



**A STUDY ON CHALLENGES OF DEVOLUTION
IN KENYAN PUBLIC SERVICE:
A CASE STUDY OF GARISSA COUNTY, KENYA**

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Abstract:

Despite enactment of devolution by the constitution of Kenya 2010, Garissa County was still marginalized. The expectation of Garissa resident was that significant development could have been achieved. However, this was never the case. This study was aimed at investigating challenges of devolution of public service in Garissa County. Kenya adopted devolution as an approach of governance. When the constitution of Kenya 2010 was promulgated, the governance structure transformed from centralized governance to devolved subunits referred to as county government. The country had witness a gradual but rather comprehensive transfer of resources, power and responsibility from the central government to the 47 county governments as stipulated in the constitution of Kenya 2010. Essential services that has been devolved included; primary and vocational education, health, water and sanitation and rural feeder roads. Similarly, the findings of this study can be applied to other counties in the country since they have similar structures of governance. The population of the study majorly constituted of the staff employed by the Garissa County public service board. Stratified random sampling was used to select 129 respondents from the employees of Garissa County. Both primary and secondary data were employed in this study. The study has established that employment and procurement law have not been effectively adhered. Resource mobilizations needed to be encouraged instead of depending funding from central government. For successful implementation of devolution, the county government of Garissa needed to allocate sufficient funds for capacity building of staff to promote quality service delivery.

Keywords: devolution, county government, challenges, constitution, resources

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1. Introduction

Globally in matters of governance, decentralization was the new trend. Devolution has become a widely debated issue. For instance, the European union and state rights in the United State, decentralization has been seen a new model and thus formed a center stage of policy experiments in the last two decades in number of developing and transition economies Latin America, Africa and Asia

Since Kenya gained her independence in 1963, Kenyans suffered in the hands of central government due to inefficiency of central governance. His Excellency, Mwai Kibaki's government saw the need to address these challenges by directing the minister for local government for speedy implementation of devolution since it has been stipulated in the constitution. Devolution implied transferring administrative, political and fiscal management powers from the national level to the county government. It involved delegating authorities and responsibilities from the national level to the 47 counties across the country. Devolved governance was likely to provide solutions to the challenges of the past trend of uneven development and growing disproportions of economic opportunities that have caused inequalities in many regions and communities. However, this was not the case.

This study was conducted to investigate the challenges of devolved governance in Kenya, the case of Garissa County. Garissa County is among the 47 counties in Kenya, former regional headquarter for North Eastern Kenya. The county is 580kms away from the capital city, Nairobi.

2. Literature Review

Garissa could have been developed under the pretext of devolved governance thus bringing service closer to the people. Garissa was marginalized since independence in 1963, services such as electricity, communication, transport and other basic services was a nightmare (Ogot, 1995). Many tend to believe that devolution had been panacea to the above challenges, unfortunately, nothing was forthcoming.

Ndegwa (2002, pp. 17) stated that devolved governance in thirty African countries showed that no country had the claim of decentralization considered only difficult to effect and sustain. Therefore, this implied that there was a need for visibility study before a country embarks on a new system of governance. This was significant since it helped to understand the pros and cons and its subsequent implementation of devolved governance.

Bardhan and Mookherjee (1998) identified major argument against decentralization concerns the possibility of elite capture local government .Decentralization provided equal distribution of resources through allocating resources to each county and sharing authority. In view of this, danger can be mitigated by putting strong institutions and political disciplines.

Planning for devolution with a limited resource was likely to fail and therefore resource mobilization for this new approach of Governance was needed for Kenya to enjoy the fruits of devolution. Rondinelli, Nellis and Cheema (2007), have indicated that financial, human and physical resources constraints inhibited the successful implementation of decentralization was nearly all developing countries including Kenya

This scenario was referred to as Non-correspondence problem which rose from the fiscal imbalance occasioned by the divergence between constitutional functions and responsibilities and fiscal resource. Belo, Iman and Agba (2004) had shown that non-correspondence usually leads to the inability of some level of government to effectively fulfill their functions and responsibilities.

In addition, there were instances where governors have been accused of flouting with tendering procedures. Studies by Mbondenyi and Ambani, (2002) cited in Hatchard et al., (2004) found that when the devolved governance was wrongly structured may lead to mobilization on the basis of religion and tribe thus leading to political oppression, intolerance and the extreme secessionist's movement. This study was a clear testimony of what happened in Embu County where the governor was impeached by the members of the county assembly on ground of corruption. Therefore, this hindered development process since much of the time and resources has been wasted on resolving the dispute.

The presence of ghost workers in the county payroll in many counties especially Garissa County was a challenge that hindered devolution. Ghost employees were retained in the payroll by high officials of the county government; these amounted to an abuse of power. Further, this implied that there were no clear levels of accountability and one level may keep shifting blame to the other. According to Steyler, (2013) this was a challenge that had been widely experienced in South Africa.

The central government had retained critical authority and functions; these includes, conducting foreign affairs, the relationship between religions and the state, internal security and national defense service, finance, institution of higher learning among others (Constitution of Kenya, 2010).

Hope (2012) stated that in august 2010, Kenya promulgated a new constitution that had several articles which had direct bearing on public sector performance, reform and transformation. For instance article 47 part 2 of the bill of rights states that every person has the right of administrative action that is lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair'. This implied that individuals had the right to get effective service that was satisfactory and served in a reasonable manner. Moreover, Article 6 of section 73(1) of the constitution of Kenya 2010 on leadership and integrity stated that authority assigned to state officer in a public trust as outlined in the constitution demonstrated respect for the people and bring honor.

Musgrave (1959) suggested that decentralization enhanced efficiency by promoting accountability, reducing corruption and improved cost recovery. This can be done by reducing bureaucracy and limiting the powers of elected officials in the county

government. Social cohesion especially at the local levels instilled and fostered cooperation which was indeed a critical measure of curbing corruption.

2. Methodology

2.1 Sampling

Kothari, (2004:152) defined sampling as the process of taking a sample from an entire population. Therefore, to investigate the research problem and the research question related to challenges of devolution of public service, the researcher selected 80 employees of county public service board in Garissa County. Factors such as experience, gender, age and educational level were the significant consideration in the sampling selection.

2.2 Sources of Data Collection

a. Primary Sources

Data was collected directly from the staffs of county public service board that were responsible for implementation of devolution that included well-structured questionnaires.

b. Secondary Sources

This entailed existing literature, published articles and journals that articulated devolved governance.

2.3 Tools and Techniques for Data Collection

Questionnaires, interviews and observation were the important tools for collecting data. Books, reports, journals and articles that were relevant to the study were reviewed and studied.

3. Plan of Analysis

Data was well tabulated and corresponding percentage given. Table and graph were used to get accurate information. Inappropriate and biased responses were discarded.

3.1 Objective of the Study

1. Perception of the staff on funding by the central government;
2. Staff opinion on training, workshop and seminars were initiated by the Garissa County;
3. Staff suggestions towards ghost workers in the county payroll;
4. Nepotism and ethnicity existed in Garissa County.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1 Funding by the Central Government

A. What is your perception regarding on funding by the central government?

Table 1: Funding by the Central Government

Response	Percent
Strongly disagree	12.4%
Disagree	41.9%
Neither agree nor disagree	14.7%
Agree	29.5%
Strongly agree	1.6%
Total	100

Source: Author's own Survey, July 2018

4.1.1 Analysis

Majority of the respondent disagree that Garissa County was funded adequately by the central government, while 14.7% of the respondents interviewed have no idea whether the county was funded or not. On the other hand, 29.5% and 1.6% agree and strongly agree that Garissa County was adequately funded by the central government.

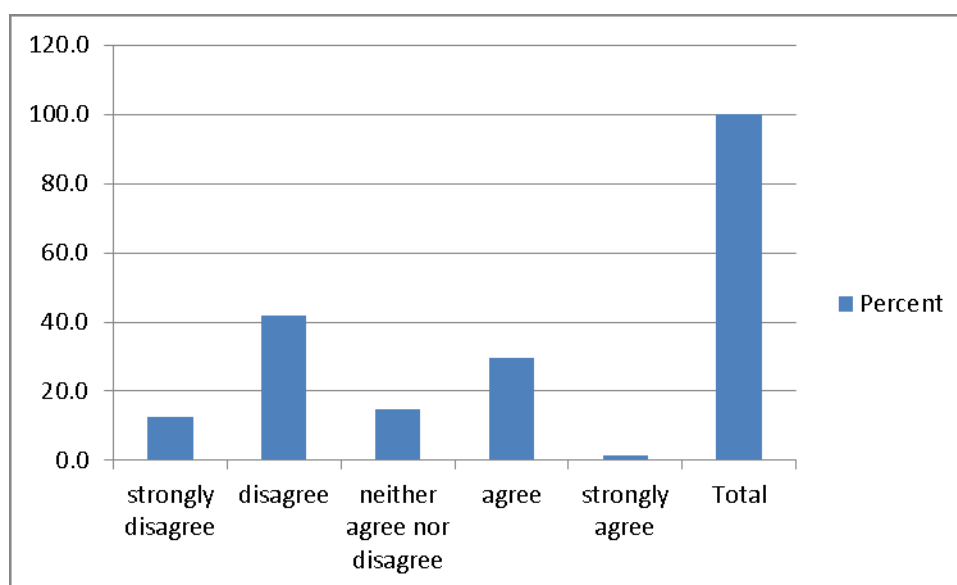


Figure 1: Funding by the Central Government

Figure 1 presented that 41.9% of the respondents disagree that the county government was funded by the central government. 29.5% of the respondent agreed that the county was adequately funded and hence cannot effectively run the county activities. 12.4% of the respondents strongly disagree that the county government was adequately funded, 14.7% were not sure, while 1.6% of the respondents strongly agree that the county was funded by the central government.

4.2 Training, workshop and seminars were initiated by the Garissa County

Table 2: Opinions whether training, workshop and seminars were initiated

Response	Percent
Once	10.9%
Never	17.1%
Few times	27.1%
Many times	38.0%
Several times	7.0%
Total	100

From the above table it can be deduced that 38.0% of the respondents have asserted that training and workshops are conducted for the public service officers many times, while 27.1% of the respondents argued that trainings, workshops and seminars are initiated few times by the county government of Garissa thereby limiting the efficiency of the staffs.10.9% of the respondents felt that workshops and seminars are conducted once by the government, 17.1% of the staff suggested that trainings were never conducted while 7.0% of the respondents believed that trainings and workshops are conducted several times hence promoting effective service delivery.

4.2.1 Analysis

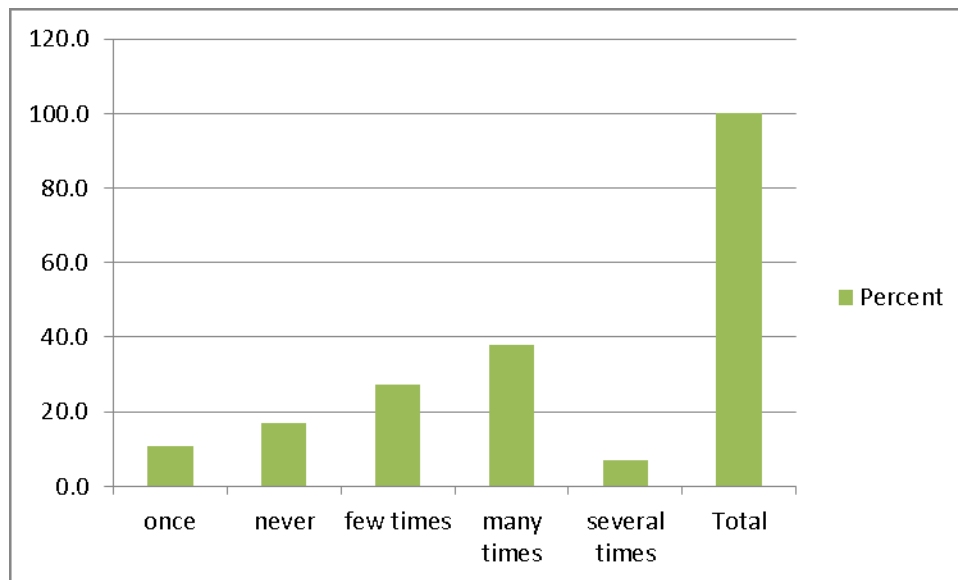


Figure 2: Opinions whether training, workshop and seminars were initiated

Training of staffs promotes their skills hence guaranteeing effective service delivery. one of the core objectives of devolution of public service is to promote service delivery at the grassroots level. Garissa county government have initiated and conducted trainings that enhance the skills of the employees.

4.3 Ghost Workers in the County Payroll

A laborer needed to be remunerated commensurate to the services he rendered rather than paying someone whose details does not appear in the county payroll hence this amounts to abuse of office. Therefore, it was important to know whether ghost workers existed in the payroll.

Table 2: Ghost Workers in the County Payroll

Responses	Percent
Strongly disagree	1.6
Disagree	13.2
Neither agree nor disagree	19.4
Agree	45
Strongly agree	20.9
Total	100

Source: Based on Researchers Survey Conducted in July, 2018

4.3.1 Analysis

From Table 2, the data obtained, 45% of the respondent agreed that ghost workers existed in the county payroll, 20.9% of the respondent felt that these workers existed but did not turn up for duties. 19.4% of the respondents were not sure whether they existed or not while 13.2% and 1.6% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively that ghost workers existed in the county payroll.

4.4 Ethnicity and Nepotism in Allocation of Resources and Awarding of Contracts at the County Level

Nepotism was one of delimiting factor of national unity. It was paramount that the bearer of state office needed to promote integrity, non-partisan, fairness, equity and equality in discharging their responsibilities in terms of recruitment procedures, promotions and awarding of tenders.

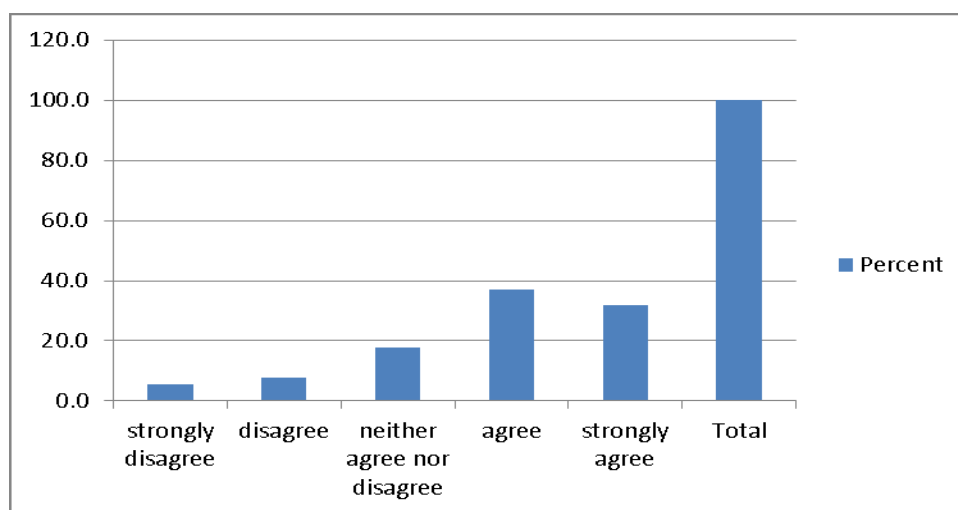


Figure 3: Respondent's perception on ethnicity and nepotism
 (Source: Field Survey in July, 2018)

The above figure described Ethnicity existed in Garissa County. 37.2% of the staff interviewed believed that ethnicity was a common practice employed during recruitment, promotions and awarding of tenders. 31.8% strongly agreed that due procedures were not followed in hiring, deploying of staff in the county. 17.8% of the respondents were not sure, while 7.8% and 5.4% felt that ethnicity was not practiced in Garissa County.

4.5 Interpretation

This had compromised the image of county government and derailed the morale of the employees since a number of them had stagnated in one job group for the last five years. Moreover, public service and procurement disposal act were not given considerations hence led to ineffective service delivery.

5. Recommendations

The research recommends the following;

1. Garissa County government needed to put stringent measures for resource mobilization instead of depending funds from the central government. Moreover, it should promote internal relations with investors in order to improve investment in the country.
2. Capacity building for staff is a key requirement for successful devolution. Therefore, Garissa County government should set side adequate funds to provide training of staffs to improve services delivery.
3. The county government of Garissa needed to promote accountability and transparency in delivering services to the citizen. Professionalism and procurement disposal act needed to be adhered during employment, promotion and awarding of tenders respectively.
4. Further study needed to be done on the role of devolution of public service to understand opportunities and challenges.

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