

**STATE OF PROCUREMENT TRAINING AND ECONOMIC
STIMULUS PROJECTS' PERFORMANCE**
**A SURVEY OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MBEERE NORTH DISTRICT,
EMBU COUNTY, KENYA**

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Abstract

The human aspect in the success of any projects cannot be over emphasized for it is the glue that holds all the other players together. Training plays a key role in equipping the people with the necessary skills and knowledge in performance of their tasks hence the project success. The study therefore aimed at examining the role of procurement training in the performance of economic stimulus programmes in public sector in Kenya. The particular objectives that were analyzed included; to establish the state of procurement professionalism in the economic stimulus projects, to determine the extent to which staff training on procurement affects economic stimulus projects' performance and to identify challenges facing procurement professionals on economic stimulus projects. The researcher used descriptive research design in carrying out the survey. The researcher used census method since the respondents were drawn from the entire population of thirty seven respondents since it is small and known. Data was collected using open-ended and semi-structured questionnaires. Data collected was analyzed through qualitative and content analysis. The study established that most of the members involved in procurement of ESP projects have no training in procurement and also lack the experience in procurement. It was also clear that most head teachers have a great

influence on what transpires during the procurement exercise. The researchers recommend establishment of an independent procurement department in secondary schools involving well trained staff conversant with procurement procedures. The study is of great importance to the management of ESP especially the heads of public secondary schools and Board of Governors. To Kenyan government and donors it will assist in identifying areas of improvement in procurement procedure of such projects. To researchers the study will form basis for future research.

Keywords: Professionalism, Training, Performance, Procurement, Economic Stimulus Projects

INTRODUCTION

ESPs being multi-billion projects requires high level of monitoring, transparency and accountability hence in secondary schools the projects are managed by head teachers and board of governors most of who are expected to be well versed with knowledge on public procurement procedures and guidelines as stipulated in PPDA (2005) and the PPDR (2006). The people concerned in implementation of the ESPs have other key responsibilities in other areas like the head teacher whose key responsibility is to run the school and ensure academic excellence, members of the board of governors only visit the school occasionally and more so to address specific issues as requested by the head teacher, other members include teachers whose key role is to teach. In such circumstances monitoring of such time framework and procedural activities may pose a big challenge. The schools have no procurement professionals hence procurement activities are carried out by people with minimal or no procurement knowledge. Does this affect the performance of the ESPs? The study therefore sought to answer this question through assessing role of procurement training on economic stimulus projects' Performance by establishing the state of procurement professionalism and the extent to which staff training on procurement affects Economic Stimulus Projects' performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Procurement Procedure

The public procurement procedure is the process followed in acquiring of goods, works and services by the government procuring entities which includes purchasing, hiring, leasing or any other contractual means of engaging suppliers in the provision of services to the public (lent, 2002). Public procurement is controlled by government and is financed from taxation, grants, public debts and fees for services. The main goal of public procurement is effective and efficient

provision of public service. It is aimed at satisfaction of customers in terms of cost, quality, and timeliness of the delivered product or service, minimizing administrative operating costs, conducting business with integrity, fairness and openness so as to fulfill public policy objectives (GoK, 2005).

ESP Procurement

All works and services are sourced using existing government procurement regulations [Public Procurement and Disposal Act, 2006 and its attendant Regulations, 2006 and subsequent Amendments, 2009]. The CDF Account Manager shall ensure that the constituency establishes CPTC. A Tender Evaluation Committee shall also be established and membership appointed by the CDF Account Manager, whose task will be to prepare a report on the analysis of the tenders received, and final ratings assigned to each tender and submit the report to the CPTC, with exceptions of projects under the Ministry of Education, the CPTC will be responsible for adjudication and award of all the project contracts in the Economic Stimulus Programme.

Project Performance Measurement

Projects are often implemented as a means of achieving an organization's Strategic plan. Operations and projects differ primarily in that operations are ongoing and repetitive while projects are temporary and unique. A project is a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product or service. Temporary means that every project has a definite beginning and a definite end. Unique means that the product or service is different in some distinguishing way from all other products or services. For many organizations, projects are a means to respond to those requests that cannot be addressed within the organization's normal operational limits (Gary, 2002).

Project procurement management is governed by the four project management objectives as identified by James (1995); performance, cost, time and scope of the project. Performance is the quality of the work being done, cost is the cost of project work, directly related to the human and physical resources applied, time is the schedule that must be met and scope is the magnitude of the work to be performed. The four project objectives are related to each other by cost as a function of performance, time and scope. What the equation says is that cost is a function (f) of performance (P), time (T), and scope (S). As P and S increase, cost generally increases. The relationship between time and cost, however, is not linear. As a rule, cost increases as the time to do the project decreases below a certain optimum time. That is, there exists a project duration that results in the best performance of all resources. If the duration is shortened, it is often necessary to pay premium labor rates as a consequence.

Further, worker errors often increase, resulting in costs for corrections, and productivity often declines. In addition, if project work extends beyond an optimum time, costs increase because people are not working efficiently.

Training of Staff on Procurement

Professional supply managers with assistance of top management and their colleagues in other functional areas must ensure that appropriate personnel receive periodic training or education with respect to organizations ethical and professional standards (David et al, 2003). All members of the supply management system must respect their roles as agents of their employer and must represent the best interest of their organization. According to Chopra (2002), secretary of the purchasing and supply lead body, traditionally the UK only required small highly educated elite-our engines of government and civil service; and management of UK industry only required that proportion of workforce to be educated to high levels. Today we need a large work a better education system for a larger proportion of the work force and in view of increasing competitive world's environment; we need to ensure workforce is trained to highest levels in competence.

The Chopra (2002) report indicated that vocational education, training qualification were fragmented. There were too many awarding bodies and much of provision was not delivered against recognizable or employer led statement of occupational competence. Kenneth (2006) explained why continuing professional development in the shape of the things to come and examine some of the other professional education and training initiatives in which the institute is involved. Many employers now recognize that it is no longer enough and services on for their staff to gain a professional or relevant academic qualification at one particular point in their career. It is essential that they keep themselves up to date with the best practice in their function. Employers must also accept that qualifications gained earlier in their careers quickly become outdated as a result many professional institutions have developed schemes that assist and guide their members.

According to David et al (2003), many firms have learnt the benefits of providing training to their suppliers in approaches such as World class supplies Management (WCSM), statistical process control (SPC), Just - In – Time (JIT) manufacturing. Progressive firms recognize that their ability to procure quality products and services on time requires suppliers with competence in these tools and philosophies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research involved a survey of public secondary schools in Mbeere North District, Kenya. The respondents were drawn from the entire population of 37 committee members involved in procurement of ESP in public secondary since it is small and known. The target population was distributed as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Target Population

Cadre of staff	Target population	Percent
BOG ESP Representative	6	16.2
Heads of schools	3	8.1
DEOs office staff	3	8.1
School Tender Committee	21	56.8
Public Works Staff	4	10.8
Total	37	100.0

Data was collected using a self-designed questionnaire with both closed and open questions. The study mostly utilized descriptive statistics. As such, frequency tables were generated to highlight the percentage scores and cumulative percentages for the variables of interests. Items in the questionnaires which required the respondents to give an essay response were first put in groups of similar response and then analyzed.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Response rate

Thirty seven respondents were targeted by the research study from the schools implementing economic stimulus programme. Thirty five (35) questionnaires were filled accordingly and returned this represented an overwhelming 95 percent of the targeted population.

Background Information

It is important for the readers to know the particulars for the participants in order to be able to have an objective assessment of the findings. Hence, the underlying information concerning the respondents who furnished the details, which formed part of the research findings, was obtained in terms of age, gender, length of service in secondary schools procurement, designation and their duties, professional background, highest level of educational attainment and their familiarity with procurement procedures. The analysis is as follows;

Gender

Table 2: Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	25	71.4	71.4
Female	10	28.6	100
Total	35	100.0	

The study findings indicate that 71.4 percent of the respondents were male while 28.6 percent of the respondents were female. From the censured population, it is clear that the proportion of the male was higher than their female counterparts. This is almost the recommended government 30 percent of women representation percentage in decision making processes.

Age

The study sought to determine the ages of the staff in order to identify the distribution of the staff age. Age was disaggregated by 10 years interval and hence grouped into age groups ranging from 20-29 years to 50-59 years. The responses are presented in table

Table 3: Age Bracket

Age	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
20 -29 Yrs	3	8.6	8.6
30 - 39 Yrs	15	42.9	51.5
40 - 49 Yrs	15	42.9	94.4
50 - 59 Yrs	2	5.6	100
Total	35	100.0	

From table 3, 8.6 percent of the staff fell between the age of 20 and 29 years. While 42.9 percent and 42.9 percent composed of staff age between 30 – 39 years and 40 – 49 years respectively, 8.6 percent of staff members were aged between 50 and 59 years. The mean age of the respondents was 34 years. This shows that the participants in the research were young people. This is the group which has little experience but may have been exposed to knowledge of procurement through formal training.

Level of Education

Education attainment was asked in order to determine distribution of respondents by level of education. Responses are shown in table 4

Table 4: Education Level

Level of Education	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Secondary School Certificate	0	0.0	0
College Diploma	8	22.9	22.9
Bachelor's Degree	24	68.6	91.5
Post graduate - Masters	3	8.5	100.0
Post graduate -Doctoral	0	0	100.0
Total	35	100.0	

From the table, none of the SIC members have secondary school certificate as their highest level of education, 30% percent of the respondents are diploma holders, 67% are degree holders and 9% percent having master's degree. Although none of the respondents have doctoral qualification this indicates that the SIC members have capacity to understand their duties and for the sake of this study be able to understand the research questionnaire items and are in a position to give relevant information as required.

Length of Service

The study sought to determine the length of service as part of procurement committee member so as to identify whether the respondents are experienced therefore acquainted with procurement process. Further, information on length of service would form basis not only to determine the correlation between length of service and other demographic information such as; age and gender but also to validate content of the responses. The results are shown in table 5.

Table 5: Length of Service

Length of Service as Procurement Committee			
Member	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
0 - 2 yrs	28	80.0	80.0
3 - 5 yrs	5	14.3	94.3
6 - 10 yrs	2	5.7	100.0
11 yrs and above	0	0.0	100.0
Total	35	100	

Familiarity with Procurement Procedure

The researcher also wanted to know the familiarity of the respondents to the schools procurement procedure. When respondents were asked whether they were familiar with the term procurement process their response was as shown in table 6

Table 6: Familiarity with the term Procurement Procedure

Option	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	14	40	40
No	21	60	100
Total	35	100	

Table 5 responses indicate that only 40 percent of the respondents agreed to be familiar with the term procurement process while 60 percent seemed not to be familiar with the term. This indicates that most of the SIC members were not directly involved in the procurement process and may be lacking relevant training and skills on procurement.

Respondents' Rating of schools' Procurement Procedure

The study sought to know how the staff would rate school procurement procedure in terms of whether as being very effective, effective, and not effective or not being decided on its effectiveness. The responses are shown in table 7.

Table 7: Rating of school's Procurement Procedure

Option	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very effective	3	8.6	8.6
Effective	6	17.2	26.8
Not effective	21	60	86.8
Undecided	5	14.2	100
Total	35	100	

When asked to rate the school's procurement process, 60 percent of the respondents rated the school's procurement process as being not effective, 17.2 percent rated it as effective while 8.6 percent rated it as being very effective. 14.2 percent of the respondents were undecided. These findings indicate there were factors that were affecting the effectiveness of the procurement process and hence leading to it being ineffective as noted by the 60 percent of the respondents.

Effects of Staff Training on the Procurement Procedure

Information concerning staff training on the procurement process gave a blue print on how the procurement process was being conducted. The responses were based on the objective of the effects of training on economic stimulus procurement process, training policy, timeliness, quality of purchase and suggestions on improving training.

When asked whether staff training affects the cost, quality and timeliness of the procurement process, 99 percent of the respondents were convinced that staff training affects directly the procurement process either in cost, time and quality of purchase as indicated in table 6.

Table 8: Effects of staff training on procurement procedure

STATEMENT	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
The school has a staff training policy on all staff involved in procurement process	94.2	2.9	0.0	2.9	0.0
The staff training on procurement process affects the quality of purchased	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.9	97.1
The staff training on the process leads to competence hence saves time	0.0	0.0	2.9	2.9	94.2

According to the respondent's schools had no staff training policy for the staff involved in procurement process as indicated by 94.2 percent of the respondents who strongly disagreed that the school had a staff training policy. The schools had no procurement specialist and majority of the staff relied on one day seminar training knowledge on procurement to carry out their procurement duties, however, 94.2 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that staff training on the process may lead to competence hence improve project performance.

Table 9: Recommendations to improve Procurement in schools

Recommendations	Frequencies	Percent
Diversify scope of supplier selection	19	54.3
Adequate training	27	77.1
Clear and Proper policies	23	65.7
Independent procurement department	17	48.6

From the basis of the findings in the table 9 we can establish that 54.3 percent feels selection suppliers should be diversified to wider region and 77.1 percent indicate need to have those involved in procurement be properly trained on procurement . Proper and clear policies and separate procurement department registered 65.7 percent and 48.6 percent respectively. This clearly shows that secondary schools procurement process may be facing some unique

problems that may not be common in other public entities. Procurement training is recommended as the leading solution to ESPs performance.

CONCLUSION

Lack of procurement professionalism by SIC members was evidenced since majority of these members don't poses procurement skill as their core competence. They just rely on seminar training on procurement with some not even attending such seminars. In relation to work experience 80 percent of the staff has worked as procurement committee for less than 2 years. This shows the school procurement committee not only lack training but also experience. Deficit in higher level qualifications has a bearing on the appreciation of procurement process and thus affecting ESPs performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For effective role of procurement to be achieved the government through the ministry of education needs to lay more emphasis on training and using procurement professionals to carry out procurement in the school. This will be possible if the department of procurement is established in the secondary schools and filled with procurement professionals. This would help remove the head teachers from the procurement process since it would eliminate the problem of diversion of funds to other unplanned activities, conflict of interest and ensuring independence of the process.

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