
SUCCESSION PLANNING CHALLENGES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT: *Succession planning is a human resource management strategy used to prepare a pool of employees with necessary competences and capabilities to become successors of senior officers leaving an organisation for various reasons such as retirement, resignation, transfer, termination, death or any other forms of separation from employment. This study which was conducted in one of the Public Sector Organisations in Tanzania revealed that succession planning is affected by shortage of staff, lack of qualified staff, lack of experienced staff and aging of the workforce. To resolve the challenges of succession planning, it is recommended to employ human resource management strategies such as recruitment, training and rewards to increase the number, quality and experience of staff at all levels and consider age factor in recruiting and preparing employees for succession.*

KEYWORDS: Succession planning, the Public Sector, Tanzania.

INTRODUCTION

Public Service organisations worldwide are under pressure to increase efficiency in delivery of services (Chemengich, 2013). Succession planning is considered one of the best mechanisms for ensuring constant supply of competent and experienced successors to various positions in an organisation in order to overcome performance challenges resulting from human resource turnover due to various reasons such as retirement, termination, death and other methods of separation from employment (Wilkerson, 2007). However, it is argued that while succession planning in the private sector continues to flourish, there is lack of strong public sector models of succession because many leaders in the public sectors have long tenure of service and believe that no one else can lead the organisation (Wilkerson, 2007). Thus it is argued that succession planning is rarely used in the public sector because of the inherent nature of bureaucracy and meritocracy (Jarrell and Pewitt, 2007).

The problem seem to be widespread up to high income economies as it is argued that public service employment grew rapidly from 1970s to early 1980s in the high-income countries and many of the public service employees hired during these years had retired or were about to do so, but the organisations had been slow to react to the ageing public service workforce (McKinnon, 2010). A study conducted in Australia to 711 human resource specialties from different organisations revealed that succession plans were present to less than half of the organisations (Taylor and McGraw, 2004). However, despite the importance of succession planning for organisational

management, there is limited knowledge on succession planning in the public sector in Tanzania because of limited studies focusing in this aspect. This study has attempted to fill the gap.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Succession planning is about preparing your own talents of workforce for future success of the company through career progress (Rothwell, 2002). It's the human resource management strategy for effective replacement of managers and other key employees who leave the organisation for various reasons in order to enhance continuation of the business and future success of the organisation (Wilkerson, 2007). Succession planning is very critical for executive positions because they have all the means and opportunities for influencing organisational performance through decision making and control of resources (Boyne and Dahya, 2002). Effective succession planning includes preparing successors for the change, preparing lower levels employees to assume higher levels of responsibilities by exposing them to training and development, functions of the organisation and attaching successors to senior members during the transition and ensure that they are capable for the position (Wilkerson, 2007).

Best practices show that organisations identify potential employees and subject them to leadership development programmes, project based learning experiences, workshops and forums to expose potential employees to multiple stakeholders and supportive organisational culture (Groves, 2007). The human resource systems that help to enhance successful succession planning include recruitment, training and retention programmes (Crumpacker and Crumpacker, 2007). These factors increases competence and motivation of staff to enhance staff retention (Liu, Combs, Ketchen and Ireland, 2007). The retention of competent and motivated employees in an organisation is considered vital for effective succession planning.

However, most studies indicate that organisations are facing succession planning challenges. It is argued that most organisations grow in terms of size and number of staff, however, their plans do not match the demands for succession (Froelich, McKee and Rathge, 2011). From the experience of United States of America (USA), it is argued that the effect of aging workforce was a more troubling factor for succession planning. It is reported that in 2006 there were 46% of local government workers with the age of 45 years or above while in the private sector were 31% with the age of 45 years or above. Thus succession planning was considered troublesome in the public sector compared to the private sector (Ibarra, 2007).

The study is supported by organisational theories such as the human capital theory which emphasises on competence of staff (Jiang, Lepak, Hu and Baer, 2012) and motivational theories which consider motivation as an important factor used to attract and retain competent staff the organisation needs (Hassan, 2016). This is based on the theoretical assumption that succession planning requires human resource management strategies that attract, develop and retain qualified and motivated staff for succession (Crumpacker and Crumpacker, 2007).

Objectives

Main Objective

The main objective of the study is to find out succession planning challenges in the public sector in Tanzania.

Specific Objectives

- (i) To determine the number of staff for succession planning;
- (ii) To determine the quality of staff for succession planning;
- (iii) To determine staff experience for succession planning; and
- (iv) To determine the age of the workforce for succession planning.

METHODOLOGY

The research strategy applied is qualitative based on data collected from documents and interview with human resource management staff in the organisation. The study was conducted to one organisation, hence the qualitative approach was appropriate in order to obtain in-depth information using a small sample size (Nkondola and Deuren, 2017) and the choice of qualitative was based also on argument advanced by scholars that research approach depends on the type of research and interest of the researcher (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Therefore qualitative approach was chosen as the best for this study which focused on one public service organisation in Tanzania.

FINDINGS

Number of Staff

The findings indicated that staffing requirement for the organisation was 198 employees. However, available employees were 88 equal to 44.4% and shortage was 110 staff equal to 55.6%. Thus the findings show that the organisation is highly understaffed. It was reported that this is due to the fact that the organisation had no mandates to recruit own staff because the recruitment mandates are vested to the Public Service Recruitment Agency which was established by the government and charged with the responsibility of recruiting all staff for the public service. This can be attributed to challenges of succession planning in the public service.

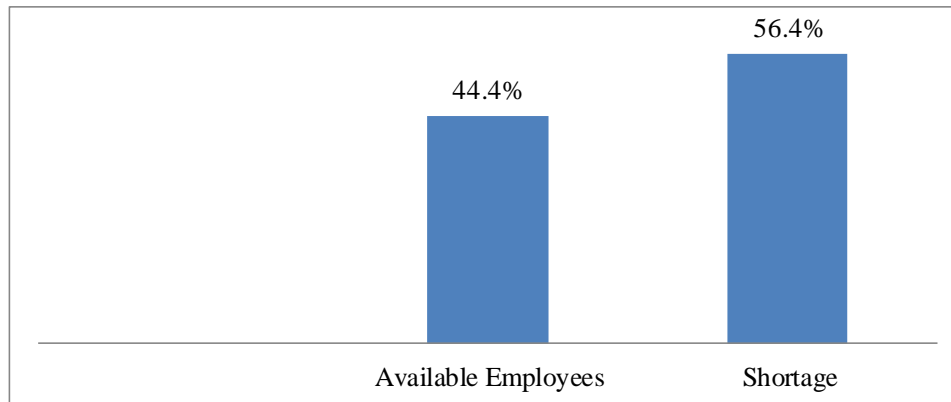


Figure 1: Staffing Status

Staff Quality

Human resource management policies of the organisation indicated that Doctorate degree is the requirement for the position of Chief Executive Officer and Directors and Masters Degree for other Managers and Senior Officers. The study revealed that employees with Doctorate degree (PhD) were 6.8%, Master's degree 60.2%, Bachelor degree 18.2%, Diploma 8% and Certificate 6.8%. At the time of this study, there were 5 executive officers with Doctorate Degrees and limited number of staff with Doctorate degrees to succeed them in case they leave the organisation for any reasons. It was reported that staff training is constrained with budget shortage hence affects staff attainment of the highest qualification level. For the example it was reported that among the 4 Directors, 2 were recruited from outside because of lack of qualified staff with Doctorate degrees from within.

Table 1: Employees' Academic Strength

S/N	Academic Qualifications	Number of Employees	Percent
1.	Doctorate Degree	6	6.8%
2.	Masters Degree	53	60.2%
3.	Bachelor Degree	16	18.2%
4.	Diploma	7	8%
5.	Certificate	6	6.8%
	Total	88	100%

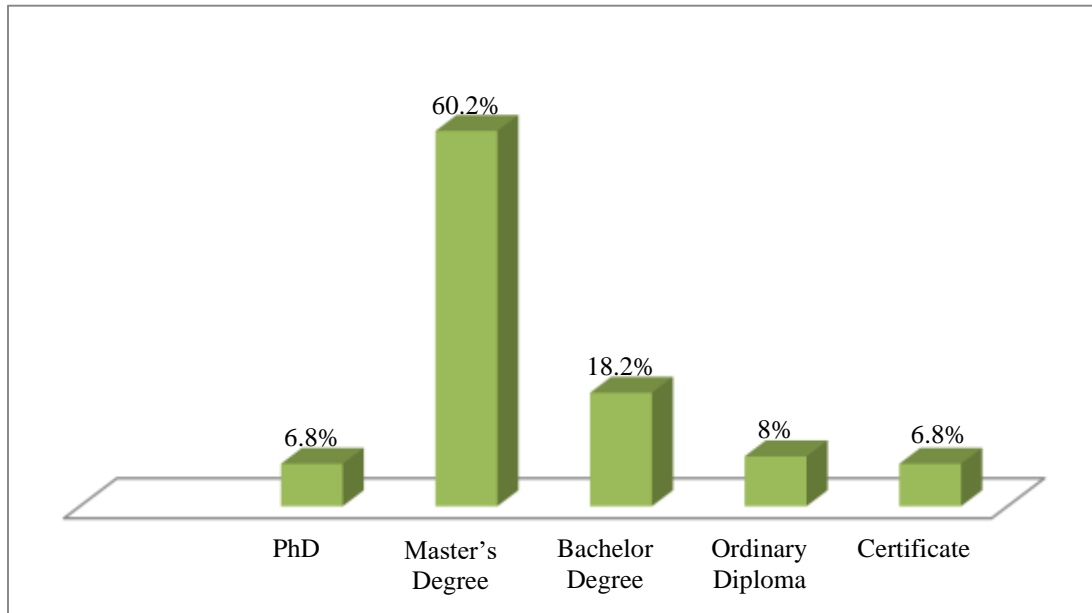


Figure 2: Employees' Academic Strength

Staff Experience

Work experience is among the critical factors for succession planning. In analysing staff experience, the focus was on the relevance of experience to the functions of the organisation a staff is allocated to perform. The experience interval is 4 years. The findings show that the majority of the employees had little experience related to organisational functions. 67% of staff had below 8 years of relevant work experience. Table 2 presents data on experience of employees.

Table 2: Staff Work Experience

S/N	Years of Experience	Number of Employees	Percent
1.	0-4	41	46.6
2.	5-8	18	20.4
3.	9-12	10	11.4
4.	13-16	13	14.8
5.	17-20	2	2.3
6.	21-24	1	1.1
7.	25-28	0	0
8.	29-30	2	2.3
9.	37-40	1	1.1
10.	Total	88	100

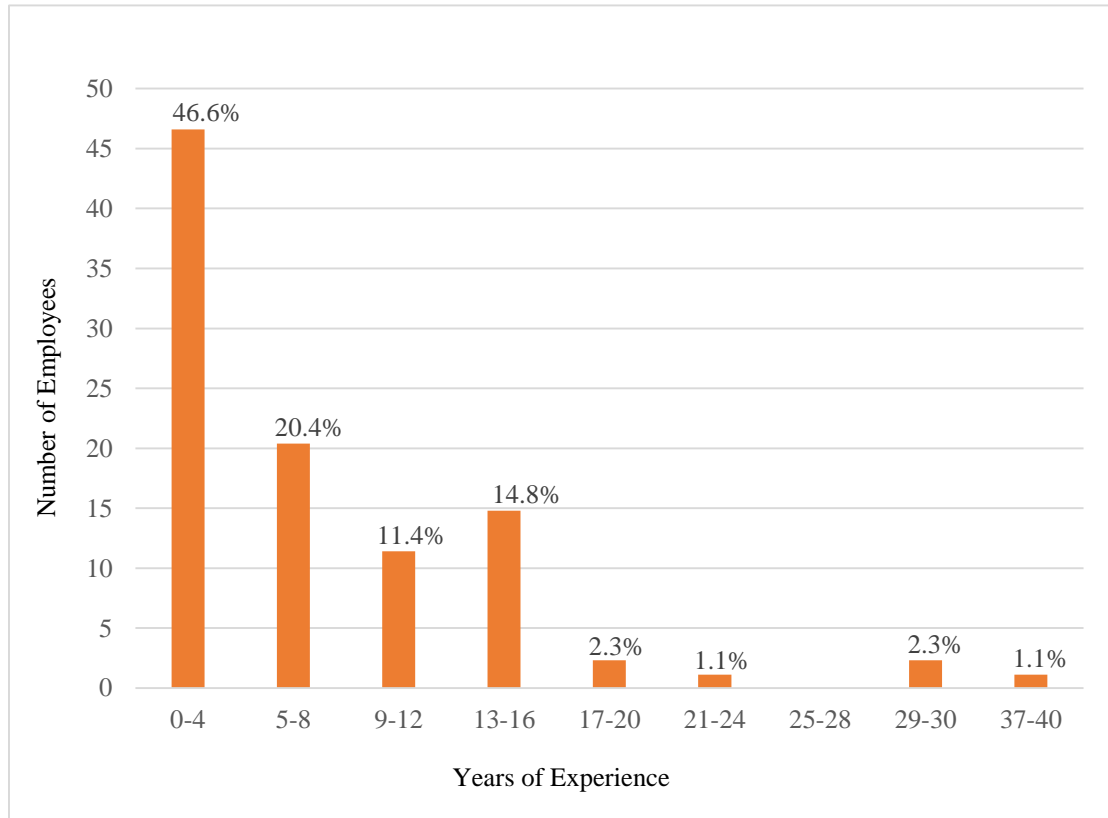


Figure 3: Staff Work Experience

Age Distribution

Age of employees is also a critical factor for succession planning. The retirement laws in the public service in Tanzania provides for 60 years of compulsory retirement and 55 years of voluntary retirement. However, the findings show that the majority of employees constituting 67.1% are between 41 and 60 years of age and 32.1% are aged between 25 to 40 years. This gives impression that the majority are staff who are about to retire from the public service than those who are expected to succeed them. This has negative repercussion in succession planning process.

Table 3: Staff Age Distribution

S/N	Age Range	Number of Staff	Percent
1.	25-30	5	5.7
2.	31-35	12	13.6
3.	36-40	12	13.6
4.	41-45	24	27.3
5.	46-50	11	12.5
6.	51-55	18	20.5
7.	56-60	6	6.8
Total		88	100

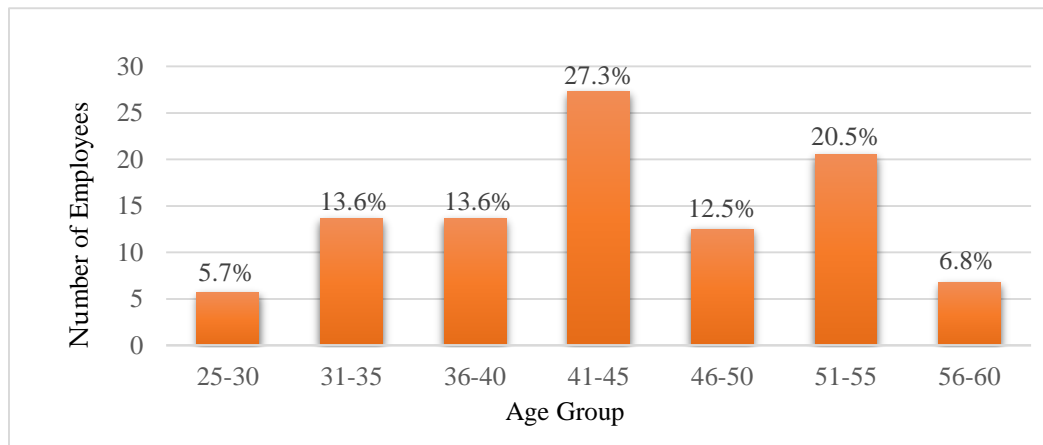


Figure 4: Staff Age Distribution

DISCUSSION

The study has revealed that the succession planning process in the public sector in Tanzania is still a challenge. This supports arguments advanced by scholars in the field of human resource management that most organisations grow in terms of size and number of staff, however, their plans do not match the demands for succession (Froelich et al., 2011). In the context of the public service in Tanzania, the study observed that succession planning process is constrained by factors such as shortage of staff, academic strength of staff, work experience and age difference.

Shortage of staff has impact on succession planning in the sense that, effective succession requires availability of staff in all job positions in an organisation by replacing those going out of employment for various reasons such as retirement, resignation, appointment to other organisations, termination by employer, death and other forms of separations as emphasised by Wilkerson (2007). Therefore shortage of staff is an obstacle to the succession planning process in the public service. It was explained that shortage of staff was caused by lack of mandates on recruitment of staff and control of staff salary budget by the government.

Lack of qualified staff was also found to be a critical factor affecting the succession planning process. The study observed that the requirement to become a Director or Chief Executive Officer is Doctorate degree qualification. However, the organisation had inadequate number of staff with such qualifications, only 6.8 percent of the staff. This caused at one time the organisation to recruit people for Directorship positions from outside the organisation. Therefore human resource academic strength is an important factor for effective succession planning from within the organisation. To overcome the challenge it requires putting in place an effective staff training policy and plan to upgrade staff to the highest academic level as suggested by Crumpacker and Crumpacker (2007).

The study also revealed that work experience is also an obstacle for effective succession in the public service in Tanzania. The study observed that the majority of the staff have little experience related to the job and very few have adequate experience as shown in Figure 3. It was explained by managers that this is due to lack of recruitment permit from the government, therefore many staff joined the organisation through the transfer process, in which their former experiences were not relevant to the they joined. Therefore they had to start learning their new responsibilities afresh through on-job orientation. The challenges of succession planning emanating from experience have widely been reported globally, that is why Gloves (2007) emphasises the need to expose potential employees to leadership development programmes, project based learning experiences, workshops and forums to multiple stakeholders and supportive organisational culture in order to prepare them for succession.

Furthermore, the study revealed significant age difference among staff which is a challenge to succession planning in the public service in Tanzania. From the analysis in Figure 4, the findings show that 67.1% of employees are of the age between 41 and 60 years and 32.1% are aged between 25 to 40 years. This gives impression that the majority of staff are about to retire while those expected to succeed them are few. This has negative repercussion in succession planning process. Literature indicates that the problem of aging workforce is a worldwide challenge in succession planning in the public sector. It has been reported that in high income economies the public service employment grew rapidly from 1970s to early 1980s and many of the public service employees hired during these years had retired or were about to do so, but the organisations had been slow to react to the ageing public service workforce (McKinnon, 2010). The experience from the United States of America shows that in 2006 there were 46% of local government workers with the age of 45 years (Ibarra, 2007) and a study conducted in Australia to 711 human resource specialties from different organisations revealed that succession plans were present to less than half of the organisations (Taylor and McGraw, 2004).

Implication to Research and Practice

The study has both theoretical and practical contribution in the field of human resources management. Theoretically, the study has added knowledge to the field of human resource management concerning succession planning. Practically, the study confirms the importance of human resource management practices such as recruitment and selection, training and rewards in attracting, developing and retaining qualified employees to facilitate succession planning. Thus managers are required to apply human resource management techniques which ensure availability of adequate, competent and experienced staff with fair age difference for smooth succession planning.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Literature has established the importance of succession planning in enhancing organisation performance. The succession planning process is influenced by number of staff, quality of staff, experience of staff and age factors. Therefore to make a succession planning process a successful human resource management strategy, organisations are required to implementation human

resource management activities that increase the number of staff, quality of staff, experience of staff and provide fair age distribution such as recruitment, training and retention policies. Therefore this study recommends the following to the stakeholders in the public service in Tanzania and globally in order to overcome succession planning challenges:

- (i) Remove the bureaucracy in recruitment process in the public sector and decentralise recruit mandates to the respective organisations to enable them recruit adequate and highly qualified staff they need;
- (ii) Put in place effective staff training policy and plans in order to train staff to attain the highest qualifications required by the organisations as mechanism for preparing them for succession to senior and executive positions;
- (iii) Put in place attractive retention policies in order to be able to retain competent and motivated staff for easy succession to senior and executive positions; and
- (iv) Increase the human resource management budget for recruitment, training, promotion and rewards in order to attract and retain competent and motivated workforce for succession.

Limitations and Future Research

This study focused on one public organisation in Tanzania, hence other research can be expanded to include more public, private, and international organisations for comparative analysis.

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