



**THE FACTORS AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUCCESSION PLANNING
IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES (MOHSS), NAMIBIA**

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Article Received on 12/05/2016

Article Revised on 01/06/2016

Article Accepted on 22/06/2016

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to investigate the factors affecting the implementation of succession planning in the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) in Namibia. Three objectives were set for achieving the aim of study, namely, to determine the factors that have an impact on the implementation of a succession planning programme in the MoHSS; to investigate the human resources management; to investigate the involvement of human resources in recruitment, selection and placement for key posts; and to determine how middle managers are groomed for their management positions. This exploratory study adopted a quantitative descriptive approach, based on data collected using a survey questionnaire. The sampling frame was set at 110 respondents and all questionnaires were completed and returned within a three-week time frame. Data was analysed by means of statistical analysis using Microsoft software and presented in the form of descriptive statistics. The study found that several factors affect the implementation of succession planning in the MoHSS. These factors include leaders being reluctant to take on succession planning; leaders assuming that succession planning do not form part of their work; inadequate information on succession planning; excessive cost/lack of resources; recruitment and replacement; a lack of clear assessment criteria and difficulties associated with internal resistance to change. Given the survey findings, this study recommends that the MoHSS should create greater awareness of succession planning amongst its employees, particularly supervisors and high-level managers. Given the complexity of succession planning, the MoHSS needs to provide increased and clear information on how succession planning should be implemented. Policy documents should be developed to help both managers of human resources (HR) and high-level managers to implement succession planning. In particular, performance assessment criteria should be clear and the MoHSS should consider implementing a performance appraisal system.

KEYWORDS: Factors affecting implementation, succession planning.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) is one of the key health service providers in the Namibian public sector. Yet it does not have a formal succession plan in place. Given numerous pending retirements as a result of age and frequent resignations owing to staff leaving the Ministry for 'greener pastures', this research was interested in how succession planning is addressed by the MoHSS. The study explored in particular the factors that affect the implementation of a succession plan in the MoHSS.

Succession planning plays a vital role in ensuring that business success will continue when the individuals currently involved in management are no longer there. It is the responsibility of every organisation to ensure that talent is allowed to emerge from within the organisation. Succession planning helps to achieve this goal through the implementation of leadership development

programmes.

Human Resources for Health (HRH) is a vital component of the MoHSS. This initiative is spearheaded by two Directorates: the Directorate of Human Resources Management and General Services and the Directorate of Policy, Planning and Human Resources Development (HRD). The Directorate of Policy, Planning and Human Resources Development is responsible for the overall planning, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of human resources development (HRD) aspects in the health sector. The Human Resources Management (HRM) division in the Directorate of Human Resources Management and General Services, on the other hand, deals with the human resource management issues (MoHSS, 2008:44).

After independence in 1990, one of the major challenges faced by Namibia's health system was a lack of the skilled human resources crucial for the successful

provision of health care. In order to address these constraints, the government launched various initiatives aimed at the development of human resources for health, including short-term, medium-term and long-term strategies. An immediate short-term strategy for filling the gap entailed the hiring of expatriates from neighbouring countries (MoHSS, 2008). To further bolster the workforce, the MoHSS awarded fellowships to enable health and social welfare workers to be trained and priority was given to improving the workforce and the quality of care in rural/remote areas, as well as addressing gender issues. Until 2009, when a medical school was established in Namibia, the majority of postgraduate education for various health professionals took place outside the country, while education for nursing and social work and postgraduate management training generally took place inside Namibia. Recipients of a fellowship sign a bonding agreement to work for the MoHSS for a specified period that is at least equivalent to the number of study years paid for by the government (MoHSS, 2008).

Over the past ten years (1998–2008), the public health sector has suffered from high levels of attrition (MoHSS, 2008), with a cumulative loss of 3309 health professionals being registered. The annual average attrition rates for selected key health professions from 2002 to 2004 was 5% (MoHSS, 2008). Owing to the prevailing shortage of health care professionals these high attrition rates are threatening the sustainability and efficacy of the health system. The prompt recruitment of additional staff and the establishment of retention schemes could help to curb these very challenging attrition trends (MoHSS, 2008).

The main reasons for human resource losses from the public health service during the year 2005/2006 were resignation (51%), retirement (20%), death (17%), transfer to other sectors (5%), medical discharge (5%) and dismissal (2%). Resignation from the public sector is primarily due to the attraction of better pay and better career growth and advancement in other sectors. There have also been a few cases of nurses who have resigned to emigrate (MoHSS, 2008).

The resignation rate of 51% includes all professional levels across the Ministry up to deputy director. Although the retirement rate stands at 20%, as mentioned above, there are many staff members at management level in the Ministry of Health who have been retained after reaching retirement age because of limited skills in their specific fields. Some regional health directors have been given two to three more years to lead their regions after they have retired. This is because they were seen as having managed their regions well and there was no one to replace them.

According to the Retention of Staff circular, circular no. 2 (2008:1), some directorates/regions are recommending that registered nurses be retained in promotional posts

after reaching the retirement age of 60. The circular further states that consideration should be given to any retention in promotional posts after a staff member has reached the retirement age of 60, owing to the critical shortages being experienced at the clinical level. This principle should not be regarded as a bar to retaining someone in a promotional post, where exceptional cases require specific expertise/skills in the interests of the service (Staff Circular no. 2, 2008:1).

Given this background, several key questions related to succession planning in the MoHSS are evoked. What are the factors that prevent the proper implementation of a succession planning programme in the MoHSS? Are the middle managers ready to take on top management positions? Are HR managers involved in the recruitment, selection and placement for key posts? What recommendations can be made to management for the effective implementation of a succession planning programme within the MoHSS? This research aimed to investigate the factors affecting the implementation of succession planning in the MoHSS.

Many staff members at management levels in the MoHSS have been retained after reaching retirement age. This seems to be the result of a lack of suitably qualified personnel to replace these potentially retired staff members. As a result of retirement of personnel, the Ministry currently has several vacant regional health director positions. Some of these regions border on neighbouring countries such as Angola, Botswana and South Africa, and these vacant positions therefore need to be filled by individuals competent enough to deal with cross-border health challenges. Areas in the health /social sector that seem to be most affected by these problems are at national and regional levels. This research aimed to investigate the factors affecting the implementation of succession planning in the MoHSS. It also aimed to assess the readiness of middle managers to take on top management positions and the extent to which they had been groomed for the positions. Finally, it investigated the involvement of HR managers in the recruitment, selection and placement for key positions.

This research is important because retaining retired staff members in their existing portfolios creates potential risks such as burn-out, lack of new development, resistance to change and poor management, among other things. Succession planning would also benefit junior staff member in the MoHSS because talented staff members can be identified and provided with education and training to develop them for future high-level positions and broader responsibilities. The findings of the study are intended to ascertain the extent of current succession planning initiatives, highlight the importance of succession planning, ensure that middle-level managers are prepared for placement and get middle managers involved in employee placement. The research will also assist the MoHSS to identify and develop potential internal staff to fill key posts at both national

and regional level, particularly those positions in which many retired staff members have been retained.

THE PURPOSE

The aim of the study was to investigate the factors affecting the implementation of succession planning in the MoHSS

OBJECTIVE

This study had three main objectives:

- determine what factors have an impact on the implementation of a succession planning programme in the MoHSS
- determine the involvement of HR managers in the recruitment, selection and placement for key posts
- determine how middle managers are groomed to take on management positions.

METHOD

A quantitative, exploratory, descriptive study was used. Exploratory studies are primarily concerned with finding out what happened and discovering new insights about a phenomenon (MANCOSA, 2010); while descriptive research describes the characteristics of an existing phenomenon. Such research seeks to find answers to questions relating to the fundamental characteristics that define the research subjects (Haynes, 2004; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009, p. 202). In this study, the researcher used a survey to uncover information on the impact of organisational culture on succession planning in the Ministry of Health. Accordingly, a quantitative research strategy was used to formulate standards, to evaluate compliance with standards and to describe the findings and results of the study.

In 2008, the MoHSS had 5509 key health professional posts, of which 1482 posts were vacant (MoHSS, 2008:47). Of these, middle-level management posts were estimated to be 907. For this study, the target population was estimated to be 110 middle level managers out of the 907 mentioned above. The sample included directors, deputy directors and all staff in middle-level management positions, such as chief control registered nurses, senior control registered nurses, chief registered nurses, chief control officers, control officers, senior accountants, chief health programme administrators, chief health programme administrators, senior health programme administrators, senior human resources officers, chief human resources officers, and chief medical officers.

In this study, the small size of the population made sampling unnecessary. The eight directorates at national level were written on pieces of papers; these papers were folded and put in a box. The box was shaken and six directorates were selected. From the six selected, the names of all managers in a specific directorate were each written on a small piece of paper and put in a box. The box was shaken well and ten managers were selected each time. The researcher selected five northern regions

from the 13 regions, and ten managers were sampled from each region. The reason for selecting the five northern regions was because they were more accessible and they were closer to where the researcher lives, thus the decision was made for financial reasons (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 211).

The questionnaires were sent to the respective regions. The researcher was assisted by a focal person in each region, who facilitated the process by receiving the questionnaires from the researcher and distributing them to the managers, and then collecting them again and forwarding them back to the researcher.

Collection instrument (questionnaire)

According to Saunders et al. (2009, p. 288), the two most commonly used primary data collection methods are the questionnaire and the interview. Questionnaires have been found to be reliable for quantitative research and are essential tools for gathering sound information (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003, p. 280). Thus, the researcher chose to use a questionnaire to collect data for this study.

The questionnaire for this survey comprised 20 questions, which were used to investigate the implementation of succession planning in the MOHSS. Questionnaires were constructed in line with the literature review and guided by the research questions. According to De Vos (2002, p. 180), the advantages of questionnaires are that the respondents have enough time to think about their answers carefully. Another advantage of the questionnaire is that a wide geographical area can be covered in the survey and respondents can complete the instrument at their own pace, which was the case in this research. The questionnaire was identified as the best means for collecting relevant, precise and unbiased information for this study. The questionnaire consisted of sections A to C: Section A: Factors that affect the implementation of succession planning in the MoHSS; Section B: Involvement of HR managers in the placement, selection and recruitment of key posts; and. Section C: Grooming of middle-level managers.

Questions included in the questionnaire were designed in such a way that they were short, clear and precise. This ensured that respondents had a common understanding of the questions asked. Although, there are some limitations to questionnaire, an attempt was made to simplify the one used in this study by using a Likert-type scale and conducting a pilot study prior to the research itself (De Vos, 2002, p. 172).

A pilot study was done by sending questionnaires to ten managers who were not part of the main study. The purpose of the pilot study was mainly to refine the questionnaire so that the respondents would not have problems in answering it and this also helped the researcher to refine the data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be

followed. In addition, it enabled the researcher to obtain the same assessment and improve the validity and reliability of the questionnaire (Yin, 2003, p. 79).

The researcher distributed 110 questionnaires to all the selected directorates/regions through the focal people who had been identified to help coordinate the work with the researcher during the data collection period. Questionnaires were sent via email to these people, who printed them out and handed them to the respondents. This method reduced costs and time wasted through travel. However, money still had to be spent on stationery (cartridges and printing papers). Postal questionnaires were accompanied by a well-written covering letter to ensure a high level of response (Saunders *et al.*, 2003, p. 200). At national level, the researcher delivered the questionnaires to respondents because no travel was required. After completion, questionnaires were collected and sent back to the researcher by courier within a period of one week as requested. The researcher estimated that the whole exercise of data collection would take three weeks because the managers were on a tight schedule and the majority could not complete the questionnaires within a week as was first proposed. Respondents were allowed to complete the questionnaires anonymously. This allowed them to give honest answers without fear of intimidation and the information gained in this way is more reliable (De Vos, 2002, p. 163).

The collected data was coded by assigning numeric values, before being captured onto an Excel spreadsheet, which was used for the statistical analysis. Data was presented in the form of frequency tables, charts and

diagrams. Descriptive research ultimately aims to solve problems through the interpretation of the data that has been gathered (Burns & Grove, 2007; Leedy & Omrod, 2010).

Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the MoHSS, as well as from the different health directors in the selected regions. A copy of the research proposal accompanied by the application letter from the research director of MANCOSA was submitted to the MoHSS research committee.

Confidentiality and anonymity were assured, meaning no information has been disclosed regarding the respondents' identities. The names of the respondents have also not been revealed. Participation was voluntary and respondents were assured that they would be free at any stage to decide to withdraw their consent and participation from the study without prejudice.

RESULTS

The findings are presented in three sections, namely, factors that affect the implementation of succession planning in the MoHSS; the involvement of human resource (HR) managers in the placement, selection and recruitment for key posts; and grooming of middle-level managers.

Factors that affect the implementation of succession planning in the MoHSS

In this section, factors that affect the implementation of succession planning are presented. The statements used to test the factor are strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, disagree and strongly agree:

Table 1: Views of the respondents regarding the factors those affect the implementation of succession planning in the MoHSS

Factors	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree strongly agree	Total
1. Leaders are reluctant to take on succession planning tasks	31 (30.7%)	43 (42.6%)	20 (19.8%)	6 (5.9%)	1 (1%)	101 (100%)
2. Leaders' assumptions about succession planning	23 (22.7%)	30 (29.7%)	25 (24.8%)	23 (22.8%)	0	101 (100%)
3. Inadequate information	32 (31.6%)	51 (50.5%)	12 (11.9%)	4 (4.0%)	2 (2.0%)	101 (100%)
4. Excessive cost/lack of resources	16 (15.8%)	28 (27.7%)	17 (16.8%)	30 (29.7%)	10 (10.0%)	101 (100%)
5. Recruitment and placement	27 (26.7%)	59 (58.4%)	7 (6.9%)	8 (8.0%)	0 (0.0%)	101 (100%)
6. Lack of clear assessment criteria	42 (41.6%)	42 (41.6%)	9 (8.9%)	7 (6.9%)	1 (1.0%)	101 (100%)
7. Overcoming internal resistance to change	28 (27.7%)	37 (36.6%)	25 (24.8%)	7 (6.9%)	4 (4.0%)	101 (100%)

- **Leaders are reluctant to take on succession planning tasks**

The purpose of this item was to test respondents' views on the willingness of leaders to take on succession planning tasks. It has been found that if leaders are not willing to take on succession planning tasks then succession planning will not be properly implemented.

Table 1 shows that 30.7% of respondents strongly agreed, 42.6% agreed, 19.8% were neutral, while 5.9% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed that leaders were reluctant to take on succession planning tasks. The majority of the respondents (73.3%) indicated that leaders' reluctance to take on succession planning tasks is one of the factors that affect the implementation of succession planning in the Ministry of Health, while 6.9% disagreed and 19.8% remained neutral.

- **Leaders assumptions about succession planning**

The purpose of this test item was to determine respondents' understanding of leaders' assumptions about succession planning. It was found that some leaders are not implementing succession planning because they have the idea that it is not within the scope of their work.

According to Table 1, 22.7% of respondents strongly agreed, 29.7% agreed, 24.8% were neutral, while 22.8% disagreed and 0% strongly disagreed. It is evident that the majority, 52.4%, agreed that leaders assumed that succession planning is not part of their work. This may be compared with 22.8% who did not agree and 24.8% who remained neutral.

- **Inadequate information**

This item tested the respondents on their perceptions on whether the information disseminated about succession planning was inadequate. Table 1 indicates that 31.6% of respondents strongly agreed, 50.5% agreed, 11.9% were neutral, while 4% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed. Accordingly, 82.1% of respondents indicated that inadequate information may be regarded as one of the factors affecting the implementation of succession planning compared to 6% who disagreed and 11.9% remained neutral.

- **Excessive cost/lack of resources**

The purpose of this item was to test whether people view excessive cost or lack of resources as one of the factors that hinder the implementation of succession planning. Table 1 indicates that 15.8% of respondents strongly

agreed, 27.7% agreed, 16.8% were neutral, while 29.7% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed. The majority of the respondents, that is, 43.5%, indicated that excessive cost or lack of resources may hinder the implementation of succession planning, while 39.7% indicated that they did not concur with the statement and 16.8% remained neutral on the matter.

- **Recruitment and placement**

The purpose of this question was to test whether respondents perceived recruitment and placement in the public sector as having an effect on the implementation of succession planning. Table 1 show that 26.7% of respondents strongly agreed, 58.4% agreed, 6.9% were neutral, while 8% disagreed and none strongly disagreed. The majority of the respondents, that is, 85.1%, indicated that recruitment and placement affect the implementation of succession planning, while 8% did not concur with the statement and 6.9% remained neutral.

- **Lack of clear assessment criteria**

This item tested respondents' understanding of the assessment criteria used when filling vacant posts. It is believed that if assessment criteria are lacking then the implementation of succession planning may be affected. Table 1 indicates that 41.6% of respondents strongly agreed, 41.6% agreed, 8.9% were neutral, while 6.9% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed. This indicates that 93.2% of respondents agree that a lack of clear assessment criteria is one of the contributing factors compared to 7.9% who disagreed and 8.9% who remained neutral.

- **Overcoming internal resistance to change**

The purpose of this item was to test respondents' understanding of the importance of overcoming internal resistance to change for succession planning. It is believed that if there is internal resistance to change then this might affect the proper implementation of succession planning. Table 1 shows that 27.7% of respondents strongly agreed, 36.6% agreed, 24.8% were neutral, while 6.9% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed. Thus 64.3% of respondents agreed with the statement compared to 10.9% that were not in agreement and 24.8% who remained neutral.

Involvement of Human Resource (HR) managers in the placement, selection and recruitment of key posts

In this subsection, the focus is on the views of respondents regarding the involvement of HR managers in the placement, selection and recruitment for key posts.

Table 2: Ratings of respondents regarding the involvement of HR managers in placement, selection and recruitment for key posts

Factors	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree strongly agree	Total
1. Succession planning a complex process	62 (61.4%)	32 (31.6%)	5 (5.0%)	2 (2.0%)	0	101 (100%)

2. Guidance for supervisors and managers	58 (57.4%)	38 (37.6%)	1 (1.0%)	2 (2.0%)	2 (2.0%)	101 (100%)
3. Involvement of different players in filling vacancies	54 (53.5%)	39 (38.6%)	7 (6.9%)	1 (1.0%)	0	101 (100%)
4. Personnel office custodian of recruitment process	32 (31.6%)	51 (50.5%)	12 (11.9%)	4 (4.0%)	2 (2.0%)	101 (100%)
5. Relationship between HR and managers	56 (55.4%)	33 (32.6%)	10 (10.0%)	2 (2.0%)	0	101 (100%)
6. Value of HR for recruitment and selection, coaching and mentoring	57 (56.4%)	37 (36.6%)	5 (5.0%)	0	2 (2.0%)	101 (100%)
7. HR managers to become strategic partners	53 (52.5%)	40 (39.6%)	7 (6.9%)	1 (1.0%)	0	101 (100%)

- **Deep succession planning a complex process requiring commitment and long-term planning**

The purpose for this test item was to understand the way in which respondents perceived succession planning. For succession planning to succeed, some commitment and strategic planning are required. The findings relating to this question are presented in Table 2. Accordingly, 61.4% of respondents strongly agreed, 31.6% agreed, 5% were neutral, while 2% disagreed and none strongly disagreed. This shows that 93% of respondents are in agreement with the statement compared with 2% who were not in agreement and 5% who remained neutral.

- **Guidance of supervisors and managers on recruitment process by personnel officers**

The purpose of this item was to test whether respondents knew what the role of HR managers is in succession planning. Succession planning will only be effective if HR managers are extensively involved in the recruitment process. In this regard, 57.4% of respondents strongly agreed that HR managers were involved, 37.6% agreed, 1% was neutral, while 2% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed. Thus, 95% of respondents agreed on the matter compared to 4% who did not agree and 1% who remained neutral.

- **Involvement of different players in filling vacancies**

The purpose of this item was to test respondents' views on the involvement of different players in the filling of vacancies. When posts are being filled the managers have to make sure that all the different players are closely involved throughout the process. The findings of this question are presented in Table 2, which shows that 53.5% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement in this test item, 38.6% agreed, 6.9% were neutral, while 1% disagreed and 0% strongly disagreed. Accordingly, 92.1% of the respondents agreed with the statement

compared to 1% who did not agree and 6.9% who remained neutral.

- **Personnel office is the custodian of the recruitment process**

The purpose of this item was to test respondents' perceptions of who is the custodian of the recruitment process. The personnel office is the custodian of the recruitment process, as they have to deal with all processes pertaining to recruitment. Table 2 indicates that 56.4% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 29.7% agreed, 5% were neutral, while 5.9% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed. Accordingly, 86.1% of participants agreed with the statement compared with 8.9% who did not and 5% who remained neutral.

- **Relationship between HR officers and managers to develop new skills and competencies**

The purpose of this item was to test the understanding of the relationship between the HR officers and managers. It is believed that HR management professionals should become strategic partners with managers to develop new skills and competencies that ensure there is a pipeline of people primed to step up to the top table. Table 2 indicates that 55.4% strongly agreed, 32.6% agreed, 10% were neutral, 2% disagreed and 0% strongly disagreed that there should be a relationship between HR officers and management to develop new skills and competencies. The evidence from the respondents shows that 88% were in agreement with the statement compared to 2% who were not in agreement and 10% who remained neutral.

- **Value of HR in the recruitment and selection process, and coaching and mentoring**

The purpose of this item was to test whether respondents' perceived that HR can add value by ensuring thorough recruitment and selection processes,

and coaching and mentoring. Table 2 shows that 56.4% strongly agreed, 36.6% agreed, 5% were neutral, while 0% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed that they had this perception. Thus evidence shows that 93% were in agreement with the statement compared to 2% who were not in agreement and 5% who remained neutral.

- **HR managers to become strategic partners with managers**

The purpose of this item was to test respondents' knowledge of the relationship between HR managers and other managers which could promote making a difference. Table 2 indicates that 52.5% strongly agreed, 39.6% agreed, 6.9% were neutral, while 1% disagreed and 0% strongly disagreed that HR managers should form strategic partnerships with other managers. The

evidence obtained from the respondents shows that 92.1% were in agreement with the statement compared to 1% who were not in agreement and 6.9% who remained neutral.

- **Grooming of middle-level managers**

This section was focuses on the perceptions of the respondents regarding the way the organisation is grooming its middle-level managers. In order to ascertain these perceptions, respondents were given an opportunity to rate themselves on a number of factors. These factors included coaching and mentoring; self-development; promotional status; and provision of opportunity for training/in-service training and are described as follows:

Table 3: Perceptions of respondents regarding grooming of middle managers

Factors	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree strongly	Total
1. Coaching and mentoring	62 (61.4%)	34 (33.7%)	5 (4.9%)	0	0	101 (100%)
2. Self-development	54 (53.5%)	41 (40.6%)	5 (4.9%)	0	1 (1.0%)	101 (100%)
3. Promotional status	69 (68.3%)	25 (24.8%)	6 (5.9%)	1 (1.0%)	0	101 (100%)
4. Provision of opportunity for training/in-service training	19 (18.8%)	20 (19.8%)	25 (24.8%)	28 (27.7%)	9 (8.9%)	101 (100%)

- **Coaching and mentoring for middle-level managers**

The purpose for this item was to test the knowledge of the respondents on the importance of coaching and mentoring, as middle-level managers can be groomed for promotion such activities. Table 3 indicates that 61.4% of respondents strongly agreed that grooming is very important for middle management, 33.7% agreed, 4.9% were neutral, with no disagreement on the matter.

It is evident that the majority, that is, 95.1% of the respondents, agreed to the statement compared to the 4.9% who remained neutral.

- **Succession planning ensures grooming**

The purpose of this item is to test the knowledge of the respondents on the importance of succession planning. Succession planning ensures there is a pipeline of people primed to step up to the top table. As Table 3 shows, 53.5% strongly agreed, 40.6% agreed, 4.9% were neutral, while 0% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed. Thus, the majority of the respondents, that is, 94.1%, was in agreement with the statement compared to 1% who disagreed and 4.9% who remained neutral.

- **Self-development**

The purpose of this item was to test respondents' understanding of the importance of training/in-service

training. It is stated that training/in-service training provides opportunities for employees to perform better and leads to self-development.

Table 3 shows that 68.3% of the respondents strongly agreed, 24.8% agreed, 5.9% were neutral, while 1% disagreed and 0% strongly disagreed. Based on the above findings, 93.1% agreed that training/in-service training provides employees with opportunities to perform better through self-development. This may be compared to the 1% that was not in favour of the statement and the 5.9% that remained neutral.

- **Promotional status**

The purpose for this item is to test respondents' understanding of the status of promotional criteria in the MoHSS. Table 3 indicates that 18.8% strongly agreed that the promotional criteria are free and fair, 19.8% agreed, 24.8% were neutral, while 27.7% disagreed and 8.9% strongly disagreed. In total, 38.6% agreed compared to 36.6% that did not agree with the statement; 24.8% remained neutral.

- **Provision of opportunity for training/in-service training**

This item focused on the provision of training/in-service training, which gives employees opportunities to pursue creative new ideas to improve performance. It thus tested

the knowledge and understanding of people on the importance of training/in-service training. As Table 3 indicates, 52.5% strongly agreed, 40.5% agreed, 3% were neutral, while 4% disagreed and 0% strongly disagreed on this importance. It is evident that training/in-service training provides opportunities for employees to pursue creative new ideas to improve performance. This was indicated by 93% of the respondents who agreed, compared to 4% who disagreed and 3% who remained neutral.

- **Limited continuing education**

This purpose of this item was to test respondents' knowledge and understanding about whether they see themselves being involved in continuing education or not. Middle-level managers can be groomed through continuous education and training. Accordingly, 33.6% of respondents strongly agreed, 42.5% agreed, 10% were neutral, while 12.9% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed that there is limited continuing education for improved service delivery for those already in service. This evidence shows that 76.1% of respondents agreed with the statement compared to 13.9% who disagreed and 10% remained neutral.

DISCUSSION

The researcher is of the view that even if the Ministry were to engage in formal succession planning there would be a number of obstacles that might hinder its proper implementation. The researcher also believes that for the Ministry of Health to be able to implement succession planning properly, the rules and regulations that govern the public sector should first be amended. In his study, Carson (2009:4) states that an organisation's success rests on its ability to change its strategy in order to meet rapidly changing market conditions. Under such conditions the culture must be adjusted so that the firm can confront and deal with factors that may contribute to its failure, stagnation or success.

From the researcher's point of view, some factors which might block the proper implementation of succession planning in the organisation include a lack of awareness creation on the issue, and the fact that leaders might not be aware of what succession planning is all about, they might not be aware its importance and they might also not know how to put it in place.

Succession planning is an exercise that requires budgeting, as it involves training. This means that in order for it to take place, it should factored into the organisation's strategic plan. Some of these factors were highlighted in a study done by Soni (2006, p. 1) and include leaders' reluctance to take on the succession planning task; leaders' possible assumption that succession planning is not within the scope of their work; inadequate information or skills on how to do succession planning; excessive costs or lack of resources; too many other work demands; overcoming internal resistance; lack of clear assessment criteria for success in leadership

roles; and a lack of evaluation of succession planning programmes to show whether they have had any effect on organisational capacity to justify their facts. Too many activities planned for that financial year might also block succession planning, as activities might be competing and time might be limited.

Similar factors were identified by Carson (2009, p. 4) in her study 'Managing the future: Why some Ontario municipalities are not engaging in succession planning'. These include that succession planning was not seen as a valuable initiative; financial constraints; immediate organisational challenges; time pressure; the size of the organisation; succession planning was not considered urgent; a lack of leadership; and no formal plan only an informally identified in service plan. In addition, the union environment viewed mentoring of some staff as being unfair to other staff or external potential candidates.

There are limited opportunities for upward career movement in the public health sector, leading to high staff turnover. The public service management circular no. 32 of 2002 stipulates that staff members in the public service may only apply for promotional posts one grade higher than their own. However, applicants who are not in the public service are allowed to apply for posts at any level. There is also a lack of a career ladder for some types of health professionals/sub-professionals, who are condemned to remain in an entry position until retirement or never to have more than one promotion their entire life.

There is also a lack of a performance management system (PMS) in the public service health sector. Although the introduction of a PMS is pending, it is not yet functional. Staff appraisal is done in a traditional manner where performance is not necessarily rewarded. Moreover, there is generally no in-service training plan for regions and districts. Therefore, there is "limited continuing education for improved service delivery for those already in the service" (MoHSS, 2008).

According to PSM circular no. 23 of 2002, public service staff rules with regard to the filling of posts, namely, recruitment and interviewing, are clearly stipulated in chapter B.11. Recruitment and placement in the public sector may also have an impact on the implementation of succession planning. The researcher conducted a thorough literature review, including a review of some of the Acts of the Public Service Staff Rule (PSSR) and found the following: There is a long recruitment process for government positions. Recruitment through the Public Service Commission (PSC) is a lengthy process, requiring several steps. "Graduates in key health professional categories like doctors, pharmacists and dentists are willing to enter public service but the long waiting time for government positions discourages many of them and as a result they turn to the private sector for employment" (MOHSS, 2008, p. 45). In addition, "the

long process for issuing work permits to foreign nationals does not easily facilitate the hiring of much needed expatriates” (MOHSS, 2008:45). Moreover, salary scales/grades are not correlated to educational levels or years of training. This is evidenced by the “high vacancy rates among physiotherapists/occupational therapists” (MOHSS, 2008, p. 45).

Organisation-deep succession planning is a complex process requiring commitment and long-term planning at all levels. “Without a thorough analysis of age and skill profile no workable plan can be made” (Hewitt, 2009, p. 181). The benefits of applying succession strategies years in advance of actually retiring include “increased profitability, greater leisure time and better work styles” (David, 2003, p. 44). According to Pynes (2004, p. 389) “for workforce and successful planning to succeed, human resources management professionals must become strategic partners with managers and develop new skills and competencies”. Another study by Stokker and Hallam (2009), on the right person, in the right job, with the right skills, at the right time, has found that workforce planning is an ongoing process. To remain effective, the workforce plan needs to be reviewed annually in the context of the organisation’s overall planning programme. This is imperative if the plan is to remain current and to be regarded as a living document that will continue to guide organisational practice.

The importance of planning and some of the obstacles to its implementation should be highlighted. In his study, Pynes (2004, p. 389) found that in order for workforce planning to succeed, “human resources management professionals must become strategic partners with managers and develop new skills and competencies”. The personnel office is the custodian of the recruitment process and personnel officers are required to give guidance and support to supervisors and managers in the recruitment process (Republic of Namibia, 2002). Furthermore, managers in the offices/ministries/agencies who seek to fill a vacancy must manage the process to ensure that all the different role players do not allow delays to slow down recruitment. Managers are also reminded to concentrate in the interview on “the competencies, knowledge, skills and attitudes required to do the work” (Republic of Namibia, 2002, p. 2).

HR can add value by looking at thorough recruitment and selection processes, coaching and mentoring for senior executives and succession planning to ensure that there is a pipeline of people primed to step up to the top table. “Those who prioritize leadership development are more likely to see a return on their investment” (Dempsey, 2005, p. 10). According to the *Oxford dictionary of human resource management* (2001, p. 354), “succession planning is defined as an element within human resource planning in which the organization tries to identify likely candidates to take over management positions when incumbents leave or retire”. In its most elaborate form, succession planning

will be based on a management development programme that prepares juniors managers to assume senior responsibilities.

In his study, Simon (2007) highlights the fact that succession planning plays a vital role in ensuring that business success will continue when the current management structure is no longer there. He further states that it is the responsibility of every organisation to ensure that there is a free flow of talent emerging from within the organisation. Succession planning helps to achieve this through the implementation of leadership development programmes (Hollington, 2007).

The PSC has the constitutional responsibility to ensure fair personnel policies. In terms of recruitment advertising, this is manifested in the principle that recruitment must be inclusive of all Namibians who may qualify rather than exclusive. This principle generates the following characteristics: All promotion posts must be advertised; the areas of search and the medium for advertising must be fairly determined and should allow for all Namibians within the area of search having a reasonable opportunity to compete for the position. Thus, “a balanced structuring of the public service must be achieved reflecting the diversity of the Namibian population” (Republic of Namibia, 2002, p. 1). There is also a lack of PMS, as the proposed PMS is not yet functional and staff appraisal is done in a traditional manner where performance is not necessarily rewarded.

In addition, there is generally no in-service training plan in place for regions and districts. Therefore, there is “limited continuing education for improved service delivery for those already in the service” (MoHSS, 2008, p. 49).

The majority of the respondents, namely 73.3%, indicated that leaders’ reluctance to take on succession planning task is one of the factors that affect its implementation in the Ministry of Health. However, 6.9% of respondents disagreed on this matter and 19.8% remained neutral. These findings indicate that leaders’ attitudes towards succession planning are also a factor in the Ministry that may thus affect its implementation. If leaders are not prepared to participate in this process, succession planning may simply not take place. Soni (2006, p. 1) has indicated that that leaders’ reluctance to take on the succession planning task is one of the factors that “hinder the implementation of succession”.

It is evident that the majority of the respondents, 52.4%, agreed that leaders assumed that succession planning is not part of their work, compared to 22.8% who did not agree and 24.8% who remained neutral on the matter. Soni (2006) agrees with this and indicates that leaders’ possible assumption that succession planning is not within the scope of their work is one of the factors that affect its implementation.

Evidence from the study showed that 82.1% regarded inadequate information as one of the factors affecting the implementation of succession planning, compared to 6% who disagreed and 11.9% who remained neutral. The study by Soni (2006) has also found that inadequate information or skills in succession planning may hinder its proper implementation.

The majority of the respondents, 43.5%, indicated that excessive costs or lack of resources may hinder the implementation of succession planning, while 39.7% indicated that they did not concur with the statement that excessive cost or lack of resources might hinder succession planning implementation. In her study, Soni (2006) also found that excessive costs or lack of resources may be an obstruction in the implementation of succession planning.

The majority of the respondents, that is, 85.1%, indicated that recruitment and placement affect the implementation of succession planning, while 8% did not agree with the statement and 6.9% remained neutral.

There is a long recruitment process for government positions. Recruitment is done through the PSC and is a lengthy process, requiring several steps.

The evidence indicates that 93.2% of respondents were in agreement that a lack of clear assessment criteria is one of the factors that contribute to the lack of succession planning, compared to 7.9% who disagreed and 8.9% who were neutral. In her study, Soni (2006) highlighted the fact that a lack of clear assessment criteria for success in leadership roles is one of the factors that affect succession planning implementation. The evidence from the respondents shows that 64.3% were in agreement with this statement compared to 10.9% who were not and 24.8% who remained neutral. Soni (2006) has shown that unless internal resistance to change is overcome, it may also prevent the implementation of succession planning in an organisation.

Hewitt (2009, p. 181) found that organisation-deep succession planning is a complex process requiring commitment and long-term planning at all levels. Without a thorough analysis of age and skill profiles no workable plan can be made. In the current study, 95% of respondents were in agreement with the statement compared to 4% who were not and 1% who remained neutral. The Public Service Staff rule states that personnel officers are required to give guidance and support to supervisors and managers in the recruitment process (Republic of Namibia, 2002, p. 2).

According to the Public Service Staff rule, managers in the offices/ministries/agencies who seek to fill a vacancy must manage the process to ensure that all the different role players are consulted and do not allow delays to slow down recruitment (Republic of Namibia, 2002, p. 2).

According to the Public Service Staff rule, the personnel office is the custodian of the recruitment process and personnel officers are required to give guidance and support to supervisors and managers in the recruitment process (Republic of Namibia, 2002, p. 2).

In his study, Pynes (2004) argues that for the workforce and successful planning to succeed, HR management professionals must become strategic partners with managers to develop new skills and competencies. The evidence from the respondents shows that 93% were in agreement with the statement compared to 2% who were not in agreement and 5% who remained neutral. HR can add value by looking at thorough recruitment and selection processes, coaching and mentoring for senior executives and succession planning to ensure there is a pipeline of people primed to step up to the top table. Those who "prioritize leadership development are more likely to see a return on their investment" (Dempsey, 2005, p. 10).

According to Pynes (2004, p. 389), for workforce and successful planning to succeed "human resources management professionals must become strategic partners with managers and develop new skills and competencies". It is evident that the majority 95.1% of the respondents agreed to the statement compared to the 4.9% who remained neutral.

The majority of the respondents, that is 94.1%, were in agreement with the statement, HR can add value by looking at thorough recruitment and selection processes coaching and mentoring for senior executives and succession planning to ensure there is a pipeline of people primed to step up to the top table, compared to 1% which disagreed and 4.9% which remained neutral.

It was found that 93.1% of respondents agreed that training/in-service training provides an opportunity for employees to perform better through self-development. This may be compared to the 1% which was not in favour of the statement and 5.9% which remained neutral.

In addition, 38.6% of respondents agreed that the promotional criteria are free and fair compared to 36.6% who did not agree with the statement. On the other hand, 24.8% remained neutral on this issue. In the Namibian public service, all promotion posts have to be advertised; the areas of search and the medium for advertising must be fairly determined and should allow for all Namibians within the area of search to have a reasonable opportunity to compete for the position: "a balanced structuring of the public service must be achieved reflecting the diversity of the Namibian population" (Republic of Namibian, 2002, p. 1).

It is evident that training/in-service training provides opportunities for employees to pursue creative new ideas to improve performance. This was indicated by 93% of

the respondents who agreed with the statement compared to 4% who disagreed and 3% who remained neutral.

Evidence showed that 76.1% of respondents agreed that there is limited continuing education for improved service delivery for those already in the service compared to 13.9% who disagreed and 10% who remained neutral. Generally speaking, there is no in-service training plan for regions and districts. Therefore, there is “limited continuing education for improved service delivery for those already in the service” (MoHSS, 2008, p. 49).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Awareness creation among supervisors pertaining to succession planning and having a succession plan in place in the MoHSS are very important. It is also important for the MoHSS to create awareness on succession planning especially among high-level managers, and to give them enough information on how succession planning should be implemented. Both policy documents should be developed on succession planning to help both HR managers and high-level managers to implement succession planning. There should also be a developmental programme in place for training middle-level managers to take on responsibilities at a higher level. The importance of grooming middle-level managers so that they are able to fill the vacuum in case of retirement or resignation should be highlighted. Sufficient information on succession planning should be provided given that it is a complex process that cannot be implemented overnight; accordingly, thorough explanation is needed. For succession planning to become a reality in a certain organisations it should be budgeted and planned for and in this case it would be advisable for the MoHSS to include it in its strategic plan. Assessment criteria should be clear and the MoHSS should consider implementing a performance appraisal system.

HR managers should guide managers and they should work closely together on matters involving recruitment and placement in top positions. More staff should be sent for training in order to develop themselves.

Exploring some of the factors outlined by the respondents may also be beneficial for understanding why some public sectors are not engaging in succession planning. By learning what arguments and information have been used to influence leaders to embrace succession planning, a stronger argument may be established as to its importance. Finally, future research could aim to investigate institutions outside the Ministry such as the Namibian private companies mentioned earlier in the literature review which were successful in engaging in succession planning. This would provide an understanding as to what other initiatives are being used and why. Moreover, it would help to determine the most effective succession planning initiatives for the Ministry.

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