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Nnamdi O. Madichie Margaret Nyakang'o

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An exploratory insight into the workplace demographic challenges in the public sector

A Kenyan perspective

Nnamdi O. Madichie

Centre for Research and Enterprise,

London School of Business and Management, London, UK, and

Margaret Nyakang'o

Department of Finance and Administration,

Kenya Bureau of National Statistics, Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the need for a Strategic Workforce Plan (SWP) in a public sector organization (PSO) confronting an ageing workforce situation.

Design/methodology/approach – The study is based upon an action research protocol with a view to initiating change through SWP developed in-house at a PSO that is arguably the custodian of workplace diversity.

Findings – The findings reveal a general consensus on the ageing workforce challenges at the PSO requiring the need to revisit the status quo on the recruitment and retention strategies as well as succession planning and talent management practices within the organization.

Research limitations/implications – The study highlights the case of a PSO that has set about addressing the workplace demographic challenge by involving employees to become more reflexive in their engagement within the organization, which serves the dual purpose of “custodian” and “role model” for the country.

Originality/value – The challenge of an ageing workforce is not common occurrence in developing countries such as Kenya. However the manifestations of this unusual occurrence, and attempts to “nip things in the bud”, using an internally generated SWP with a view to changing the status quo is a demonstration of organizational learning and employee buy-in.

Keywords Talent management, Public sector organizations, Sub-Saharan Africa, Strategic workforce planning, Ageing workforce, Kenyan National Bureau of Statistics

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

A recent report has estimated the youth population in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) to be in excess 200 million and this is expected to double by 2045. Compared with the 42 per cent of youth with secondary education, it is expected that in another ten years, this proportion would have grown to 59 per cent (World Economic Forum, 2013). Against the backdrop of a rapidly growing, and better educated youth population in SSA, the representation of the youth in the public sector has been marginal. This raises a number of concerns that form part of the research enquiry prompting the need to explore whether a Strategic Workforce Plan (SWP) would be accepted and implantable in order to mitigate the demographic challenges in the workplace of a Public Sector organization (PSO) that should be a role model for the public sector in Kenya.

The main purpose of this study was to investigate organizational sub-groups at the Kenyan National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) and tease out the multiple team



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perspectives of employees as experienced in their everyday lives within the organization. This involved encouraging employees to become more reflexive in their engagement at KNBS. The study demonstrates the case of a PSO that requires addressing the workplace demographic challenge confronting organizations especially those in the public sector. In this particular case the need is even more pertinent considering that it should be seen as not just the custodian but also as a role model for workplace diversity. The study, therefore, sought to investigate the need for a SWP in a PSO confronting an ageing workforce dilemma. As a reflexive study the three aims were to: First, understand why staff have not been replenished regularly leading to mass exits. This would then improve the staff recruitment strategies. Second, to identify strategies that would foster understanding between the older and younger generations. This will improve employee relations within the workforce and improve retention rates. Third, to link the organization's strategic objectives to the human capital challenges as well as the Government's development blue print, the Vision 2030. This would be used to improve the implementation of future strategic plans and allocation of resources to human capital.

The study, therefore, poses and seeks answers to a range of questions for public policy, all linked to the research question, especially for a supposed role model like the KNBS – these range from the how, where and what:

- RQ1.* How has KNBS managed the ageing workforce within its ranks?
- RQ2.* Where and to what extent can a SWP be made more relevant to dealing with the ageing workforce challenges within the organization?
- RQ3.* What are the current (recruitment) strategies for developing sustainable employee relations within the inter-generational workforce at KNBS?

These critically reflective questions and their answers would then be linked to the proposition that SWP may be utilised to manage staff retentions, harnessing talent and succession planning in a manner that would cushion KNBS from losing valuable skills in a haphazard manner (Lewis and Cho, 2011; Lewis and Heckman, 2006). Following this opening section, the rest of the study unpacks the narrative on the talent management challenges epitomized by the rapidly ageing workforce at KNBS with a view to initiating organizational change processes taking into consideration the underlying power relations amongst the key players (i.e. employees, senior management and policy makers). As a consequence, the study begins with a documentation of the research context for the entire study – notably KNBS. This is followed by further reviews of the literature specifically touching upon how an SWP can be seen as a worthy intervention tool for counteracting the effects of high staff turnover and consequently addressing the ageing workforce question. These latter topics are picked up in the methodology where the vagaries of insider research are highlighted along with the theoretical framing of the study, sample selection, data collection methods and analysis techniques. The key findings from the focus groups leads on to the discussion of the findings. The study concludes by linking the research questions and the findings providing policy implications for the PSO. Overall, the main focus of the study is to collectively address the recruitment and retention strategies at KNBS as most of the older workers are exiting either due to having reached retirement age or through other voluntary means. With these exits come a loss of talent and skills derived from experiences that are not passed along to younger workers. Addressing this problem can be undertaken through the development of an SWP, collectively developed by key parties within the organization.

2. Research context – the KNBS

The KNBS faces a looming workplace demographic deficit that would require research into understanding how best to replenish exiting staff, while improving on diversity of its workplace along all facets of the demographic – age, gender, education being the main elements. In the face of a new “constitutional dispensation” in Kenya, coupled with the country’s increasingly aware and educated populace (with graduates of both genders) the diversity of the workplace should be seen as central to the daily lives of those in the public sector of which KNBS is the legitimate custodian.

It must be pointed out that KNBS is a microcosm of the general Kenyan economy where on average, 800,000 Kenyan youth join the labour market every year, chasing the half a million jobs available. What is intriguing, however, is that these jobs are mostly in the informal sector of the economy (only 10 per cent are in the formal sector, see KNBS, 2012). Indeed official statistics such as those from the World Bank’s Economic Stimulus Plan suggests that an additional 300,000 jobs would have been created enough to hire all unemployed urban youths aged 15-34 years. Government spending government on jobs creation is expensive and the returns are not commensurate with the financial outlays. In the stimulus plan, the jobs created were temporary and unsustainable, with many of the projects left incomplete at the end of the programme. The current government (elected into office 4 March 2013) has pinned most of the job creating strategies on flagship schemes for women and youth. Yet, these may not be the best use for such scarce resources. One area of concern would be to increase technical courses for the youth. This requires a long hard look at the policies that would make the wheels of the economy move faster and ride more smoothly (*The Nation*, 24 July 2013).

Such findings pose some of the biggest problems facing the Kenyan community at large, and at KNBS this problem takes upon a more complex angle, in which the workplace demographic portrays a worrying trend, making it necessary to craft a long-term solution enshrined in the SWP. As a complex organization that interacts with a range of stakeholders, the SWP must be in tune with the day-to-day activities of employees – a large number of which are about to exit KNBS due to having reached the mandatory retirement age of 60 years. Indeed, the first cohort of retirees left the organization in 2014 – with further retirements on a monthly basis thereafter, depending on their respective contracts. Ironically the government has frozen new recruitments due to budgetary constraints brought about by the implementation of the new constitution.

In 2009, the Kenyan Government increased the mandatory retirement age for its workers from 55 to 60 years. This move was meant to provide time for the government to raise enough funds to pay off the thousands of retirees that were due to exit from the service. An argument was then advanced that at the age of 55, the employees to be retired were still productive. Some even contended that the cumulative on-the-job experience of the 55-year old workers was too valuable to be dispensed with. Furthermore the workers also rejoiced at the increase in retirement age as they now had jobs for another five years – thereby buying more time to prepare for life after retirement. For the government however, this was temporary reprieve, in order to raise enough money to deal with a bigger underlying problem. The grace period has now lapsed and from the beginning of July 2013, officials at the Treasury have been grappling with how to finance more than 20,000 retirees exiting their workplaces. While the turnaround time for paying retirees has greatly improved, issues over the meagre monthly Ksh 200 (US\$2.35 going by the Oanda currency conversion figures)[1], contributed by workers over their working life remain, as these are not commensurate with the cost of living by the time they retire (*The Standard*: 15 July 2013). Sargent *et al.* (2013) have identified that retirement has witnessed numerous

changes over the years – with multiple meanings, and suggestions for a re-invention of the term. As detailed in the same report, the 200 Kenyan Shillings contributed to the National Social Security Fund is not going to afford retirees the kind of life they may want to live after mandatory retirement age of 60 years. Neither is the defined Government pension, which may not be forthcoming due to cash-flow problems within the National Treasury (see Arza and Johnson, 2006; Wang and Schultz, 2010). Based on the background highlighted thus far, it is persuasive to argue that KNBS is faced with the challenges of an ageing workforce due to generational imbalances within its workforce. In order to develop coping strategies for this challenge there is a need for some form of reflexivity within the organization, which requires some form of organizational learning – afforded by the practical use of collective development of an SWP – thus providing the impetus for the study at hand.

3. Literature review

The literature review is split into three sub-sections: the ageing question; organizational learning; and the need for an SWP.

The ageing question

Ageing is expected to have serious repercussions for the world's labour force. Indeed many studies (see Armstrong-Stassen and Templer, 2005; Kunze *et al.*, 2011; Aaltio *et al.*, 2014) have shown that ageing is more than a workplace problem. According to the UK's Office of National Statistics, ageing is now expected to impact whole economies due to the pressures placed on state pensions, healthcare and social welfare upon retirement. In the case of Kenya, there is currently a significant increase in the proportion of older workers aged between 45 and 65 exiting the workplace in the next ten years (see Nyakango and Madichie, 2013). While this might not pose an immediate concern, there are indications that these employees are not being replaced, and especially so in the public sector. Indeed Statistics from the KNBS have shown that 46 per cent of the employees, as at December 2012, were between the ages of 51 and 60 and therefore about to exit anytime once they hit mandatory retirement age of 60 years (see the Pension's Act, Government of Kenya, 2009a). Further estimates obtained from the Treasury show that the total pension bill for the fiscal year 2013/2014 would increase to KSh38.16 billion from KSh28.14 billion (i.e. US\$0.5 million from US\$0.33 million) in the 2012/2013 fiscal year. The Kenyan Government now wants public servants to start contributing to their pensions, an idea that has been on the "back burner" for a while (Pension Reforms, 2006). It is estimated that up to 20,000 civil servants retire each year. If the exits happen as they are likely to, there is going to be a large shortage in labour skills in a rather dramatic manner (Ashworth, 2006), not to mention the large pension pay-outs that will accompany the impending exits from KNBS – something that has been recently described as a "ticking time-bomb" (see Nyakango and Madichie, 2013) in the workplace demographic.

There is a new problem at the workplace that has nothing to do with salaries or downsizing. It has everything to do with the various generations at the work place. The three generations at the workplace are the Baby Boomers – born Post-World War II, between 1946 and 1964, Generation X – born between late 1965 and 1976, and Generation Y – born between 1977 and 2000 (see Festing and Schafer, 2014). Due to the different age-groups, values and attitudes among the employees differ. They do things differently and even communicate differently. It is, therefore, evident that these differences be identified and addressed at the point of recruitment to team building and

motivation, all crucial aspects of human resource management and therefore workforce planning. They can impact productivity as well as change management. Baby Boomers are well established in their careers, holding positions of authority and power.

However, when working with younger workers, they have problems relating because they believe that authority only comes with age. If they encounter cases of young bosses then there is likely to be a clash of values. The older workers also believe that they have all the answers. When the younger employees propose new ideas, the older ones feel challenged leading to conflict. Generation X, who are in their 30s and 40s are more individualistic, flexible and value their work. They work to live, rather than living to work like their Baby Boomer colleagues (Festing and Schafer, 2014). They appreciate fun at the workplace and are less committed to one employer, preferring instead to change jobs where there is prospect of career progression. Generation Y usually have a sense of urgency, which may present a problem when working with other generations – they are known for always being on the look-out for “the next challenge even before completing the current one” – to the extent that sometimes, their actions akin to resistance, once they felt undervalued.

In the crafting an SWP, therefore, it is pertinent to consider the differences between these generations – something that can be achieved by forming employment circles that comprise of all generations, ensuring that there is idea-sharing at all times. Having a robust promotion policy that makes use of all generation’s strengths and talents would also be useful in ameliorating any resentment due to perceived discrimination or perceptions of these. Generation Y tend to have an inclination towards instant communications using mobile or other technological devices, as well as through social media platforms – from Facebook, through Skype, to blogs. Furthermore, developing career plans and roles for Generation X can help avoid conflict with other generations. The human resource planning needs to take into account each of the three generations to ensure that all interests are accommodated (*Business Daily*, 12 July 2013).

SWP

Workforce planning is abroad concept that defines proactive ways of determining future staffing needs based on the strategic objectives of the organization. However, many organizations in Kenya today have neither determined the number and type of employees that will be required to address the challenges of the future, nor have they established clear indications that the organizations have identified the roles and core competencies needed to support their goals and service delivery strategies. Hardly have any analyses been performed to assess the gaps between current positions and those needed for the future – something that further complicates the workplace demographic – considering the continuing mass retirements. The youth too have not found it easy to join the service due to a long standing freeze in employment that coincided with reductions in donor funding that happened in the early 1990s across many countries in Eastern Africa (KNBS Economic Survey, 1990-2012).

SWP encompasses different phases, from recruitment to training, retention, monitoring and evaluation of strategies that will align with the organization’s goals and objectives. Indeed four requisite SWP phases have been identified to include: first, setting the strategic direction; second, workforce analysis; third, implementation of the plan; and fourth, monitoring, evaluation and revision of the plan in response to feedback (Malatest, 2003). This makes it essential that SWP be developed and implemented in order to avert the looming shortages in both skilled and semi-skilled

staff (see e.g. Grobler and Zock, 2010). Organizations in the public sector need to financially plan for their staff retirement benefits, whilst also anticipating the recruitment and training expenses (Figure 1).

Succession planning and talent management

Succession planning, a critical output of SWP, can be defined as the “process of systematically identifying, assessing and developing organizational leadership to enhance performance” (Conger and Fulmer, 2003, p. 78). However, succession planning should not only involve leadership positions, but rather be extended to all critical positions that contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives (Kim, 2003, p. 535). Riccucci (2002) argues that organizations need more than the traditional skill sets and aptitudes if they are to cope with varied challenges such as ageing and more diverse workforces, as well as workforce reductions. Succession planning may, therefore, need to consider arrangements that involve all those who collaborate in the service delivery network, such as consultants, and contractors (Fredericksen, 2010, p. 53).

Before reaching out to these networks, however, the in-house component needs to be tackled by putting the house in order. In the light of this, succession planning must form a significant component of SWP and strategic human resource management (Coleman-Selden, 2009). Planning for human resources deals with meshing management of staff with organizational resources, within an evolving environment. McCann and Selsky (1984) posit that the high level of turbulence in public agencies make it difficult to respond to environmental uncertainties. Planning likewise provides an analytical coping mechanism to counter the threats and embrace the opportunities in the organizational environment. Unfortunately, despite the obvious benefits of succession planning, many public agencies rarely practice it (Johnson and Brown, 2004, p. 380; Ospina, 1992).

Drawing upon the title of Ibarra’s (2005) study “Succession planning: an idea whose time has come” it is clear that the subject is overdue for debate. Indeed succession planning cannot be isolated from talent management (Sweeney, 2013), which has been well documented in the literature. Kim (2003) posits that overall organizational goals mean more than just filling empty seats with the first available person. Rather it is about attending to other strategic goals such as fairness and representativeness (see also Caruso, 2014). Indeed Sweeney (2013) reminds us of the criticality of succession planning within organizations, indicating that succession planning is increasingly critical to organizations of all sizes. However, although many organizations may have given succession planning some thought, they have yet to exhaustively develop and implement an effective plan for the effective succession of key employees at all levels’. Sweeney (2013) concludes that there is need to engage with succession planning for effective transfer of tacit knowledge.

The Generation Y cohort is the most responsive to initiatives by management to improve the world around them (Snell and Bohlander, 2011, p. 24). Organizations, therefore, need strategies to create a favourable working environment to avoid unnecessary exits. Some of the crucial areas are job satisfaction, a sense of inclusion in the workplace, operational effectiveness, ethics, integrity, work-life balance, recognition, career development, and remuneration – key elements that would emerge from an SWP. Recruitment should be targeted at bringing younger workers to a workplace which should be made flexible and adaptable (Lewis and Frank, 2002). Other strategies include leadership development, tracking skills and talent through evaluating performance and creating “talent banks” (Pynes, 2009).

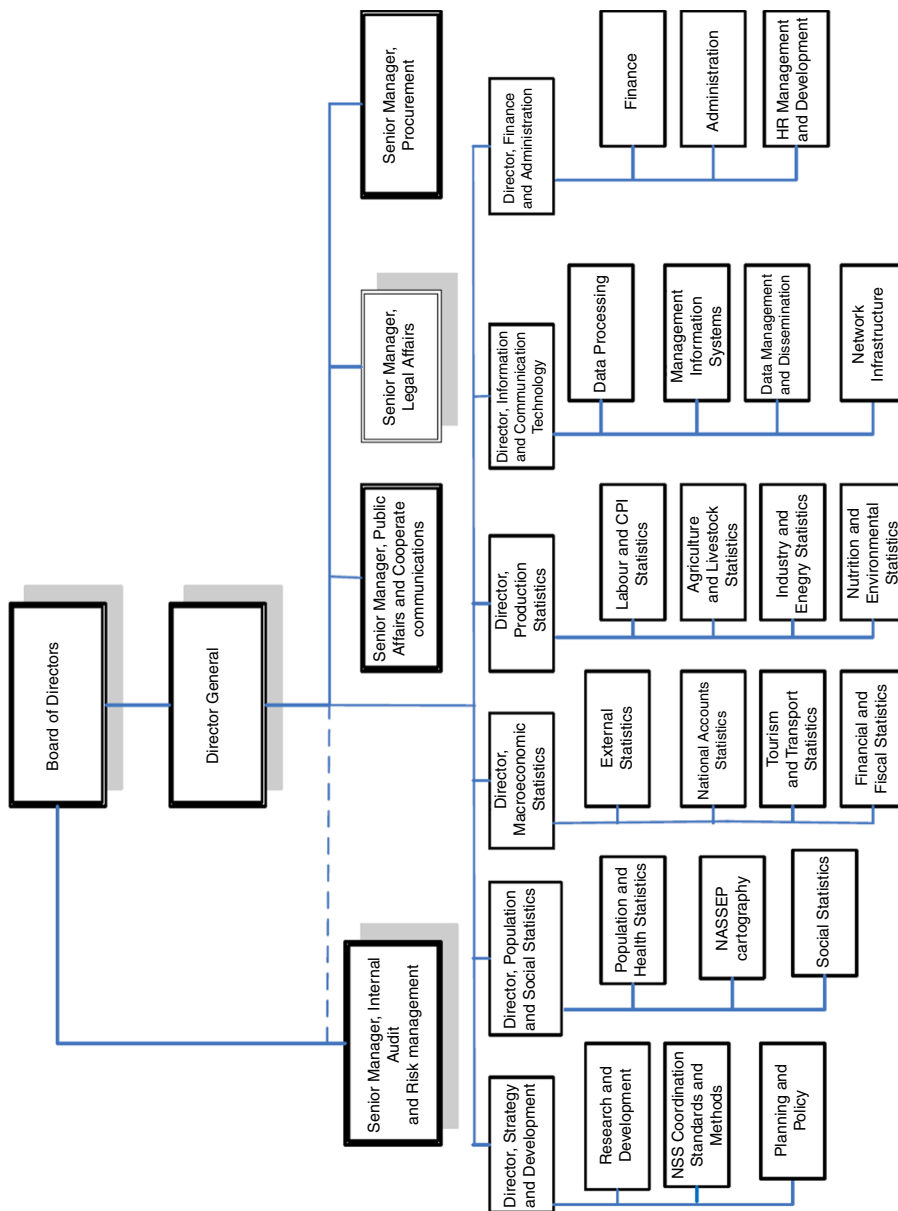


Figure 1.
The organization structure of KNBS

Within the UK context, for example, SWP and talent management could just as easily be negatively impacted by lack of understanding between older and younger generations at the workplace due to a number of factors, namely: individual performance; job satisfaction; and overall motivation. These details were contained in a report entitled “Managing Generation Y” (Schofield and Honore, 2011) which revealed that, younger employees, on the one hand, are not only very ambitious, but are also strongly motivated by money and status whilst expecting rapid progress in career advancement. On the other hand, the older generation are more conservative, some having worked in the same job sometimes for up to 40 years.

While Schofield and Honore (2011) sought to explore the manager-graduate relationship in the first few years of work, as well as the expectations of the managers, their graduates and the organizations for their future leaders, a similar study carried out in Kenya by PriceWaterHouse, also in 2011, revealed a significant disconnect between the expectations of younger generations *vis-à-vis* the older generations (see PwC, 2011). An earlier study (PwC, 2009) carried out in Kenya, indicated that 49 per cent of the Generation Y employees surveyed expected to remain at their current employer for the next three to five years, whilst 23 per cent expected to leave in the next twelve months. Evidently, retention strategies continue to be a challenge across many organizations. One key aspect impacting retention is effective staff induction and orientation to ensure the achievement of environment integration and competency development. The research carried out has revealed that there are different reasons for workplace departures, in both Kenya and the UK.

Organizational learning

Although the terms “organizational learning” and the “learning organization” have been used interchangeably, they do have different meanings. Organizations become what they become due to the quality of their learning processes, strategy and strategic direction caused by such learning (Stacey, 2011, p. 99). Easterby-Smith and Araujo (1999) have provided the difference between organizational learning and the learning organization by arguing that, on the one hand, the latter involves the methodological tools which help identify, promote and evaluate learning processes inside the organization. On the other hand, organizational learning concentrates on the “detached observation and analysis of the processes involved in individual and collective learning inside organizations” (Easterby-Smith and Araujo, 1999, p. 2). The essence of the distinction is to differentiate between the technical and social strands of the organizational learning literature. Whilst the technical strand considers learning as the processing, interpreting and responding to quantitative and qualitative information (Argyris and Schon, 1978), the social strand deals with how people make sense of their work practices (Weick, 1995). Our key emphasis here is therefore on the social strand which is reinforced by KNBS employees’ participation in developing the SWP.

One of the most influential concepts of the learning organization was advanced by Senge (1990) who posited that an organization could only excel if it was able to deliver on its commitments and the capacity of its members to learn. He does not, however, see this kind of learning taking place within profound teamwork environment. Rather he identified five key areas for organizational learning – personal mastery; mental models; systems thinking; shared vision; and team learning. Similarly, Stacey (2011) argued that managers are assumed not to respond to the real world but to their idea of the real world as represented in their mental models. This concept is crucial in understanding what would motivate employees to participate in SWP. This must, however, make

sense to employees in their day-to-day engagements before they are motivated to embrace such change in mind-set (Vakola and Nikolaou, 2005). Indeed the organization learning theory seems to suggest that organizations are systems driven by both positive and negative feedback loops that have the capacity to produce unexpected and often surprising outcomes. In other words, organizations learn when people within them are cohesive and trust their teams' composition – which obviously impacts upon their day-to-day experiences at the workplace. It follows that people can then work together to change the assumptions which block change only by being critical of their current practices as a result of embarking upon some reflexive thinking.

4. Research approach/design/method

This study is based upon Action research, an approach that typically involves participants examining their own day-to-day workplace practices carefully and systematically, in order to bring about positive change to organizational practices (see Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). In this study such change processes are based on a critical reflection of key employees in their day-to-day roles within KNBS. The research protocol involved probing the various strategies of improving recruitment, training, retention and retirement practices to achieve greater diversity. The study also takes the form of a “self-conscious criticism” (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1998) considering that one of the authors happens to be a senior employee of KNBS, which also poses challenges (e.g. conflict of interest) and opportunities – i.e. the insider advantage (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). With the impending retirements of the “Baby Boomer” generation, it is inevitable that many organizations would be affected by the loss of institutional skills and talent. This is especially critical in the public sector in Kenya, where the mandatory retirement age is 60 years.

The action research protocol

Action research is an emergent and cyclic inquiry process which brings together action and reflection, practice and theory. The study participants collaborated in the research process actively, integrating and alternating research, change and learning through which knowledge was expected to increase. Action research increased participation, collaboration and learning, which worked better in groups (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). By drawing upon a broad spectrum of action research approaches, all rooted in the authors' experiences (Reason and Marshall, 2001, p. 413), action research was both a personal, political and social process. Furthermore, according to Reason and Bradbury (2001, p. 1) action research is “a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowledge in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview”.

At the heart of all these were emergent development forms of knowledge within the organization. Action research generated much interest due to its distinctive quality whereby practitioners studied their workplace and offered explanations to their colleagues for what they were doing (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011). The study assumed the form of a “self-conscious criticism” (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1998, cited in Johnson and Duberley, 2000, p. 141), with the inevitable political baggage that is accentuated by such an approach. As an employee of KNBS and a woman, my challenges and opportunities in the insider research could not be overemphasized (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). The study sought to provide an interpretation of the current workforce with available data, subjecting it to sustained criticism and uncovering its fundamental contradictions. Data collection would

occur during focus group discussions, with quantitative data being analysed separately but subsequently compared with the results of qualitative data, in four stages.

Action research and SWP

There are a variety of angles that this study would have taken, considering the issues of research validity and ethics that accompany action research (Herr and Anderson, 2005). The study was being carried out by me, an insider female senior member of staff in the KNBS. As an insider, action research seemed like an appropriate way, not just to deepen own reflection but also as a way to solve a workplace problem and increase own professional development. The benefits of this study would further empower the participants by contributing to bringing about organizational change in a collaborative manner. Interestingly, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) described this kind of insider research as having serious difficulties because the tacit knowledge that is supposed to be an advantage, may work against the noble objectives by introducing elements of subjectivity. Indeed it was the “critical friends” in the form of study participants who were expected to provide an independent view to the researcher’s position as principal investigator (Checkland and Scholes, 1991).

The proposed SWP is geared towards the development and implementation of strategies that provide insights into talent demand and supply using both historical and current trends – both internally and externally generated to improve forecasting, as well as the allocation, deployment and performance of staff. The programme further informed retention strategies especially in key areas like statistics where specialised skills take longer to acquire and perfect. This study, therefore, sought to identify the high potential talent within KNBS, as well how to get more of the same in a proactive and strategic manner. Similar to the collaborative inquiries in previous studies, this study was crafted around groups convened by “formal institutional efforts to engage in data-driven organizational change efforts” (Herr and Anderson, 2005, p. 36). In order to engage the participants in the actual SWP, a set of planning worksheets were used based on the KPMG Model (see Rothwell and Kazanas, 2003), which outlines ten key steps to SWP construction:

- (1) reviewing of the organizational strategy;
- (2) researching the internal labour market;
- (3) assessing the existing supply and demand;
- (4) identifying the future skills demands/gaps and excesses;
- (5) modelling the workforce against a predetermined hypothesis;
- (6) defining workforce arrangements;
- (7) developing resourcing strategy;
- (8) developing resourcing plan;
- (9) implementing and measuring; and
- (10) integrating with other planning processes in the organization.

These ten steps were further condensed into the five tenets of SWP activities as detailed in the Figure 2. Various worksheets were provided to the participants to capture details relating to their specific themes and directorates.

The function of the worksheets was to tease out five key aspects of the present practice at KNBS and how future changes may have different requirements. By filling



out the worksheets, they would have provided information to complete the SWP activity. Key questions posed revolved around a series of how's what and why:

- (1) How would you describe the current workplace demographic at KNBS?
- (2) What are the current recruitment and retention strategies at KNBS?
- (3) To what extent would you consider KNBS a "role model" of workplace diversity in Kenya? Is it? Should it be? Why?
- (4) Do you think there is any need to change the status quo at KNBS?
- (5) What are your suggestions for the required changes (i.e. to the status quo) at KNBS?
- (6) How would you describe the future of the workforce composition at KNBS?
- (7) Why did you accept to participate in this study on the challenges of the workplace demographic at KNBS?

Sampling procedures

The sampling strategy was rather opportunistic. The study involved 30 participants, selected to provide a constructive analysis of the situation at KNBS, as well as to identify and quantify the workforce issues, while also trying to understand the current demographic challenges at KNBS. Indeed the willingness of participants to be included in the sample provides a clear indication of the existence of the problem at KNBS and also their willingness to be part of the proposed changes. One of the researchers actively participated, not just as a researcher, but also sought to improve own learning (Sankaran *et al.*, 2001). Indeed as Beck (2014) observed in her study of training needs of older workers, these learning and training opportunities could be utilised to respond to the "extending working lives" agenda, but interviews with employers suggest that this is not being done. Overall the data collected from the worksheets were analysed to form the basis for potential action plan and adoption of an SWP for KNBS and by extension the public sector in Kenya.

Being a senior member of the management and holding various leadership positions meant that one of the researchers had privileged access to the respondents – while the

co-author played the role of an independent assessor – and outsider (see Nwankwo *et al.*, 2005). This enabled the identification of the possible key implementers of the proposed SWP, whom it was known, would have the level of interest required to complete the task. The researcher's position also became the strategy for gaining access to the individuals since she happened to be a keen member of all the staff-related committees within the organization. Explanations on the purpose of the research were provided to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) from the very outset, after which a written approval to engage staff from other committees was signed. Purposive sampling was, therefore, undertaken from four existing committees in charge of staff-related matters. Maxwell (2005, p. 70) recommends this type of sampling as one in which particular settings, persons or events is deliberately selected so as to provide information that cannot be obtained from other sources. Staff belonging to various committees constituted the source of the 30 participants (see Table I) from four staff committees – training and advisory; retirement benefits scheme trustees; gender and disability mainstreaming; and senior management – cutting across the entire organization and key directorates such as strategy and development; ICT and statistics; finance and administration; and the director general's office.

The ages of participants ranged between 35 and 60 years, and comprised of both key prospective, as well as current implementers of the SWP. As illustrated in Table I, the credentials of the participants in the study demonstrates a diverse mix of skills and competencies, which ensured that a wide range of view-points were incorporated into the SWP development. Moreover, the focus groups were interrogated using the unstructured interview questionnaire which gave them the opportunity to freely express their views on a wide range of subjects that would form the basis of the SWP. The relationships between the four selected committees and the proposed SWP as illustrated in Figure 2. Each of the committees has members that are officially appointed by the CEO in writing, based on the specific terms of reference. The committee members remain in place for a financial year – on a rolling basis – except in the situation where they are disbanded by the CEO or members exit the organization. It is worth pointing out that the membership of some of the committees overlapped, as some individuals belong to more than one of the groups. For instance three members of the "Staff Retirement Benefits Scheme" are also members of the "Training and Advisory" team. The groups, nonetheless worked like learning sets making discussions more manageable than if all 30 were to meet together. For the sake of convenience in discussions, groups of seven to eight participants were considered appropriate for the focus groups. The participants played the role of change agents, working within their respective focus groups in order to contribute to the development

Focus group	1	2	3	4
Thematic area	Strategic planning/senior management	Gender and disability mainstreaming/diversity	Training and advisory/staff development	Retirement benefits
Membership	Eight (8)	Eight (8)	Seven (7)	Seven (7)
Terms of reference	(1) Environmental scanning (2) Organizational strategic plan	(1) Training and development (2) Staff welfare and discipline (3) Gender and disability (4) Communication		(1) Talent management (2) Succession planning (3) Retirement security (4) Job security

Table I.
Thematic areas to
focus groups

of the proposed SWP. Key expectations arising from such buy-in strategies include forecasting, predicting and providing insights on how to better manage talent, and thereby, enhance decision making that would achieve anticipated coping strategies to the ageing question at KNBS. As a consequence the jointly developed SWP sought to spot early warning signals and develop appropriate mitigation strategies. The focus groups sought to engage their members (the participants) in organizational learning (Patterson, 2014) and change by engaging in collaborative action in a cyclical manner (see Saldaña, 2012, 2013). Indeed Saldaña (2012, p. 60) specifically points out the existence of various perspectives on coding decisions as well as “research question alignment”. Therefore, following in the tradition of Saldaña (2012, 2013) the focus groups were split into four, brainstorming on thematic areas (skills shortages, recruitment and retention strategies, training and development, and talent management/succession planning, etc.) identified as part of the study’s research questions, and with implications for KNBS. The phrases adopted were dependent on the research context and the peculiarities of its challenges as the custodian of the national statistics and face of the public sector, hence coding did not require a mix-and-match *per se*, but rather an exploration and interrogation of thematic areas identified from the initial brainstorming, which is consistent with the first cycle discussed in Saldaña’s (2012) manual for coding qualitative data.

5. Findings

The main findings of the study lean towards the need for SWP emanating from the established ageing workforce at KNBS. The focus groups all pointed towards: A change in the *status quo* especially in the areas of existing recruitment and retention strategies; Matters related to talent management and succession planning. Indeed a realization of the disconnect in the inter-generational workforce, which emerged out of the collective internally driven action research also testifies to the appropriateness of the adopted approach; Provides avenues for reflexive thinking and organizational learning being plugged into the SWP going forward – in other words the buy-in of employees going through a change process. As suggested in the literature, the SWP involves looking at the bigger picture where talent had to be evaluated from an organization-wide perspective. Similarly the information was sought through the in-house team of economists, accountants, human resource experts and demographers, and the qualifications of these research participants at KNBS. Each directorate had to interrogate their unique reports in order derive that “holistic picture” of the problem at hand. Key elements and excerpts from the explored themes are discussed in this section.

Current workplace demographic at KNBS

The current demographics at KNBS is arguably far from optimal and this has impacted upon the day-to-day activities in the organization. On this topic participants confirmed the lingering challenge related to an ageing workforce with the organization:

I would describe the current workplace demographic at KNBS as one that is aging since more than half of the staff is aged 50 years and above.

It is evident that the age band 51-60 has the highest numbers of employees, making up 50% of the employees. In terms of sex, women make a percentage of 24% on an overall basis, with higher numbers occurring between age-bands 36-40 and 41-45. In the age-band 51-60, the women form only 15%, closely followed by age-band 46-50 with only 23%.

KNBS is partly diverse. Not all the regions, age groups and even special groups are represented. The intercultural integration is minimal amongst the employees. This means employees are only partly able to learn from each other and grow.

The central message from the above is that over half of the workforce at KNBS is above the age of 50 years (see Table II) and this figure increases as the age composition is lowered to about 45 years. This substantiated the need to explore the recruitment and retention strategies in place at the PSO in order to identify what might be the key ingredients to the current dilemma at KNBS.

KNBS as a "role model" of workplace diversity

The discussion as to the extent to which KNBS should be considered a role model follows on from the initial insights into the current and/or existing workplace demographics of the organization brought about some mixed results on the level of diversity anticipated. One of the respondents observed the marginal workplace practice from a gender perspective, which is understandable considering that she is a woman and a director:

It is to a very small extent that I would consider KNBS a "role model" of workplace diversity in Kenya. [...] Stories from some of my senior colleagues indicate that [...] KNBS should be a role model because it is made up of people who should know better [about equality & diversity in the workplace, as] KNBS gives the rest of the country official statistics. This means that information reaches KNBS before many other places [placing the organization at] a point of responsibility vis-à-vis the rest of the public service.

Another respondent also shares the limited progress made by the organization towards a more balanced workplace demographic from the age perspective. According to this participant:

I would consider KNBS a role model of workplace diversity to a small extent. This is because a role model of workplace diversity should have representation of all age brackets evenly distributed hence ensuring smooth transfer of experience and knowledge. In the case of KNBS a majority is soon retiring and there is a Government directive stopping new recruitment so all KNBS can do is replacement [...] once an employee has exited. This means the exiting employee does not transfer knowledge to the incoming employee.

Whilst the previous two respondents were in agreement as to the modest efforts of KNBS in its expected capacity of role model – albeit from a gender *vis-à-vis* age perspective, a third respondent takes a more holistic view on work diversity. According to him:

I would consider KNBS partly a "role model". Though the institution identifies and incorporates people differences in its activities, there are still some differences in the area of educational level, gender, age, ethnicity, special groups and work related experiences.

Age band	No. of employees	Male	Female	% male	% female
21-25	5	4	1	80	20
26-30	33	21	12	64	36
31-35	17	11	6	65	35
36-40	25	15	10	60	40
41-45	59	34	25	58	42
46-50	117	90	27	77	23
51-60	257	218	40	85	15
Total	514	393	121	76	24

Table II.
KNBS staff
demographics
(December 2013)

From the foregoing it can be inferred that KNBS cuts the picture on organization without an SWP in place and therefore not in a legitimate position to dictate how the public sector in Kenya should be run where the subject of workplace is concerned.

Recruitment and retention strategies at KNBS

As far as the entry and exit strategies in place at the organization were concerned, responses exhibited signs of both convergence and divergence (see Table III), which seemed to confirm the absence of an SWP at the organization. For example:

KNBS has been going through a transition over the last seven or so years since it became a semi-autonomous government agency in 2007. From having been a department of the Ministry of Planning, it now had a Board of Directors [BOD] and autonomy in budgetary control and hiring of staff. This has meant that the BOD crafts its own strategies for attracting and retaining staff. A consulting firm PriceWaterhouse Coopers crafted the initial delinking strategy, which outlined the structure and recruitment guidelines [which] have been the basis [for operations at] KNBS.

As a way of retaining the trained Statisticians, KNBS absorbed all the former employees of the former Central Bureau of Statistics. Subsequently, in the last four years some of the strategies for recruitment and retention.

The current recruitment and retention strategies at KNBS have been affected by the government directive on recruitment and salary determination. Whereas the Bureau intends to recruit new staff and pay competitive salaries her hands are tied.

We have a challenge with the issue of age gaps. This is partly contributed by the freeze by the government on recruitment sometimes back. Many of our old employees are also almost exiting.

Another participant had something positive to say about the existing recruitment strategy at the organization:

Currently, new recruits [...] go through a rigorous process of interviews where the best are taken. Areas of consideration include academic excellence, field of expertise, regional and gender balance. Successful recruits then go through six (6) months' probation period to ascertain their suitability [...] once permanently employed, there are various strategies utilized to ensure a happy and motivated workforce. These include; competitive salaries, medical benefits, pension schemes, periodic team building, capacity building among others.

Despite the optimism expressed by the latter respondent, it was clear that the succession plan at KNBS is at a chaotic juncture with the dual dilemma of an impending mass retirement corresponding with a recruitment freeze at the organization. Perhaps there just might be a need for revisiting the status quo. This led us to explore whether the aforementioned practices were part of the status quo and

Recruitment strategies	Retention strategies
(1) Employ multi-disciplinary panels to interview	(1) Retirement benefits scheme
(2) Advertise on our website as well as press for greater reach	(2) Generous medical scheme and group life insurance in the event of death in service
(3) Equal opportunity for both male and female candidates indicated on all adverts	(3) Both long and short term training opportunities to develop careers
(4) Multistage interviewing to improve cultural fit	(4) Low interest loan schemes introduced
(5) Comprehensive induction training	(5) Improved remuneration

Table III.
KNBS recruitment
and retention
strategies

to what extent that needed to change. There was also the issue of training and development linked to recruitment and retention:

It was [...] recommended that we arrange for pre-retirement trainings to prepare the employees for their lives in retirement. Being the Chair of the training committee [...] this responsibility came back to me. I have since organised pre-retirement training for all KNBS employees over 50 years old. This year (2014) we shall have more staff undergo the training [...] as an essential component for employees soon after they are hired.

Overall it is evident that there are areas of concern when it comes to the recruitment, retention and training practices within the organization.

Changing the “status quo” at KNBS

The main task of action research is to be a change agent in organizations within which they are conducted. Thus, when respondents were questioned on their views on this change in the status-quo the responses were mixed – albeit only in terms of degree of change anticipated:

I think we need to change the status quo. Firstly, we need to have a strategy for preparing women for higher office apart from simply increasing the numbers at recruitment. We also need to replace those who leave in such a manner as to improve equality at the workplace [a talent management problem]. Gradually, KNBS will become the role model that it is supposed to be [...] we need to embrace the young generation and have strategies for a multigenerational workforce.

Yes, there is need to change the status quo at KNBS otherwise a lot of knowledge will not be passed down to the new staff.

For the required change to the status quo I would suggest that the Bureau offers short contracts to potential employees who will then be employed on a permanent basis to replace retirees such that there is knowledge transfer.

Though the current structure is operational, there is need for a more vibrant structure that takes into consideration growth, expertise and experience acquired so as to motivate staff to work even harder for the good of the organization.

The future of the workforce composition at KNBS

The future of the workforce composition at KNBS relates to the issue of succession planning and/or talent management. On this subject there seemed to be some degree of optimism amongst the respondents with regards to the workplace demographic at KNBS. Such optimism seems to derive from the anticipated outcome of the current action research requiring the organization to restructure and implement the suggested SWP. The commonalities in responses include the following:

The future of the workforce composition will be [underpinned by the following features] the percentage of women and youth will increase. The tolerance for these hitherto minorities will also increase among the existing employees. It will also be a workforce with a plan that ensures the right people are at the right place at the right time and at the right cost.

The future of KNBS should be vibrant, well-motivated workforce that fairly encourages the growth of all its employees. This is based on the current data demands both from within and without which can only be addressed by well-motivated workforce.

The future workforce composition at KNBS if circumstances remain the same will be one with a majority of the workforce being under 35 years of age.

Interestingly while the response of the Senior Manager in statistics introduces another instructive action plan – i.e. employee motivation – something that needs to be a key component of the SWP, the response of the Management Accountant opens up a whole “can of worms” – could the current skew towards employees nearing retirement (i.e. 50 years and above) be moving towards the other end of the spectrum (under 35 years of age) – thus restoring the demographic imbalance at the workplace?

The study confirmed that an aging workforce may bring about multiple challenges to an organization, but yet also create opportunities to craft a performance-related culture, improve diversity and maintain successful employee relations. In answering the research question on how to improve the practice at KNBS, for example, exit interviews for those who resigned were examined to obtain the reasons for exit. The reasons, ranging from higher salaries to low-interest rate loans as part of their terms and higher posts with more responsibility all provided fodder for the SWP. This information served as a wake-up call for the KNBS to plan for and implement not just the working environment but also the career progression mechanisms for its employees as part of the SWP. The study also evaluated the supply and demand of the current workforce, scanning the current demographics and carrying out a forecast of the additional staffing needs for the next five years (focus group 1). The phase involved senior management, the SWP participants and the human resource division. Internally, employee satisfaction and work environment surveys undertaken provided some insight into employee perceptions of change processes[2].

Motivation for participation

A key requirement for studies of this nature is the value of “informed consent” that had to be obtained from KNBS employees from amongst whom the sample was drawn. A central element of this was that there would be no coercion or pressure to participate, whilst providing sufficient information to guide the choices taken (Tanke and Tanke, 1982) arising from the relationship between the researcher and the researched. The idea of co-constructing the research procedures made this kind of consent different from that of other research paradigms (Zeni, 2001). It is for this reason that Tisdale (2003) once criticized informed consent in action research as being a meaningless ritual that hardly improves the ethical, soundness of research. Indeed Cassell (1982) advises that the important thing is to recognize the ethical issues when they arise so that they can be addressed, rather than try to evade them. The informed consent consisted the first of many interactions between the researcher and the researched.

Although the participants had a choice of withdrawing from the study voluntarily, it was hoped that they would actually stay on to the end by continually getting informed of the progress of the study (indeed for this very reason, focus groups 2 and 3 were merged). Pritchard (2002) reinforces the idea that participants should never be treated as purely “a means to an end”, but viewed as “reflective moral agents” to be handled with respect and dignity. These procedures were abided with, to the letter, in compliance with the dictates and under the supervision of a UK university – whose ethical approval was received prior to commencement of the study. Following the aforementioned, participants were provided with explicit guidelines to enable them decide if to join the study and to be updated on any new circumstances that would determine their continued participation – both verbally and in writing. The participants indicated their consent in writing by signing off the consent forms at different times in line with their preferences. All the participants were adults and none was of diminished autonomy and ensure a fair distribution of the benefits and burdens of the study. Not surprisingly the response was

very encouraging as participants wanted to be a part of this study – the first of its kind in Kenya – legitimizing workplace knowledge, and empowerment through engagement in dealing with a demographic challenge at KNBS. Herr and Anderson (2005, p. 120) observed the incidence of “subtle coercion” in action research where the researcher as an insider, may be in a position of power *vis-à-vis* participants as employees. For this study, however, there seemed to be a captive audience as many colleagues were eager to participate. It was also possible that the subject of the study promised an interesting research and therefore generated a lot of interest among KNBS employees. The excerpts below capture some of the motivations for participating in the study:

I accepted to participate in this study [...] because KNBS has a challenge in that the majority of the workforce is aged 50 years and above.

I recognize the value of individual differences and the importance of a representative diversity in our institution. Workplace diversity involves recognizing the value of individual differences and managing them successfully to create an environment that values and utilizes the contributions of people with different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives.

My interest [...] arose from two aspects: The first was my involvement as a trustee of the [...] Staff Retirement scheme. In the process of working with the Actuarial consultants, we had to provide up to-date age profiles of the KNBS staff in order to establish the levels of sponsor-staff contributions. It is at this point that I realised that the staff at KNBS were skewed towards the fifties, against a background of a 60 year retirement limit.

Overall the findings and observations from this study, coupled with the detailed review of policy documents, confirm the existence of discriminatory workplace practices in the public sector, which has left out vulnerable groups (young people, women and ethnic minority groups) from the workplace in numbers incommensurate with their respective proportions in the population. The in-house developed SWP in a large PSO responsible for managing the national statistics, would be one way of leading by example – not just for the public sector, but also the private and third sectors – with a view to being adopted at the national level. However, this would need a well thought out execution and/ or implementation strategy – in order to have any viable practical relevance.

6. Conclusions

The main purpose of this study was to explore the how, where and what the ageing workforce in Kenya’s public sector has been managed. In order to reach the conclusions, an evaluation of the status quo within the ranks of the custodian of national statistics in the country was undertaken with a general consensus reached as to the need for changing existing practices. Considering that KNBS is perceived by the key informants in the study as a microcosm of the wider economy, the dilemma of an ageing workforce was deemed to be a clear and present danger, which is in need of public policy attention. As a consequence, the proposed SWP may be seen as a step in the right direction, as it proposes coping strategies to address the demographic challenge facing, not just KNBS in particular, but Kenya in general. Indeed evidence has shown that what obtains in the Kenyan context seems to be playing out in other SSA contexts. Notable among these include studies on Eritrea (Ghebregiorgis and Karsten, 2006) and Ethiopia (Moges *et al.*, 2014) both of which highlighted similar concerns – perhaps due to a shared political history. Similarly studies in the context of Mozambique (Wood *et al.*, 2011; Webster and Wood, 2005; Sartorius *et al.*, 2011, p. 1963); Nigeria (Okpara and Kabongo, 2011); South Africa and Tanzania (Lam *et al.*, 2006;

Velkoff and Kowal, 2006; Spitzer and Mabeyo, 2014; Schatz and Seeley, 2015); as well as Zambia (Fashoyin, 2008a; Gadzala, 2010) seem to have provided some indication of the demographic shifts in the SSA region. Indeed Moges *et al.* (2014) captured the newness of the trend more aptly in their study on emerging population ageing challenges in Africa, which explored the implication for Ethiopia. According to them “Ethiopia [the second most populous country in SSA behind Nigeria] is in its early stage of demographic transition [...] with projections indicating [...] significant departures from the historical trend”. These authors went on to confirm that “rapid changes in demographic features of the country can lead to fast population ageing before the economy, the country and families are ready to handle the problems associated with population ageing” (see Moges *et al.*, 2014, p. 15). A similar media report in Ghana also confirms the particular concern in a government department as recently as 2014 where the Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority was feared to “lose a lot of its human resource in the next two years because of ageing staff” (see Abbey, 2014). According to the article, and quoting Mr Ussuri Ibrahim Adams, the Deputy Commissioner of Human Resource Unit of the agency:

Two hundred management staff have retired so far this year and 240 more are set to go on retirement in the next two years [...] retirement was inevitable but [...] we have to do something about replacement of the workers.

The above quote underscores the need for talent management and/or succession planning strategies as coping mechanisms for this new trend. More generally, few studies (notably Pillay and Maharaj, 2013; Aboderin, 2012a; Cohen and Menken, 2006) have highlighted the plight of SSA as it currently faces an ageing workforce.

In the case of KNBS, the workforce is rapidly ageing, with the first batch of employees having already retired from active service in 2014 and about 20,000 more employees set to retire within the next few years according to estimates from the National Treasury (The World Bank, 2013, p. 65). These retirement trends are bound to leave a hole in the workplace as replacements are not currently in place as at the time of data collection for this study. The observed retirement trends, along with the need for new skill sets, prompted the investigation in an effort to craft an SWP that would encompass employee talent management and succession planning strategies at KNBS – the supposed custodian of the Kenyan economy. The SWP is most exigent now considering the current investment climate of the Kenyan government *vis-à-vis* the impending skills loss and the chequered diversity of the KNBS workplace and the attendant pension liability implications, which is estimated at over 500 billion as at 2008 a number that has since increased exponentially (Raichura, 2008).

Overall, this study has some policy implications of preparing KNBS for grappling with the unabatingly staff exodus due to massive retirements of the “baby boomer” generation since 2014. A careful execution of the SWP involving the organizational learning derived from the action research would help move KNBS forward and especially so, as it strives to legitimize its function as a “role model” to the public service sector in Kenya. Undoubtedly the workplace, as we know it today, faces challenges, even with the best laid out plans. The proposition for a SWP against a fast dwindling older generation of workers brings into sharp focus the question of accession of younger generation into the workplace – especially in a context that is newly exposed to the situation of an ageing workforce (see Beard *et al.*, 2012; Aboderin, 2012a). This study contributes to prior studies on the aging question in SSA from the holistic reports of Aboderin (2012a) to the study by Pillay and Maharaj (2013).

However, the focus in this particular study is one a single organization, which plays a key role in what obtains across the country – especially in its capacity as the custodian of national statistics.

7. Limitations and implications

This study experienced a number of limitations – in at least four areas. First, the methodological concerns over the credibility of an action research protocol and the constitution of the research participants, many of whom were statisticians involved in positivist research methods posed an initial concern. Indeed the focus group composition may have discouraged the “die-hard” positivists from participating, even after consent had been given (five participants opted out, mostly directors). A second limitation arose from studying a single organization for a problem that affects the whole public service in Kenya. This brought about lingering doubts as to the generalizability of the findings. However as Coughlan and Coughlan (2002, p. 64) argues, action research does not attempt to create universal knowledge *per se* (emphasis added), but should be left to the readers to decide what to take from the “story”. A third limitation arose from being an insider researcher. While many colleagues offered initial verbal assurances to participate in person, they later ignored invitations to meet-up or to provide information. This had negative implications for the successful implementation of the SWP and its sustainability going forward. A fourth limitation relates to implementation of the study findings. Being a semi-autonomous state agency in the Kenyan Public service, KNBS is impacted by what happens in the wider public service that depends on government funding – ultimately any recommendations would depend on the government goodwill and financing. Collectively the aforementioned limitations also raise opportunities for a number of future research areas. A first area would be to explore SWP in a different setting, say in a large private sector or NGO (non-governmental organization) for comparison with what has been observed in the public sector. A second area would be on inter-generational communication at the workplace as it impacts upon the transfer of skills from the older to the younger generation – i.e. succession planning. A third area would be to research on the impact of SWP wherever it has been implemented using an action research protocol considering the embedded cultural and organizational practices in other SSA contexts.

Consequently there are a variety of angles that this study would have taken, considering the issues of research validity and ethics that accompany action research (see for example, Herr and Anderson, 2005). As an insider, action research seemed like an appropriate way, not just to deepen own reflection but also as a way to solve a workplace problem and increase continuous professional development. Although Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) described this kind of insider research as having serious dilemmas because the tacit knowledge that is supposed to be an advantage, may work against the noble objectives due to its subjective nature – bias, prejudices and assumptions that may jeopardize the findings, this approach is nonetheless still very common in studies of this nature (see Page *et al.* 2014). Indeed the “critical friends” in form of the study participants have the tendency to provide the much-needed independent perspective to the researcher’s position. Furthermore one of the researchers in this study is also an outsider to the organization and thereby provided another independent view to the study – by acting as a sounding board (see Nwankwo *et al.*, 2005, 2010).

This demographic diversity poses a challenge in terms of creating and managing harmonious workplaces, where each generation’s unique values and office expectations comingle. Indeed Caruso (2014) argues that management should be aware of the

characteristics of the different generations (notably Generation Y) even though it may also bring about inter-generational conflict in the workplace. In order to avoid such clashes, organizations should have clearly defined roles and responsibilities to all staff without discrimination to ensure that all employees work in harmony. Overall even though this study may be deemed a pioneering effort as exploring diversity issues in the workplace and specifically from the age discrimination rather than the usual suspects (e.g. gender and ethnicity) it must be acknowledged that prior studies have undertaken such endeavours – albeit from an SME perspective – exploring organizational commitment and talent management. For example, Fuertes *et al.* (2013) explored age management in the context of SMEs; Winkelmann-Gleed (2011) conceptualized prolonged labour market participation through organizational commitment in the context of UK older workers' decisions to either work longer or retire; and Bhatnagar (2007) highlighted talent management strategy from employee engagement in the Indian context. From our initial findings and observation, coupled with the detailed review of government documents, we confirm the existence of discriminatory workplace practices that have left out vulnerable groups (both young people and women) from the workplace in numbers commensurate with their proportions in the population[3].

Notes

1. Exchange rate figures were obtained from a popular foreign exchange website, Oanda Currency Converter online at: www.oanda.com/currency/converter/
2. The current workforce analysis provided details on the length of service, employees' age cohorts indicating the recruitment trends, retirement risk, the highest qualifications attained and diversity. Matching the strategic foci to the workforce requirements provided the five-year staffing forecasts, while data from the current workforce analysis informed the numbers of the open positions available.
3. See the Rapid Gender Assessment Report, 2009/2010. Needless to add that the next population and housing census in Kenya is scheduled for 2019.

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About the authors

Dr Nnamdi O. Madichie is the Director of the Centre for Research and Enterprise at the London School of Business and Management. His research interests straddle business and management developments in emerging markets where he has published numerous works. He has also reviewed a key text on Talent Management published in the *International Journal of Business and Emerging Markets* in 2015. Dr Madichie has supervised and examined numerous doctorate theses across three continents, Europe, Africa and the Middle East. He is also currently a Doctoral Thesis Supervisor at the University of Liverpool, UK, in partnership with Laureate Online Education. Dr Nnamdi O. Madichie is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: nnamdi.madichie@lsbm.ac.uk

Margaret Nyakang'o obtained her first degree in Commerce from the University of Nairobi (Kenya), and later completed her MBA in Strategic Management from the same University. She is also a Certified Public Accountant and has worked extensively in the Public Sector in Kenya in the areas of Finance, Human Resource and Administration strategy, currently in the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. She has recently completed her Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), with a thesis on Strategic Workforce Planning in the Kenyan Public Sector. Her research interests include workforce planning, aging workforce, youth employment, strategy and action research in the public sector.

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