The Impact of Organizational Politics on The Effectiveness of Management Development In The Kenya Civil Service

Professor Roselyne W. Gakure
Dr. George Orwa

Florence Nyokabi Wachira
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology
Nairobi, Kenya

ABSTRACT

The Civil service as a formal organization is designed to co-ordinate activities to drive the Government's development agenda. It is the policy implementation arm of the Government and is guided by public policy pronouncements and attendant development plans and circulars (GOK, 2006). The civil service is expected to be effective and efficient in order to play a vital role in economic development of the country. Yet, the civil service as part of the political system is exposed to political decisions that may influence its effectiveness. This study sought to find out to what extent organization politics affect effectiveness of management development. Using an exploratory survey design, the study targeted 205 managers in the civil service deployed in Nairobi. The sample was picked through stratified random and simple random sampling and Data was collected using a questionnaire with both Likert type and open questions. SPSS was used to analyze the data quantitatively and qualitatively.

The study found that managers were fully aware of the political context of the civil service but they did not think that Organizational Politics affected key management areas and felt that their supervisors supported them and ensured they were clear about their roles. They however thought that Organization Politics affected social relations at the workplace significantly. The study concluded that practices like performance contracting had reduced negative impacts and ensured that managers were clear on what was expected of them. The effect of politics on social relationships could be the reason for the 'silo mentality' pervading the civil service interfering with learning from each other, limiting benchmarking of successful interventions and resulting in duplication of effort that interferes with effective service delivery. The study recommends that the Government addresses the impact of politics on social relationships to improve work based learning through internal bench marking.

Key words: Management Development, Social relationships, supervisor support, Political skills, internal benchmarking

Introduction

The civil service in any Government is to implement its socio-economic development agenda. It provides policy guidelines and infrastructure to undertake programs and projects to bring about growth and development. It is therefore expected to be efficient and effective in its operations. For it to be efficient and effective, it must have managers with the required skills and competences to drive processes. The Webster Dictionary defines politics as competition between interest groups or individuals for power and leadership. The idea of politics stems from the view that, where interests are divergent, society should provide a means of allowing individuals to reconcile their differences

through consultation and negotiation. Organizational politics can be understood in terms of what people think of it rather than what it actually represents and therefore politics in organizations reflect the organizational climate. Organizational politics and power have been regarded as critical factors affecting various organizational practices (Kim, 2004).The premise that every organization is composed of people who have varied task, career, and personal interests allows us to understand an organization as a political entity (Morgan, 1998).

According to Pfeffer(1981) and Holton, Bates, Seyler & Calvalho(1997) organizational politics encompasses individual's perceptions of supervisor support, opportunity to use knowledge learnt, peer support, supervisor sanctions, and positive or negative personal outcomes resulting from application of training on the job. Vigoda (2003) argues that organizational politics is a critical factor that affects training because politics often interferes with organizational processes such as decision making, promotion, and rewards. Learners' relationship with supervisors who hold power, and the power derived from their own role status within the organization signal their capacity to transfer what they have been trained in (Kim, 2004). Accordingly, training transfer emerges as a crucial issue when performance is the reason managers are sponsored for training (Holton & Baldwin, 2003). Organizational norms and values lead learners to control the aspect of transfer for themselves. Internalized in learners' minds, these norms and values reflecting managerial interests repress transfer of training in a hidden way.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study was to determine if Organizational Politics affects effectiveness of Management Development in the civil service of Kenya

Conceptual framework
Independent variables   dependent variable
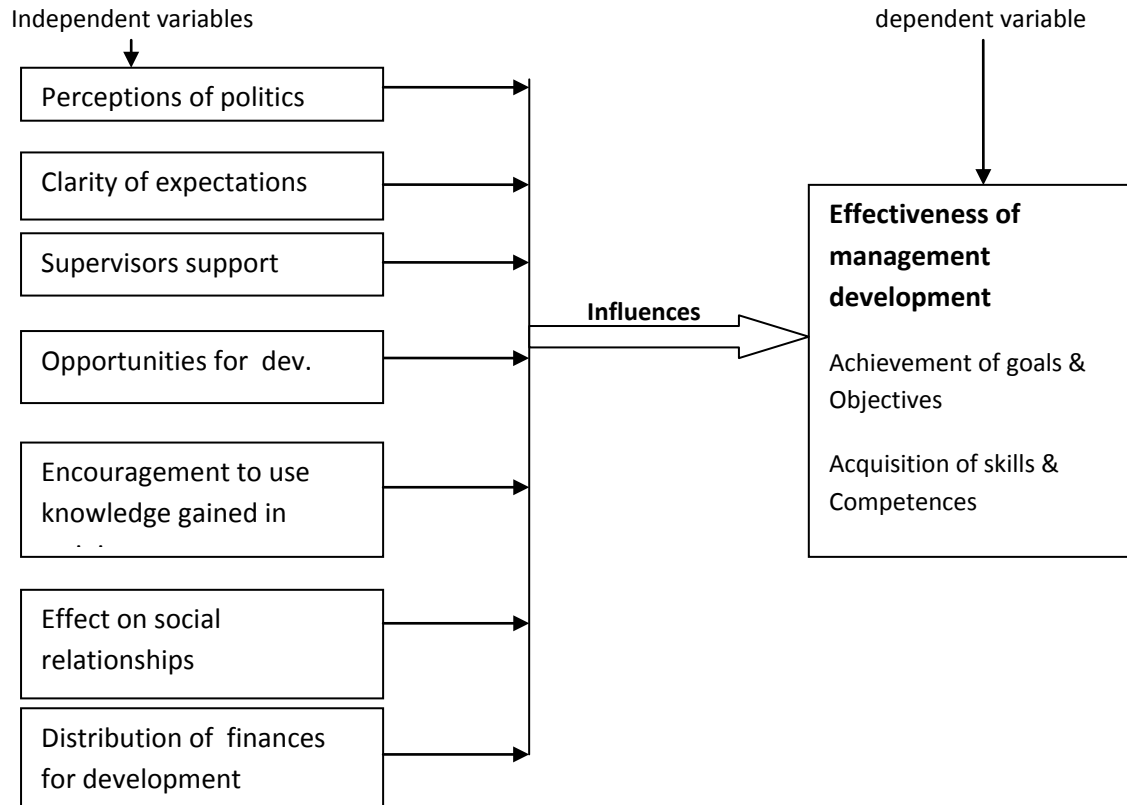
Study Methodology

The study adopted an exploratory approach using descriptive survey design to obtain information from a sample of managers in the civil service of Kenya. The study population was management cadre staff in the civil service of Kenya as defined by the Public Pay Review and Remuneration Board (PPRRB, 2005) to consist of those in job groups P,Q and R. There are 3,482 civil servants in the management cadres and 2,335 of these are deployed in Nairobi in the Ministries Headquarters (MSPS, 2011). The sampling frame for this study was the integrated pay and personnel database (IPPD) of the civil service.

Stratified random sampling was done to obtain a list of all civil servants in each of the job groups P, Q and R from the IPPD using a computer based random number generator and random numbers tables (stattreck.com/tables/random.aspx).The study targeted 205 managers picked randomly from this list. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire that included open ended and Likert scale questions and analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively using SPSS.

Study Findings and discussion
The data collected was analyzed for each variable to determine the effect on management development. This section describes and discusses the findings

Perceptions of organizational politics
According to the results of the study, 14.6 % of the managers strongly agreed and 22.2% agreed that their ministries were relatively free of organization politics. Twenty six percent (26.9%) of the respondents remained neutral, 27.5% disagreed and only 8.8% strongly disagreed. Majority (83%)of the respondents also thought it was important for managers in the civil service to recognize politics as an important aspect of their work(Figure 4.9). The findings collaborate those by Buchanan (2008) who in a similar study in the UK found that only 12% of the managers agreed that their organizations were relatively free of politics, 17% did not see much political behavior, 87% agreed that politics is a natural part of management jobs, 83% agreed that politics played at all levels. The study found that 74.1% of the respondents thought that management development should also include political skills but only 29.9% of the respondents thought that it was important to play politics to succeed as a manager. Majority of the respondents (67.5%) did not think organization politics affected their ability to acquire skills they needed as managers.

The results agree with findings by Bacharach (2005) that politics is an essential skill in managers who wish to get things done and with Kim (2004) that politics and power are critical factor in organizational processes. Valle & Perrewe (2000) argued that management development should include political skills because organization politics can build or destroy careers. The art of how to get them on your side is crucial at any rank and has human resource management implications (Vigoda, 2003).

The study concludes that managers in the civil service are aware of the political environment they operate in but did not think it had much impact on their work which is surprising considering that organization politics is a natural phenomenon in any organization.

Table 1: Perceptions of Organization Politics

Variable	Frequency	Mean	% Yes
Management Development should include political skills	117	1.74	74.1
Playing politics is important for success as a manager	52	1.32	29.9

Areas of Management Affected by Organization Politics

Although some respondents wanted organization politics to be included in the management development, they did not think it had significant impact on major management processes. Only 27.5% of the respondents thought it affected decision making, 21.05% said it affected staffing of different departments, 20.6% said that organization politics affected relationship with supervisors, 18.6% said that it affected organization of project teams while 12.3% said that it affected promotion and rewards.

The findings do not agree with findings by Vigoda (2003) and Kim (2004), that organization politics is a critical factor that often interferes with organizational processes such as decision making, promotion and rewards. It was not clear from the findings if the managers in the civil service conceptualized the term organization politics as being distinct from the political system to which the civil service belongs.
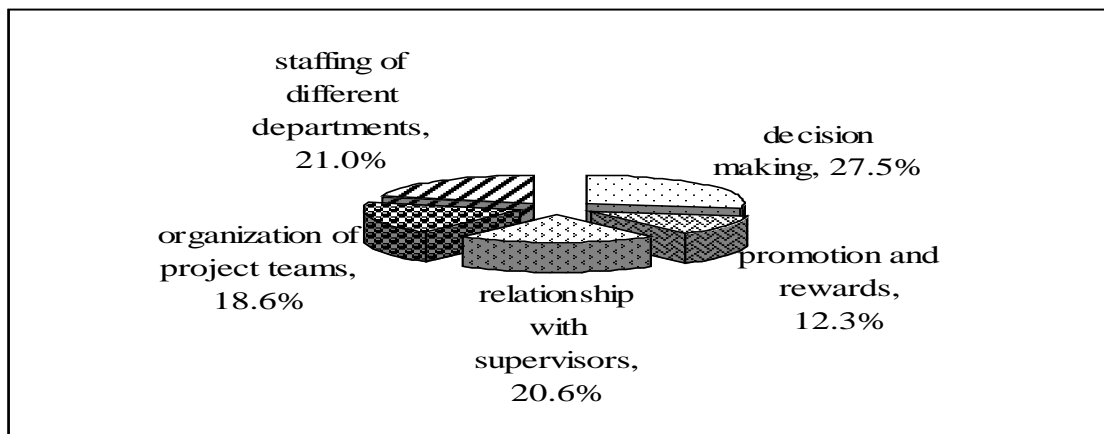

Figure 1:   Areas of Management Affected by Organization Politics

Clarity of expectations on the manager

Majority of the managers (85.8%) agreed that their supervisors ensured they were clear about their roles and of what was expected of them as managers. This agrees with the general paradigm of adult learning that clarity of roles and expectations ensure it is self directed and work based. According to McClleland(1985), Maslow(1954), Aldefer(1972) adults are driven by an intrinsic desire for personal development, achievement and the need to take responsibility to find solutions to problems and to be successful.

The findings contradict those by Voges, Priem, Shook & Shaffer (2004) who found that managers in the public sector face uncertainty about what was expected of them which was compounded by tension. In the face of uncertainty and ambiguity, the managers had to develop working strategies to remain effective in their jobs. Noordegraaf (2000) observed that public service managers had to optimize the use of their time in the face of this uncertainty.

According to Ferris & Kacmar (1992), Valle & Perrewe (2000), Vigoda- Gadot (2003), perceptions of politics have an effect on the relationships that potentially mediate or moderate supervisor-employee relations. The introduction of performance contracting in the civil service of Kenya helped to ensure that managers were sure of what was expected of them in terms of targets to achieve as collaborated

by 64.9% of the respondents that the management development policy focused management development to the needs of performance contact.

Opportunities for development

As shown below, 35 % of the respondents strongly agreed and 51% agreed that their supervisors gave them opportunities to attend management development activities. Only a small proportion (2%) disagreed or strongly disagreed(1%).
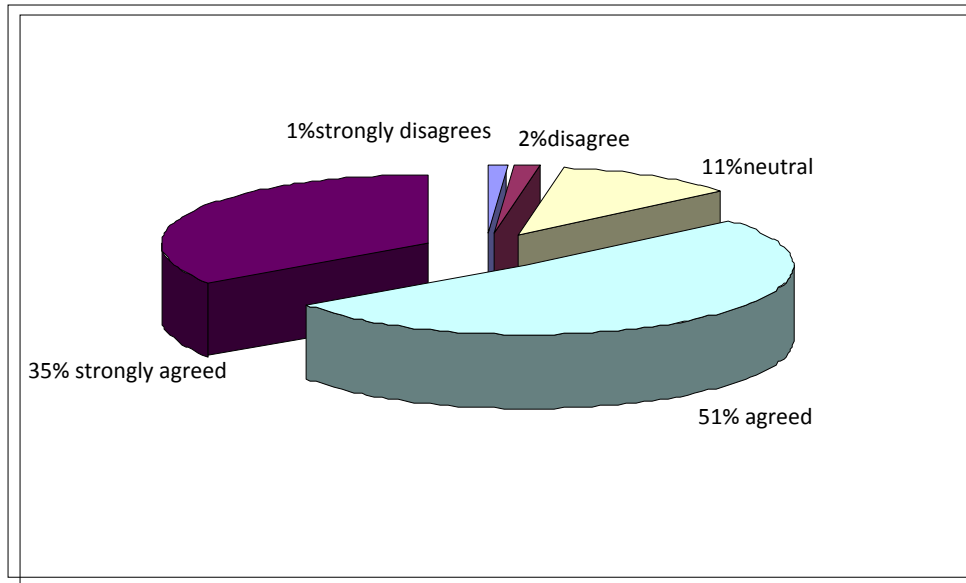

Fig 2:   Opportunities for Development

The results agree with Dipboye (1995) who argued that at times decision makers resort to political behavior to deconstruct Human Resource procedures like appraisal, training and compensation to provide support, justice and empowerment. The results also collaborate findings by Vigoda & Talmud (2003), Farrel & Peterson (1982) that politics reflect organizational climate and perceptions of supervisor support and that politically motivated behavior influences distribution of advantages within the organization. The study concludes that introduction of training committees and Human Resource Development units and oversight function by the Ministry of State for Public Service has reduced the impact of organization politics on distribution of opportunities for development. The results however are not consistent with the study findings that 51% of the respondents said they are required to impress their supervisors sometimes to get development opportunities.

Encouragement to use knowledge gained in training and development activities

According to the findings, only 21.5% of the managers strongly agreed and 55% agreed that their supervisors encouraged them to use knowledge they had gained from management development activities. Only a small proportion (6.2%) of the respondents disagreed. These findings agree with those by Kim's (2004), French & Raven (2001), Holton et.al (1997), Rouiller& Goldsten(1993), Tannenbaum & Yukl (1992) that supervisor's support is a critical factor affecting positive transfer of training.

Table 2:   Encouraged to use Knowledge Gained in Training and Development

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	strongly disagree	Total
Frequency	38	93	31	11	**2**	**177**
Percent%	21.5	55	15.3	5.1	1.1	**100**

According to Vigoda (2003), manager's relationship with supervisors who hold power signal capacity to transfer knowledge from training. Effectiveness of management development can only be gauged on the basis of knowledge and skills applied on the job to improve performance. The study concludes that managers in the civil service are well supported by their supervisors to transfer knowledge gained in management development to the work place.

Effect on Social Relationships

According to the findings, slightly more than half (59.9%) of the respondents agreed that politics affected social relationships to a medium extent and 27.3% said it affected to a great extent and 11% to a smaller extent. Only a small proportion (1.7%) said it was to a very small extent. These findings agree with those by Nahapiet & Goshal (1998) and Vigoda & Talmud (2003) on the centrality of social capital and the tight connection between social relationships, intellectual capital and sustained competitive advantage.

According to Kacmar& Ferris (1991) organization politics is an elusive type of power relations at the workplace characterized by direct or indirect engagement of people in influence tactics and power struggles. Mintzberg (1989) stressed that organization politics reflected illegitimate force relations between members of an organization. The study concludes that work is a social activity and any factor affecting social relationships will affect work performance and learning through networking at the workplace. Perhaps the 'silo' effect quite evident in the civil service could be attributed to organization politics.
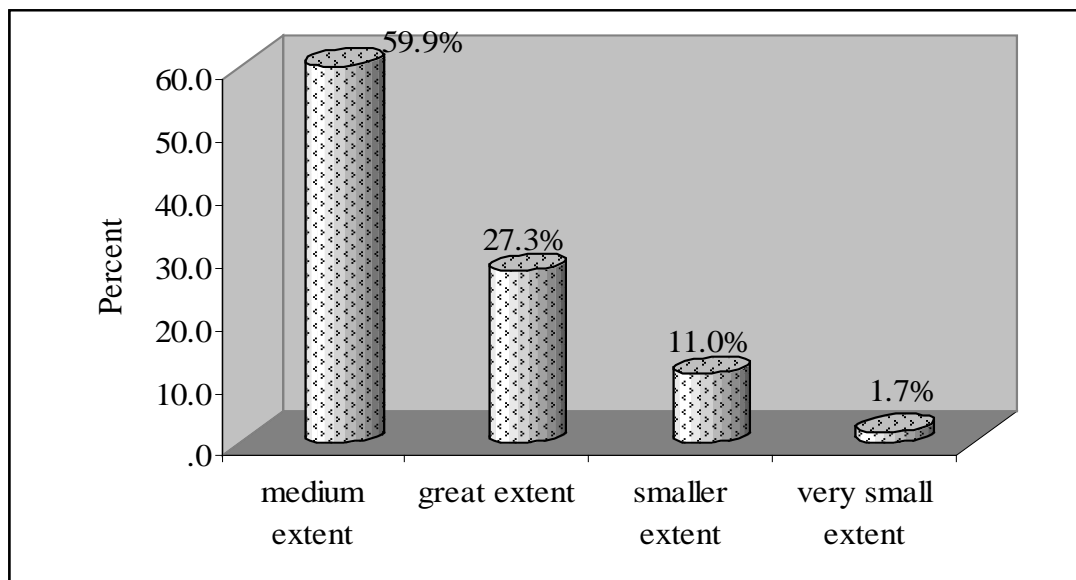

Figure 3:Effects of Organization Politics on Social Relationships

Distribution of opportunities for development

According to the findings of the study, 69.6% of the managers thought that distribution of development opportunities was fair and equitable and 30.4% thought it was unfair and inequitable. The findings disagree with those by Kamar & Ferris (1991) that self interest results in decisions that affect equity and justice in the distribution of resources and opportunities.

According to Zanzi, Arthur & Shamir (1991) resource distribution is one of the influence tactics used by employers in organizational politics. Vigoda & Talmud (2003) found that perceptions of fairness and equity affect job performance. The study concludes that preparation of annual training projections and plans agreed upon by the training committees ensure that there is parity of treatment in opportunities for development.

Inferential statistics

To confirm the relationship between organization politics and effectiveness of management development, Pearson's correlation and regression analysis were conducted on the data. The results are represented in this section.

As shown in the table below, Pearson's correlation coefficient of .341** at p=<.001 showed there is a positive relationship between organization politics and effectiveness of management development. The relationship however is weak.

Table 3: Pearson's Correlation

		Organization Politics	Effectiveness of MD
Organization Politics	Pearson correlation Sig (2tailed)	1	.341**
	N		.000
		177	177

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01level (2-tailed)

Regression analysis yielded R coefficient equal to 0.341 that confirmed a weak positive relationship between organization politics and effectiveness of management development. The R^2 value of .116 showed that only a maximum 11.6% of the variation in effectiveness of management development could be explained by organization politics.

Table 4:   Model Summary for Organization Politics

Model	R	R square	F	Sig
1	.341	.116	22.975	.000

Coefficients

		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
Model		B	Std error	Beta	t	Sig
1	(Constant)	30.731	4.253		7.226	.000
	Organization Politics	.916	.191	.341	4.793	.000

The F statistic of 22.975 p<.001 showed the model's goodness of fit to explain the variations and to reject the null hypothesis. This validated the alternative hypothesis that organization politics affects effectiveness of management development. The Beta values of .341 confirmed the weak relationship between the variables. The value of t = 4.793 p<.001 showed that organization politics is a significant predictor of effective management development.

These findings support similar findings by Vigoda & Talmud (2003) and Kim (2004), Buchanan(2008), Kacmar&Ferris(1991) that perceptions of politics has an impact on Human Resource management and development as well as transfer of knowledge to workplace. According to Holton et al (2001),Harvey & Mills (1970), Pettigrew (1973), Pfeiffer (1981) there is a close association between political activity in organizations and distribution of resources. Mintzberg (1985) argued that there is a positive relationship between interpersonal relationships, performance and productivity and politics in organizations. Morgan (1986) argued that power determines *who gets what, when and how*.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study established that the relationship between organization politics and effectiveness of management development was weak and a unit change could only explain 11.6% of the variability in effectiveness of management development. The managers thought that politics affected the key management areas to a smaller extent social relationships at work to a medium extent.

If organization politics reflect organization climate/culture, then the study confirmed that politics permeate the fabric of the civil service. However, Organization politics has been tempered with practices that reduce its negative impacts. Introduction of performance contracting has ensured that managers are clear on what is expected of them since their performance would determine the rating of their ministry.

Managers in the civil service did not link decisions on promotion, rewards, staffing and appointment of project teams to organization politics and this contradicts findings in other studies about the role of Politics in organizations. It is possible that managers being the key players of organization politics had not focused much on the impact it has on those they supervise. Alternately, institutions like the Public service Commission that take decisions on career progression and promotion, the Pay Review Board(now Salaries and Remuneration Commission) that takes decisions on rewards and the Ministry of State for public service that takes decisions on staffing and Human Resource management may be the reason the impact of organization politics on key management areas has been reduced significantly at Ministry level.

The effect of politics has on social relationships is real in the civil service and could be the reason for the 'silo mentality' pervading individual ministries and the entire civil service interfering with learning

from each other and limiting benchmarking of successful interventions in service delivery. It may also be the reason for duplication of effort that interferes with effective service delivery.

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