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Infrastructural Concerns Hindering The Implementation Of Performance Contracting In Public Primary Schools In Nandi – North Sub – County, Kenya.

Keter, Richard, Kiprop, David and Ndaita, Justina

Faculty of Education and Human Resource Development, Kisii University, P.O Box

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ABSTRACT

As part of the comprehensive reforms in Kenya, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) introduced performance contracting initiatives to counter the dissatisfaction in services delivery systems. Thus, the study sought to explore the infrastructural challenges facing headteachers in the implementation of performance contracting in public primary schools in Nandi North Sub-County, Kenya. The study adopted an exploratory design with a sample size of 123 respondents sampled through stratified sampling. Data collection procedures involved the use of interviews. The headteachers are facing challenges that include inadequate training, lack ICT skills, etc. The study concluded that these concerns have impeded the implementation process and recommend that the headteachers be trained and facilitated.

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Introduction

The dissatisfaction with the dismal performance levels in the levels of service in many African countries called for a new paradigm shift in the provision of public services. These have seen many governments spending time, money and effort on the selection of appropriate performance management techniques for evaluating the service delivery in the public sector (Van Thiel & Leeuw, 2002). For instance, within the education system, teachers can be assessed on the performance of their pupils without regard to the starting point of the pupils or the fact that there are many other people involved in the pupil's education (Fryer, Antony & Ogden, 2009). As the quality of education service being provided by the public schooling systems is becoming a major issue in education worldwide, the public education sector is under a growing pressure to increase efficiency and improve the quality of its activities and the (Nazarko & Šaparaukas, 2014).

In a study done in Kenya, Mbua and Sarisar(2014) observed that the implementation process of the performance contracting initiatives was faced by organizational efficiencies that include the lack of adequate financial and human resources, delayed the release of funds, ambitious performance targets and transfer of employees. In Uganda, Ssengooba, McPake & Palmer (2012) noted that the implementation process was fraught with several challenges that included the hastily drawn contrasting designs. The empirical studies by Verbeeten and Speklé (2015) noted that there is a push for a strong emphasis on targets and incentives which may result in dysfunctional behaviour when goals are ambiguous and difficult to measure. This is highlighted by the case of the health services sector in Uganda in which performance targets were hastily done without prior awareness of the managers and supervisors of the health centres. In this manner, the managers did not understand the requirements of the contracting initiatives which were piloted

a year down to implemented. These aspects resulted in the loss of institutional memory due to time and transfer of personnel (Ssengooba, McPake & Palmer, 2012).

In many instances, the same scenario is playing out with the performance contracting being adopted and used in the state agencies and enterprises of developing countries (Mbua & Sarisar, 2014). Implementors also faced financial challenges which hindered their capacity to see through the implementation process (Ssengooba, McPake & Palmer, 2012). Progress reports in the early phase of the pilot indicated that the stalling of activities was partly due to delays in the disbursement of funds. Other significant impediments to the performance contracting are the information asymmetry between the levels of governments, lack of commitment at the implementation levels, arbitrary imposition by the most senior government employees (Sophie, 2006).

Other significant impediments in performance contracting are the fact that not all ministry employees signed the performance contracts, where there is a loop-sided approach in that account for the results is not matched with allocated responsibility (Nyaga, 2013). He also noted that there was a lack of consultation or involvement when drafting and negotiating the annual performance contract targets by the ministry employees. Wambua(2011) indicated that the lack of commitment by the top management coupled with reactive organizational culture. Other organizational aspects that impeded implementation efforts were lack of monitoring and evaluation and non-involvement of all employees in the target setting.

Ngigi (2014) sought to understand why teachers resisted the implementation efforts and found that several factors contributed towards this resistance. Indeed, significant organizational factors included, leadership, organizational changes brought by the process, organizational culture and inadequate communication. Among public schools in Kenya,

Kiratu, Peter & Martin(2019) observed that performance contracting is scanty in that not all teachers understood., some performance targets were highly ambitious to the teachers. Kiruthu(2012) established that performance contracting is influenced by organizational factors such as organizational culture, communication and leadership.

Problem Statement

The public education sector in several developing countries is under a growing pressure to increase the quality of its activities albeit with limited financial resources as well as detailed regulations and supervision governing the budgetary allocations (Nazarko & Šaparauskas, 2014). Thus, the use of performance contracts among public sector institutions has received accolades for achieving effectiveness and improvements in the performance of public enterprises as well as government departments (Nderi, 2013). For instance, the performance contracting processes in the public universities in Kenya has been realigned the planning, training and development of manpower, research and innovation and are geared towards the attainment of the organizational goals and by extent, support larger national goals (Nganyi, Shigogodi & Owano, 2014). Kipkenei, Ndiku, Maiyo & Cherui(2016) observed that performance contracting has been introduced to teacher training colleges in an effort to institute accountability and enhance service delivery.

The performance contracting initiatives at the top management level of public institutions in Kenya faces challenges at the evaluation stage. The individuals setting the performance targets and those evaluating the progress are different and this may affect the validity of the outcomes (Mbua & Sarisar, 2014). Further, the institutional capacity to implement the contracts also influences the intended performance outcomes (Ssenooba *et al.*, 2012). Based on terms of service for heads of public institutions they are expected to carry out performance assessment and discuss the findings with the teacher concerned for purposes of corrective action and continuous improvement (TSC, 2015), however, certain organization factors have impeded the implementation efforts (Ochoti *et al.*, 2012). It is this assertion that informed the researcher to explore how significant are these organizational factors in influencing implementation efforts.

Methodology

The choice of the design was largely informed by the need to develop a rich narrative on the mentioned problem on the structural challenges facing headteachers in the implementation of performance contract in public primary schools. Therefore, the study adopted an explorative research design because the researcher used interviews as an approach to collecting on the challenge facing the implementation of the performance contracting phenomena without the imposition of preconceived notions, constructs and concepts. The study was exploratory in that it was conducted in a natural setting with an explicit objective of uncovering the phenomena of interest, variables, theory if possible, or a combination (Depoy & Gitlin, 2011).

The study was carried out in six educational zones in Nandi North Sub-County in Nandi County, Kenya which has a total of 202 public primary schools. The target population for the study consisted of 202 head teachers, 202 deputy headteachers of all primary schools in Nandi North Sub-county and one TSC Sub-County. The study used 30% criteria to arrive at a sample size of 122 respondents. As suggested by Cooper and Schindler (2006) the range from

10% - 30% is considered sufficient enough to be a representative sample depending on the target population. Further, 30 % was used because it gave enough sample size from which the study derived the findings. The study used a stratified sampling technique to select the study participants. First, the study classified the population into six 6 strata based on the number of zones in the sub-county. Thereafter, a simple random sampling method was applied in the selection of the respondents in each educational zones.

The two research instruments namely the questionnaire and interviews were used in collecting data. Further, this form of the instrument allowed for statistical analysis to be carried describing the phenomena of interest. Interviews were carried out on key informants because it gave liberty to the researcher to ask specific questions depending on the theme and further allowed additional questions that explore research questions and objectives given the nature of events within that particular context.

The study obtained content validity was obtained by the specification of the domain of a concept through a literature search and the adequate representations of the constructs through the construction of indicator items (Depoy & Gitlin, 2011). Further, the researcher used an expert in the Faculty of Education in consultation with the university supervisors in the construction of the questionnaire items and the interview schedule based on the operational variables, thereafter their inputs were incorporated in the refined instruments in the final data collection.

The qualitative data generated from the interview schedules were analyzed in nature in the form of interview transcriptions and thematic analysis. The main techniques for analysing qualitative data are summarization, categorization and structuring. Once the data has been transcribed, summarized, categorized and structured, and analysed a combination of deductive and inductive approaches (Saunders *et al.*, 2007). The quantitative data generated from the questionnaire was sorted and organized before being coded and entered into statistical software (SPSS) for analysis. The nominal and ordinal scaled data was analysed by the use of frequency table proportion (percentages) mode or frequency distribution. Once the descriptive analysis had been done, the information was presented through various ways such as bar charts, pie charts and frequency distribution.

Results

The study managed to collect data from 102 individuals which represented 82.93 per cent response rate and these respondents were split into 73 headteachers (71.6%) and 29 deputy headteachers (28.4%). This distribution was considered to be sufficient for the preceding analysis.

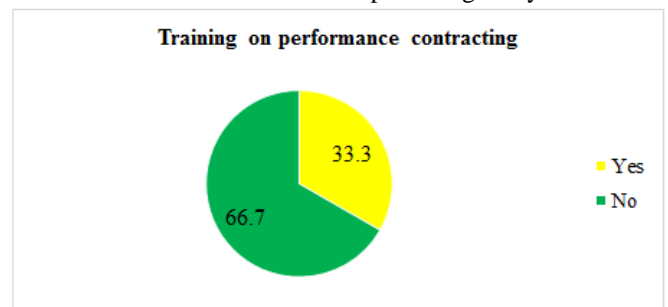


Figure 1.1 Training on performance contracting

Source: Research Data (2018)

Workforce training

The study sought to understand the perceptions of the headteachers on the concerns relating to the training of

teachers on the performance contracting process and the respondents were required to confirm whether they had received any training touching on the performance contracting aspects. The distribution in Figure 1.1 indicates that two-thirds of the respondents had not been trained on the performance contracting aspects while only a third had been trained.

When the respondents were asked to elaborate further, one respondent said that *"proper training and proper communication on why performance contracting is necessary"*, while another said that *"more induction courses should be offered to teachers and also the targets should be simple and achievable"*. *"Limit the number of targets and have short but precise procedures to reduce time wastages at the cyber cafes. Train teachers on ICT usage"*.

According to the respondents, the whole performance contracting process is unnerving in that they are expected to formulate the objectives and set targets for review and evaluation. The process can be tedious because the teachers have not been trained on the procedure and are expected to come up with objectives and targets for use.

One respondent said that,

"the whole process is cumbersome and tedious as we are expected to do everything ourselves while the people at the top are seated and observing the process and thus putting us under lots of pressure".

The results show that a significant number of teachers had been training in the performance contracting process. The implementation process can be compared to a change management process which requires staff with critical knowledge and training on the performance contract. On the converse, lack of sufficient staff tends to reduce the effectiveness of the implementation efforts because the inadequacy in the human resource capacities hinders the implementation efforts by straining the human resources capabilities consequently overworking the current staff members. As observed by the Simiyu(2015) the public service sector of many Africa countries faces significant challenges in the human resource capabilities which include the insufficient number of individuals and skill deficiency coupled with the appropriate mindset and socio-psychological dispositions.

According to the respondents, the implementation efforts require sufficient structures for staffing, workforce realignment and communication. The rise of the number of new monitoring mechanisms is helpful in the fight against the unintended consequences of the performance measurement systems. For instance, the internet is a tool that can make facilitate the information on the public sector performance measurement activities. (Van Thiel and Leeuw, 2002) This result is similar to what Kago(2014) asserted that two key components are embedded in the PC framework in order to ensure its success, a performance management information system and a strong enforcement mechanism. A management information system is a tool that will aid in the reporting mechanisms while enforcement comprises workforce alignment, compliance and authority lines.

In other cases, Simpson & Buabeng, (2013) observed that the lower cadre staff are expected to formulate objectives and targets for their role in the implementation process. Most of the time the implementation process takes a top-down approach supported by extensive supervision and monitoring activities to ensure the realization of the objectives. As a

result, this top-down approach tends to oversimplify the process and content of the performance contracting process.

Due to this, many of the staff members in the ministries, department and agencies are overloaded with requirements for the approval of the performance contracting because of the need to provide quarterly, semi-annual and annual reports. Further, there is slow uptake of training appointments resulting in the limited success of Training of Trainers (ToT)(Hope, 2012).

Workforce alignment

The study sought to understand the perceptions of the headteachers on the concerns relating to the workforce alignment and their views were collated and the distribution is in Figure 1.2. shows that over nine-tenths (91.8%) of the respondents affirmed that the institutions have not aligned their staff towards performance contracting.

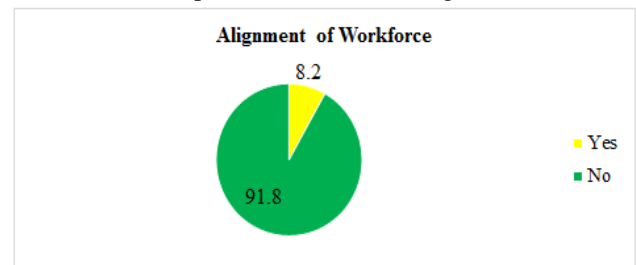


Figure 1.2. Workforce alignment to performance contracting.

Source: Research Data (2018)

When the TSC official was asked to enumerate the number of challenges facing the performance contracting process, he said that *"first, most of them are not competent in the ICT and monitoring of the performance contracting is done electronically. This forces the headteachers to cybercafé instead of filing the reports in schools. Some don't understand what performance contracting is all about"*.

School service charter

The study sought to understand the perceptions of the headteachers on the concerns relating to the school charters and their views were collated and analysed. The distribution in Figure 1.3. shows that close to six-tenths were involved in the generation of the service charter and more than four-fifths believed that the service charters have a significant effect on service provision.

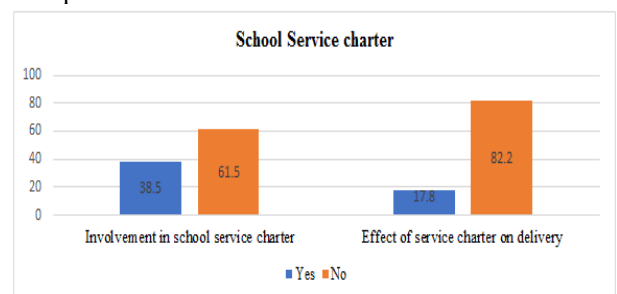


Figure 1.3 School service charter

Source: Research Data (2018)

The distribution relates to the involvement and effectiveness of the school's service charter on delivery. Service charters are structures that can support the delivery of services in the public sector by providing the staff with standards and priorities for service delivery. It is usually displayed to any stakeholder who is seeking service from the institutions and thus aids in promoting transparency and accountability while allowing the stakeholders a means to give feedback. Van Thiel and Leeuw(2002) noted that

organizational charters, code of practice and complaint procedures should increase the opportunities for the feedback mechanism

Lastly, performance contracting in schools generally uses particular objectives, socio-economic settings and constraints. The evaluation of such programs takes into considerations much more than specified academic achievement gains and the total program perspective (Stucker & Hall, 2011). However, other significant factors are lack of sound planning mechanism coupled with adequacy in resources allocation hinder the achievement of the organizational objectives (Mbua & Sarisar, 2014). Important is the differences in institutional arrangements, historical backgrounds and political environments have resulted in differences in reform agendas and programmes being implemented in the public sector in different countries (Petrie, 2002). These include financial resources to facilitate activities at various stages of the PC process hampering efforts of training public officers on PC. The budget allocated is inadequate and there are inconsistencies and delays in releasing funds. There are a limited human resource capacity and expertise to effectively oversee the performance contracting process (Korir, Rotich & Bengat, 2015). Further, some organizational members do not draw up contracts thus inhibit the performance contracting framework (Hope, 2012).

Discussion

The organizational structures involved in the implementation process tend to vary depending on the nature of the organizational form. During the implementation process, the implementation structure defined by the official arrangement of actors, processes employed and the type of organizational format. Misaligned and inappropriate organizational structure often tends to impede the stage of implementation because specific organizational forms are only suitable for the performance of certain definite tasks. For instance, the degree of hierarchical structures which represent the reporting and authority lines of the implementing agency or personnel have a significant influence on the timelines in carrying out the policy. Thus, the extent to which the system is loosely integrated, the greater the variation in the degree of behavioural compliance among implementing officials and target groups and individuals as each respond to the incentives for modification within their local setting (Simpson & Buabeng, 2013).

The structural forms of the public sector organizations are bureaucratic with offices having a significant influence on the work processes, communication and information flow. More is the influence of these offices which only as conduits for information from above but not below and thus impede the bottom-up communication which is critical in the implementation process. These structural impediments have arisen due to the statutes that created the MDA in the developing countries and as observed by Petrie(2012) many public sector organizations, in particular, the MDAs are created by statutes and therefore have a statutory obligation to provide a particular service. Due to these statutory mechanisms, performance contracting in some public agencies are sometimes impeded by the same statutes which created them. In particular, among the educational agencies and organizations, institutional factors may impede or promote performance contracting in schools (Stucker & Hall, 2011).

The public sector organizations often have multiple stakeholders with differing and sometimes conflicting, goals, therefore one performance management technique cannot adequately address all these actors' objectives (Fryer, Antony & Ogden, 2009). Further, the public sector policies tend to have contradictory goals which can complicate the evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of policy implementation (Van Thiel and Leeuw, 2002). In other instances, the application of performance contracting in the public sector have in some instances led to the creation of new layers of bureaucracy that is concerned with the contract specification and monitoring, quality control, inspection, audit and review and second the diversion of professional staff service and program deliveries into a form-filling, report writing and procedures (Diefenbach, 2009).

Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the study makes the following recommendations: First, the stakeholders in each school should offer support to the headteachers in providing the necessary atmosphere that would encourage learning and promote the performance contracting process. An enabling supportive and inspirational work environment confers the individuals and implementors with the latitude to freely partake in the processes and thus ensure the complete engagement by those who are responsible. Further, the enabling environment will create conditions that influence and align the behaviours and encourage performance and improvements geared towards service delivery. These include work processes, equipment and facilities and the physical conditions in which employees work.

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