Influence Of ICT Related Training On Customer Service Delivery In County Governments In Kenya: A Case Of Machakos County

Mathew Masinde Egessa, Janet Nangila Manyasi

Abstract: The main purpose of this study was to establish the effect of ICT related training on customer service delivery in Machakos County, Kenya. Being a descriptive and correlational cross-sectional survey, self-administered questionnaires and interviews were used to collect primary data from the respondents. The collected data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Significant variations between groups were determined using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Pearson correlation was also used to examine relationships among variables. The study concluded that there is a strong positive relationship between ICT related training for staff (r=0.752, p =0.000) and customer service delivery. The study recommends that County Governments allocate more funds towards ICT related training for their staff and where possible, the ICT related training should be sponsored by the government to ensure uniformity in the training for its staff based on identified needs.

Key Words: ICT related Training, Customer Service Delivery

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1 INTRODUCTION

The UN e-Government survey emphasizes the potential for provision of opportunities to transform public administration into an instrument of development and service to the citizens of every country. This can be achieved through the application of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in government operations as well as enhanced investment in telecommunication infrastructure. Various studies in sub-Saharan Africa have enumerated benefits that may accrue from such initiatives including service quality improvement, enhanced efficiency, improved response time, increased transparency in administration and ease of access to services among others. Globally, there is increased perception of e-government and online service delivery as a cost reduction measure and a way to provide better user-friendly services to their citizens and businesses. The United Kingdom's government has embarked on various initiatives to reduce upfront expenditure on e-government while increasing its impact. Other developed countries' governments have also adopted ICTs to serve a variety of different other ends. In many African countries, central governments have embraced e-government applications by creating the necessary Local Area Networks (LANs), internet connectivity and web presence.

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However the spread of the same to local authorities has been a bit slow.Studies in Ghana and Ethiopia show that successful and proper utilization of web portals is frustrated by poor state of e-readiness of most local governments. In Kenya, the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 ushered in County Governments as an effort to enhance citizens' service delivery. The functions of these governments, which include Agriculture, Health Services, Trade, Culture, Pre-Primary Education and Disaster Management among others, are outlined in the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 and the County Government's Act, 2012. These institutions have embraced ICT as part of their effort towards improving service delivery to citizens. These efforts have been seen in revenue collection and communication departments.

Statement of the Problem

The adoption and usage of various ICTs on local governments has been found to have various benefits. Studies such as Ochieng and Gichoya (2013), Waema and Adera (2011) and UN (2014) hold that such actions may lead to reduced corruption, increased transparency, levels of convenience, enhanced revenue and reduced costs of operations. This will result in transformation of public administration as an instrument of development. However, amid these benefits, studies show that even after adoption of ICTs, local governments have not got the benefits as envisaged. Instead poor service provision has been witnessed. This paradoxical situation gives rise to a research gap that necessitates research to establish why County governments are not reaping the expected benefits of ICTs adoption. Whereas this situation can be attributed to various factors, the extent to which this may be attributable to ICT related training of staff ought to be established. This study therefore sought to establish the effect of ICTs related training on customer service delivery in County Governments in Kenya.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study is critical to the governors and managers of county governments since it will enable them enhance service delivery to citizens through effective utilization of ICTs. It will also be of interests to academicians and researchers on providing more knowledge on the role of ICTs on customer service delivery

Literature Review

WITSA (2003) noted that lack of understanding and computer skills is one of the barriers to effective implementation of e-government. The UN (2014) emphasised how strengthening institutions and building capacities of public servants is one of the main enablers of good e-government progress. Continued investment in primary, secondary and tertiary education is also a considerable opportunity for countries with high E-Government Development Index (EGDI) and middle EGDI to continue advancing their e-government development. Low adult literacy in some middle EGDI and low EGDI countries coupled with little education or low average years of schooling, pose a challenge in e-government development. For effective deployment of sustainable online services, Africa also needs to focus on building human capital, including ICT literacy. Most of the local governments under review relied heavily on external consultants and/ or contractors to provide a host of ICT services such as maintenance of ICT systems due to lack of in-house technical capacity. Lack of adequate basic ICT skills at all levels of government, in Kenya, Mozambique and Mauritius, was also a major impediment to the e-government initiatives, making them very expensive. In addition to the lack of ICT technical skills, most local governments did not have the requisite in-house managerial ICT skills, for example Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Mozambique. They also lacked the training programmes to create a suitable pool of staff with basic ICT literacy, technical and managerial skills. The low level of ICT literacy was not only among the employees of local governments but also among the local community members. This frustrated the provision of information through web portals. This was the case in Mozambique, Uganda, Ghana and Ethiopia. Despite having all these studies, Waema and Adera (2011) acknowledge the need to carry out more research on the effect of ICTs because the reported findings were dependent on the local contexts of the studies. Though the concept of county governments stems from the former local authorities in Kenya, it is still a relatively new phenomenon. With County Governments being a new creation of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 that seeks to enhance public service delivery, there was need to investigate how ICT related training was impacting on customer service delivery.

Methodology

This research study was done through the use of both a descriptive and a correlational cross-sectional survey. A descriptive research attempts to describe systematically a situation, problem, phenomenon, service or programme. A correlational research on the other hand attempts to establish the existence of a relationship between two or more aspects of a situation.

Target population

The target population of this study was the staff of the County Government of Machakos who interact with service seekers in three departments namely ICT department {21 employees}, Procurement department, {16 employees} and Accounts department {25 employees}. The total study population was therefore 62 service providers.

Sampling design

A sample is a segment of the population selected to represent the population as a whole. It should ideally be representative and allow the researcher to make accurate estimates of the thoughts and behaviour of the larger population. This study used stratified random sampling. Using the stratified random sampling technique, the staff members that interact with service seekers were divided into different strata based on the departments in which they work. Thereafter, the respondents were randomly selected from the various strata as shown on Table 1.

Table 1: Study population and sample size

Department/Category	Population	Sample size
ICT Department	21	19
Procurement Department	16	14
Accounts Department	25	24
Total	**62**	**57**

Source: Research study 2015

Data collection methods and techniques

This research study employed both primary and secondary data collection methods. It collected first-hand information from respondents through the use of self-administered questionnaires and interviews. Different statements were placed before the respondents to know their attitudes, which was measured using the five point (1-5) likert scale format. The questionnaires for the service providers were dropped and picked up later. Adequate time was taken to explain the purpose and objectives of the study to the respondents.

Data analysis and presentation

Data collected by the instruments was edited, coded and analysed descriptively and inferentially using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)programme. This sought to establish frequencies, patterns and relationships between study variables. The findings were then presented in form of frequencies, percentages and tables.

Results

Out of the targeted 57 employees, 52 of them filled questionnaires and returned, representing a 91.23% response rate.

Demographic Characteristics of respondents

Personal details of the employees were analysed using three parameters namely gender, age and highest level of qualification. The study found out that 27 respondents (51.92%) were male while 25 respondents (48.08%) were female as shown Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

		N= 52	Percent (%)
Gender		Male	51.92
		Female	48.08
Age		21- 30 years	56.25
		31- 40 years	38.46
		41-50 years	05.77
Highest academic qualification		Post secondary certificate	03. 22
		Diploma	15.63
		Graduate	62.50
		Masters	18.75

Source: Research study 2015

The age distribution indicated that the majority of respondents were in the youthful age of between 21 years and 30 years represented by 55.77% while the least number of employees (05.77%) were between 41 years and 50 years. Also, a majority of the respondents (62.5%) had bachelors' degree as their highest academic qualification, followed by masters' degree (19.23%), diploma (15.38%) and finally post-secondary certificate (03. 85%).

Effect of ICT related training on customer service delivery

Majority of the respondents 39(75%) had received ICT related training while 13 (25%) of the respondents had not. Of those who had received ICT related training, 37.5% had received the training courtesy of sponsorship from the Machakos County Government as shown in Table 3. These findings tally with the recommendations of the study by the United Nations (2014) which emphasised on strengthening of institutions through capacity building as a main enabler of good e-government progress. The remaining 62.5% had received training through their self-initiative.

Table 3: *Respondents who had got ICT related training and its sponsors*

Respondents who have got ICT related training	Percentage (%)
Yes	75.0%
No	25.0%
Total	**100.0%**
Who sponsored the ICT related training	
Office / County Government	37.5%
Self-Initiative	62.5%
Total	**100.0%**

Source: Research study 2015

The study further used several statements to establish the effect of ICT related training on customer service delivery in the study area. The results are shown on Table 4:

Table 4: *Responses to statements on ICT related training*

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
ICT training needs analysis is done before training is planned for	56.3%	2 5 %	12.5%	6.2%	0 %
There is open and fair process of choosing employees to undergo ICT related training in the ministry	25%	18.8%	25.0%	18.7%	12.5%
ICT related training provided by the County Government is sufficient	18.8%	25.0%	28.1%	3.1%	25%
Employees in the ministry have relevant ICT related skills that enable them serve customers better	18.8%	34.4%	21.8%	0 %	2 5 %
The ICT related training undertaken by the ministry employees has improved their customer service delivery	34.4%	46.9%	0 %	6.3%	12.4%

*KEY: **SA**-Strongly Agree **A**- Agree **N**-Neutral **D**-Disagree **SD**-Strongly Disagree*
Source: Research study 2015

The study established that training needs assessment was done before training was planned for as confirmed by 56.7% of the respondents who strongly agreed with the statement. However, the process of choosing the employees to undergo ICT training was not considered to be open and fair. There was a perception that the County government employees had relevant ICT related skills that enabled them to serve customers in a better way as was confirmed by 53.3% of the respondents who strongly agreed and agreed respectively with a statement on the issue. More than half of the respondents also strongly agreed and agreed to all the statements regarding ICT related training. The general feeling among the respondents of the study was that the ICT related training undertaken by the county employees had improved their customer service delivery. That was evidenced by 34.4% of the respondents who strongly agreed and 46.9% of the respondents who agreed to the statement on the issue. That amounted to 81.3% of the respondents. In general, the study further found out that ICT staff in Machakos County Government had the adequate basic ICT skills to maintain the ICT systems. This differed with findings of previous studies focusing on Government employees in Kenya, Mozambique and Mauritius that showed the contrary. Most of the maintenance and administration of the ICT systems and infrastructure was done by the in-house ICT team. The general feeling among the respondents of the study was that the ICT related training by the county employees had improved their customer service delivery. The study also subjected these findings to inferential statistics. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient test was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between ICT related training and customer service delivery. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: *Effect of ICT related training on customer service delivery Customer Service Delivery*

		Customer Service Delivery
ICT Related Training	Pearson Correlation	.752**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	. 0 0 0
	N	5 2

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
Source: Research study 2015

The result indicated a very strong positive (r=0.752, p =0.000) and significant correlation between ICT related training and customer service delivery in Machakos County Government.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on both the descriptive and inferential analysis, it can be concluded that ICT related training has a positive effect on customer service delivery. The study recommends that:

1. County Governments should allocate more funds towards ICT related training for their staff.
2. There should be an open and fair process of identifying employees to undergo ICT training among employees in organizations.
3. Where possible, the ICT related training should be sponsored by the government to ensure uniformity in training for its staff based on identified needs.

4. With the ever changing technological environment, continuous research should be undertaken to ensure the training given is responsive to environmental dynamics.

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