



EXTENT OF IMPLEMENTING A SERVICE CHARTER ON STUDENT SERVICES DELIVERY AT KARATINA UNIVERSITY, KENYA

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Abstract

For years, public institutions have grappled with offering quality services to the citizens. This led to the introduction of performance contracting worldwide. Performance contracting is an effective strategy to improve public institutions' service delivery by defining the expectations and responsibilities of parties involved in attaining mutually agreed targets. Performance contracting was introduced three decades ago in Kenya including higher education institutions to support public reform. However, despite public universities adopting performance contracting, they have always been linked to poor service delivery, proven by increased student strikes. This study therefore sought to determine the impact of performance contracting and how it influenced the service delivery to students at Karatina University. The objective of the study was to establish the extent of implementing a service charter on service delivery to students at Karatina University, Kenya. The research was guided by the Agency Theory and Stakeholder Theory. The study employed a case study design. A sample of 240 participants was selected using random sampling that comprised of students, middle-level management, and academic heads of departments. A questionnaire and a structured interview were used to gather data from participants. Descriptive statistics was used to present the research with the help of SPSS 21. The findings revealed that both students and Middle level management/ Academic heads of departments agreed that the

university is committed to providing quality services through the service charter, and it meets the set standards for service delivery. The study concluded that excellent implementation of service charter, will increase the quality of service delivery to students. Also proper implementation of performance contracting can positively influence the quality of service delivery to students. Based on the findings, it is recommended that the university continue implementing the service charter to ensure that service delivery meets the set standards.

Keywords: Performance contracting, Service delivery, Service charter, Students, Middle-level management and Academic Heads of Departments

INTRODUCTION

The Performance Contracting is viewed as a company and government strategy to improve efficiency and effectiveness with manageable expenses involved by supporting service charter. Performance contracting forms an agreement signed as a contract intended to carry out a service in accordance with the terms of the contract within a specified period and effective utilization of performance resources. Mbuu et al. (2016) noted that the responsibilities and expectations of the contract entered by the respective parties would in most cases comprise of diverse management instruments. According to Armstrong (2017), performance contract can be viewed as a memorandum of understanding involving two parties in given time periods. The two parties can lay a foundation that supports performance contract implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Therefore, the main idea of performance contracting implementation is the control, monitoring, and assessment of performance, which is a key factor in determining the performance of the entire organization.

Performance contract is a valuable tool for employers to clearly define goals as well as support new management control techniques. The performance contracting tool was introduced in countries such as Argentina, Asia, China India, Latin America, Brazil, among others as a way of improving service delivery in public sector performance (Gakere 2013). According to Kristiansen (2015) performance contracting was introduced in Denmark in the 1980s as a way of efficiency in service delivery as well as affirming citizens' confidence by enlightening them on exploitation by the public officers. The higher education institutions have as well embraced the implementation of performance contracting in their core mandate of training, innovation and research. In Africa, PCs have been introduced in Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Kenya, Gambia, Guinea, and Ghana (Kobia & Mohammed 2006). The introduction of PCs in Africa stemmed from various factors which affected the governments' ability to offer the required and expected service delivery. However, as resources constrain Africa on one hand, lack of

accountability and work ethics had continually marred the public sector in service delivery to the public.

The PC implementation offers a basis for creating the desired behavior in a decentralized management structure. The approach, which drives the performance contract in the public sector, is that whenever performance flaws have been identified, (non-compliance inclusive) measures can be taken to alleviate the flaw fixes (Kimiru, 2018). Kinyanjui et al. (2020) reported that back in 1989, performance contracting was implemented to fulfill the needs of the taxpayers in the administration of Kenya's State Corporations. All Kenya state-owned enterprises (SOE) and all higher education institutions have signed and implemented performance contracts that submit reports at the end of performance cycle. Implementing performance contracts in higher education institutions is a way of improving efficiency in both service delivery and resource (Bajaj, 2018).

According to a report by the Ministry of Public Service and Gender on the "Evaluation of State Corporations, Tertiary Institutions, and Ministries' Performance for the Financial Year 2019/2020" out of the 336 MDAs, 167 State Corporations representing 74.8% scored a "Good," "Fair" or "Poor" grade. This meant that only 25.2% of all MDAs had met the set performance goals. In addition, there was a marginal decline for the financial year 2019/2020 compared to 2018//2019 as the average composite score changed to 3.1449 from 3.1972, respectively. This indicated that despite the rolling out of PC as a performance measurement strategy and the country receiving international recognition for its adoption of the concept, more than a decade later, a majority of the MDAs still record poor performance. Therefore, the research would determine the influence of performance contracting on student service delivery in public universities.

Performance Contracting in Public Universities of Kenya

Kenya has increased the number of public universities through conversion of various technical institutions into campuses and university constituent colleges. There were approximated 15 constituent colleges allied to seven public universities by 2012, whereas, by 2022, there are over 31 public universities in Kenya. Despite the effort to advance higher education, the universities have experienced insufficient learning facilities, poor learning and conditions, and further dilapidation of an overwhelmed higher education structure (The World Bank, 2018). Karatina University, was established in 2007 and was fully chartered in 2013. As a way of managing the minimal resources, Karatina University and others resulted to a flurry of survival strategies, like introduction of the Self Sponsored Student Programme (Karatina University 2016). According to the Evaluation Report on the MDAs for the Financial Year

2019/2020, Karatina University was rated as the worst-performing Public University with a composite score of 3.3632 compared to the University of Embu ranked as the best in the country with a composite score of 2.1250. The score indicated that service delivery at Karatina University did not meet and satisfy its major clients, the students. The university's mission and vision could only be achieved if the students are fully satisfied.

Statement of the Problem

Service delivery is a concern in higher education institutions in Kenya. Karatina University has witnessed student riots, with the latest one being on December 2020, due to poor service delivery (Munyiri, 2020). The main issue of concern has been inadequate and poor service delivery such as poor teaching facilities, with the increasing student population experiencing insufficient or congested lecture halls, hostels and skills laboratories and workshops characterized by the delayed or insufficient funding by the government. The students have also witnessed poor learning conditions resulting from untimely release of learning materials like timetables, posting of e-notes, delayed results, and delayed update of student's account after fees payment which provides access to portal for units' registration, among others. This is despite Karatina University engaging in PC, which supports providing quality services for the students.

Research Objective

To establish the extent of implementing a service charter on services delivery to students at Karatina University, Kenya.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Agency Theory

The agency theory was initiated by Stephen Ross and Barry Mitnick in 1973. The theory shows the conflict of interest between the agents (managers) and principal (owners), known as an "agency problem." Ross claimed that the agency problem was caused by incentives, however Mitnick emphasized that it was a product of several institutional elements. Over time, the agency theory has changed, with Jensen and Meckling who developed it first in (1976), noted that an agreement between the agent and the principal is the basis of the agency relationship. The agency problem results from the two parties' selfish interests being their primary concern. Jensen and Meckling (1976) suggest that as a result, the principal is compelled to put in place a number of monitoring mechanisms to regulate the agent's behavior and guarantee that it serves the principal's interests. Additionally, Eisenhardt (1989) divided the

agency theory into positivist and principal-agent models. According to the model, the principals are more risk-averse and profit-driven, while agents are risk-averse and rent-seekers. However, the agent ensures that they produce the results sought by the principal. However, the principal sometimes does not prescribe how the agent should execute their task, which could have an essential effect on an organization's performance (Verhoest, 2005). The agency theory thus considers the various aspects that can affect the agent's performance and how this will affect service delivery. A performance contract can thus be a form of incentive set up by the principals. In this case, the government and its impact on the agents will be the various MDAs.

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

Service charter and Service delivery

A service charter helps in addressing the issues of professionalism and ethics in any institution. Most of the upcoming countries economically are implementing the service charter as a way of government to support its citizens. Mastai (2017) notes that the Service charter also provides feedback mechanisms that will enable the residents to establish whether they are receiving quality services. Mastai (2017) states that majority of agencies in Tanzania, among them private companies, Ministries, as well as local governments, have implemented service delivery to ensure efficient service delivery to citizens and clients, although majority have not upheld the spirit of the service charter. Therefore, Mastai (2017) carried out a study to determine the influence of service charter and service delivery in private and public universities in Tanzania. The study was conducted in Dodoma, involving St John's University of Tanzania and the University of Dodoma using a cross-sectional survey design. Mastai (2017) used a sample of 120 participants, including both students and staff from the two universities. A survey and interview were used in gathering data from the participants. The researchers found out that implementing the services charter has impact on service delivery at the two institutions. However, the researchers found that various factors have affected the successful implementation of service charter at the institutions, including low staff, shortage of working material, and corruption. The researchers also noted that students from the private institutions SJUT were happier about the services than those from the UDOM. From this study, it is an indication that service charter has an impact on service delivery in higher educational institutions, as evidenced by the two universities. However, the results of the study cannot be used in the Kenyan context hence a need to carry out the study.

Masese, Mwaura-Tenambergen, and Muiruri (2016) conducted another study to establish the impact of the service charter in public hospitals. The researchers discovered that a number of challenges regarding patient care had marred public health institutions. The

challenges persist, despite the introduction of service charter more than ten years ago. Transparency, responsiveness, and accountability were sought following the introduction of service charter in the healthcare industry. Consequently, in order to assess the impact of service delivery in public hospitals, the researchers conducted the study at Thika Level 5 Hospital in Kiambu County of Kenya with 156 participants selected in the study involving patients and healthcare providers, using questionnaire and interviews in data collection analyzed using SPSS. The researcher found out that 60% of the participants believe that failure in service charter leads to deterioration in provision of health services. Therefore, abiding by the service charter plays a vital role in ensuring equality and quality in service delivery at Thika Level 5 Hospital in Kiambu County of Kenya. However, the study was carried out in a government hospital with different operating procedures compared to a learning institution. Therefore, there is a need to establish the impact of service charter on overall service delivery.

Research Gap

In a study by Mastai (2017), cross-sectional research design to ascertain the impact of service charter on service delivery in Tanzanian-based institutions. Despite the researchers finding a positive impact between service delivery and service charter, the study results cannot be used in the Kenyan context, given the difference in policies used in supporting service delivery. Masese, Mwaura-Tenambergen, and Muiruri (2016) further investigation, involved participants from the Thika Level 5 Hospital in Kiambu County of Kenya. The researchers found out that there is a favorable connection between service charter and service delivery. However, the study was carried out in a government hospital with different operating procedures than a learning institution.

Service Charter

Wafula (2017) notes that an increased call for good governance and accountability within developing countries has forced most governments to rethink how they deliver services to their citizens. This has seen the governments implementing various citizens' service delivery charters to support improved service delivery in the public sector. A service charter refers to a document that outlines how an organization will provide services to the customers, along with outlining how it operates to ensure the goals are achieved (Wafula, 2017). Wafula (2017) notes that the Ministry of Health implemented a service charter in 2006 to help improve service delivery. However, more than a decade down the line, the health sector still faces problems. In order to establish the outcomes of service charter, studying the institutions' conditions and

getting feedback from users is an essential activity as it will ascertain the effectiveness of the services provided.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The case study research design was employed to conduct the research. This research design helped the researcher in examination and comprehension of difficult subjects in real life context. It can be regarded as a credible research methodology, particularly when a thorough, in-depth investigation is required. The design is appropriate as it sought to describe the influence of performance contracting on student service delivery.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Sample frame refers to the population from which a sample is taken (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Thompson (2012) states that a sampling technique is used to obtain a sample from a study population. A simple random sampling strategy was used in selecting the study participants. This sampling technique was selected because it gives every member of the study equal opportunity to become part of the study.

Furthermore, the sampling technique allows a researcher to eliminate any form of bias (Suresh, 2011). In most cases, researchers engage in unconscious or conscious bias, which can affect the study findings. The lottery method was used in selecting participants whereby a member of the target population was chosen using a random draw. The target population given random numbers whereby the researcher drew the number randomly from a box.

Data Collection Instruments

The research relied on primary and secondary data. Primary data is the premises, assumptions, or facts that a researcher has directly collected from the field, whereas secondary data refers to beliefs, assumptions, or facts gathered from sources already reported by others, such as documentary sources. The study relied on the questionnaire and interview as the primary data collecting instrument as it is a cheap and economical means of gathering information (Wright, 2017). The questionnaire had six main sections. The first section required participants to fill in their general information and the second section determined how to implement service delivery at Karatina University. The third section focused on the extent of implementing a service charter on student service delivery at Karatina University whereas, the fourth section focused on the influence of policy implementation on student service delivery at Karatina University. The fifth section focused on the extent of target setting on

student service delivery at Karatina University, and the sixth section on the influence of financial stewardship on student service delivery at Karatina University, Kenya.

Method of Data Analysis

The raw data gathered through questionnaires was computed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (SPSS version 21.0). The researcher used SPSS in data analysis because of its capacity to manage both small and large data through its sophisticated statistical techniques, (Bell, 2017). SPSS is a technique used to manipulate data to efficiently realize good results (Calltutors Team, 2022). This study used descriptive data analysis. Descriptive statistics provide simple data summaries and highlight any observations made, including percentages and frequencies, standard deviations and means and can handle large amounts of data and provide credible tabulated data. The descriptive statistics help to facilitate data visualization by enabling the presentation of the data in an understandable and meaningful way which in turn supports a much simpler data interpretation (CFI Education, 2022). Through frequency distribution, the data was presented in tables and charts, used to summarize the grouped data categorized on mutually exclusive classes and the number of occurrences in each given class (CFI Education, 2022).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Extent of implementing a service charter on services delivery

The objective of the study was to establish the extent of implementing a service charter on services delivery with key indicators from middle level managers/Academic heads of departments.

Table 1. Extent of implementing a service charter on services delivery

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	N	Mean	Std. Dev
PC has supported the development of a service charter to improve service delivery.	30.5	39.0	14.6	4.4	3.9	21	2.81	1.21
The institution, through the service charter, is committed to providing quality services.	45.2	40.3	9.7	3.9	1.9	21	3.26	1.14
The institution exercises the utmost integrity in the implementation of service charter.	36.8	50.4	14.2	1.7	2.9	21	3.38	1.12
The service charter meets the set standards for service delivery in the university.	38.5	38.6	2.6	14.4	5.9	21	2.81	1.96

According to the table 1, majority of response at 69.5% (Mean of 2.81 and Std. Dev 1.21) from Middle level managers/ Academic heads of departments agreed that performance contracting has supported the development of a service charter to improve service delivery. The researcher sought to determine whether the institution is committed to providing quality services, majority of the respondent agreed with 85.5% (Mean of 3.26 Std. Dev 1.14). On whether the institution exercises the utmost integrity in the implementation of the service charter, majority of the respondent at 87.2% (Mean of 3.38 and Std. Dev 1.12) agreed with the statement. Furthermore, the researcher sought to determine whether the service charter meets the set standards for service delivery in the university, 77.1% of the respondents agreed with the statement with a mean of (2.81) and std. dv. of (1.96.) This indicates that the service charter is effective in improving service delivery and meeting the expectations of stakeholders, which is essential in ensuring satisfaction and loyalty.

Extent of implementing a service charter on services delivery to students

The researcher sought to determine the extent of implementing a service charter on service delivery from student. The results are shown in table below.

Table 2: Extent of implementing a service charter on services delivery to students

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	N	Mean	Std. Dev
The learning materials are uploaded within the timelines of the service charter.	43.0	41.8	4.7	5.4	5.1	219	3.23	1.28
The examinations results are posted within service charter timelines.	38.2	51.6	3.8	3.3	3.1	219	3.40	1.16
The fee structure are accessible on the website before closure of the preceding semester.	33.4	51.9	5.0	4.2	5.7	219	3.05	1.33

From the table 2, the data reveals 84.8% of the respondents agreed that the learning materials are uploaded within the timelines of the service charter. It was noted that majority of the respondents at 89.8% (Mean of 3.40 and Std. Dev of 1.16) agreed that the examinations results are posted within service charter timelines. Finally, the data reveals that most of respondents at 85.3% (mean of 3.05 and std dev of 1.33) agreed that fee structure are accessible on the website before closure of the preceding semester.

The results agree with Mastai (2017) who found out that implementing the services charter has impact on service delivery. The results also agree with Masese, Mwaura-

Tenambergen, and Muiruri (2016) that failure to implement service charter can negatively impact service delivery.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Summary

The findings revealed that service charter have significantly affected the quality of service delivery to students. Most of respondents at 84.8% (Mean of 3.23 and Std. Dev of 1.28) agreed that the learning materials are uploaded within the set timelines. Also, 89.8% (mean of 3.40 and Std. Dev of 1.16) of respondents agreed that the examinations results are posted within service charter timelines. Finally, the data reveals that most of respondents at 85.3% (Mean of 3.05 and Std. Dev of 1.33) agreed that fee structure are accessible on the website before closure of the preceding semester.

Additionally, data analyzed from middle level managers revealed that majority of response at 69.5% (Mean of 2.81 and Std. Dev 1.21) agreed that performance contracting has supported the development of a service charter to improve service delivery. The results further indicated that 85.5% (Mean of 3.26 Std. Dev 1.14) agreed that institution is committed to providing quality services through the service charter, whereas, 87.1% (Mean of 3.38 and Std. Dev 1.12) agreed that the institution exercises the utmost integrity in the implementation of the service charter. Also, the study revealed that 77.1% with a (Mean of 2.81 and Std. Dev of 1.96.) agreed that the service charter meets the set standards for service delivery in the university.

Conclusions

The objective of the study was to establish extent of implementing a service charter on services delivery to students at Karatina University, Kenya. The influence of performance contracting on student service delivery at Karatina University is assessed through various factors. One of these is the extent of implementing a service charter on services delivery to students. According to the study, the implementation of a service charter had an impact on the quality of service delivery to students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, the university should continue implementing the service charter to ensure that service delivery meets the set standards. This will require regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the service charter is being followed and that necessary adjustments are made.

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