

## Succession Management and Sustainability of Micro Organizations: South East Conundrum

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**ABSTRACT:** *Every micro organization ensures the deployment of its best practices for sustainability amidst seemingly competitive, complex and unpredictable business environment. Consequently, supportable leaders are needed to ensure longevity and sustained performance. This calls for succession management. The study therefore aimed to examine the effect of succession management on sustainability of micro organizations with a focus on the challenges in the South East. Survey method was adopted. The population of the study was infinite. However, purposive random sampling was adopted to select 50 micro organizations. Sources of data were through primary and secondary sources. Structured questionnaire was the major research instrument. The validity of instrument was determined by applying construct validity which refers to the degree to which the questionnaire measures the theoretical concept that the researchers hope to measure. A test-re-test method of reliability was adopted for the study. Simple regression analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was adopted. The findings showed inter alia that; sustainability of micro organizations significantly depends on succession management, usually achieved through training and retention of existing employees in an organization. There is high optimism among the organizations sampled in the Southeast that adequate planning and execution of succession management will ensure productive longevity of many organizations in the geopolitical zone. The study contributed to existing knowledge on the indispensability of succession management to the sustainability of micro organizations in the Southeast. It confirms that the most efficacious means of organizational sustainability is through training and retention of existing employees of organizations. Therefore, this construct should be considered by micro organizations in planning and implementation process to remain afloat. The population of the study is limited to one geopolitical zone in the country-the South East, thus the result cannot be generalized to the remaining five zones. There is need for more studies on the remainder of the zones in Nigeria.*

**KEY WORDS:** succession management planning, micro organization, sustainability, staff training, employee retention

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## INTRODUCTION

Every organization faces challenges emanating from forces of competition. This condition demands that organizations put in the best management practices and specifically practices that can enhance and sustain succession management in order to avoid power vacuums. This practice has been used for many years without giving it the emphasis it deserves. However, in the recent times succession planning has become an essential tool for organizational success (Armstrong, 2012; Akinyi, 2017).

Succession planning is the process of preparing an organization for a transition in leadership. Effective succession management provides long-term sustainability, guarantees the productivity and survival of business and ensures that capable and trained officials are in the organization (Onwuka, Ekwulugo, Dibua & Ezeanyim, 2017). Many of the world's renowned organizations with the most longevity and good productivity have their success rooted in effective succession management. Such organization started planning their exit strategies right at the start of their appointment (Oluabunwa, 2015).

Employees are bound to leave the organization through departures or retirement. Therefore, organizations need individuals who are competent to take key roles when positions become vacant. In addition, unfavorable work condition may force premature job mobility especially when the welfare of employees is given less attention. This situation prompted Rothwell (2001) cited by Henderson (2011) to opine that an operative succession plan is one that is driven by the overall objectives as well as policies that are written.

Doing nothing about succession management is quite disastrous for organizations. Many organizations erroneously view it as an expense, rather than investment. Without adequate successor in place, the next generation of leadership and management of firms cannot maintain its character, let alone surviving (Obadan & Ohiorenya, 2013). This is the reason Dauda, (2013) maintains that most of the world admired states and corporations have achieved longevity and productivity because their Chief Executives Officers (CEOs) started planning their departure right at the beginning of their appointment.

In Nigerian organizations, the CEOs have hard times facing and accepting the impending loss of power, which is a necessary step for their succession plan. Some even find delegation difficult as it exposes some deals that need to be covered. As a result, the transitions are not as smooth as they should be. Succession management provides continuity of leadership, which is essential for companies to survive as CEOs and Senior Management positions become vacant due to retirement, as it allows organizations to place the right people in the right leadership positions for the future (Rothwell, 2005).

Klein (2000) claims that family businesses may head to failure because of the fight for power and internal disagreements that may occur among family members. Klein further attributes it to family

members refusing to hand over their management roles and to relinquish control and power in the businesses. It is very apposite for families to comprehend the structuring options of wealth that may be available requiring advice from a legal expert. Younger members of the family should also be involved early enough for them to get to understand the goals that were set before them. This may also help them not to dilute the family ideologies with others that they may have acquired from outside (Jarret & Tan, 2015).

It is an unquestionable fact that in this current economic dispensation where there is a rapid global development of information and communication technologies that micro organizational sustainability is contingent upon succession management. This correlation attracts attention to look at this topic from South East conundrum as this new paradigm inevitably imposes new requirements on remaining in business.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Succession planning enhances the competencies and craftsmanship of existing staff and prepares them for future roles in the organization. The inclusion of personal development of employees in succession planning encourages them to stay more in organization. With succession management in place, organizational mission is fulfilled with high quality skilled workforce to achieve maximum productivity. An effective succession management influences an employer in many ways which includes planning about retention rate, employee compensation management, employee career development etc. It also identifies the minimum knowledge, skill, abilities and characteristics required to complete task.

The failure of any business is normally seen as a result of the inability of the organization to take into consideration succession management practices that would lead to the training and retention of workforce whose competencies and skills are paramount for growth of the organization. This situation has made poor handling of succession planning one of the greatest challenges facing sustainability of micro organizations. Regrettably, these micro organizations do not accept that training and development of employees are important independent variables requisite for robust achievement of goals of the organization. Consequently, tangential results are often achieved. Besides, when the children or relatives of owners of organizations are either short of needed knowledge for the business or/ and not interested in the continuation of the organization, the management will appear indecisive, thus giving way for negative scenarios like labour turnover (regular loss of talented employees), low productivity, poor service delivery and consequently, extinction of the organization becomes inevitable. The afore-stated scenario poses potent threat to succession management and sustainability of organizations, thus, unable to achieve predetermined goals.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The major objective of the study is to examine the effect of succession management on micro organizational sustainability. Specifically, the study will look into the following objectives:

- i. Examine the effect of training on goal attainment in micro organizations in South East Nigeria;
- ii. Determine the effect of retention of staff on service delivery in micro organizations in South East Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions are raised to guide the study

- i. To what extent does training affect goal attainment in micro organizations in South East Nigeria?
- ii. To what extent does retention of staff affect service delivery in micro organizations in South East Nigeria?

### **1.1 Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses are formulated for the study:

- i. Training has no significant effect on goal attainment in micro organizations in South East Nigeria;
- ii. Retention of staff has no significant effect on service delivery in micro organizations in South East Nigeria

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### **Succession Management**

Couch (2013) posits that succession management is a deliberate and systematic effort to identify leadership requirements, identify pools of high-potential candidates at all levels, accelerate the development of mission critical leadership competencies in the candidates through intentional development, select leaders from the candidate pools for pivotal roles and then, regularly measure progress. Rothwell (2005) speculates that an effective succession management effort is that which is capable of building talent from within and ensures leadership continuity in key positions. It also encourages individual advancement which is designed to ensure the continued effective performance of an organization, division, department, or workgroup by making provision for the development, replacement, and strategic application of key people over time.

Succession management is a comprehensive approach for identifying and developing a position in an organization. It is a process, which involves the planning, selection and preparation of the next generation of managers, transition in management responsibility, gradual decrease in the role of previous managers and final discontinuation of any input by the previous manager (Erven 2007). It is more than filling the top spots, a smart management strategy that can drive retention of talent throughout the organization and make sure that the organization has the skills it needs in place, or on hand, to respond to the rapidly shifting sands that make up today's business environment (Hills 2009). Besides, succession Management is about taking pre-determined steps to make sure that

business continues to move even when the founder or generations of managers should exit the business (Onyima, 2011).

Ward (2000) opines that succession management is the process of preparing to hand over control of the business to others in a way that is least disruptive to the business operation and values. It shows that succession management is an on-going process and this means it should take a long time, spanning at least five years before retirement of the principal. Succession management aims at transferring information and knowledge from the founder to the successor of the business as the founder grooms the successor on how to run the business to result in the continuation of the business after the death or retirement of the founder. Succession management is a process of deciding how and when the management, ownership and control of the business will be transferred to subsequent owners (Sikomwe, Mhonde, Mbetu, Mavhiki, & Mapetere, 2012). It ensures the identification, development, and long-term retention of talented individual (Schoonover, 2011).

### **Sustainability**

In the light of this course, sustainability is first and foremost a business strategy. Thus, building that strategy begins with looking closely and thoughtfully at the business, then using what is learned to operate for long-term success, meeting the company's current needs in ways that help ensure that future generations can meet theirs. Therefore, sustainability is much more than the footprint a company's operations have today. It's a path to chart for the future that brings together smart, disciplined management of financial resources, responsible use of natural resources and strategic investment in human resources both within the company and in the communities in which it serves (Hakensen, 2017).

The essence of sustainability in an organizational context is “the principle of enhancing the societal, environmental and economic systems within which a business operates” (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2012). This introduces the concept of a three-way focus for organizations striving for sustainability. This is reflected also by Colbert & Kurucz (2007), who state that sustainability “implies a simultaneous focus on economic, social, and environmental performance.” Perhaps, organizational sustainability is more related to organizational culture rather than specific policies and procedures (Wales, 2013).

Sustainability should be viewed as an umbrella concept that encompasses environmental quality, social justice, business ethics, governance, employee health and safety, diversity and philanthropy. Looked at this way, it's clear that sustainability becomes an integral part of any company's business strategy. How a company manages its three major resources-the "people, planet, profit," as Elkington calls it, provides the basis for receiving society's "permission to operate"; building the "bank of goodwill" for when times are tough and, most important, a strategic approach to sustainability that can have a positive impact on a company's bottom line (Hakensen, 2017). Sustainability entails the capacity of an organization or state to maintain or keep in existence with clear intentions to improve on a particular socio-economic and political phenomenon to achieve

set goals of such organization at the moment, without jeopardizing the interest of the future generations (Nnaeto & Ndoh, 2020).

### **Training**

Training primarily focuses on teaching organizational members how to perform their current jobs and helping them acquire the knowledge and skills they need to be effective performers (Jones, George, & Hill, 2000). Training denotes a systematic procedure for transferring technical know-how to the employees so as to increase their knowledge and skills for doing particular jobs. "Training is an act of increasing the knowledge and skills of an employee for doing a particular job. The major outcome of training is learning; a trainee learns new habits, refined skills and useful knowledge during the training that helps him improve performance. Training enables an employee to perform present job more efficiently and prepare for a higher level job.

Training refers to the acquisition of skills, knowledge and information directly required for the performance of a specific role. It includes on-the-job training, workshops, seminars and conference. Training explains the ways in which specific knowledge and skills necessary to perform specific jobs are taught and learnt, while development entails an analogous process in which people acquire more general abilities and information, but in ways that cannot always be tied directly to a particular task they perform (Aidah, 2013).

### **Goal Attainment**

Goal attainment involves any strategic approach undertaken by any organization to mobilize her human and material resources for the purpose of attaining collective goals and objectives. The achievement of a plan must precede a process or an outline to make it happen. However, having a goal oriented behavior, goal clarification and setting a goal plan of action are ingredients for goal attainment. Succession goal is one of the important goals that an organization needs to constantly plan for and provisions made on time to forestall future crisis.

A private establishment without a good succession planning strategy in place is bound to face growth problem in the future. Any set of goal to be attained by an organization needs a peculiar type of planning to achieve. Senko and Hulleman (2013) note that when pursuing performance goals, people and institutions focus on outperforming peers and define success versus failure with normative standards; and when pursuing mastery goals, they instead focus on developing their skills and define success versus failure with task-based or self-referenced standards. In that same manner, succession goals need good strategic plan and a point of focus for it to work.

Naveen (2006), cited in Gabriel, Biriowu and Gagogo (2020) identified the strategic plans for the attainment of succession management goals as designated replacement plan which involves measures taken by organizations to train someone, make him/her qualified and keep him/her ready to immediately fill vacant role as soon as it occurs; target replacement plan which is a planning strategy used when the business knows in advance when a key staff member wants to leave the company usually by retirement in which case, plans are made to replace him upon due time; and

situational replacement plan which involves planning for an unexpected departure in the company which may be caused by sudden death, resignation or incapacitating ill health.

### **Staff Retention**

Staff retention is the ability of an organization to keep back and work with its employees. It is one of the indices to measure organizational performance. High staff mobility rate in and out of the company is an indication of poor management, motivation, lack of job security and weak corporate image. When staff is retained, their talent, skills, competencies and other resources within their disposal are retained also by the organization. Kitayi (2017) posited that it is important that management comes up with strategies that will assist them in the retention of employees at the same time keeping them motivated. The cost of hiring and maintaining a new staff is more than the cost of maintaining an old staff.

Whenever a staff walks away, coworkers and the public outside the organization notice it. In most cases, it might steer up the desire among others to start wondering if they should start looking for a new job too. This justifies the reason staff retention and job satisfaction should be high on every organization's list of priorities and why creating effective retention strategies to decrease staff turnover should be construed as the most important responsibility of the human resources department of the organization. Kitayi (2017) identified strategies that can be employed by an organization to ensure employee retention such as, making sure that workers have a balance between their jobs and outside life, giving rewards where an employee deserves it, and having compensation packages that an employee can request during a needful situation.

### **Service Delivery**

Apart from maximization of corporate wealth as main management objective, the core target of every organization is effective service delivery. The organization must be ready to provide sufficient, affordable and quality basic services to the clientele. Effective service delivery is a cause and effect situation which can be seen from the Newton's third law of motion view point that action and reaction are equal and opposite. However, in the contemporary social milieu, where public private partnership (PPP) holds sway, the issue of service delivery appears to be the joint responsibility of both public and private administration. The private administration does the manufacturing and distribution of goods and services while the public administration provides the enabling environment for smooth operations. The target of the joint or corporate effort is to provide quality and affordable life-sustaining goods and services like healthcare, education, electricity, security of life and property, good roads, job opportunities, as well as opportunities for personal development (Nnaeto & Umeh, 2020).

There is a correlation between job satisfaction, quality service delivery and corporate performance. The application of good staff retention policies such as team work, mentorship, staff compensation, wellness offerings and annual performance review will naturally give the employee satisfaction which will translate to maximum use of his skills and talents for effective service delivery. Effective service delivery will also translate to customer satisfaction, increased patronage and eventual rise in sales revenue for the organization.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Leadership Model Succession Theory**

This is a leadership theory that encourages a company or an entity to groom the next chief executive from within the company's own ranks as opposed to looking outside the company. It supports raising future leaders of the organization from inwards. John C Maxwell developed the leadership model theory in 1999 in his book titled "Developing the leader within you". This will see to it that succession of leadership is covered and ensures that successors of retiring employees are mentored before the dismissal of the outgoing leaders. The company should also mentor potential candidates under the wing of incumbent leaders. To prevent conflicts that may arise during this process, they should ensure that there is a swift transformation in leadership without hitches and questions (Ibrahim, Soufani, & lam, 2001). Planned succession of leadership in an organization will promote continued operation of businesses even if its founders are no longer actively involved in its operation.

### **Empirical Review**

Onoriode and Okoh (2019), carried out an investigation into managerial succession strategy and its impact on organizational stability: an empirical study of selected financial institutions in Nigeria. The study adopted a set of structured question as the instrument of data collection administered on sixty (60) employees of the financial institution under study in Nigeria. Data analysis was made using simple percentage tables and hypotheses were tested using Pearson product moment correlation co-efficient and T-Text at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed positive and significance relationship between managerial succession planning strategy and the continuity of an organizations performance and its survival. The result also shows that positive and significance relationship exists between managerial succession planning strategy and the growth of an organization. It was concluded that managerial succession planning strategy is imperative for the growth and stability in a financial industry.

Baba and Edwinah (2018) studied succession planning and organizational survival. Data analysis of 62 participants drawn from fast food businesses in Port Harcourt, revealed a significant relationship between both variables (Succession planning and organizational survival), thus a total of 7 null hypotheses were all rejected based on insufficient evidence of acceptance. The results support the position that succession planning through features such as mentoring and management development enhances competitive advantage of the organization and effective operational survival. Furthermore, the embedment and institutionalization of such practices as culture provides an authoritative and substantial platform for its continuity and successive adoption by upcoming leadership. Based on these findings, it was concluded that succession planning and organizational survival are significantly associated, hence the practice of and implementation of succession planning structures and activities would enhance the organizations' chances of adaptability, achievement of high competitive advantage, maintenance of high-performance goals and the achievement of functional performance goals.



Sheila (2017) studied effect of succession planning on organizational performance of family owned businesses in Horticulture industry, a case of Mara Farm LTD. The study specifically seek to explore how training and development, talent retention, talent recruitment and compensation management affect performance of Mara Farming Ltd. The target population consisted of senior management, middle level management and supervisors, with the adoption of stratified sampling procedure to select samples that were representative of the entire population. The data collected from the respondent was analyzed and presented using tables, pie-charts, graphs as well as qualitative and quantitative tabulation of data to ease understanding and interpretation of results. Majority of the respondents agreed that training and development affect organization's performance.

Nicholas (2012) examined the link between talent management practices, succession planning and corporate strategy among Kenya commercial banks. The study conducted a survey where all banks were studied. The study established that the studied firms had actually incorporated talent management practices as part of growth strategy. It was established that talent management is therefore critical including succession planning as it ensures that there is long term business continuity. The study indicated the presence of a strong link between succession planning, talent management and corporate strategy.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted survey research. The data for this study were obtained specifically from two sources: primary and secondary sources. The sample size of the study is 50 randomly selected micro organizations from the Southeast geopolitical zone, Nigeria. The major research instrument adopted in gathering data for this study was the structured questionnaire. The validity of instrument was achieved by research experts making corrections on the questionnaire .A test-re-test method of reliability was adopted for this study. The pilot study was carried out, 10 copies positively responded of the questionnaire was administered to the respondents. Cronbach alpha coefficient of reliability result was 0.98%.The main data for the purposes of research questions and hypotheses testing were analyzed using simple regression analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

### **Test of Hypotheses**

#### **Hypothesis One**

**H<sub>0a</sub>**: Training has no significant impact on goal attainment in micro organizations in South East Nigeria.

**H<sub>1a</sub>**: Training has significant impact on goal attainment in micro organizations in South East Nigeria.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.929 <sup>a</sup>	.863	.857	.51058	.990

Predictors: (Constant), Goal Attainment

1. Dependent Variable: Training

**Table 1b: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	37.844	1	37.844	145.169	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	5.996	49	.261		
	Total	43.840	50			

a. Dependent Variable: Training

b. Predictors: (Constant), Goal Attainment

**Table 1c Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.240	.335		.718	.480
	Goal Attainment	.990	.082	.929	12.049	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Training

Decision rule: If the probability of the F-statistic obtained from the result is at 5%  $\alpha$  level of significance, the study would reject the null hypothesis,  $H_0$  and accept the alternative hypothesis,  $H_1$ . The F statistic with 145.169 has probability of 0.000 level of significance. Since the probability of the F statistics is below 5% level of significance, we would reject the null hypothesis,  $H_0$  and therefore conclude that training has significant impact on goal attainment in micro organizations in South East Nigeria.

### Hypothesis Two

**H<sub>0b</sub>:** Retention of staff has no significant effect on service delivery in micro organizations in South East Nigeria.

**H<sub>1b</sub>:** Retention of staff has significant effect on service delivery in micro organizations in South East Nigeria.

**Table 2a: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.851 <sup>a</sup>	.725	.690		510306.67611

a. Predictors: (Constant), Service Delivery

**Table 2b: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5487138551570 .236	1	5487138551570 .236	21.071	.002 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	2083303229429 .764	49	260412903678. 721		
	Total	7570441781000 .001	50			

a. Dependent Variable: Staff Retention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Service Delivery

**Table 2c: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	- 6071967.840	1863963.334		.535	.012
	Service Delivery	619659.628	134993.075	.851	4.590	.002

a. Dependent Variable: Staff Retention

Decision rule: If the probability of the F-statistic obtained from the result is at 5%  $\alpha$  level of significance, the study would reject the null hypothesis,  $H_0$  and accept the alternative hypothesis,  $H_1$ .

The F statistic with 21.071 has probability of 0.02% level of significance. Since the probability of the F statistics is below 5% level of significance, we would reject the null hypothesis,  $H_0$  and therefore conclude that retention of staff has significant effect of on service delivery in micro organizations in South East Nigeria.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on the analysis of data collected, the following findings were made:

1. Training had significant positive impact on goal attainment in micro organizations in South East Nigeria.

2. Retention of staff had significant positive effect on service delivery in micro organizations in South East Nigeria.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the findings of the study, it is clearly concluded that training, an integral part of succession plan contributes immensely towards the sustainability of micro organizations. The results also revealed that skills and competencies among staff are gained through routine training and that training is the key that ensures improved organizational sustainability. The findings also demonstrated that retention of staff, another giant leap towards organizational sustainability, has significant effect on service delivery. The study opines that employee retention techniques have allowed the micro organizations to keep key employees while still improving overall efficiency in service delivery. Proper attention on these variables by organization(s), clearly will ensure organizational longevity, even many years after the demise of the progenitors. It is therefore most apposite for organization(s) to invest enormously on human capital development and also cultivate the culture of workforce retention so that its succession requirements and trends will not be truncated at any time.

### **Recommendations and remarks for policy direction**

Following the findings of the study, it is firmly recommended that organizations should make training of their employees a continuous activity because training helps to gain a competitive advantage more than just basic skill development. Besides, since achievement of succession management revolves around many strategic phenomena like staff retention, training for fresh competencies, motivation etc, organizations are encouraged to make the afore-stated their management watchword. This will create uncommon zeal, enthusiasm, and readiness in the workforce, to sit back, not only as employees, but also as contributors to when and how the future of such organization(s) will be secured. Furthermore, in view of the complexities surrounding succession management of micro organizations and its contributions towards economic development of the state, it is recommended that governments device a means of encouraging both service and manufacturing organizations, perhaps through its ministry of labour and productivity, on the need to regularly plan for the longevity of firms in the state. This is quite apposite because there is robust relationship between economic growth of a state and the stability of micro organizations in the state. If companies are established and soon get extinct because of lack of strategic plan for future existence and management, the host economy will lose economic growth and development that could have accrued from hitherto existence and productivity of the firm. Therefore, government and statutory bodies in the state should create environments supportive of regular succession plan among micro organizations in Nigeria. This will help save organizations from management crisis and possible extinction.

### **Need for further research**

The study was basically conducted in the South East of Nigeria which is apparently one of the geopolitical zones in Nigeria. This status may not qualify for express generalization of the research results across the remaining five geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Consequently, the study suggests

further research on same topic across the remaining five geopolitical zones in Nigeria to be able to ascertain the perception of respondents on the impact of succession management on the sustainability of micro organizations in the respective zones.

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