EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTION OF THE STAFF PROMOTION PROCESS: THE CASE OF MIDDLE GRADE STAFF IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

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A management research project presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Award of Master of Business Administration Degree

School of Business

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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This management project has been submitted with my approval as University supervisor.

Signed: GEORGE OMONDI
Date: 10/11/06
DEDICATION

To my late dad
Alexander Kachero
Who passed on as I was working on this project, thanks for your love, support, foundation and care

To my dear wife
Joy
Whose love and wholehearted support encouraged me to pursue higher education

To my children
Celestine, Larvine, Dalvin, Nicole and foster ones Metrine, Anaclet and Tracy

To my mum
Felicitas Inyanje
Who underwent pains for me
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I wish to thank all those who in one way or another contributed to the success of this project. May God richly bless you.
ABSTRACT

The research used a sample survey design to document the perceptions and the factors that influence the perceptions of middle grade employees on the process of staff promotion in the University of Nairobi. Data was collected from eighty (80) middle grade staff drawn from 8 clusters that represent 8 out of 9 administrative colleges of the University. Of the 80 sampled, 48 (60%) responded.

Data analysis results show that this cadre has a fair gender distribution and a rich academic background with most aged between 40 and 50 and having worked for the University of Nairobi for more than 25 years. Most middle grade employees joined the university in grade A/B/C and are still in those grades. Majority do not agree with the management’s decisions on promotion. Research findings indicate that internal advertisements for vacancies in the University are neither effective nor ineffective.

Employees don’t receive communications about procedures used in promotions and decisions finally reached. Results indicate that most employees are not in the right grades based on their qualifications and University of Nairobi staffing and placement policies. Some have stagnated in the same grade for more than 30 years. There are many instances where employees with similar qualifications, skills, and experience are in varying grades. Moreover, many employees have added to their knowledge and skills through further training since joining the University but the institution does not recognize these new abilities.

While employees feel that promotions are very important to them, they are rare. Research analysis indicated that the most important criteria used for promotion are relationship with the heads of sections/departments/colleges and the ethnic background. Often, external candidates have been preferred for jobs that existing employees could do, and employees strongly disagree with such a policy. However, most indicated that other factors might have to be considered first before leaving the University if another opportunity arose outside. In view of the promotion process, most employees indicated low job satisfaction. The greatest failures of the process were identified as stagnation in one grade for decades, a restrictive establishment, rules that hinder promotions to merited grades, favouritism, and tribalism, among others. They recommend that
rules that impede promotion be done away with, qualifications, performance, experience be considered during promotion and a proper policy and procedure for promotion be put in place.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Challenges associated with the changing nature of work and the workplace environments are as real for the University of Nairobi (UON) as elsewhere. The emergence of private universities alongside other public universities in Kenya has wrought competition to the University of Nairobi amidst reduced financial support from the exchequer necessitating reduction in inefficiency (Magoha, 2006). Moreover, recent developments in training opportunities in Kenya have posed major challenges to the University of Nairobi as an employer, particularly with regard to its policies on promotion vis-à-vis staff establishment. Public universities have been accused of placing many of their employees in grades inferior to their academic and professional qualifications and experience, operating rigid and archaic policies that hinder upward mobility alongside nepotism and patronage (Mukhwana, 2005). The challenge to the University has been heightened by expansion of opportunities in higher education, especially the introduction of module II programmes, in which many members of staff enrol, and upon completion, they seek promotion on the basis of newly acquired qualifications and skills (Kagiko, 2006). Improving the human capital improves the ability of an organization as Valsecchi (2000) points out that once it is disclosed that certain workers are highly skilled, the incumbent employer will find it profitable to keep speeding up their career quickly. Adachi (2002) defines promotion as the increase in wages, in proportion to an increase in hierarchical rank that is accompanied by corporate benefits. It can be external or internal. This study shall be limited to the latter. Internal promotion refers to the case where a vacancy is
filled within the organization and current employees are preferred in the selection of candidates for the newly available position (Valsecchi, 2002).

1.1.1 Perception

Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) have observed that organizational support is significantly influenced by perceptions of fairness. Since these perceptions influence organizational performance and bottom-line outcomes, it is important to investigate what influences perceptions of fairness. Perceived unfairness is determined by how well a particular event or incident reflects widely held beliefs, expectations and norms about (the violation of) social responsibility (Harris et al., 2004). Milkovich and Boudreau (1988) assert that managing promotion activities effectively requires attention to their effects on both efficiency and equity. Gender issues, political patronage, lack of transparency, nepotism, favouritism and undue advantage are usually cited as factors that negate the objectivity of promotion. Ethnicity is another consideration where employees that belong to minority ethnic groups believe their lack of upward mobility is partly a consequence of stereotyping and prejudice. Employees feel frustrated if they view promotions as being awarded on subjective criteria. Promotion should be attuned to perception of equity because it affects current employees. Employees regard promotions as rewards, recognition and signs of their value to the organization. It can have effects on Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO)/Affirmative Action (AA) goals and progress. Promotions represent more than a series of employment opportunities for those who move; they are a signal to employees about the equity of the organizational policies. Research has shown that if organizational members perceive that the organization does
not treat them fairly, they are less likely to engage in behaviour that is useful to the organization (Moorman. 1991).

Garavan and Coolahan (1996) have shown that not promoting employees when they deserve it can create dysfunctional outcomes for both the organization and its employees. The former suffers from an inability to optimize its return on its human resource investment because of failure to identify its best talent and the evolution of internal labour market structures that creates bureaucratic barriers prohibiting staff redeployment. Barriers impact on the latter category because job mobility is seen as an important component of career advancement and failure to fulfil psychological needs results in reduced motivation and commitment to organizational goals. Harris et al. (2004) point to three types of reactions to perceived discrimination in promotion selections: reduced psychological wellbeing; likelihood of taking legal action; and negative job attitudes and behaviours.

Moorman (1991) found that there was a positive causal relationship between perceptions of organizational justice and organizational citizenship behaviour. Co-workers who know something about the promotion decision will also have views about how just the process and decision was. Reactions of non-participants as well as participants may therefore have important and practical and theoretical implications for organizations. Heilman et al. (1988) showed in a simulation that there were negative reactions from co-workers when some applicants were perceived to have received preferential treatment.
In a study, Bradley (2006) found that people would change their behaviour based on their perceptions of equity and fairness in organizations. If they believe there is a low level of organizational justice, they may behave in ways that are contrary to what is beneficial to the organization. She further found that employees believed there was greater justice when an internal candidate was chosen for a higher position. This was due to the perception that previous employment in the position was something positive that needed to be considered. Gilliland (1993) has shown that the procedures and rules used for selection for promotion and the level of adherence to them influences how fair an applicant perceives the selection situation. He further adds that many outcomes (such as job satisfaction and performance) are at least partly based on these perceptions; a point further reinforced by Francesconi (2001).

1.1.2 Promotion Process

Many of today’s employees equate success with upward mobility, viewing anything short of a promotion as career failure (Tzabbar. et al., 2003). Firms try to promote those with the greatest propensity to work hard. Since this propensity is unobservable, firms will use indicators of it (such as hours of work, or overtime hours) for the purpose of selecting workers for promotion (Francesconi. 2003).

There are two criteria for promotion, according to Tzabbar, et al. (2003), namely, Universalistic (which consist of such items as employee seniority, organizational loyalty, employee training needs, past training, and previous jobs in the organization) and Particularistic (which consist of employee performance level, performance quality,
evaluation score, and contribution to the organization). Dessler (2003) points out that some employers have established formal, published promotion policies and procedures where employees get a formal promotion policy describing the criteria by which the organization awards promotions. The organization posts open positions and their requirements, and circulate these to all employees. Many other firms have informal promotion process where key managers may use their own “unpublished” criteria to make promotion decisions for open positions that may or may not have been posted. Some organizations use a decentralized system of promotion where units have the authority to decide on whom to place where; others use a centralized one (Jackson and Schuler, 1999). Some organizations use replacement-planning charts in addition to maintaining a talent inventory (Jackson and Schuler, 1999). Replacement planning charts list the current and potential occupants of positions in the firm.

A decision has to be made on whether to base promotion on seniority or competence, or some combination of the two. Dessler (2003) argues that today’s focus on competitiveness favours competence. This criterion, however, depends on a number of things, such as union agreements or civil service requirements governing promotions. In general merit based assessment is the basis of promotion in the hierarchy of ranks. But this is not always the case as Atkinson (2002) points out that personal influence, being in the right place at the right time, profile, face fitting and length of service are significant factors in the promotion decision. Mullins (2002) concurs that, while in the majority of cases managers clearly state “merit” or “ability” as the overt belief, the “if your face fits” syndrome is also an apparent covert reason. Factors such as gender, age, and weight have
also been shown to play a role in promotion (Heilman et al., 1988). The Peter Principle has also been known to be the basis for promotion (Hackett, 1996). In some cases, according to Jackson and Schuler (1999), managers can write the job description to fit their favourable candidates. They can control the final decision by selecting less qualified candidates to compete with their favourite candidate, ensure that others notice their protégé’s strength, and withhold information on the favoured employee’s poor performance. The process then becomes superficial.

With regard to the University of Nairobi, there exists no Staff Handbook to guide employees on promotion. Current policy, procedures and practices are scattered in diverse documents. Promotion of staff is subject to vacancies in the establishment. The exchequer capitation for personal emoluments is based on the approved personnel establishment. The approved staff establishment is, therefore, the pool from which the university draws posts against which new staff are appointed and existing staff are promoted. This method of staff promotion has limitations and is restrictive especially where staff merit promotion but cannot be promoted due to the lack of vacant positions. Vacant positions are posted to the Recruitment and Training section and advertised internally or externally depending on the line manager’s choice. Those short-listed are then called for an interview, whose panel comprises of a chairperson (a college principal or deputy principal), secretary, the head and one representative of the concerned department, an administration registrar, and college bursar. The successful candidates are then selected by this panel and communicated to through the DVC’s (Administration and Finance) office (Kagiko, 2006).
1.1.3 Middle Grade Employees of the University of Nairobi

University of Nairobi’s Payroll shows that the university’s staffing is structured into three layers, which can be referred to as the lower, middle and upper grades. The lower comprises of grades I – IV and includes cleaners and sweepers, cooks, guards, masons, carpenters, plumbers, drivers, messengers, library attendants and clerks. The upper layer is what is termed as the Academic Grades. It comprises the University management staff such as the Vice-Chancellor (VC), Deputy Vice-Chancellors (DVCs), Principals, Deans, Chairmen of Departments, Registrars, Librarians, Finance Officers and the Teaching Staff (Lecturers), to mention a few.

The middle grades – the subject of this study – comprise of staff serving in grades A – F. Staff in these grades include, among others, technicians, senior personnel clerks, nurses, secretaries, administrative assistants, technologists, accounts assistants, internal auditors, telephone supervisors, library assistants, bookshop assistants and supplies assistants. University Non-Teaching Staff Union (UNTESU) represents this group.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Employees’ attitudes are affected by their perceptions of the fairness of internal staffing activities (Milkovich and Boudreau, 1988). Unfairness, arbitrariness and secrecy sometimes diminish the effectiveness of the promotion process (Dessler, 2003). Employees regard promotions as rewards, recognition and a signal of their value to the
organization; hence, they scrutinize promotions for equity (Milkovich and Boudreau, 1988).

University of Nairobi rules and procedures such as an employee cannot ‘jump a grade’ or be promoted more than once within a span of two years even when merited, considerably limit staff promotion. Promotion challenges have been heightened by the introduction of module II programmes in which members of staff enrol, and upon completion, seek promotion on the basis of newly acquired qualifications and skills. The more appropriate means of promoting staff would be on the basis of the provisions of Schemes of Service. However, most cadres of staff in middle grades do not have Schemes of Service (Kagiko, 2006). Moreover, the middle grade staffing structure inherently impedes promotion due to dead-end jobs with short ladders and limited opportunities for horizontal movement within the institution. The ‘pyramid squeeze’ i.e. smaller number of jobs in the higher ladders inhibits promotion resulting in stagnation of staff in one grade for years. More complications emanate from the fact that different departments have varying opportunities resulting in similar employees accorded dissimilar promotional chances. Consequently, there is stiff competition for promotion whenever a vacancy arises. Often, internal advertisements are tailored for intended applicants in the department (Kagiko, 2006). Armstrong (2003) advises that where promotion arrangements cause problems, there should be a policy and procedure that is known to both management and employees and this procedure should take full account of EEO policies. Promotion opportunities should be open to all irrespective of race, creed, sex or marital status. Thus, a high degree of fairness in the promotion process is necessary at the university.
A review of literature on promotion reveal studies that limit their focus to individual or positional influences on promotion (Rosenfield, 1992), or on the role of the employees previous achievements (Rosenbaum, 1979), the number of peers that compete for the next promotion (Stewman and Konda, 1983), promotion process (Brett and Stroh, 1997), internal versus external promotion (Adachi, 2002; Bradley, 2006); perceptions of discrimination in selection and promotion in the U.S (Harris et al. 2004), determinants and consequences of promotion (Francesconi, 2001); and career mobility (Garavan and Coolahan, 1996). No study has been carried out on promotion perception among middle grade staff of the University of Nairobi. This study attempts to fill this void.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

i) To establish the perceptions of middle grade employees on the process of staff promotion in the University of Nairobi.

ii) To determine the factors that influence the perceptions of middle grade staff on employee promotion process at the University of Nairobi.

1.4 Importance of the Study

The benefits of this study will accrue to, among others: -

i) University of Nairobi management team – The study will avail pertinent information to all managers in the University regarding promotion practices that could benefit or damage the employees and the organization in general.
These include the heads of departments, chairpersons, registrars, administrators and personnel staff in the university.

ii) Managers and Human Resource practitioners – This study will lend some light on the subject of promotion to all managers and HR practitioners.

iii) Employees of the University of Nairobi – all employees will learn about how certain promotion practices can be perceived.

iv) Academia – The findings of this study are expected to provide an insight into, and stimulate interest in, the process of promotion apart from adding to the existing body of knowledge.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

HRM is a strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organization’s most valued assets: the employees. The main objective of HRM is to contribute to the achievement of high levels of organizational performance. This includes rigorous recruitment and selection procedures. An effective promotion policy would lead to the selection of right candidates for organizational tasks. Moreover, the level of individual performance is a function of ability, motivation and opportunity - AMO (Armstrong, 2003). Promotion is one of the ways used by organizations to motivate their employees (Valseecchi, 2000). Fundamentally, the role of HR professionals is not only helping ensure that the best candidates available fill positions, but also making sure that the selection decision is based only on relevant information and that the most qualified person does not lose out because of prejudice and stereotyping that are irrelevant to job qualifications (Jackson and Schuler, 1999).

2.2 Promotion

According to Valsecchi (2000), promotion – a study in job mobility – is used to connate either wage rises or changes in the assigned tasks: the common factor is that it marks an improvement in the quality of the employment relationship. This agrees with the position held by Fairburn and Malcolmson (2001) who state that promotion takes two forms. In the first, promotion results in higher pay (and possibly higher status) but no change in job responsibilities. In the second, promotion also involves doing a different job. Adachi
(2002) sees promotion as the increase in wages, in proportion to an increase in hierarchical rank that is accompanied by corporate benefits. It can be external or internal. Internal promotion refers to the case where a vacancy is filled within the organization and current employees are preferred in the selection of candidates for the newly available position (Valsecchi, 2000).

Valsecchi (2000) has shown that opening promotion to competition from external candidates decreases the incentive to exert effort at performance by insiders. Favouritism for the insiders’ sake is therefore envisaged as a rational organizational policy. Promotion can also result from an employee’s position being classified at a higher grade because of additional duties and responsibilities, i.e. accretion of duties. When the nature of a position gradually evolves over an extended period of time due to accretion of duties, the individual in the position may be promoted in place without competition. Alternatively, the evolved position may be advertised and filled competitively through merit (Fairburn and Malcomson, 2001).

Promotion has importance to both employees and employers. Many of today’s employees have tended to equate success with upward mobility, viewing anything short of a promotion as career failure or penalty (Tzabbar. et al., 2003). Meyer (1992) argues that the high expectation of advancement of new recruits can lead to disillusionment, loss of motivation and intention to leave the organization.
2.2.1 Organizations and Staff Promotion

Meyer (1992) shows that the productivity of the organization itself relies to some extent on how well it matches job slots in the hierarchy to appropriately able workers, and in general more able workers will be relatively more productive in higher slots within the hierarchy. When organizations promote “good” employees – in the sense that they are well suited to the positions, the organizations receive non-transferable benefits in addition to profits; else they can be damaged, for example through a serious mistake, if they promote “bad” employees (Adachi, 2002).

Some employers have established formal, published promotion policies and procedures where employees get a formal promotion policy describing the criteria by which the organization awards promotions. The organization posts open positions and their requirements, and circulates these to all employees. Other firms have informal promotion process where key managers may use their own “unpublished” criteria to make promotion decisions for open positions that may or may not have been posted. In such circumstances, employees sometimes conclude that non-competence factors such as “who you know” are more important than performance (Dessler, 2003). Some organizations use a decentralized system of internal promotion where units have the authority to decide on whom to place where. However, Jackson and Schuler (1999) observe there are more advantages in using a centralized system. Some organizations use replacement-planning charts in addition to maintaining a talent inventory (Jackson and Schuler, 1999). Replacement planning charts list the current and potential occupants of positions in the firm.
Nevertheless, the fact that there must be a vacancy in order to have promotion is neither novel nor rare and it can establish a link between the growth of the firm and effort (Valsecchi, 2000). As Meyer (1992) argues, if workers are induced to exert effort by the prospect of upgrading via internal contests, the faster the growth of the firm the greater the probability of promotion will be once the span of control is fixed at each organization layer. However, the emergence of specialized education has led to horizontal stratification of organizations, limited upward mobility and the creation of barriers that impede mobility within the organization's divisions and departments. Moreover, "stratification by credentials" has led to the development of a management cadre that has achieved its position in the absence of experience at the bottom rungs of the ladder, and a followership that has grassroots experience but no opportunity for vertical movement.

2.2.2 Internal Promotion

Milkovich and Boudreau (1988) observe that, although promotion is considered one form of employee selection, internal promotion systems differ from external employee selection. First, because promotion involves existing employees as opposed to individuals outside the organization, promotion candidates have access to more information regarding the procedures used to make promotion decisions. Second, promotion candidates may have more information than external job applicants regarding qualifications of the newly promoted employee once the decision has been made. Thus, one might infer that employees who are rejected during the promotion process, and who
will perceive the procedures used during the process to be unfair. might be more likely than rejected external applicants to demonstrate negative attitudes or behaviours.

Bradley (2006) shows that the decision to select for promotion can affect employees depending on whether the candidate is internal or external to the organization. It is expected that already belonging to the organization is an input that workers believe needs to be considered in the equation. It is therefore expected that if all aspects of two applicants for a job were equal, then employees would perceive there was greater justice if the internal candidate was selected for the position, rather than the external applicant. If employees believe that the organization is loyal to its staff, then they are likely to be more loyal to the organization (Moorman. 1991).

2.3 Basis of Promotion

Tzabbar et al. (2003) show that the contemporary global labour markets that have led to restructuring and downsizing have changed collateral processes to base their promotion decisions on individual performance criteria (e.g. merit, potential) rather than on universal ones (e.g. seniority). There are two criteria for promotion, according to Tzabbar, et al. (2003), namely. Universalistic and Particularistic. Universal criteria consist of such items as employee seniority, employee training needs, past training, organizational loyalty, and previous jobs in the organization. The Particular criteria consist of employee performance level, performance quality, evaluation score, and contribution to the organization.
Valsecchi (2000) points out that the characteristics most usually taken into account are talent and accumulated skills as experience on-the-job or training. An employee’s productivity is affected by experience, ability and position in the organization. So old workers enjoy a comparative advantage in high positions, but their staying in employment slows down the promotion rate of younger employees, who would be willing to accept lower retention wages in exchange of upgrading to higher job assignments. Given that ability improves marginal product with respect to the same position, optimal retirement will be delayed longer for very talented workers.

In general merit based assessment by supervisors is an important determinant of an employee’s promotional chances. But this is not always the criterion, as Atkinson (2002) indicates that personal influence, being in the right place at the right time, profile, face fitting and length of service are significant factors in the promotion decision; this, he adds, has high potential for de-motivating employees and does not fit with the themes of fair, open systems and ensuring procedural justice. Other factors, such as gender, age, and weight have been shown to play a role (Heilman et al., 1988). Mullins (2002) adds that, while in the majority of cases managers clearly state “merit” or “ability” as the overt belief, the “if your face fits” syndrome is also an apparent covert promotion reason. The Peter Principle, where competence in each new position qualifies one for promotion to the next higher position until a position of incompetence is reached, is also another basis (Hackett, 1996).
Garavan and Coolahan (1996) observe that theorists summarize promotion as being based on either the 'individualistic approach' that views advancement as being a function of background, education, ability, job experience, ambition, timing, etc.; or the 'organizational approach' which views promotion as a structural issue where individual advancement is determined by such factors as internal labour market structures, vacancy chains and organizational politics. They however contend that human resource policies are sometimes ambiguous or misleading about the ways in which promotional opportunities are determined. It downplays constraints on the promotion path because of the desire not to dampen employee motivation levels, while organizational approaches are also limited in that they are not easily related to individual characteristics and experience or their actual career paths within the organization. Moreover the emergence of job ladders divides the labour force because the relatively privileged position of those within the ladders gives them an incentive to exclude the others. A system of "haves" and "have-nots" is created and tends to perpetuate itself.

2.3.1 Promotion Policy

Promotion from within policy can be a good career management policy. According to Armstrong (2003), a promotion policy could state the organization's intention to promote from within wherever this is appropriate as a means of satisfying its requirements for high quality staff. In organizations that have frequent promotional moves and where promotion arrangements cause problems. he advises that there should be a promotion policy and procedure that is known to both management and employees and this procedure should take full account of equal opportunity policies and that promotion
opportunities should be open to all irrespective of race, creed, sex or marital status. The policy could, however, recognize that there will be occasions when the organization’s present and future needs can only be met by recruitments from outside.

The aims of the promotion procedures, according to Armstrong (2003), should be to enable management to obtain the best talent available within the company to fill more senior posts and provide employees with the opportunity to advance their careers within the company, in accordance with the opportunities available and their own abilities. Promotion has a double nature – as an incentive and sorting device (Valsecchi. 2000; Adachi. 2002).

Dessler (2003) points out that an important decision is whether to base promotion on seniority or competence, or some combination of the two. Today’s focus on competitiveness favours competence. This criterion, however, depends on a number of things, such as union agreements or civil service requirements governing promotions. Union agreements require that, where ability, merit, and capacity are equal, employees with the highest seniority should be given preference. But how would the firm define and measure competence? According to him, once the job is defined, standards set, appraisal tools can be used to record the employee’s performance. Yet this only measures past performance. For potential for future performance, you need a valid procedure for predicting a candidate’s potential. Most employers use prior performance and assume that based on that, the person would do well on the new job, while others use tests or assessment centres. Others take a more comprehensive approach that include a written
knowledge test, an assessment centre, credit for seniority, and a score based on recent performance appraisal ratings.

Firms try to promote those with the greatest propensity to work hard. Since this propensity is unobservable, firms will use indicators of it (such as hours of work, or overtime hours) for the purpose of selecting workers for promotion (Francesconi, 2003). Fairburn and Malcomson (2001) argue that when promotions are used to provide incentives and when employees are risk averse, standards of promotion may be laxer than would be wiser for assignment reasons alone. The firm consciously has some employees promoted to jobs beyond their capability, in the sense that they would be more productive in lower ranking jobs. It is also quite possible for the distortion to go in the opposite direction, with criteria for promotion being tougher than would be efficient.

2.3.2 Benefits of Promotion

Because workers know that not all of them will receive a promotion, the probability of a promotion provides an incentive to exert effort without the need for any formal contract between workers and the firm (Francesconi, 2001). Thus employers use promotion schemes as an incentive system or motivational device (Phillips and Sorensen, 2003). Rauch (2001) shows that promotion in bureaucracies can help bring to power individuals who restrain the corruption of their subordinates resulting in large-scale and petty corruption tending to be lower the longer the practice of promotion is in place. Hackett (1996) adds that promotion from within has the advantages of attracting higher calibre employees, better selection decisions as potential in an employee is identified through
observation on a day-to-day basis than external applicants seen only briefly (probably at their best), less induction into the organization, less expense and a shorter lead-time, low turnover as the promoted candidate is already committed to the organization. For the candidate, there is the advantage of being familiar with the organization, the system and the various personalities. Promoting an internal candidate improves the organization's reputation. Other members of the organization tend to be safer and comfortable with the known internal choice than external ones. Garavan and Coolahan (1996) state that there are advantages to both employee and employer to promote internally: the former enjoys security of employment and privileged access to promotion while the latter benefits by retention of firm-specific skills transferred to employees through on-the-job training. Kagiko (2006) observes that the benefits of promoting employees include staff motivation, commitment, retention and loyalty. In a study, Bradley (2003) found that employees believed there was greater justice when an internal candidate was chosen for a higher position. This was due to the perception that previous employment in the position was something positive that needed to be considered.

2.4 Employees’ Perceptions of the Promotion Process

Organizational support, as has been examined by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), is significantly influenced by perceptions of fairness. Since these perceptions influence organizational performance and bottom-line outcomes for organizations, it is important to investigate what influences perceptions of fairness. Harris et al. (2004) observe that perceived unfairness is determined by how well a particular event or incident reflects widely held beliefs, expectations and norms about (the violation of) social responsibility.
They point out that people hold certain expectancies as to who the perpetrators and victims of the unfairness are, and these expectancies determine judgements of unfairness. Their study showed that perpetrators who were expected to be in a power position (i.e. were historically assumed to have power in a specific situation) were believed more likely to be discriminating than perpetrators not expected to be in a power situation. For example, where a white manager in a bank rejects a black candidate for a job promotion, the candidate should be relatively likely to assume that the decision was based on discrimination. But where a black manager rejects a white candidate for a job promotion, the candidate should be less likely to attribute the decision to discrimination. The difference, according to prototype theory, is that historically speaking, white managers have held much power than black managers in the banking industry. At the same time, blacks have historically experienced difficulty in achieving employment success in the banking industry.

Managing internal promotion activities effectively, according to Milkovich and Boudreau (1988), requires attention to their effects on both efficiency and equity. It should be efficient because it is similar to external recruitment and selection in that it attracts an applicant pool and uses information to choose candidates most likely to contribute to organizational goals. Meyer (1992) shows that promotion has important implications for the productivity and costs of the organization. The costs, such as those for training replacing workforce, can be offset if promotion management enhances productivity.
Previous research has shown that if organizational members perceive that the organization does not treat them fairly, they are less likely to engage in behaviour that is useful to the organization (Moorman, 1991) and less likely to feel committed to the organization (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Promotion should be more attuned to equity perceptions because it affects current employees. Employees' attitudes are affected by their perceptions of the fairness of internal staffing activities. They regard promotion as rewards, recognition and signs of their value to the organization. Internal promotion needs to be evaluated for fairness with regard to minorities. It can have effects on EEO/AA goals and progress. Promotions represent more than a series of employment opportunities for those who move; they are a signal to employees about the equity of the organizational policies (Milkovich and Boudreu, 1988).

Moorman (1991) found that there was a positive causal relationship between perceptions of organizational justice and organizational citizenship behaviour. Co-workers who know something about the promotion decision will also have views about how just the process and decision was. Reactions of non-participants as well as participants may therefore have important and practical and theoretical implications for organizations. Heilman et al. (1996) showed in a simulation that there were negative perceptions from co-workers when some applicants were perceived to have received preferential treatment. People will change their behaviour based on their perceptions of equity and fairness in organizations. If they believe there is a low level of organizational justice, they may behave in ways that are contrary to what is beneficial to the organization (Bradley, 2004).
Gilliland (1993) has shown that the procedures and rules used for selection for promotion and the level of adherence to them influences how fair an applicant perceives the selection situation. He further proposes that many outcomes (such as job satisfaction and performance) are at least partly based on these perceptions. Perceptions of not being valued by the employer emanate from staff not being promoted. Employees feel they are just a number when they are not promoted. Employees usually get concerned about the objectivity of promotion, with a number of them believing that the promotion process is a barrier to career advancement. Gender issues also concern employees who at times feel they were excluded because of their gender. Ethnicity is another consideration where employees that belong to minority ethnic groups believe their lack of upward mobility is partly a consequence of stereotyping and prejudice (Milkovich and Boudreau, 1988). Political patronage, lack of transparency, nepotism, favouritism and undue advantage are usually cited. There are views that promotions are awarded on subjective criteria that slow expansion of the organization resulting in a lack of posts, that there is lack of interest on the part of senior management in the welfare of staff, and that senior management oppose upgrading some posts. Basically, there is no direct link between promotion and performance. As a result, the promotion systems do not reward high performers and staff end up being frustrated (Hope, 2003).

2.4.1 Consequences of Perceived Unfairness

The underlying variable in perception of unfairness appears to be the degree to which the decision-maker is perceived to have violated the norm of social responsibility, which assumes that powerful individuals should not take advantage of the less powerful. Thus,
the greater the degree to which the decision-maker appears to have violated that norm in
treating someone, the more likely that the decision-maker is perceived to have unfairly
treated the target (Harris et al., 2004). Harris et al. (2004) point out that there are three
types of reactions to perceived discrimination in promotion selections: reduced
psychological well-being, likelihood of taking legal action and negative job attitudes and
behaviours. Reduced psychological well-being de-motivates workers, lowers their
commitment to the organization and adversely affects their loyalty. Taking legal action
can be quite costly to the organization and the employee apart from being time-
consuming. Suits against the organization give it negative publicity. Negative job
attitudes and behaviour such as turnover, reduced organizational commitment and poor
citizenship behaviour are partly attributable to perceived unfairness. In a study, Devos et
al. (2002) found that the more employees viewed a situation as a case of ethnic
discrimination and a violation of principles of equality, the more they felt angry and
disgusted about what happened to the target. When employees view a colleague as a
victim of discrimination, they express a desire to engage in confrontational or active ways
of dealing with the situation (such as taking legal action or making the story known).
Thus, individuals who may not be personally or directly concerned by a situation will
experience emotions from the perception that an in-group member has been treated
unfairly. Garavan and Coolahan (1996) have shown that not promoting employees when
they deserve it can create dysfunctional outcomes for both the organization and its
employees. The former suffers from an inability to optimize its return on its human
resource investment because of failure to identify its best talent and the evolution of
internal labour market structures that creates bureaucratic barriers prohibiting staff
redeployment. Barriers impact on the latter category because job mobility is seen as an important component of career advancement and failure to fulfil psychological needs results in reduced motivation and commitment to organizational goals.
3.1 Research Design

This research used a sample survey design to determine the perceptions of middle grade employees on promotion process in the University of Nairobi. This design was appropriate in collecting information on a subset of the elements of the target population and using the information to determine summary characteristics about the population (Leedy, 1989).

3.2 Population

The study was made up of 1,383 middle grade employees of the University of Nairobi. This was as per May 2006 payroll. Staff in these grades serve in grade A – F. Placement in these grades is such that staff can be in grade A/B, C/D, or E/F. meaning an employee in A/B automatically moves to B on reaching the maximum of A. There is, likewise, a categorization of A/B/C and D/E/F with similar movement from A to C or D to F. Some mid-grade employees are placed in a single grade, for example only in A or C.

3.3 Sample

The sample for this study consisted of 80 middle grade staff drawn from 8 clusters that represent 8 out of 9 administrative colleges of the UON. namely; Central Administration; CAVS; CAE; CEES; CBPS; CHS; CHSS; Kibwezi Dryland Station; Students Welfare Authority (SWA).
Excluded from the sample due to distance was Kibwezi Dryland Station. 10 participants were randomly picked from each of the 8 clusters, resulting in a sample of 80, which the rule of thumb as proposed by Roscoe (1975) states is appropriate for statistical techniques.

3.4 Data Collection

Data was collected using semi-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of both open and closed ended questions that was dropped and picked later at an agreed date. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. Part A collected data on the profile/general information about the respondents and Part B and C collected data addressing the objectives of the study.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as tables, charts and percentages to represent the response rate and information on the variables under study. Mean scores, proportions and frequencies were used to analyze categorical data.
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter covers data analysis and findings of the research. The data is summarized and presented in the form of proportions. It documents the perceptions and the factors that influence the perceptions of middle grade employees on the process of staff promotion in the University of Nairobi. Data was collected from eighty (80) middle grade staff drawn from 8 clusters that represent 8 out of 9 administrative colleges of the university (see Appendix 3). Of the 80 sampled, 48 responded, a reasonably high response rate of 60 percent.

4.1 Employee’s Profile

The respondents in this study were middle grade employees of the University of Nairobi from 8 administrative colleges of the University.

4.1.1 Gender

The respondents were asked to indicate their gender. Out of the 48 respondents who were sampled, 52% were female while 48% were male. This is relatively a fair distribution in gender.
4.1.2 Highest academic qualification

The level of education has an impact on one’s promotion. Majority of the middle grade employees in the University have at least passed through high school. Out of the 48 respondents who were sampled, 15% indicated that they have gone to Secondary level, 26% indicated that they have a University degree, 46% indicated that they have Higher secondary certificate ('A' level), as 13% indicated that they have a Postgraduate Degree. Thus, the respondents had a rich academic background to understand the issues under research.

4.1.3 Professional Qualifications

The professional qualification of an employee has an impact on promotion. From the results of respondents sampled, 27% indicated that they have a professional certificate, 46% indicated that they have a diploma or mid-level professional qualifications such as Certified Public Accountants (CPA) IV. 19% had full professional qualifications (e.g. CPA-K). This is an indication that the respondents are qualified people in their respective disciplines and duties.

4.1.4 Age

Age is another important factor in employee job promotion. It is also used in laying-off the unproductive staff. Of the 48 who were sampled, 60% indicated that their age was
between 40 – 50 years. 23% indicated that they were above 50 years, 17% indicated that their age was between 30 – 40 years, 0% indicated that their age was below 30 years. This is an indication that most of the employees are at their productive ages that can enhance promotion.

4.1.5 College

The sample for this study consisted of 80 middle grade staff drawn from 8 clusters that represent 8 out of 9 administrative colleges of the UON. The respondents were asked to indicate the colleges where they work and the results showed that 17% were from the central administration. 9% from College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences (CAVS), 16% from College of Architecture and Engineering (CAE), 12% from College Biological and Physical Sciences (CBPS), 10% from College of Education and External Studies (CEES). 9% from College of Health Sciences (CHS), 14% from College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) and 13% were from Students Welfare Authority (SWA). Thus all the eight clusters were well represented.

4.2 Employees Grading and Promotion Process

The number of years an employee has worked in an institution has an influence on his/her experience and promotion. Seniority has been shown to be an important criterion when promoting employees. The respondents were asked to indicate the number of years they had worked for the University. 46% indicated that they had worked for more than 25
years. 28% indicated that they had worked between 15 – 20 years. 15% indicated that they had worked for between 10 – 15 years. 11% indicated that they have worked between 20 – 25 years. 0% indicated that they had worked between 1 – 5 years. 0% indicated that they had worked between 5 – 10 years. This is an indication that the people who responded had rich experience on the issues that were under study.

The entry grade determines how employees have been promoted. The respondents who were surveyed were asked to indicate their entry grades. From the results, 21% indicated that they joined the university at grade III. 2% indicated that their entry grade was IV, 29% entered at A/B/C, 17% indicated that their entry grade was A/B, 9% joined at grade A. 7% at C, 4% at D, while 11% indicated that their entry grade was D/E/F. None indicated that their entry grades were B, C, D, E, F, C/D, E/F, (I) or (II). It can be deduced that most of the middle grade employees joined the UON in middle grades. Only 23% have moved from the lower grades (I –IV) to the middle grades. 62% of those sampled joined the University in grades ranging from A – C, while 14% entered in grades D –F.

The employees’ current grade shows how fast the employee moved within the ranks. 73% indicated that their current grade is A - C, while 27% indicated that their current grade is D - F. From the entry grade results (above), it was shown that only 15% had joined the University in grades D – F. Now 27% are in these grades – an increase of 12%. Considering that most respondents had indicated that they had worked for more than 25 years, this is a very low increase. Thus, there is a high degree of restriction to upward mobility within ranks among middle grade employees.
The way promotions are effected has implications on the fairness of the procedure and therefore a fertile ground for different perceptions. Promotions in the university can be either through application or management’s decision. Out of the respondents surveyed, 76% indicated they had applied for promotions while 24% indicated they hadn’t. This shows that most employees apply for promotions. Some of the reasons given by those who hadn’t applied for promotion so far were that they never know of the existence of a position while others stated that it would have been unnecessary wastage of time as they wouldn’t have been considered anyway as the advertisements had targeted intended applicants.

How information relating to existence of a vacancy is relayed to employees can have an effect on the way the employees view the fairness of the process. The respondents were asked to indicate how they learn about new or vacant positions in the University. 60% indicated that they learnt through internal advertisement, 24% indicated that they learnt through the local media, 11% indicated that they learnt through their bosses, 5% indicated that they learnt about it through colleagues. This higher percentage of internal advertisement may be due to the line manager’s preference of promoting internal candidates as opposed to external candidates. However, 40% learning from either the local media or informal sources also shows that the internal mechanism for informing employees about vacant positions in the University is yet to be fully effective.

After learning about the advertisement and tendering applications for them, the candidates are then short-listed and then called for an interview. Respondents were asked
to indicate whether on applying they were called to attend interviews to fill the vacant positions. The results showed that 74% indicated they were not called for interviews while 26% indicated they had. Thus, a large number of those surveyed showed that they are not called for interviews for positions they apply for. This research did not venture into the reasons for this. It can only be assumed that the applicants did not qualify, or there was need to limit those short-listed to those with the highest requirements, or some other reason that is beyond the scope of this study. Respondents were further asked to state whether they receive an update as to why they were not considered for advertised positions. It was indicated that none of them is told. Asked what they believed were the reasons for not being considered. 60% believed it was favouritism and nepotism, 26% thought it was due to lack of enough positions, 6% stated that they lacked the necessary qualifications. 4% attributed it to corruption, while another 4% didn’t know.

The decision to select for promotion can affect employees depending on whether the candidate is internal or external to the organization (Bradley, 2006). Those who were interviewed were asked to state whether there were external candidates during the interview. 77% indicated that there were no external candidates, while 23% were interviewed along with external candidates. There are various advantages of injecting into an organization new blood such as avoiding in breeding and for effective management of change. However, as Bradley (2003) found, employees believe there is greater justice when an internal candidate is chosen for a higher position. Hence, the small proportion of external candidates is indicative of congruence with employees’ perceptions.
The respondents were asked to indicate who conducts the interview. 73% of the respondents indicated that it is a panel that includes personnel from other departments, 21% indicated that it is a panel of members of the college/department/section, 6% indicated that it is the head of the college/department/section and the deputy, 0% indicated that it is external consultants. This concurs with Kagiko’s (2006) observation that the university of Nairobi uses interviews, whose panel comprises of a chairperson (a college principal or deputy principal), secretary, the head and one representative of the concerned department, an administration registrar, and college bursar. Asked to indicate whether they are selected for new positions for which they have been interviewed, the results showed that 22% indicated they were selected for the positions while 88% were not selected. As is expected, not all called for interviews are promoted.

An important decision is whether to base promotion on seniority or competence, or some combination of the two (Dessler. 2003). The respondents who had been promoted were asked to indicate the strengths they possessed that were used to make the decision to promote them. From the research data, the factors with the highest influence were education, which scored 27%; ability 23%; performance 19%; age and seniority had a moderate effect of 16% and 15% respectively. This meets the universal criteria consisting of such items as employee seniority, employee training needs, past training, organizational loyalty, and previous jobs in the organization.

It is good management practice and communication to provide feedback to staff that were considered, but not selected. Provision of information after the selection process is
important as it provides a justification for specific selection decisions, which have already been taken (Gilliland, 1993). The respondents who were not promoted were asked to indicate whether they were made aware of the reasons they were not selected. 80% indicated they were not informed while 20% indicated they were. Some of the reasons given to those who were informed included: that one can’t jump a grade; the applicants were so many they just had to make choices. The respondents who were not selected were asked to indicate whether they agreed with the management’s decisions for not promoting them. 77% indicated that they don’t agree while 23% indicated that they do. Some of the reasons for those who don’t agree with the management were that the decisions were based on favouritism (66%), while others cited ethnicity/nepotism (28%), 6% cited corruption. Favouritism, ethnicity and corruption go against the tenet of efficiency and equity in managing promotion activities effectively as proposed by Milkovich and Boudreau (1988).

The respondents were asked to indicate and give reasons whether they have ever been promoted without applying. From the research results, all the respondents indicated that they have never been promoted without application. An indication all promotions go through a formal process. At the very basic level, an employee’s chance of competing for a promotion in a hierarchy is dependent on that individual being aware that an opportunity exists, which in turn depends on the existence of company-wide job posting arrangements (Garavan and Coolahan, 1996). The respondents were asked to indicate how they rate the effectiveness of internal advertisement for vacancies in reaching the relevant staff. The results were interesting in that 38% indicated that it is fairly effective.
36% indicated that it is ineffective, 15% indicated that it is effective, 11% indicated that it is utterly ineffective, while 0% indicated that it is highly effective. Thus, in general terms, internal advertisements are neither effective nor ineffective. Some of the reasons advanced for their ineffectiveness were: the adverts come late, interested parties hide them, their circulation is not good enough. However, others felt they were effective since they give opportunity for existing staff.

There is a positive causal relationship between perceptions of organizational justice and organizational citizenship behaviour. There must be some honest communication and procedures on “how-to-do-it” and “how-it-is-done”. The respondents were asked to indicate whether there is honest and timely communications about procedures used in promotions and decisions finally reached. 82% indicated that they are never informed, 11% indicated that they are sometimes informed. 7% indicated that they don’t remember, 0% indicated that they are frequently informed.

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they are in the right grades based on their qualifications and in view of the known staffing policies of the University. 70% indicated that they are not in the right grades based on their academic qualifications. 30% indicated that they are in the right grades. The employees, therefore, feel dissatisfied since they feel they are not in the right cadres. Some of the reasons they had given as to why they are not in their right grades includes: the establishment is limiting, there are no promotions anymore, some are qualified to be in grade D yet they are in grade B, no vacancies for right grades have been advertised. Some have worked for more than 30
years without promotion. Regarding promotion on the basis of experience, the respondents indicated that the university does not consider that criterion highly. These agrees with Mukhwana’s (2005) assertion that public universities place many of their employees in grades inferior to their academic and professional qualifications and experience, and operate rigid and archaic policies that hinder upward mobility. This state of affairs is also against Kagiko’s (2006) observation that the benefits of promoting employees include staff motivation, commitment, retention and loyalty.

Sometimes, there are instances where employees with same qualifications/skills/experience are in different grades. From the research data, all the respondents indicated that there are instances where employees with similar qualifications/skills/experience occupy different grades, either lower or higher grades. Some of the reasons for this scenario include lack of a clear policy on placement and promotion for the entire institution, bias, lack of uniformity across the board for the entire university community, incompetent managers, lack of guidance from the personnel department. More complications emanate from the fact that different departments have varying opportunities resulting in similar employees accorded dissimilar promotional chances.

Learning is related to promotion in as much as current performance affects future compensation (Valssechi, 2000). The respondents were asked whether they have ever undertaken any training, addition of knowledge or skills since joining the University. From the research data, 87% of the respondents indicated that they have taken training
and this is actually depicted by the level of academic qualification shown above. From the above the employees are only trying to affirm Valsecchi's (2000) point that the characteristics most usually taken into account in promotion are training or accumulated skills as experience on-the-job and talent. This is because productivity is affected by ability, experience and position in the organization.

The respondents were also asked to indicate whether they have ever been promoted after undertaking further training, addition of knowledge or skills. From the research data, 87% of the respondents indicated that they have never received any promotion after training. Some of the reasons for no recognition of other academic qualifications were given as the university takes these qualifications as irrelevant to job, and they therefore feel there is need of competent management to design a promotion scheme, which is not there at the moment. This is a clear indication that the University of Nairobi does not recognize this very important characteristic when carrying out its promotions. This is against Tzabbar, et al.’ (2003) two criteria for promotion. i.e. universalistic, which consist of such items as employee seniority, organizational loyalty, employee training needs, past training, and previous jobs in the organization and the particularistic, which consist of employee performance level, performance quality, evaluation score, and contribution to the organization. The University is supposed to utilize this pool of well-trained middle level employees in other senior assignments, as they also understand the University policies better. This is in line with Garavan and Coolahan’s (1996) statement that there are advantages to both employee and employer to promote internally: the former enjoys security of employment and privileged access to promotion while the latter
benefits by retention of firm-specific skills transferred to employees through on-the-job training.

The respondents were asked to indicate the most important criteria used by the UON for promotion according to the order in which they influence the decision on whether one is to be promoted or not. From the research data, the variable which were considered very important were the following with their respective percentages: 33% indicated relationship with head of department/college/section as the most important criterion; 29% indicated ethnicity i.e. the tribal background to be most important; 23% cited competence i.e. skills, knowledge, abilities, education as a very important criterion; previous performance i.e. past contribution was scored by 6% of the respondents; seniority i.e. number of years worked was scored by 5%; 4% scored gender i.e. sex of the employee; 0% indicated appearance, weight and/or height. Thus, according to the respondents, there's low degree of fairness in the promotion process at the University of Nairobi. Perhaps the University should consider Armstrong's (2003) advice that where promotion arrangements cause problems, there should be a policy and procedure that is known to both management and employees and this procedure should take full account of EEO policies.

4.3. Employees’ Rating of the University’s Promotion Practices

The respondents were first asked to indicate whether they actually feel that promotion is very important, and from the research data, 83% felt that promotion is a very important
aspect of their job. They were further asked to indicate the frequency of promotion in the University, and from the research data, 71% indicated that promotions are rare in the University. The respondents were also asked to rate the current promotion practices, and from the research data, 52% indicated that they are very unsatisfactory with 48% indicating not satisfactory, none indicated very satisfactory or satisfactory.

4.4 Preference of an External Candidate over an Internal one

The respondents were asked to indicate instances when an external candidate has been preferred for a job that any other already existing employee would have been selected. From the research data, 33% indicated that there are very many instances, as 7% indicated that there are very rare instances. The respondents were further asked to give their opinion about the prevalence for an external candidate. From the research data, 40% indicated that they strongly disagree with such practices, as 6% indicated that they agree with it. Since such has to do with recognition, the respondents were further asked to rate the institution’s recognition of employees’ contribution, and from the research data, 66% indicated that they are lowly valued, as none indicated that he/she is highly valued.

The respondents were also asked to indicate whether they would leave the institution if another opportunity arose due to the current promotion practices in the institution. From the research data, 50% indicated that other factors may be considered first, 28% indicated that they will leave as soon as the opportunity arises, 17% indicated that they are likely, as 4% indicated that they would never.
4.5 Rating of Employees’ Level of Job Satisfaction

The respondents were asked to rate their level of job satisfaction in view of the promotion process in the University. From data results, 44% indicated that they are lowly satisfied, 30% indicated that they are very lowly satisfied, 17% indicated that they are satisfied, 9% indicated that they are highly satisfied, 0% indicated that they are very highly satisfied.

4.6 Failures of the Promotion Process

Asked what they consider to be the greatest success or failure of the promotion process in the institution, none of the respondents indicated that there were successes. Only failures were pointed out ranging from keeping persons qualified for a higher grades in lower grades for too long (with some indicating that they had stayed in the same grades for more than 30 years without promotion), favouritisms (that one’s promotion depends entirely on the relationship created with the person who has the authority to ultimately recommend it rather than a reasonable competency standard), tribalism (that ethnicity has great meaning in promotion at the University), bureaucracy (during those rare moments promotion takes place, there’s a great deal of red-tape involved letting it take unnecessarily long to effect), unfairness (those who ought to be promoted are not the ones who get the promotion), poor management (that has permitted odd criteria as bases for promotion and which cannot forecast and anticipate changes in order make suitable amendments such as those relating to personnel establishment) and lack of innovation.
(which has let rules and procedures that should be discarded to continue to prevail, such as not 'jumping a grade', even though reason would dictate that cognizance of the changed work environment be taken into consideration).

4.7 Need to Change the Promotion Process

Lastly, asked to give their opinion on the need to change the promotion practices in the organization and to recommend some if so. 92% indicated that there is need to change the practices while 8% indicated that there is no need. Those who supported the preservation of the status quo, all of whom had been promoted, stated that the process has served the University well and symbolizes continuity that needn’t be disrupted – interference with this stability would permit unwanted chaos, confusion and disorder in the university. Of those who indicated that there is need for change (there are those who had been promoted and those who hadn’t), the following were some of their recommendations. That qualifications/skills should always be considered during promotions and should take merit into account. The long serving members should be recognized and promoted for their experience and loyalty that has kept valuable skills and knowledge pass onto their younger counterparts; that there should be fairness, equality and equity in the process with many responses lamenting that new employees with same qualifications as them, but without their experience, are entered at higher grades due to policies that keep them in certain grades over time as the new ones move higher. Consequently, recommendations were that the rule stipulating that an employee cannot 'jump grades' should be done away with. Respondents recommended that management find a solution to the issue of staff
establishment by converting the unoccupied positions into the needy ones even as it strives to expand it in relation to the ever growing needs of the University. There were views that victimization of staff due to the limiting establishment is unfair. It was further recommended that the performance of an employee should be an important consideration in promotion to serve as motivation to performance. Most respondents suggested that a scheme of service for all cadres of staff be put in place to avert arbitrary practices. Above all, there should be a well-documented promotion policy.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The major purposes of this study were to document the perceptions and the factors that influence the perceptions of middle grade employees on the process of staff promotion in the University of Nairobi. This chapter presents the summary and conclusions of results obtained from the study in line with above objectives.

5.2 Summary

The middle grade employees of the University of Nairobi were the respondents in this study. All the respondents in the eight strata (Colleges) were proportionally well represented. There is relatively fair distribution in gender amongst the employees in the middle grades. The respondents also had a rich academic background, which was fairly distributed ranging from secondary to postgraduate degrees - a clear depiction of understanding on the basic issues under study. The respondents were also found to be qualified people in their respective disciplines and duties as they had undertaken their professional training in fields ranging from CPA, technology, catering, secretarial, librarianship, technicians, graphic design, theology, at levels ranging from certificates and diplomas to degrees. It was also found that most employees in middle grades are at their productive ages (40-50), an age which employees desire promotion most.
The following were also some of the findings on employees grading and promotion process: most employees in the middle grades have worked in the University for more than 25 years, an indication that they had rich experience on the issues that were under study. Most of these employees joined the University in grades A/B/C, the majority are still in these grades. Promotions in the University are effected mainly through applying an advertised vacancy. Employees only learn about new or vacant positions in the University through internal advertisement, the local media and their bosses. After learning about the advertisement and tendering applications for them, a few of them are then short-listed and called for an interview. It was also established that the interviews are conducted through a panel that includes personnel from other departments or sometimes a panel of members of the college or department. A small number of the respondents indicated that they were selected for new positions for which they had been interviewed. Majority of those not called for interview, however, cited favouritism and nepotism.

Those promoted believed that the strengths used to make decisions of promoting them were their ability, education and performance, with age and seniority having a moderate effect. Unfortunately, majority of those who were not selected indicated that they were not made aware as to why they were not selected. These employees don’t agree with the management’s decisions on promotions. However, none of the employees sampled has ever been promoted without an application. Regarding the effectiveness of internal advertisements in reaching the intended applicants, the respondents gave interesting responses: they are neither effective nor ineffective. Reasons for their ineffectiveness
were cited as their being late, hidden, poor circulation, while they were said to be effective in so far as they were targeting intended existing applicants in the various departments.

It was also found that employees don’t receive honest and timely communications about procedures used in promotions and decisions finally reached, therefore there is a negative causal relationship between perceptions of organizational justice and organizational citizenship behaviour as there is no honest communication and procedures on “how-to-do-it” and “how-it-is-done”. It was established that most employees are not in the right grades based on their educational qualifications and experience in accordance with known staffing policies of the University. Reasons for this included a restrictive staff establishment, a tacit no-more promotions practice, lack of vacancies for qualified employees, a restrictive policy that does not allow ‘jumping of grades’. Some employees have stayed in the same grades for more than 30 years.

It was also found that there are many instances where employees with similar qualifications, skills, and experience occupy hugely varying grades - either lower or higher grades. Some of the reasons for this scenario include use of criteria that is not well stipulated, lack of promotion guideline across the board, bias, unfairness, incompetent managers and lack of guidance from the personnel division.

Most employees have taken training - addition of knowledge or skills since joining the University and this is actually depicted by the high level of academic qualification among them. But majority have, however, never received any promotion after their courses,
implying that the University of Nairobi does not recognize this very important characteristic when carrying out its promotions. This is against Tzabbar, et al. ' (2003) two criteria for promotion, i.e. universalistic, which consist of such items as employee seniority, organizational loyalty, employee training needs, past training, and previous jobs in the organization and the particularistic, which consist of employee performance level, performance quality, evaluation score, and contribution to the organization. One of the major reason cited for no promotion was that the University takes these qualifications as irrelevant to job, and the employees therefore feel there is need of a competent management to design a promotion scheme, which is not there at the moment.

From the responses, it was found that the most important criteria used by the university of Nairobi for promotion according to the order in which they influence the decision on whether one is to be promoted or not. were found to be (starting with the order of importance): relationship with the head of department/college/section; ethnicity i.e. tribal background; competence i.e. skills, knowledge, abilities & education. Previous performance, seniority and gender were considered peripheral, while appearance did not score any. Thus, promotion opportunities in the university are not necessarily open to all. A very low degree of fairness in the promotion process exists at the university. It would be advisable for the university to heed Armstrong’s (2003) advice that where promotion arrangements cause problems, there should be a policy and procedure that is known to both management and employees and this procedure should take full account of EEO policies.
Most employees feel that promotion is a very important aspect of their job, but promotions in the university are rare. It was also found that there are very many instances when external candidates have been preferred for a job that an already existing employee would have been selected. Most respondents strongly disagreed with such practices. It was further found that most employees felt they are lowly valued by the university as a result of the promotion process. None of the respondents indicated that he/she is highly valued. On leaving the institution if another opportunity arose due to the current promotion practices in the institution, majority indicated that other factors may be considered first, with a substantial number indicating that they could leave as soon as the opportunity arose. Also from the rating of the employees’ level of job satisfaction in view of the promotion process in the University, they indicated that they are lowly satisfied as others indicated that they are very lowly satisfied.

Finally, on the greatest success or failure of the promotion process in the institution, only failures were identified ranging from keeping a person qualified for a higher grade in a lower one for too long, the rule barring employees from ‘jumping grades’ even when they merit, restrictive personnel establishment, ethnicity, favouritisms, bureaucracy, unfairness, lack of a scheme of service, poor management and lack of innovation. On whether there’s need to change the promotion process in the organization, they expressed the need to change the practices: they made recommendations ranging from that qualifications should be considered in promotions, there should be a scheme of service for all cadres of staff, dormant positions in the establishment should be converted or lent to needy ones, the rule against ‘jumping of grades’ should be done away with, promotion should also be based on merit and experience, long serving members should be
recognized and promoted for their experience and loyalty, that performance should be an important consideration, and above all there should be a well documented promotion policy.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the results from data analysis and findings of the research from chapter four, one can safely conclude the following:

First, on the respondents’ and institutional profile, there is a fair distribution in gender amongst the employees in the middle grade and they also have a rich academic background, which was fairly distributed ranging from secondary to postgraduate level. The majority are at their productive ages (40-50) that will enhance promotion.

Second, on the employees grading and promotion process: most employees in the middle grade have worked in the University for more than 25 years, an indication that they had rich experience on the issues that were under study. Majority joined the University in grade A/B/C, and are still in those grades. Promotions in the University are either through application or management’s decision, but majority of the respondents indicated they apply for promotions. They only learn about new or vacant positions in the University through internal advertisement, the local media and their bosses. After learning about the advertisement and tendering applications for them, a few of them indicated that they are then short-listed and called for an interview. It was also established that the interviews are conducted through a panel that includes personnel from other departments or
sometimes a panel of members of the college/department/section. A few of them indicated that they were selected for new positions for which they had been interviewed.

Third, the strengths used to make decisions of promoting the employees as cited by those who were promoted were the employees’ ability, education and performance, with age and seniority having a moderate effect. Unfortunately, the majority of those who were not promoted are not made aware as to why they were not selected. These employees don’t agree with the management’s decisions on promotions, but none of the employees has ever been promoted without an application.

Fourth, most internal advertisements are tailored for intended applicants in the department but the use of the University of Nairobi’s internal advertisement for vacancies reaching the relevant staff was found to be neither effective nor effective. The reasons being that the adverts come late, interested parties hide them, and their circulation is not good enough. But they were also said to be effective because the targeted applicants within the departments for whom they were intended get them anyway.

Fifth, employees don’t receive honest and timely communications about procedures used in promotions and decisions finally reached, therefore there is a negative causal relationship between perceptions of organizational justice and organizational citizenship behaviour as there is no honest communication and procedures on “how-to-do-it” and “how-it-is-done”. Further, most employees are not in the right grades based on their qualifications and known University staffing policies since there are no promotions anymore. the establishment does not permit, they cannot ‘jump grades’ and in some cases
external candidates are preferred. Some are qualified to be in grade D yet they are in grade B. Some employees have been in the same grades for more than 30 without promotion. Employees responded that experience as a criterion for promotion is not highly considered at the University of Nairobi.

Sixth, there are many instances where employees with similar qualifications, skills, and experience occupy different grades - either lower or higher. Some of the reasons cited for this include lack of a clear policy on placement and promotion for the entire institution, bias, lack of uniformity across the board for the institution, incompetent managers and lack of guidance from the personnel department. More complications emanate from the fact that different departments have varying opportunities resulting in similar employees accorded dissimilar promotional chances.

Seventh. most employees have taken training, addition of knowledge or skills since joining the University as actually depicted earlier by their level of academic and professional qualification. But these employees have never received any promotion after the training. This is a clear indication that the University of Nairobi does not recognize this very important characteristic when carrying out its promotions. This is against Tzabbar, et al. (2003) two criteria for promotion. i.e. universalistic, which consist of such items as employee seniority, organizational loyalty, employee training needs, past training, and previous jobs in the organization and the particularistic, which consist of employee performance level, performance quality, evaluation score, and contribution to the organization. Reasons for no promotion were cited as the University’s lack of recognition of academic qualifications issued by the same University and others on
grounds that they are as irrelevant to the job. Employees therefore feel there is need for a competent management to design a promotion scheme, which is not there at the moment.

Eighth, the most important criteria used by the university for promotion according to the order in which they influence the decision on whether one is to be promoted or not, were found be (starting from the most important): relationship with head of department/college/section: ethnicity i.e. the tribal background: competence i.e. skills, knowledge, abilities, education is a poor third important criterion. Thus, according to the respondents, there’s low degree of fairness in the promotion process at the University of Nairobi. Perhaps the University should consider Armstrong’s (2003) advice that where promotion arrangements cause problems, there should be a policy and procedure that is known to both management and employees and this procedure should take full account of EEO policies.

Ninth, while most employees feel that promotion is a very important aspect of their job, promotions are rare in the university. There are very many instances when an external candidate has been preferred for a job that an already existing employee would have been selected and employees strongly disagree with such practices. Due to current promotion process, majority of the employees felt they are lowly valued, as none indicated that he she is highly valued.

Lastly, on leaving the university if another opportunity arose due to the current promotion practices in the institution, majority indicated that other factors may be considered first,
but with a good number stating that they could leave as soon as the opportunity arose. Also from the rating of the employees' level of job satisfaction in view of the promotion process in the University, majority indicated that they are lowly satisfied as others indicated that they are very lowly satisfied. Regarding the greatest success or failure of the promotion process in the institution, no success was cited as only failures ranging from keeping a person qualified for a higher grade for too long in a lower grade, restrictive establishment, favouritisms, tribalism, bureaucracy, unfairness, poor management and lack of innovation. They expressed the need to change the practices by making recommendations that qualifications should be considered in promotions, a scheme of service for all cadres be in place, borrow dormant positions in the establishment to fill gaps, do away with the no 'jumping of grades' rule, promotion should be also based on merit and experience, the long serving members be recognized and promoted, that performance should also be considered, and above all have a well documented promotion policy.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are also worth making to the University of Nairobi especially to the management:

There are three types of reactions to perceived discrimination in promotion selections: reduced psychological well-being; likelihood of taking legal action; and negative job attitudes and behaviours. Since very many members in the middle cadre have enrolled for professional training and upon completion seek promotion on the basis of newly acquired
qualifications and skills, it would be prudent to recognize them and find ways to utilize this pool of well-trained middle level employees in other senior assignments as they also understand the University policies better. This is in line with Garavan and Coolahan’s (1996) statement that there are advantages to both employee and employer to promote internally: the former enjoys security of employment and privileged access to promotion while the latter benefits by retention of firm-specific skills transferred to employees through on-the-job training.

Having established that promotion is a critical component in the University, internal promotion (case where a vacancy is filled within the organization and current employees are preferred in the selection of candidates for the newly available position, through increase in wages, in proportion to an increase in hierarchical rank that is accompanied by corporate benefits) should be emphasized more by the University rather than external promotions except in very exclusive cases.

Managing promotion activities effectively requires attention to their effects on both efficiency and equity. Therefore the university management team should avoid instances where promotion opportunities are not open to all. This will lead to a high degree of fairness in the promotion process at the University of Nairobi. The University should therefore heed Armstrong’s (2003) advice that where promotion arrangements cause problems, there should be a policy and procedure that is known to both management and employees and this procedure should take full account of EEO policies. In this vein is recommended a well-documented policy and procedure for promotion at the university.
Circulation of internal advertisements so as to reach the employees ought to be improved to enable as many qualified candidates to apply for the advertised vacancies. It is recommended that administrative staff be instrumental in making sure that the advertisements are well circulated to the university community.

It is further recommended that uniformity in placement and promotion across all departments of the University be emphasized, with the personnel division of the university playing a crucial role in correcting past imbalances and advising line managers on the import of certain promotional and/or non-promotional decisions.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

There was time and financial constraint in carrying out the research. The members of staff in the middle cadre who were the targets for the questionnaire were very busy most of the time and kept turning down the appointments.

Most of the informants were reluctant to participate in the research and had to be really convinced to. Some felt they would be sacked if they gave pertinent information regarding the University’s promotion processes and practices that are not documented anywhere.
5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

The researcher recommends a study to be conducted to determine the perceptions of the other two levels of employees - the academic grades and the lower grades - on the process of staff promotion in the University of Nairobi.

A particularly interesting area is the criteria for promotion among the academic members of staff. While teaching members of staff in the academic grades are required to study further, publish or supervise a number of theses to earn a promotion, it is worth studying the equity of standards used to promote their equivalents who are non-teaching staff.

The role of the University Enterprises and Services Limited (UNES) in the increase of wages to University of Nairobi staff with regard to proportionality of hierarchical ranks and duties and the perception of staff regarding this is also a fertile area for research.

There are differences in the staff promotion processes among the departments of the University of Nairobi as could be deduced from responses from the questionnaire. In some departments, upward mobility is quite fast whereas employees in most departments have stagnated in the same grades for decades. It is recommended that a study be carried out to determine the reasons for these differences.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1A: INTRODUCTION LETTER

TO RESPONDENT

University of Nairobi
School of Business
P.O.Box 30197
Nairobi.

Dear Sir/ Madam.

RE: A STUDY ON EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTION OF THE STAFF PROMOTION PROCESS: THE CASE OF MIDDLE GRADE STAFF IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI.

I am student at the University of Nairobi pursuing a Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.) degree. This research is part of the requirement of the course. You have been carefully selected to form part of this study. It is my humble request that you kindly spare some time to fill the attached questionnaire as accurately as possible. The information you give will be used purely for academic purposes and all responses will be treated with confidentiality. A copy of the research report will be availed to you on request.

Yours faithfully,

F.W.K. Kachero
M.B.A. Student.
APPENDIX 1B: QUESTIONNAIRE

Please tick the appropriate response

PART A: EMPLOYEE PROFILE

1. Name (Optional)...........................................................................................................

2. Gender
   Male [ ]   Female [ ]

3. What is your highest academic qualification
   a) Primary level [ ]
   b) Secondary level [ ]
   c) Higher secondary level (‘A’ level) [ ]
   d) University degree [ ]
   e) Postgraduate [ ]

4. Professional qualifications (if any) e.g. Journalism, CPA, Librarianship etc.
   [Please state level e.g. CPA 3]...........................................................................

5. Age
   a) Below 30 years [ ]
   b) 30 – 40 years [ ]
   c) 40 – 50 years [ ]
d) Above 50 years [  ]

6. College
   a) Central Administration [  ]
   b) College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences (CAVS) [  ]
   c) College of Architecture and Engineering (CAE) [  ]
   d) College Biological and Physical Sciences (CBPS) [  ]
   e) College of Education and External Studies (CEES) [  ]
   f) College of Health Sciences (CHS) [  ]
   g) College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) [  ]
   h) Students Welfare Authority (SWA) [  ]

7. Section or Department..............................................................

PART B

(1) How long have you worked for the UON?
   a) 1 – 5 years [  ]
   b) 5 – 10 years [  ]
   c) 10 – 15 years [  ]
   d) 15 – 20 years [  ]
   e) 20 – 25 years [  ]
   f) More than 25 years [  ]
(2) What was your entry grade?

(i) A/B [ ]  (ii) C/D [ ]  (iii) E/F [ ]  or [Tick] Grade (I) (II) (III) (IV)

or

(i) A/B/C [ ]  (ii) D/E/F [ ]

or

(i) A [ ]  (ii) B [ ]  (iii) C [ ]  (iv) D [ ]  (v) E [ ]  (vi) F [ ]

What is your current grade?.................................

(3) Have you ever applied for a promotion

Yes [ ]  No [ ]

If No, explain why and move to question

(11)..........................................................................
..........................................................................
..........................................................................

(4) How did you learn about the position?

a) Through by my boss [ ]
b) I learnt about it through colleagues [   ]
c) Through internal advertisement [   ]
d) I learnt through the local media [   ]

(5) Were you called for an interview for the position? Yes [   ] No [   ]

If ‘No’, were you told why you were not considered?
Yes [   ] No [   ]

What reasons were given? ........................................................................................................

If you were not told, what reasons do you believe made you not to be considered?
........................................................................................................................................

If ‘Yes’. were there other applicants interviewed for the same post?
Yes [   ] No [   ]

Were there external candidates? Yes [   ] No [   ]

(8) Who conducted the interview?

a) A panel that included personnel from other departments [   ]
b) A panel of members of the college/department/section [   ]
c) The head of the college/department/section and the deputy [   ]
d) External consultants [   ]

(9) Were you selected for the position? Yes [   ] No [   ]
If 'Yes', rate the following in accordance with the strengths you believe you possess and in the order they influenced the decision in your favour by circling one number per criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 = Very Low</th>
<th>3 = Moderately</th>
<th>5 = Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 = Low</td>
<td>4 = High</td>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Seniority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b) Education</td>
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<td>c) Performance</td>
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<td>d) Ability</td>
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<td>e) Age</td>
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</table>

(10) If you were not selected for the position, were you told the reasons?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

i) If told, what were the reasons? .............................................................................................................

Did you agree with them? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If 'No', why not? ............................................................................................................................................

ii) In your opinion, why was (were) the person(s) promoted to the position selected instead of you?

..............................................................................................................................................................
(11) If you have never applied for a promotion, but you were nevertheless promoted, state how it happened.

(12) How would you rate the effectiveness of internal advertisement for vacancies in reaching the relevant staff?

   a) Highly effective [ ]
   b) Effective [ ]
   c) Fairly effective [ ]
   d) Ineffective [ ]
   e) Utterly ineffective [ ]

Why, or why not?

Explain.

(13) Do you receive honest and timely explanations about procedures used in promotion and the decision finally reached?

   a) Frequently [ ]
   b) Sometimes [ ]
   c) Don’t remember [ ]
   d) Never [ ]
(14) In view of your educational qualifications, and in accordance with the known staffing policies of the university, are you in the right grade?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

Why or why not?

Explain


(15) Regarding your experience, do you think you are in the grade you ought to be?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

Explain


(16) Are there instances where other employees with qualifications/skills/experience such as yours are in:

a) Lower grades than you? Yes [ ] No [ ]

b) Higher grades than you? Yes [ ] No [ ]

c) Both [ ]

(17) What are your opinions about the situation (in question 16) above? .................................................................
(18) Have you ever added to your knowledge, skills or training since joining this institution?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

(19) After completion, were you promoted?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

If ‘No’, why? Explain and state your feelings about it: ........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

(20) Please rate what you consider in your opinion to be the most important criteria used by the UON for promotion by circling each according to the order in which they influence the decision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 = Irrelevant</th>
<th>5 = An Also Important Criterion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 = Very Low Importance Criterion</td>
<td>6 = Important Criterion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = Low Importance</td>
<td>7 = Very Important Criterion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 = Satisfactory Criterion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Seniority i.e. number of years worked 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
b) Competence i.e. skills, knowledge, abilities, education 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
c) Previous performance i.e. past contribution 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
d) Ethnicity i.e. the tribal background 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
PART C

1. How important is promotion to you?
   a) Not important at all [ ]
   b) Fairly important [ ]
   c) Important [ ]
   d) Very important [ ]

2. How frequent are promotions in the organization?
   a) Very frequent [ ]
   b) Frequent [ ]
   c) Rare [ ]
   d) Very rare [ ]

3. Rate the current promotion practices in the organization
   a) Very satisfactory [ ]
   b) Satisfactory [ ]
   c) Not satisfactory [ ]
   d) Very unsatisfactory [ ]
4. Has there been an instance when an external candidate has been preferred for a job you believe either you or any other already existing employee would have been selected?
   a) Very many
   b) Many
   c) Rare
   d) Very rare

5. What is your opinion about the situation in question 4?
   a) Strongly agree with such a policy
   b) Agree with it
   c) Disagree
   d) Strongly disagree

6. How do you rate the institution’s recognition of your contribution?
   a) Am highly valued
   b) Am valued
   c) Am lowly valued
   d) Am not valued at all

7. Would you consider leaving the institution if another opportunity arose due to the current promotion practices in the institution?
   a) Never
   b) Other factors may be considered first
c) Likely [ ]

d) As soon as the opportunity arises [ ]

8. Rate your level of job satisfaction in view of the promotion process in the university

a) Very high satisfaction [ ]
b) High satisfaction [ ]
c) Satisfaction [ ]
d) Low satisfaction [ ]
e) Very low satisfaction [ ]

9. What do you consider to be the greatest success/failure of the promotion process in the institution?

...................................................................................................................................

...................................................................................................................................

10. Do you think there is need to change the promotion practices in the organization?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

What changes would you recommend?
...................................................................................................................................
...................................................................................................................................
...................................................................................................................................

I WISH TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SINCERELY THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.