

INFLUENCE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY POLICIES ON PERFORMANCE OF THE DEVOLVED SYSTEM OF COUNTY GOVERNMENTS: WAJIR COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The 2010 Constitution of Kenya created 47 county governments to improve service delivery and ensure equitable distribution of resources. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) policies play a critical role in enhancing efficiency, transparency, and accountability across devolved governance structures. This study investigated the influence of ICT policies on the performance of devolved systems with specific focus on Wajir County, Kenya. Utilizing Public Management Theory and descriptive survey methodology, the findings demonstrate that ICT policy adoption, infrastructure development, and automated procurement systems significantly improve municipal service delivery, citizen engagement, and organizational performance across county administrative departments.

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Abstract: Devolvement has been promoted as a political response to conflicts, administrative inefficiencies, corruption, economic stagnation, inefficient use of public resource and other ills that characterize centralized governments. In spite of the development of various County Information and Communication Technology policies made to reverse past inequalities through good governance and equitable development, six years into the devolution system in Kenya, there are only a few reported success stories. The study sought to evaluate the effect of Information and Communication Technology policies on performance of devolved system within Wajir County, Kenya. Descriptive research design was used during the study. Moreover, target population was 140 personnel working in the five departments and 30 Members of County Assembly in Wajir County. Slovin's Formula was utilized to establish the sample size. In this study, the sample size was 119. Both primary as well as secondary data was adopted in this study. Secondary data was retrieved from Wajir County government yearly reports. Questionnaires and key informant interviews were utilized in this research study to collect data. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation as well as frequency distribution was deployed to analyze research data. This includes the percentages, standard deviation as well as mean. Inferential statistics (regression and correlation analysis) was computed with the help of the SPSS (24) to draw conclusions based on the surveyed data that was collected. All qualitative data gathered during the study was analyzed through content analysis and presented descriptively. The quantitative results of the study were presented in tables, graphs as well as pie charts. The study found that Information and Communication Technology Policy has positive as well as significant influence on performance of the devolved system in Wajir County. The study recommends that national government through policy makers should revise the Information and Communication Technology Policy to ensure continuous use of e-procurement so as to improve financial transaction between suppliers and county government. In addition, the County government should carry out a thorough research on issues related to Information and Communication Technology so as to access recent information on Information and Communication Technology projects that will acts as a guide towards the development of modern Information and Communication Technology infrastructure.

Introduction

Devolvement has been promoted as a political response to conflicts, administrative inefficiencies, corruption, economic stagnation, inefficient use of public resource and other ills that characterize centralized governments (Gooberman, 2016). Devolvement involves transfer of finances and power to County governments with an aim of bringing services and development close to citizens. According to Khaunya, Barasa and Chepng'eno (2015), the devolved system has been much successful in different parts of the world such as US, Nigeria, South Africa, India and Sweden. In addition, Uganda practices in devolved system are via kingdoms while Tanzania practices are via Jimbos. Devolution allows counties to develop their own policies that can ensure development and improve service delivery.

Among the most essential arguments on decentralization and devolution is that it improves economic efficiency by boosting information flow, reducing development cost and bringing public services closer to the people. It is suggested that to encourage accountability and community participation, and improve technical efficiency as well as equity in management of public resources (Siddle and Koelble, 2016). Furthermore, devolution establishes democratic space for institutions of governance to flourish. There are numerous countries across the world that are run via devolved units. The success level varies from one country to another. For instance, the community was not involved during the devolution of power in United Kingdom, which reduced access to funds by the local authority and altered the emphasis on governance (Eniola and Entebang, 2015). India and United States with about 60 and 200 years of experience respectively are the other most prominent successful experiences with devolution.

In United Kingdom, Faguet, Fox and Poeschl (2014) indicate that decentralization in terms of Policy autonomy as well as the ability to maintain the law, provision of accountable service responsive as well as social learning affects delivery of services. They argued that what decentralization (fragmentation of authority) actually does is to change politics from top-down to bottom-up, adopting numerous localities together with their concerns. In addition, Morocco, Indonesia, Thailand and Pakistan portrayed perceptible but small, increment in distribution of resources, local participation and public services extended to rural areas, identification of project and implementation, as well as creation of employment after implementing decentralizing public sector reforms (Mukabi, 2015).

Decentralization in Libya, Algeria and Tunisia indicate that performance of decentralized managerial units in certain case has been positive, however have not constantly attained the goals of the initial policy reformers (Muskoka and Gakuu, 2018). In Papua currently known as Guinea, devolution raised popular government participation and has improved the management, planning and coordination ability of provincial administrators. In Africa, South Africa is the only country which has a devolved government system with the premier leading the regional governments. The national government upholds oversight and supervisory roles; nevertheless the regional (provincial) government represents the national congress to both the assembly and the cabinet (Muthui, 2016). Siddle and Koelble (2016) argue that while the local governments had developed their own policies, service delivery and development had not improved. This was because of inability to carry out functions, resources mismanagement, incapability and an inferior accountability culture which entirely adds to state of affairs.

In Nigeria, Fatile and Ejalonibu (2015) indicate that although County governments, Nigeria had developed different policies to improve service delivery in the counties, the local government was too strictly regulated by the State and hence lagging behind in performing the duties allocated by the constitution. However, Okojie (2017) argues that the policies' development in County governments enabled service delivery including improvement in access to clean water, improvement of health services and improvement in public transport.

In Kenya, this came after several years of local governments, post-independence approach which still adopted governance structure which was highly centralized and had been expected to resolve the problems of regional development but actually failed (Khaunya, Wawire and Chepng'eno, 2015). In the year 2010, the Kenyan constitution initiated changes in the country's history as it reconfigured equality of power by decentralizing responsibilities as well as powers from national government to elected county governments which were 47 in total among which included Wajir County situated at northern part of Kenya and at the former North Eastern Province.

Statement of the Problem

Devolution in Kenya was considered a solution to various problems like conflicts, inequalities, corruption, inefficient use of public resources, rent seeking and economic stagnation. Since the year 2013, Kenya has experienced essential changes in the state institutions involved with economic development as well as redistribution (Njuguna, 2012). Further, proper implementation of county government policies like Information and Communication Technology policies helps in strengthening governance in the county governments by strengthening accountability, increasing transparency and creating a performance culture in the governments to support making of better policy, making decision on budget and management (Mbugua and Moronge, 2016).

In spite of the development of Information and Communication Technology policies made to reverse past inequalities through good governance and equitable development, six years into the devolution system in Kenya, there are only a few reported successful stories. In addition, there is a myriad of governance and institutional challenges that must be tackled for devolution to succeed (Mukabi, 2015). Moreover, County governments usually received inadequate, erratic and unevenly distributed resources, which weakened sustainable implementation, leading to continued inequality and poverty. As such, despite the development of various County policies including ICT policies, residents of Wajir County are still experiencing challenges related to service delivery (KNBS, 2018). Therefore, despite the development of County policies in Wajir County, service delivery is still very low (County Government of Wajir, 2018).

Several studies have been conducted in Kenya on the evaluation of County government policies and development of devolved systems. For instance; In Kitui County, Muthui (2016) focused on the policies influencing delivery of service in county governments in Kenya. Moreover, Ngeno and Omwenga (2015) performed a research on the factors aiding to e-procurement adoption in Bomet County, Kenya. Nonetheless, these researches were limited to particular counties and therefore their results cannot be applied in Wajir County. Hence, the study sought to determine the influence of information and communication technology policy on performance of the devolved system in Wajir County, Kenya.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored Public Management Theory, which was founded by Allan (2003). The theory states that the government run based on the laws or generally acceptable political principles which outline the procedure for implementing sovereignty. The contract or constitution among the principles of the state sets a parameter on ways in which democracy function in the country. Characters that represent democracy take form via the three co-equal government branches, namely, legislature, executive department and judiciary. Each branch is independent in its domain (Osborne et al., 2013). The executive department is sovereign in implementing the laws, the legislators enact laws and the judiciary interprets laws. Such differentiations aimed at speeding up performance of government roles and also ensure delivery of high quality services through specialization in marketing of the public services, strategic orientation, coproduction and operation management (Konrad, 2016).

By embracing public service-dominant approach in delivery of public services, the user and the citizen are both as referred to as important stakeholders in delivery of public service processes and public policy and their participation in all processes increases value to both. In addition, a public service-dominant marketing approach is important for changing strategic intention of public service to specific offering or "service promise", as well as for expectations' molding of the service by their consumers and function of employees in delivering it (Meier, 2015).

In addition, it can provide robust framework meant for improving trust in delivery of public service between service users and PSOs. By embracing dominant approach of public service, coproduction turns to be an unchangeable constituent of delivery of public services that positions the knowledge as well as service users' experiences at the core of effective design as well as delivery of public service. Absence of dominant-approach of public service and management of operations within the public services will result to only more efficient public services but not more effective. Nevertheless, absence of operations management, public service-dominant approach toward the public services will results to an unfulfilled "service promise" (Marona and Beemt, 2018).

In relation to this study, this theory describes how ICT policies which outline the procedure for implementation of sovereignty to speed up development of devolved systems through effective utilization of resources and delivery of efficient services. The ICT policies should focus on assessment of the result of information communication technology on public service-dominant approach, and testing within the context of public service of prevailing approaches to enhance development of ICT infrastructure, implementation of e-procurement among other ICT systems (Aldemir, 2018).

Conceptual Framework

This research sought to investigate the influence of ICT policies and performance of the devolved system in Wajir County, Kenya. Moreover, the independent variables were ICT policies and the dependent variable was development of devolved system. Figure 2.1 indicates the association between dependent variable (performance of devolved system) and independent variable (Information and Communication Technology policies).

Figure SEQ Figure_2. * ARABIC 1: Conceptual Framework

Empirical Literature

Ndegwa, Kiririand and Achoki (2016) performed a study on the factors affecting donor financed ICT projects' adoption in Kenyan public sector. Furthermore, the investigation was performed by use of descriptive survey research design. Additionally, the researcher targeted a population of all 205 state owned enterprises in Kenya out of which 67 are located in Nairobi County. Research findings showed that the relationship between Infrastructural ICT policies and adoption of donor funded ICT projects was positive and significant. According to the study results, implementation of a robust public sector policy can enhance ICT use, and the development of donor funded ICT project make ICT hardware and software accessible and affordable to majority of individual firms.

Al-Shboul et al. (2014) performed a study on impact of ICT policies on implementation of E-Government in Jordan. In addition, semi-structured interviews were adopted for data collection. Target population comprised of 36 E-government officials. Study findings showed positive significant association between ICT policies and execution of E-government in Jordan. However, the research established that unclear technological policies; economic challenges and poor infrastructure in the country negatively affected initiatives of e-Government services. It was also indicated that financial policies had an impact on implementation of ICT projects. Results showed that in Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, adoption and implementation of e-Government program is at formative stages. This means that it is necessary for government to put extra effort into offering better e-services and in linking the digital divide. This will be achieved through implementation of clear technologically and financially policies.

In Kenya, Owino, Keraro and Wanjiku (2016) performed an investigation on the factors affecting the performance of ICT projects. Furthermore, descriptive survey design was employed during the investigation. Target population involved 344 ICT firm and through the use of stratified sampling technique, 103 firms were selected as a sample size of total population from Nairobi County. Findings revealed that ICT policies had a positive and also significant outcome on implementation of ICT projects. It was further established that growth and expansion of ICT was influenced by tax incentives, access to recent ICT information and incentives for ICT sector investment. Other factors found comprised of; government regulatory necessities which were found to limit ICT investment, license requirements, license fees and political risks.

Ladokun, Osunwole and Olaoye (2013) performed a study on factors affecting adoption and ICT usage in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study adopted empirical model and was based on sample data collected by use of survey instrument which was distributed to 70 SMEs in Lagos, Nigeria. Study findings revealed that infrastructural policies, training, skills and policies, investment cost policies, management support, cost of maintenance policies, government policies and security level are factors that are affecting adoption of ICT by SMEs. It was concluded that SMEs have consumed a lot of time in adopting ICT in Nigeria as they experience major limitation such as limited literacy in ICT, poor infrastructure in telecommunication, lack of ability to incorporate ICT into various business processes, costly ICT equipment, partial regulations for e-commerce by the government, regulatory and legal issues, inferior ICT strategies, absence of advancement as well as research, foreign technology' over reliance, ICT implementation weaknesses and poor understanding of changes of the knowledge on economy.

Karunaratne, Colombage and Hansson (2018) conducted a study on implementation of ICT projects on small scale in developing countries. The study adopted underlying theoretic framework from research in Information systems (IS) and Information Technology (IT). Specifically, it's motivated by model of critical factors. The study targeted 20 projects from 20 different countries. Findings showed a positive and significant outcome of ICT policies on implementation of ICT projects. The research indicated that government policy on ICT in Zimbabwe intends to establish connectivity in all the schools and also join the urban-rural digital divide, further enhance learning and teaching by use of technological tools and enhance computer literacy which is universal in Zimbabwe's schools. Findings also revealed that Zimbabwe had adopted strategies which make sure that resources are maximized so as to understand their ICT policy. According to the study findings, almost all the countries under the study considered ICT policies when implementing their change project.

Ngeno and Omwenga (2015) performed a research on the factors aiding to e-procurement adoption in Bomet County, Kenya. Furthermore, descriptive design was employed during the study. Additionally, target population consisted of 45 staffs working in accounts, procurement and IFMIS/ICT departments. Study findings revealed that ICT policies have positive and also significant outcome on adoption of E-Procurement in County Governments. It was further established that e-procurement is the preferred way of procurement. The research revealed that technology and ICT infrastructure availability influence e-procurement system adoption. Consequently, adopting E-procurement in the counties has been effective and efficiency in procuring of county products.

Research Methodology

The study used a pragmatic research approach and a descriptive research design. The unit of observation was employees working in various departments within Wajir County as well as Members of the County Assembly. The target population was 140 personnel operating in the five departments and 30 Members of County Assembly in Wajir County. Furthermore, Slovin's Formula was utilized to establish the sample size. This formula was chosen since as it puts the size of entire population into consideration.

Where by: n = no. of samples; N = entire population; and E = margin of error (0.05)

Stratified random sampling method was adopted to select 119 personnel from study population. The strata were the Members of County Assembly and five departments. Stratified sampling has a major advantage on how it captures major population features in the sample.

Table 1: Sample Size

Target population

Sample Size

Agriculture, livestock and fisheries

29

20

Public health ,sanitation and medical services

32

22

E-government and ICT

24

17

Roads, public works and transport

31

22

Water, natural resources energy and environment

24

17

Members of County Assembly

30

21

Total

170