contracting system in the public service in year the 2003.

In the study of 62 respondents, opinion was sought on performance appraisal tool reliability and objectivity for succession management purpose. 30.1% respondents were in agreement that the tool was reliable and objective, 19.4% respondents were not sure and 50.0% respondents were in disagreement on the use of the tool. The findings revealed that majority (50%) respondents were in disagreement on the performance appraisal tool and the findings were similar to findings in the literature review. Samford and Bois[1](1998) stated that public service is not a world in isolation, it faces external pressures and that these too had to be taken into account. Facts such as politicization of public service, influence of the media, the pressure of economic realization, arbitrary appointments to the public service and influence of interest groups affected the public service. The findings therefore indicated that despite the tools being in place and use to aid the management in the managing of the succession processes, the respondents did not agree over the tool being reliable and objective for evaluating employees for promotion purpose or appointments to key managerial positions.

From the foregoing, the literature review along with study findings established that political leadership dynamism affect succession management through political appointments. Political leadership restructuring and staffing affects human resource staffing plans especially when key appointments are made for fill strategic management positions from external source. Challenges of succession management can be overcome when addresses addressed both from entry levels and senior management levels. Though the transitional appointments are expected to bring on board preferred managers to take over key management positions and responsibilities, nevertheless, these appointments affect the success of a successful succession since it does not take into consideration the established succession plans and prior investments in the succession management programmes such as training, development, delegation and mentoring.

In the study of Nairobi County, when respondents were asked if talent, seniority and performance were important considerations for appointments to key management positions, 32.3% respondents were in agreement, 29.3% respondents were not sure and 48.7% respondents were in disagreement. The findings therefore indicated that talent, seniority and performance are not main considerations in key appointments. These findings were similar to what was reported by the Hansard[8](2003), Kenya National Assembly, that there was no single institution in the public sector that had a proper succession management policy including the government. There were people being juxtaposed. One minute, a district commissioner and the next minute a permanent secretary and yet there were deputy secretaries lined up. This is indicative of the fact that changes in political leadership just like the changes in any institutional management affects management of succession in the civil service. Therefore, talent, seniority and performance are secondary considerations in the civil service when sourcing for suitable candidates for filling key strategic positions.

In Lamaureux and Campbell[11](2009), a survey of 220 senior HR leaders with responsibilities for succession planning and management, in-depth interviews with more than 25 senior business executives and succession management program managers; a quantitative survey of more than 100 business leaders provided an input on their perceptions of the overall effectiveness of their company's succession management strategies. It was found out that talent mobility, and the ability to quickly and effectively reorganize and move talent into new roles and vacancies is critical to business success.

From the findings of the study and previous studies, succession management in the Kenyan civil service face challenges of political leadership dynamism; this finding is similar to the findings and experiences observed some countries world over. Hofer and Charan (1984) noted that within the context of professional management transitions, the chances of a successive succession are 'practically nil' if the incumbent is not committed to the process. Further, they stated that though this proposition may have been a subject of discussion, without effective leadership to identify and nurture potential and future leaders, the success of succession planning and management system encounter challenges. They thus recommended for internal promotions as preferable to external sourcing of personnel.

### 5.3 Conclusion

Therefore, the study findings generally indicated that succession management process face challenges from various factors including political leadership. The effects of the factors on succession especially changes in leadership leads to distortions in the implementation of human resource management plans when key management positions are filled with no due regard to established process and prior investments for succession purpose. Last but not least, Hansard [8](2003), Kenya National Assembly observation that there was no single institution in the public sector that had a proper succession management policy including the government was critical and remains relevant in the Kenya civil service. It is therefore concluded that succession management in organizations face challenges from various factors including institutional leadership with severe and noticeable consequences in the civil service.

### 5.4 Recommendation

Transparency and accountability is at stake in the Kenyan civil service as indicated by the responses from the respondents, there was a general perception that performance is not recognized and rewarded. The results indicated that corporate governance principles have not been institutionalized in the civil service, participation by staff in the monitoring and evaluation of performance along with engagement of independent bodies/persons in the exercise will instill ownership of the appraisal process and appointments of staff to key management positions. It is therefore recommended that hiring and appraisal and reward system for key position in the service be administered by independent bodies devoid of political inclinations.

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