Management Development and Succession Planning: Challenges and Prospects for Nigerian Public Service

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Abstract

The development of potential employees remains pivotal and critical in the Nigerian Public service where effective service delivery can be achieved through enhanced capacity building of the employees. The paper explored the concept of management development and succession planning in the Nigerian public service. Relying mainly on secondary data from journals, government reports, and internet materials, and employed the Resource-Based View theory as framework of analysis. The study revealed that management development is a key feature of succession planning, through which employees are equipped for future leadership tasks. It was concluded that the Nigerian Public Service has no visible operational management development programs that promotes sustainable succession planning, rather the prevalent practice is what we call accidental replacement system. The paper recommends that the Nigeria public service should first be clear about its vision for the future and the skills that the vision will require. Nigerian leaders must be vision-driven and get things right by

incorporating youth capacity detection, attraction and management development programs through mentoring initiatives in the public service.

Keywords: Management development, Succession planning, Public service, Mentorship

Introduction

Management development has been described as a pivotal aspect of human resource management. According to CIPD (2022), management development which was also referred to as management revolution gained prominence in organizations in the 1950s. Lagat and Makau (2018) added that during the 1950s, the impact of the First and Second World Wars created a managerial gap. There was a dearth of qualified employees for top managerial positions. In addressing the gap, development programs were designed for employees to be groomed to fill the growing gap. Hence, the herald of the concept "management development" in the field of human resource management.

However, CIPD (2022) opined that management development has been perceived as a segment of a huge process of development and learning, which constitutes a considerable aspect of human development. The development of managers in organizations facilitates the attainment of goals and objectives. This involves capacity building of employees while preparing them to meet organizational present and future manpower needs (Armstrong, 2016). Management development is one of the approaches adopted by an organization to enhance opportunities for employees to acquire the right knowledge for skills and attitudes, to enable them to achieve individual and organizational goals.

Management development is an essential tool for succession planning. Swanson and Holton (2001) posit that the Post World War era was typified by succession programs where employees were mentored to assume a higher position of authority in the event of one leaving the position. Programs run by specialized schools

and with classified styles, including job rotation and coaching approaches were utilized. Management development which is the process of learning on the job is a continuous ever-changing process wherein employees who have the required potential also learn through the informal and on-the-job experiences that are not planned in the course of the job. (Afamefuna, et al, 2021). This process creates a deliberate attempt in preparing employees with a high prospect who could provide extraordinary performance at work to take over from leaders who are departing the organization.

The imperativeness of management development in the public service of developing countries has been stressed by Oppong (2013). He averred that there is a dearth of well-groomed and developed leaders which in turn exert considerable impact on the sustainable development of the developing countries.

The Nigerian public service occupies a pivotal position in the sustainability and development of the nation. This is achieved through effective implementation of the policies and programs of government (George et al, 2016). However, the nature of work of the Nigerian public service as pointed out by Ajakaiye (n.d) is shrouded by a low level of capacity building. This is hinged on the bored and unchallenging nature of work in the service. He noted that this has necessitated the notion held, that productivity is irrelevant in the public service. In addition, succeeding one's position in the public sector is characterized based on several factors such as ethnicity, and political patronage and not based on skills, insight, and knowledge acquired over the years on the job. The implication of this is that the need to come up with strategic management development programs for capacity building is neglected and also hampering effective service delivery in Nigeria.

On the premise of the foregoing, Afamefuna, et al (2021) posits that the Nigerian public service has disregarded the essentials of deliberate development of the succession planning process. Hence, the effective delivery of services to the citizenry suffers the cost associated with not having a clear understanding of an effective

succession goal for the public service. It is in this light that this paper examines the issue of management development and succession planning in the Nigerian public service, with emphasis on the need for mentorship in the public service. This paper is therefore organized as follows: Apart from section one which is the introduction, section two considers concepts related to the subject matter, section three considers the theoretical framework and the final section is the conclusion and recommendation.

Methodology

The study depended entirely on qualitative data which was collected from secondary sources such as scholarly peer-reviewed journals, government and agency reports, and related online materials. The data were analyzed using the content analysis method and presented thematically, utilizing subheadings to reflect key conceptual areas, and the issues were organized based on the objectives of the research.

Conceptual Clarifications
Management Development

Management has been viewed as the organization and coordination of the activities of an organization following laid down policies and in the development of clearly defined goals and objectives. Management development, therefore, is the process by which the management competencies of a manager or a management team are enhanced (Roche, 2010). CIPD (2022) posits that management development is a planned process of learning and growth designed to bring behavioral change among executives. She noted that the new approach to human resources management is that money used in the development of employees and managers is considered an investment and not a cost. Along with their jobs, the managerial staff is provided opportunities to learn and improve on their competencies. This whole process is known as management development.

In organizations, management development programs afford employees to be prepared to improve their performance on the job and prepare them for further assignments. It is also a systematic process of training and growth by which managerial personnel gain and supply skills, knowledge, attitudes, and insights to manage the work in their organization effectively and efficiently (CIPD, 2022). Rothwell (2010) describe management development as a systematic effort to train, educate and develop individuals who aspire to or are already functioning in an organization's executive management or supervisory ranks.

These authors emphasize that management development is "a planned effort to prepare individuals for supervisory, management or executive positions in the organization and to help them maintain their skills at a time when leadership talent is critical to organizational survival and competitive success, that is to meet individual, group and organizational learning needs and to improve performance and productivity of employees" (Hirsh and Carter, 2002).

Armstrong (2006) while emphasizing the contributory role of management development to the growth and development of an organization, assert that management development seeks to achieve the following objectives in any organizational setup:

- ensuring that managers understand what is expected of them; agreeing with objectives against which their performance will be measured and the level of competence required in their roles;

- improving the performance of managers in their present roles as a means of preparing them for greater responsibilities;

- identifying managers with potential, encouraging them to prepare and implement personal development plans, and ensuring that they receive the required development, training, and experience to equip them for more demanding responsibilities within their locations and elsewhere in the organization;

- providing for management succession, creating a system to keep this under review

It is worthy to mention that management development provides an all-encompassing developmental programs approach to enhancing managerial competencies and capacity for managerial activities.

Approaches to Management Development

According to Armstrong (2006) improving the effectiveness and potential of managers can be realized through three basic approaches: learning through work, formal training, feedback, facilitation, and support. He added that these approaches can be achieved through the following formal and informal means.

Formal Approaches to Management Development

- Development on the job through coaching, counseling, monitoring, and feedback by managers continuously associated with the use of performance management processes to identify and satisfy development needs, and with mentoring;
- Development through work experience, which includes job rotation, job enlargement, taking part in project teams or task groups, 'action learning', and secondment outside the organization
- Formal training utilizing internal or external courses
- Structured self-development by following self-managed learning programs agreed upon as a personal development plan or learning contract with the manager or a management development adviser – these may include guided reading or the deliberate extension of knowledge or acquisition of new skills on the job;
- E-learning as part of a blended learning program.

Informal Approaches to Management Development

Armstrong (2006) describes informal approaches to management development as consisting of the on-the-job learning experiences that employees encounter daily. The challenging tasks that employees are confronted with, the unfamiliar task that they are expected to embark upon, or a move to a different job all makes up the learning experiences. The pertinent part as noted by Armstrong is that these experiences stimulate new initiatives on the part of the employees in dealing with the situation. In addition, to enhancing their capacity for effectiveness and efficiency for future responsibility.

This approach can be perceived to be an effective form of learning, but this approach, apart from the fact that there are some employees whose learning comes naturally to them, would be dependent on the organization, developing a system that encourages self-assessment and identification of development need by getting managers to access their performance against their agreed objectives.

Knowledge Management and Development

According to Simitichieva (2013), knowledge is an endless renewal and development in an organization. Armstrong (2006) noted that knowledge management is concerned with storing and sharing the wisdom, understanding, and expertise accumulated in an organization about its process, techniques, and operations. Knowledge management is concerned with both stocks and flows of knowledge. According to a study conducted by CPS HR Consulting in 2018, it shows that when an outgoing incumbent leaves an organization, they take not only the level of productivity and efficiency they brought to the public service, they also take the bank of knowledge they possessed, which helps them to succeed in their respective jobs. Invariably creating a knowledge gap in the organization.

Therefore, Durst and Bruns (2016) emphasized that knowledge management can be achieved through several management development methods, such as job shadowing, mentorship, having the incumbents provide an overview and specific how-to sessions, and seeking effective means of documenting the approaches and procedures undertaking in performing the tasks.

Succession Planning

Every organization whether public or private strives to sustain its existence no matter how tempestuous the operating environment may be. It is on this basis, that succession planning becomes an essential element for ongoing business survival. Hence, an organization's willingness to sustain its operations is depended on its ability to sustain the present mix of individuals with the right skills and cognate experiences to manage the organization. To buttress the foregoing assertion, Mandi in Wobodo, et al. (2020) aver that the future sustainability of any organization is depended on its implementation of succession planning and management development programs.

Rothwell (2010) viewed succession planning as a thoughtful and orderly effort by an institution to ensure continuity in key positions, retain and develop knowledgeable capital for the future and inspire employee development. Garman & Glave (2004) defines succession planning as a systematic process that involves identifying and training possible successors to take on a new task. To establish succession planning as a process, Mathis & Jackson (2006) opine that succession planning involves the evaluation and appraisal of employees' talent such that an organization can answer some important questions: These questions include; does the organization have sufficient available and supply of individuals who have the potential to occupy management role in the future? Are the potential of these individuals good enough for the future vacant management positions and do these individuals possess the right abilities and characteristics for the years to come?

Drawing from the above definitions, it is clear that succession planning is an intentional act carried out by an organization that strives to achieve a sustainability drive. It is a systematic process that involves a commitment to putting strategic measures to fill a future key position in the future.

Succession Planning Process

Succession planning in an organization involves myriad of processes, given that several scholars have initiated models that is consisting of diverse steps in the succession planning process. Rothwell in Okhawere, et al. (2016) proposed seven processes for executing succession planning in an organization

- Initiation and Commitment Stage: At this stage, the management of the organization initiates the need and decides to commit to succession planning by embarking on succession planning and management programs. This stage would require the evaluation of the operations in the organization and the difficulties being encountered. This stage also involves the identification of potential individuals for which the management development programs are earmarked and other activities that would be beneficial for the achievement of the programs.
- Assessment of employee's performance: A performance management system would at this stage be utilized in other to appraise staff members based on their performances in the organization. This process would afford the organization to embark on talent management, to determine what human resources are already available.
- Assessment of future work/people requirements: Since succession planning is futuristic, a decision concerning assessing future work requirements and competencies would have to be made, in this way the organization is setting out the work or competency requirement in key leadership positions in the future.

- Assessment of future individual potential: At this stage, the organization initiates a system that would access the potential of its employees. The assessment would take cognizance of the capacity, skills, and competence of employees alongside future work requirements.
- Abolishing the knowledge gap: This is essentially imperative for knowledge management in the organization. The organization is expected to put in place a mechanism to ensure that there is no shortage of knowledge. Selected employees are required to be exposed to specific programs, training, and mentorship that would enhance their capacity and competencies to meet the expected management and leadership responsibility.
- Evaluation of the Succession Planning Program: The succession planning program instituted at this is periodically evaluated. This enables a feedback system on the performances of the program.

Theoretical Framework

The baseline theory that explains the connection between management development and organizational effectiveness is the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm theory. This theory was emphasized by Penrose (1959) and subsequently developed by other scholars. The resource-based theory assumes that resources available or acquired by an organization are the basic driver of its performance. It is the organization's resources that give it competitive power (Penrose, 1959). According to Lepak and Snell (1999) the resource-based view of the firm theory asserts that internal knowledge, regarded as some of the organization's key resources is an essential basis for competitive advantage. The resource-based view of the firm theory proposes that core competencies should be directed through internal development (Lepak and Snell, 1999).

In modern organizations, highly developed managers are valued, exceptional, and hard to replicate and cannot be replaced. If properly managed, they can be the most valuable asset of any organization (Wright et al.1994). According to RBV, the attainment of organizational efficiency includes developing capabilities and linking competencies together through better communication, cooperation, and synchronization in other to attain goals for instance through building organizations' scarce resources, valuable and hard-to-imitate resources assumed to contribute to competitive advantage.

Drawing from the theory, in today's knowledge-driven economy, an organization believes that the success of any organizational operations relies hugely on its ability to attract and retain an identifiable pool of talents to stock up its knowledge base not just for the now but also for the future in the means of promoting succession planning essentially within. Thus employees are like vehicles conveying the organization from their current position to that future desired state. On this basis, the pillar of industrial economies has now moved away from natural resources to intellectual property (Wobodo, 2020; Morten, 1999).

Linking Management Development to Succession Planning

It is no gainsaying the fact that management development is a key feature of succession planning, and management effectiveness has been recognized as a determinant of the success of an organization. Therefore, as pointed out by Akani (2015) investment in management development programs would enable the sustenance of goals and objectives in an organization. The Nigerian Public service as a cardinal agent of service delivery cannot continue to deliver its core mandate to the people without ensuring that they have the right mix of people to meet their current and future operational needs. Hirsh and Carter (2002) noted that this is imperative for the future sustainability and viability of any

organization, and it is said to depend on how well an organization implements effective succession planning and management development programs. Rothwell (2010) categorically contend that succession planning and management development is an increasingly indispensable issue in Nigerian public service.

Drucker (1995) emphasized that management development in an organization must focus on performance rather than mere intention, and future needs, rather than those of today. Over the years, research has established the relationship between management development and succession planning. Wobodo et al (2020) noted that it is through management development programs that employees with potentials are equipped with the required skills for future leadership tasks.

Hirsh & Carter (2002) also described the linkage between succession planning and management development, they contend that succession planning has been around for a long time, and its emphasis has shifted from identifying successors to developmental and job experiences that would strengthen the skills and knowledge of those identified as short or longer-term successors. This indicates that high potential employees are put on a high potential management development program that may combine planned work experience with both formal training and personal developmental support.

According to Sinha and Dubey in Wobodo et al (2020) management development gears at bridging any gap between current and required knowledge of the individuals for better succession planning. This is why a talent management-driven organization is always in regular review of its existing human capital and future human resources needs as well as developing a system of meeting those needs. Similarly, Sinha and Dubey (2005) argued that the implication of poor succession planning is usually poor performance, which translates into high turnover and corporate instability. On the other hand, Barton and Rouse-Jouns (2007) disclosed that an effective succession planning process in

any organization enhances the opportunity for deliberate leadership training organized for potential employees. This is geared towards the continuance supply of prepared leaders for strategic positions; having an organized process for examining leadership talent; increasing opportunities for talents; helping the employees to identify their career plans within the organization; and developing strong leadership teams for strategic tasks of the organization.

Challenges of Management Development and Succession Planning in Nigeria Public Service

As regards the issue of management development as a tool for effective succession planning, research has shown that inadequate or in most cases a clear absence of government commitment to sponsored management development programs is a major challenge faced by public service in Nigeria. CIPD (2021) aver that succession planning in an organization ensures that the skills and experience and knowledge required to take up senior management role is secured for the future. These plans in the long run can help influence management development programs, content and structure. However, it is important to recognize that all managers will benefit from access to learning and development opportunities.

Wobodo, et al. (2018) noted that the lack of a progressive development program is a critical issue affecting public organizations in Nigeria. However, according to a white paper released by CPS HR Consulting, effective succession planning could assist the public service, which, on average, has an older workforce compared to the private sector, and as a result is more susceptible to losing key employees with critical institutional knowledge to retirement. Nevertheless, it was noted that very few government agencies address the issue of a succession plan.

Given the above, Okhawere et al (2016) opined that the public service in Nigeria is regularly surmounted by challenges that have affected the achievement of effective succession planning. The

studies conducted by CPS HR Consulting revealed that most public organizations are not only ill-prepared for the changing dynamics of their workplace, but they are also at an impasse in terms of where to start when constructing a succession plan. From the available literature, challenges have hampered succession planning in Nigeria, including the selection of succession planning as a program, which has no connection with other organizational strategies for managing talents in an organization (Wilkerson in Okhawere, 2016). According to Wilkerson (2007), succession planning has been handled as an annual event instead of a developmental strategy. Other challenges also include government interference in the appointment of successors in public organizations.

With regards to the operational system of public organization, it is marred by poor financial compensation plans and prolonged service in the public service. In addition, limited resources available to the public organization pushes them to do more with less. The implication is that instead of the management focusing on long-term strategic priorities, they focus on pressing daily operational issues. Public service organization in Nigeria lacks the expertise to institute a succession planning process, and they may also not have anyone knowledgeable in the agency to guide the succession planning efforts (CPS HR Consulting n.d).

Another challenge as identified by Dauda (2016) has to do with the federal character principle of the country. The principle is designated based on an ethnic and geographical divide. The current operationalization of the the principle tends to jeopardize the principles of meritocracy, capacity, and competence. In most instances, the federal character has posed a big challenge with regards to attracting the best people to public agencies, which in turn affects the high level of productivity and talent management in the public service. Wilkerson (2007) also pointed out that another challenge is the restriction the public personnel system places on their ability to implement private sector-model

programs. In addition, sustaining innovations and programs in the face of changing administration, politics and priorities have contributed considerably to hampering effective management development programs and succession planning in the public service.

Mentorship: An Emerging Necessity

Organizational mentoring programs have become progressively prominent in the past decade as intermediation to provide support to organizational change efforts (Catalyst, 1993, Lawlor, 1997). Notwithstanding the prominence of mentoring, public service organizations owned and managed by the government are still behind its adoption and effective implementation as there is no evidence of such policy in their several years of existence (Bozeman 2009). A common approach used by the public service is the usual emergency replacement which is aimed at filling a clear vacuum as a result of retirement, vacation, or death as against succession planning which is focused on developing people as future successors. Many a time, these replacements are made at the instance of a top government official who may want to settle some of their political cronies, and in some cases, these applicants are not qualified or lack the requisite skills and experience for the job and at the end that would not contribute to the growth of the establishment. (Wobodo, et al, 2020)

The concept of mentoring is a phenomenon any organization intending to maintain its knowledge-based competency must encourage, as it enhances the free flow of tacit and explicit knowledge from the mentors to the mentees to equip them with all necessary practical and professional knowledge they need to manage the organization when the mentors are gone. (Wobodo et al, 2020). This is made practical by Hirsh and Carter (2002) as they describe mentors as persons who groom others for future performance and give them opportunities to advance their careers. According to Clutterbuck (2002) mentoring is the assistance

rendered by a knowledgeable individual through encouragement and support while sharing knowledge, work, and ideas. This connotes that mentoring is a deliberate intention asserted by a mentor to reproduce himself or herself in the mentee, this is proven by the act of pouring out all relevant knowledge and ideas that would empower the mentee to act proficiently in the absence of the mentor. In support of the assertion, Taller & Henry (2008) believes that mentoring is a creative method of improving professional growth which in turn leads to self-actualization and focuses on developing the totality of the person. A good mentor, however, assists the mentee to understand the essentials of the organizational internal dynamics thereby making them efficient and effective in service delivery.

Shery & Stephen (2012) advanced the importance of mentoring, they noted that mentoring programs promote a smooth succession planning process. Mentoring has been linked to a myriad of irrefutable organizational outcomes, including more promotions (Dreher & Ash, 1990) better income (Chao, 1992), reduced turnover in an organization (Viator and Scandura, 1991), greater career satisfaction, and easier association (Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1993). In an attempt to capture the benefits described above, many private sector organizations are creating mentoring programs as a mechanism to address the knowledge gap.

However, public organizations in Nigeria are required to embrace mentoring programs and develop a system where well-experienced individuals as recommended by the management in the organization can identify high potential employees and start grooming them. Bozeman (2009) believes that mentorship plays a typical role in envisaging leadership succession. Schall (1997) noted that in a working setting where lofty level management appointments are either political or influenced by political cronies usually promotes an unstable and malleable managerial workforce. In this sence, mentorship can be one of the mechanisms for the achievement of adaptation and leadership preparation. Bozeman

(2009) posits that for instance, mentorship in the public service assists to alleviate the change between the elected or appointed officials to continue efforts across administrations. Wobodo et al (2020) noted that since the core purpose of mentoring is anchored on the effective dissemination of tacit knowledge which is resident in the brain of the mentor and not easily accessible to the mentees unless, at the expression of the mentor, the most viable approach here will be personalization approach: whereby the mentor develops networks to bringing people within his influence together so that knowledge internally could be shared. This can be achieved through face-to-face contacts, interactive media, workshops, and brainstorming sessions.

Conclusion

In line with existing literature, it is observed that scholars at sundry times and in diverse empirical and conceptual studies have established that successful organizations are the product of quality labor force layout through effective management development programs and succession planning processes. This is as the development of managers in an organization facilitates the attainment of organizational goals and objectives through capacity building of employees, while preparing them to meet present and future organizational manpower needs.

Furthermore, it was observed that the Nigerian public service has no visible operational management development programs that promotes sustainable succession planning in place rather the prevalent practice is what we may call an "accident replacement system"; and based on these inconsistencies and inadequacies in managing the core asset of the institutions, it has resulted in the rareness of competent and committed employees to deliver on their mandate of effective service delivery and this is contrary to the assumptions of the Resource-Based theory.

However, based on the strength of this study, it is recommended that the managers of the Nigerian public service

should first be clear about its vision for the future and the kind of leadership and skills that the vision would require, Wilkerson (2007) described it as the essential foundation for a successful succession planning programs. The Nigeria political leaders must be vision-driven and get things right by incorporating youth capacity detection, attraction, retention, and management development through mentoring. This is to facilitate the transfer of inferred experiences from the mentors to the mentees as well as consistent training to attain the up-to-date knowledge required for effective succession planning.

Nigerian polity should come up with a policy that would discourage government interference concerning the employment process in the Nigerian public service. Emphasis should be placed more on competence, skills, and experience in the recruitment process in the service. Although the Federal Character principle is geared toward bringing about social justice in the society, representation from the various ethnic and geographical divides can be drawn from the pool of qualified and competent Nigerians.

Finally, to sustain succession planning in the public service through management development, owners of inferred knowledge such as mentors should be encouraged by either according some level of recognition or initiating some monetary incentives that would act as motivation for sharing their skills and experience, and this would also encourage those coming after them to be willing to mentor others.

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