

CAPACITY BUILDING AND SERVICE DELIVERY AMONG NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION OFFICERS IN EMBU COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Kenya government continues to enhance service delivery to the public through improved coordination and optimal resource utilization. To do so, the government relies on the expertise of National Government Administration officers (NGAOs) mainly deputy county commissioners (DCCs), Assistant County Commissioners (ACCs), chiefs, and Assistant Chiefs to deliver its mandates to the public. The government also engages Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs on regular capacity building to ensure their skills remain at par. Besides these efforts NGAOs still demonstrate inadequate skills necessary to deliver effective services implying a potential disconnect between capacity building (training) and their needs. Therefore, the specific objective of this study was to determine the effect of training to service delivery among NGAOs in Embu County, Kenya.

Methods: The study used a mixed method research design where it combined a survey (quantitative) and structured interviews with key informants (qualitative). The study targeted 226 participants, 64 chiefs and 141 assistant chiefs distributed in the

six sub counties in Embu County and 15 Assistant County Commissioners (ACCs) and 6 Deputy County Commissioners (DCCs)

Results: The study had a total of 148 participants out of anticipated 226 leading to 65.5% response rate. Among the participating National-Government Administrative Officers (NGAOs), (84, 56.8%) held positions as assistant chiefs, (62, 41.9%) as chiefs, and (2, 1.4%) as assistant county commissioners. The findings indicated that only (57, 38.5%) of participated NGAOs have attended capacity building in the last 3 years. These results demonstrate a good number of NGAOs may have not attended capacity building program due to variety of reasons. **Conclusion:** There was insufficient recent capacity building training opportunities highlighting the effect of inadequate capacity building training on service delivery. Without recent training, NGAOs may lack updated skills and knowledge necessary for effective service delivery, potentially leading to inefficiencies or shortcomings in their performance.

Keywords: Capacity Building, Service Delivery, NGAOs.

INTRODUCTION

Kenya enjoys a considerably stable and robust government that rigorously focuses on service delivery for her citizens. The country has made tremendous political and economic reforms which are attributed to its current sustained economic growth, political stability, and social development (World Bank Kenya, 2022). With the current two levels of governments (County and National governments) service delivery have been decentralized and coordination

enhanced between the various government stakeholders and arms to counter previously experienced challenges in public service delivery.

Therefore, to maintain its long-term development agenda, Vision 2030, Kenya continues to reinvent its leadership and governance systems which are key to its renewed momentum in improving public service delivery (KIPPRA, 2021). At the heart of competent public service delivery systems are the NGAOs mainly chiefs and assistant chiefs at the street level. Since colonial period by British, chiefs and assistant chiefs have been fundamental in maintaining law and order in their respective areas of authority (Hority, 2020). Up to date the roles of NGAOs in many African countries including Kenya have hardly changed instead they have been enhanced from primarily arbitrators in everyday disputes, overseeing justice, maintaining stability and order (Hority, 2020) to coordinating and implementing government policies in their areas of jurisdiction (Mukindia, 2013). To enhance performance of chiefs and assistant chiefs in their roles specifically in maintaining law and order most governments take deliberate efforts to train and equip them with the right knowledge and skills. In Ghana chiefs have been identified as important actors in dispute resolution (Kuusaana et al., 2013) whereas Kenya view them as potential conduits of peaceful resolutions especially in conflict infested rural parts of the country (Ngaruiya & Scheffran, 2016).

Concerns have been raised over the ability of chiefs and assistant chiefs to provide effective services to the public given their broader roles. For example, the NGAOs are excellent for conflict resolution because of their familiarity with and closeness to the people and awareness with the working of the government but the extensive duty and inadequate training can lead to inferior services (Kaufman, 2011). Many NGAOs lack training in critical areas such as ICT and legal matters limiting their effectiveness or exposing them to negligence in their line of duty. Mbuba and Mugambi (2011) NGAOs are key agents of crime control but their ability to utilize their potential is limited to training. Jelagat (2014) reported lack of proper utilization of ICT based communication is among the major barriers for chiefs and assistant chief's effective executing their role as security agents in rural areas. Anecdotal research show chiefs and assistant chiefs undergo paramilitary training to enhance their leadership skills for effective service delivery (Ombati, 2022). However, with limited empirical evidence the effectiveness of the NGAOs training is uncertain. Additionally, there is no account available reviewing the association between training for chiefs and assistant chiefs with improved security in their specific area.

Public administrators require result-based, trans-formative, and measurable capacity building (KIPPRA, 2019) that is tailored to public sector and NGAOs' needs. Ziervogel et al. (2016) also suggest the impact of capacity building will be high if all actors are involved. Involving chiefs and assistant chiefs when developing their training program imply their inputs are considered and implemented. Franzen et al. (2017) argued optimal outcomes of capacity building are antecedent of strategic capacity development that is anchored on research, existing policy, and practice. The training for chiefs and assistant chiefs needs to reflect the current changes in terms of technology and issues (DeCorby et al., 2018). It should also emphasize among others the key elements such as enhancing skills, attitude, creativity, and critical thinking that fosters their ability to deal with security and conflict resolution, or any other

emerging trends. Simply put, the training should help NGAOs adopt necessary changes. Comparably, NGAOs in Kenya need to have a commendable knowledge in technology such as use of surveillance drones and encrypted communication, and a good command of current policies to assist in conflict resolution in their respective areas such as the currently disturbed Rift Valley region. However, the scarcity of evidence makes it challenging to determine if NGAOs are capable of adopting these changes. Considering these findings this study is set to explore various ways capacity building influence service delivery among the NGAOs in Embu County.

RESEARCH MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Designs, Site, and Population

The study used a mixed method research design where it combines a survey (quantitative) and structured interviews with key informants (qualitative). The study was conducted in Embu County, Kenya which is one of the 47 counties in Kenya. Embu is located 120 kilometers North East of Nairobi and it's on South-Eastern side of Mt. Kenya . Embu County was selected because it has the resources to support the study objectives and little study had been done in the area on the subject.

The study was conducted from November to December 2023.

Sample Size Determination and Sampling Technique

The study targeted 226 participants, 64 chiefs and 141 assistant chiefs distributed in the six sub counties in Embu County and 15 Assistant County Commissioners (ACCs) and 6 Deputy County Commissioners (DCCs) (Office of the County Commissioner, 2023). The study used census sampling technique, where all the 226 participants were targeted and also Key informants where they were purposively selected for interviews.

Data Collection Tool

Quantitative data from the survey was collected using questionnaires. The questionnaires were filled by chiefs and assistant chiefs. Data from qualitative was collected using interview guides. The interviews were conducted with DCCs. The interview guides were designed in line with the study objective.

Data collection procedure

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaire was first recorded, organized, and cleaned using excel before being transferred to the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 25 for further analysis. Additional analysis involved ordinal regression to determine how capacity development influence service delivery. All statistical level of significance for this study were evaluated at $p < .05$. Qualitative data collected was transcribed using themes

RESEARCH RESULTS

Participant characteristics

The study had a total of 148 participants out of anticipated 226 leading to 65.5% response rate. Among the participating National Governmental Administrative Officers (NGAOs), (84, 56.8%) held positions as assistant chiefs, (62, 41.9%) as chiefs, and (2, 1.4%) as assistant county commissioners. The majority of NGAOs possessed a college diploma (105, 71.4%), followed by (32, 21.8%) with a university degree, (9, 6.1%) with a postgraduate degree, and (1, 0.7%) with a high school certificate. Regarding work experience, the largest proportion of NGAOs had 11-15 years of experience (40, 27.0%), followed by 5-10 years (38, 25.7%), below 5 years (27, 18.2%), over 21 years (22, 14.9%), and 16-20 years (21, 14.2%). Male respondents were 57.3% while females were 43.7%

Training and Service Delivery among NGAOs in Embu County

The objective of this study was to determine the effect of training to service delivery among NGAOs in Embu County, Kenya. To respond to this objective, participated NGAOs answered the following question, in the last 3 years have you attended capacity building? The results shows the percent of participated NGAOs who have attended capacity building in the past 3 years.were as as follow; all chiefs 41%, assistant chiefs 35.7% while ACCs were majority 50% The findings indicated that only (57, 38.5%) of participated NGAOs have attended capacity building in the last 3 years. Among those who had attended were (26, 41.9%) chiefs, (30, 35.7%) assistant chiefs, and (1, 50%) assistant county commissioner. These results demonstrate a good number of NGAOs may have not attended capacity building program due to variety of reasons. In fact, findings from the FGDs revealed that capacity building is not provided on a regular basis for NGAOs. One of the KI₄ reported:

'Capacity building for public administrators is not regular because of the resource constraints but very important'.

Another KI₁ added:

*'My experience with Capacity building happened mainly first during administrative officer's induction; then during paramilitary Training for administrative officers. The frequency ought to be strengthened'.
government-sponsored training or induction*

Still on determining the effect of training to service delivery, participants were asked how often they attend the government or government-sponsored training or induction

Majority (70, 47.3%) of participated NGAOs self-reported to have never attended government or government-sponsored training or induction. Amongst the chiefs a small proportion had attended government or government-sponsored training after 2-3 years (23, 37.1%) similar with assistant chiefs (23, 27.4%). The findings further inform the inadequacy of capacity training among Kenya NGAOs yet available evidence supports its importance in enhance management and problem-solving skills among government administrators (Khan et al., 2016; Mozael, 2015). Findings from the FGDs demonstrated the desire among NGAOs to have regular capacity training for the purpose of acquiring new skills, equipping the government administrators with the knowledge on government procedures, laws, and code of conduct. However, it hardly happens, which in turn undermining NGAOs capacity on new technological trends. These findings concur with Mascagni and Santoro (2018) who found that inadequate

capacity training among government administrators reduce efficiency of service delivery due to their reduced ability for knowledge sharing, technology transfer, and the adoption of best practices.

Capacity building training

Respondents were asked to indicate the type of capacity building training they have attended in the last 12 months. And the results showed Leadership development was the most reported by all the participants (92, 64.3%), followed by technical skills such as computer skills (22, 15.4%), and policy (17, 11.9%). The least reported type of training was paralegal (7, 4.9%) and monitoring and evaluation (5, 3.5%) and the trend was similar across all participants. The findings demonstrated unbalanced type of training provided for the NGAOs. The focus is more on leadership development and less attention on skills such as computer, policy, and paralegal which are fundamental in augmenting service delivery. The findings contradicted with Wangui (2021) survey which established technical skills, managerial competence, and attitude change were the most trained among government administrators in Nyeri County. The difference between the two studies was linked to lack of standardization in capacity training among Kenya NGAOs leading to different focus and consequently the outcomes. However, the findings between the two studies agreed that capacity training nurture the right skills that strengthen government service delivery. KI1 stated;

'Regular capacity building is important to enhance skills of the administrators but the frequency ought to be strengthened.'

Satisfaction level from the past capacity building training

When asked whether they have attended any training in the last 12 months, the results showed over half (91, 61.5%) of the NGAOs who attended the training in the past 12 months were satisfied in its ability to assist them solve conflict in their area. Specifically, among the participated chiefs (36, 58.1%) assistant chiefs (55, 65.5%) were satisfied while (2, 100%) assistant county commissioners were unsure of the training in their ability to help them solve conflicts in their area. The findings depict that capacity training is paramount to NGAOs which rhymes with Wangui (2021) survey which established government administrators considered public training imperative to inculcate values and skills to strengthen service delivery. Sonnino (2013) also added that government administrator program is crucial because it augment their technical, analytical and problem-solving skills sharpening public communication and effective policy implementation. This may suggest why more than half of participated NGAOs satisfaction with the capacity training they had attended. The findings from the FGDs further alluded the importance of capacity training and how it affects the capacity of NGAOs to deliver quality services. A KI₂ said,

Training can positively affect my capacity to deliver services because I may lack the ability to understand the attitude and culture of the community I serve, new technology, government policies etc.

Another KI₅ said:

Capacity training help the officers go about their daily duties smoothly, increase interpersonal and departmental relationships and also help officers deliver services within the confines of the law.

Another KI₂ stated:

My past trainings help me in my day-to-day work for instance clear understanding of the constitutional roles of both levels of government helps in directing clients to relevant MDAS for relevant services also procedures like estate administration helps in guiding clients on the necessary documentation and information. In the face of challenges at work the paramilitary training which hardens officers helps to maneuver such challenges.

This section presents results of how the capacity training NGAOs attended in the past was delivered.

Delivery of the trainings

The results showed that seminar or workshop was the most utilized type of training attended by the participated NGAOs (120, 81.1%). Additionally, more than half of the participants (85, 57.4%) were satisfied with the method of training used in enabling them improve the skills such as conflict resolution. These findings infer that seminar and workshops are likely preferred due to their interactive nature and practical focus. Government administrators may find these formats effective for learning skills such as conflict resolution, as they often involve case studies, role-playing, and group discussions which facilitate active learning and skill application. The results further showed that, majority of participants expressed satisfaction with the training methods which suggest that the seminars or workshops met their expectations and provided value. However, there were a number of chiefs (14, 22.6%) and assistant chiefs (13, 15.5%) were unsure of their satisfaction with the type of training method used during the capacity building training they attended. This reflects differing preferences or expectations among participated NGAOs. Chiefs, assistant chiefs, assistant commissioners, and deputy county commissioners may have specific requirements or preferences regarding training formats or content, and their uncertainty could indicate a need for tailored or more targeted approaches to meet their needs effectively.

Discussion of the results

Overall, results on capacity building training and service delivery among NGAOs in Embu reveals several significant insights. Firstly, they indicate a concerning trend of low attendance and irregular frequency of capacity building programs, with only a minority of NGAOs having participated in such training in the last three years. Moreover, government-sponsored training appears inadequate, with many NGAOs reporting never having attended such sessions, pointing to a substantial gap in official training provisions.

Secondly, results highlight an imbalance in the types of training offered, with a predominant focus on leadership development and a lack of emphasis on crucial technical skills such as computer proficiency, policy understanding, and paralegal knowledge. Participated NGAOs express a strong desire for regular capacity training to acquire essential skills and knowledge,

including familiarity with government procedures and technological advancements. However, despite these challenges, the majority of participants report satisfaction with the training they do receive, particularly with interactive formats like seminars and workshops, which are seen as effective for enhancing skills such as conflict resolution. Overall, the findings underscore the critical importance of addressing gaps in training provision and content to improve service delivery and enhance the capabilities of government administrators in Kenya.

CONCLUSION

There was insufficient recent capacity building trainings opportunities highlighting the effect of inadequate capacity building training on service delivery. Without recent training, NGAOs may lack updated skills and knowledge necessary for effective service delivery, potentially leading to inefficiencies or shortcomings in their performance.

There was imbalance in training emphasis where there was more focus on leadership development over technical skills in training which could directly impacts service delivery. While leadership skills are important, a lack of technical proficiency, such as in computer skills or policy understanding, can hinder NGAOs' ability to effectively carry out their duties, potentially impacting service delivery outcomes.

Recommendations to revise capacity training programs: There is a need to develop and implement more frequent and up-to-date capacity building training opportunities that focus not only on leadership development but also on enhancing technical skills relevant to the duties of NGAOs. This will ensure that NGAOs are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to deliver services effectively.

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