

EFFECT OF PROCUREMENT PROCESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS IN KENYA

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Abstract: The general objective of this study is to assess the effect of procurement process on the implementation of county government infrastructural projects in Kenya, a case of Kajiado County. The study was based on four theoretical foundations. These include: Agency Theory; Evaluation Theory; Theory of Public Participation and; Resource-Based Theory. This study uses the descriptive survey design. The population for this study comprised of county public servants targeted from public servants working in the ministries of public works, roads and transport, finance and economic planning. These departments were purposively selected since they directly deal with infrastructural projects. The directors and departmental heads and staff from these departments totaling 84 individuals were targeted. The study used total population sampling techniques to sample all the 84 individuals targeted. Data was collected through use of structured questionnaires. The questionnaire was pretested to ascertain validity and reliability through a pilot of 10 individuals. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze data from the structured questionnaires. Several statistical tests such as: descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages and weighted means) and; inferential statistics (Multiple Regression Analysis, Analysis of Variance and Pearson Correlation) were carried out. Results were then presented in tables. The study findings show that the implementation of infrastructural projects in the county is greatly affected by procurement processes in the county. The study recommends that the county government should ensure that procurement processes are transparent.

Keywords: Procurement, Implementation, County Government, Infrastructural Projects.

1. INTRODUCTION

Infrastructural projects are part and parcel of governments the world over. Although governments spend millions of dollars in coming up with infrastructural projects such as dams, roads, sanitation, houses, schools, hospitals and bridges among others, the fruits anticipated from these projects are often hard to reap. As early as three decades ago, World Bank (2013) reported an immense failure of infrastructural projects in developing countries. According to this report, the failure of such projects imperils the realization of the efforts of governments to improve the living standards of their citizenry.

Without understanding how to strengthen the implementation of infrastructural projects, Lothe (2006), argues that it is hard for the rural and urban poor to maintain family health or even to overcome poverty without roads, clean drinking water, accessibility, and sanitation. Although countless efforts have been made to improve infrastructure, the results have been meagre. This necessitates studies that endeavor to find out why successful implementation of such projects has always been a hard feat.

In the backdrop of the pursuit of the benefits of anticipated government infrastructural projects, it is important to study the factors that hinder the successful implementation of such projects. This is essential since the absence of studies in this direction could keep vital knowledge from different development actors. In Latin America for example, Estache, Foster and Wodon (2003) argue that attention on studies that focus on the challenges facing infrastructural development in Latin America has been overlooked. This leaves about 200 million people without access to safe water and sanitation.

Procurement has been identified as one of the key factors besetting the successful implementation of infrastructural projects the world over. Tendering processes are often faced with immense patronage (Meidute & Paliulis, 2011). This contributes to the selection of incompetent suppliers and puts the implementation of public projects at stake. Though prior studies have been undertaken in developed countries, there is an absence of keynote studies on the effect of procurement on the implementation of government infrastructural projects in Kajiado County.

Ruben (2007), argues that organizations that have open and clear procurement processes often reduce challenges related to the timely execution of project activities. Such organizations have the propensity of having quality projects since the best-suited suppliers of goods and services are sourced. This minimizes wastage and leads to the sustainable implementation of project activities.

In Kenya, public sector procurement plays a critical role in project-specific procurement such as the search of services for a particular initiative such as the construction of a new road, hospital, or plant (George 2008; Kenya Gazette Supplement No. 92, (2006). Tendering processes in the country have often been unscrupulous. This often leads to shortlisting and award of tenders to incompetent or dishonest suppliers, putting the success of projects at stake (Arthur 2009). Since the former study did not focus on devolved governments, it is important to undertake studies that focus on these governments which receive immense financial resources and which could easily go to the drain if projects fail.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The importance of good infrastructure in the socio-economic development of any country cannot be gainsaid (Lothe, 2006). With this realization, governments commit a lot of financial resources towards the implementation of various infrastructural projects. Regrettably, some of these projects do not succeed (Estache et al., 2003). An examination of post-world-war planning history reveals that there have been many more failures than successes in the implementation of projects especially in the developing countries (World Bank, 2010). It is at implementation stage that most projects fail, and this has given concern to governments as well as the citizens. Implementation of development projects being the most crucial of all the stages of policy is not devoid of certain factors that influence it, some of these factors include wrong priority, shortfalls in resource availability, inadequate project identification etc. (Adek 2015). Without a firm understanding of these factors, it is untenable to deliver any infrastructural projects at the stipulated time and to the expected standards. This is unrealizable without systematic study.

Although Kajiado County has elaborate strategies that clearly elaborate county plans on development of infrastructure to facilitate service delivery (Chogo, 2015), there have been instances of poorly implemented infrastructural projects in the county. This has led to the wastage of millions of tax payers' money since residents do not often get the required benefits anticipated if such projects were implemented well. Regrettably, there is no documented study that addresses the factors that affect the implementation of infrastructural projects in the county. Studies in this direction tend to look at this problem remotely but do not investigate the factors in details.

The study by Mukindia (2014) which investigated the challenges and prospects for sustainable water supply for Kajiado Town in Kajiado County did not focus on other infrastructural projects. The study only focused on only one town in the county but did not look at the county in totality. Although it shows the immense financial challenges, which is one of the factors under investigation in this current study, it does not show the influence of the other factors.

A survey undertaken in the Kajiado County showed that 499 care teachers and 31 instructors have been employed in the county for pre-primary education and vocational education respectively (Birishi, 2016). This is taking place in the backdrop of immense infrastructural and human resource developments in the county that have led to increased enrolment of children in pre-primary schools. However, the challenges faced within the process of implementing such projects were not systematically studied by the study.

Adek (2015) studied the determinants of infrastructure projects implementation in devolved units through a case study of Mombasa County. The descriptive survey investigated these variables namely; influence of stakeholders, role of management, resources and governance in infrastructural projects implementation in Mombasa County, Kenya. The study found that as is the case in other parts of the world, stakeholders do influence the implementation of infrastructural projects in the county. This shows that stakeholder's participation affects the success of infrastructural projects and vice versa. The former study did not focus on Kajiado County. Moreover, some of the variables under investigation in the former study are not the focus of this current study. The findings obtained may thus not relate to this current study.

As shown in the preceding discourse, there is limited attempt to investigate the factors facing the implementation of infrastructural projects in Kajiado County. Most of the existing relevant studies investigate singular aspects of the factors under investigation in this study in other counties. Some of these studies are based on desk review of existing literature and some are quite outdated. Without current and detailed studies, understanding the prevailing poor implementation of these projects in the county may remain a tall order. This necessitated this current study.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Procurement has been identified as one of the key factors besetting the successful implementation of infrastructural projects the world over. More often than not, tendering processes are often faced with immense patronage (Meidute & Paliulis, 2011). This often leads to the selection of incompetent suppliers. When this happens, the implementation of public projects is put at stake. Though prior studies have been undertaken in developed countries, there is absence of keynote studies on the effect of procurement on the implementation of government infrastructural projects in Kajiado County. This necessitated this current study.

In Kenya, public sector procurement plays a critical role in project-specific procurement such as the search of services for a particular initiative such as the construction of a new road, hospital, or plant (George 2008; Kenya Gazette Supplement No. 92, (2006). Tendering processes in the country have often been unscrupulous. This often led to shortlisting and award of tenders to incompetent or dishonest suppliers, putting the success of projects at stake (Arthur 2009).

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A study by Maiyo (2009) "Irregularities in undertaking procurement practices in public institutions" noted that there were increased levels of irregularities in undertaking procurement practices in many training institutions and this questioned the nature of procurement policies employed by the institutions.

Zuzana (2012) in an article titled "Knowledge of the Firm, Combinative Capabilities, and the Replication of Technology" argues that the effective implementation of procurement practices procurement policies and practices considerably affect project implementation. Zuzana argues that sound public procurement, which is closely linked to the success rates of projects, affects economic growth in numerous African countries.

Studies such as those of Meidute and Paliulis (2011) as well as Nisar (2006) link procurement to wastage of government resources. When the procurement process is efficient and the right persons are shortlisted, there is probability of lower costs in projects, better quality of projects and fast implementation of such projects and vice versa. As such, governments have to put in the best efforts in ensuring value for money in procurement processes. When this fails, the realization of the outputs of the government projects fails. Since the former studies did not focus on Kenya or on Kajiado for that matter, it is important to carry out studies such as this current one.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was based on four theoretical foundations. These include: Agency Theory; Evaluation Theory; Theory of Public Participation and; Resource-Based Theory. This study uses the descriptive survey design. The population for this study comprised of county public servants targeted from public servants working in the ministries of public works, roads and transport, finance and economic planning. These departments were purposively selected since they directly deal with infrastructural projects. The directors and departmental heads and staff from these departments totaling 84 individuals were targeted. The study used total population sampling techniques to sample all the 84 individuals targeted. Data was

collected through use of structured questionnaires. The questionnaire was pretested to ascertain validity and reliability through a pilot of 10 individuals. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze data from the structured questionnaires. Several statistical tests such as: descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages and weighted means) and; inferential statistics (Multiple Regression Analysis, Analysis of Variance and Pearson Correlation) were carried out. Results were then presented in tables.

5. FINDINGS

The study sought to establish the effect of procurement process on the implementation of county government infrastructural projects in Kenya in Kajiado County. Data was captured in 5 Likert-type questions as well as an open-ended question. Data from the likert type statements was analyzed and presented Table 1. With an average weighted mean of 4.89 and weighted means ranging from 4.75 to 5.00, the respondents tended to agree to the statements presented to them to a very high extent. In this regard the respondents agreed to a very great extent that procurement related issues affect the implementation of infrastructural projects in the county and that tendering processes are often interfered with by political leaders and this affects the implementation of projects. These findings agree with Zuzana (2012) who found out that the effective implementation of procurement policies and practices considerably affect project implementation.

Furthermore, it was made clear that procurement was often not transparent and this led to shortlisting and award of tenders to incompetent or dishonest suppliers, putting the success of projects at stake. These findings are in agreement with Meidute and Paliulis (2011) who argues that tendering processes are often faced with immense political patronage and that this often leads to the selection of incompetent suppliers.

The respondents went on to point out that clear procurement processes reduced challenges related to timely execution of project activities. There was also wastage and lack of sustainable implementation of project activities in the county due to conflict interests of various stakeholders. These findings agrees with Ruben (2007) who argues that organization that have open and clear procurement processes often reduce challenges related to timely execution of project activities and transparent procurement processes leads to minimized wastage and sustainable implementation of project activities. In this regard, it can be concluded that the implementation of infrastructural projects in the county is greatly affected by procurement processes in the county.

Table 1: Procurement Process

Attribute	Rating					Total	Weighted Mean	Std. Dev.
	5	4	3	2	1			
1. Procurement related issues affect the implementation of infrastructural projects in our county	77	1	1	0	0	79	4.96	0.25
2. Tendering processes is often interfered with by political leaders and this affects the implementation of projects	74	3	2	0	0	79	4.91	0.36
3. Procurement is often not transparent and this leads to shortlisting and award of tenders to incompetent or dishonest suppliers, putting the success of projects at stake	72	3	2	2	0	79	4.84	0.59
4. Clear procurement processes reduce challenges related to timely execution of project activities	79	0	0	0	0	79	5.00	0.00
5. There is wastage and lack of sustainable implementation of project activities in the county due to conflict interests of various stakeholders	68	6	2	2	1	79	4.75	0.74
Average Weighted Mean							4.89	

The respondents were presented with the question: *in which other ways does procurement affect the implementation of infrastructural projects in the county?* The various responses obtained show that procurement processes often delayed projects in case of conflicts and disgruntlement of suppliers. In some cases sub-standard goods were supplied. This affected the overall quality of the projects as argued by Adek (2015) who argues that the quality of goods supplied often affected the quality of projects.

There were also cases in which projects were never finished as stipulated in contract agreements if suppliers were not paid their dues in time. These findings corroborates those of Kavaugh (2007) who is of the view that effective implementation of projects is positively influenced by the availability and promptness of financial resources and that when financial resources are available for the implementation of various project components in time, it is possible to get the project finished in time and vice versa.

Bribery in the award of tenders led to substandard projects as contractors sought to recover the money used in bribes. This agrees with Arthur (2009) who posits that tendering processes in the country have often been unscrupulous and that this leads to shortlisting and award of tenders to incompetent or dishonest suppliers, putting the success of projects at stake. The positive and significant correlation between procurement process and the implementation of county infrastructural projects corroborates the findings of Zuzana (2012) who found out that the effective implementation of procurement policies and practices considerably affect project implementation.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It can be concluded that the implementation of infrastructural projects in the county is greatly affected by procurement processes in the county. Challenges related with procurement often delayed projects in case of conflicts and disgruntlement of suppliers. In some cases sub-standard goods were supplied. There were also cases in which projects were never finished as stipulated in contract agreements if suppliers were not paid their dues in time. Bribery in the award of tenders led to substandard projects as contractors sought to recover the money used in bribes. The county government should ensure that procurement processes are transparent. There should be effort to streamline procurement processing and ensure that it was not affected by political interference. Challenges related with disgruntled suppliers should also be smoothed immediately they occur. There should be strict enforcement of anti-corruption laws so as to check corrupt practice in procurement processes.

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