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The linkage between good governance and service delivery in Meru district council, Tanzania

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Abstract

Public services delivery is the challenge in district councils across the world. However, many countries have adopted some reforms and frameworks to strengthen the work of district councils on service delivery. Nevertheless, adopted reforms have brought several changes including good governance. The purpose of the study was to determine the influence of good governance in service delivery in Tanzania using a case study of Meru District Council. The study focused on accountability, transparency, and participation as constructs of good governance, and their influence on service delivery in Meru District Council. The study used 74 respondents from the target population of 153. The population comprised the staff of Meru District Council drawn from all departments. The study collected both qualitative and quantitative data using questionnaires and interview guide. Quantitative data was analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 whereas thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. Descriptive statistics such as measures of central tendency and measures of spread were used to summarize and describe data. The findings indicate the presence of weak relationship between transparency and service delivery in Tanzania with correlation coefficient value of. 243. Further, accountability was found to have weak relationship with service delivery with coefficient value of.1 97; while participation also had weak relationship with public service delivery at coefficient value of. 247. The study recommends that District Councils should invest on information disclosure so as to enable more participation of citizens and development stakeholders. This will reduce different challenges in the council management such as the poor participation, crimes and corruption which have facilitated violation of human rights and lack of sense of ownership. In line with this, the council authority should allocate and provide adequate budgetary resources to district councils to enable them improve their governance systems so as to make their services more accessible to citizens.

Keywords: Service delivery, good governance, participation, accountability, transparency

Introduction

Public service organizations experienced rapid changes after Second World War whereby many countries started to implement public service management reforms with a focus of enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery. According to Shibu (2013)^[14], Public Service Delivery is the mechanism through which public services are delivered to the public by local, municipal, or federal governments. However, the access to public services is a major problem in many countries (Ofori-Mensal, 2017)^[19]. Example in Vietnam, decentralization of public expenditure to provincial health authorities was reportedly undertaken without putting the necessary monitoring and evaluation instruments in place to monitor the allocation and spending of provincial health budgets (Frosberg, 2011)^[5]. In Rwanda the public administration faces many of challenges including poverty, illiteracy and power shortages (Kitaw, 2006)^[1]. In Uganda and Malawi, formal processes for monitoring and supervision are not followed across the chain of service delivery provision (Cammack, 2011; Cammack and Kanyangolo, 2010)^[2, 4]. According to REPOA (2018)^[12], in Tanzania, service delivery appears to have improved since 2014, with fewer Tanzanians reporting difficulties, delays, and bribes for services.

Nevertheless, among the common causes of poor service delivery in the district councils are poor participation, inequality, corruption, absence of accountability and transparency (Republic of Belarus, 2012; Human Rights Watch, 2013)^[13, 6]. These causes indicate that there is a linkage between good governance and public service delivery. However, access to regarded as a major determinant to human development and productivity; a

Basic public services is precondition for ensuring the wellbeing of a country’s citizens (Armah-Attoh, 2015) [17]. Therefore, public service delivery in district councils depends on aspects of good governance such as participation, accountability, rule of law, and transparency (Kaul *et al.*, 2008) [8]. This indicates that the quality of public services delivery in Tanzania depends on good governance frameworks and reforms (Saikia, 2013) [11].

Statement of the Problem

The government of Tanzania accepted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and has been implementing its development Vision 2025 and Five-Year Development Plan Phase II 2016/2017-2020/2021; all aiming to transform the country into a middle-income economy (UN, 2010). Further, the government of Tanzania has sought to improve delivery of services through administrative, legal, labour, and financial reforms focusing on transparency, accountability, and performance of civil servants (Lufunyo, 2013). Tanzania Public Sector since 2000s has undergone massive restructuring in order to make it more responsive to the needs of citizens by increasing levels of accountability, promoting efficiency and effectiveness, introducing participative decision making and adopting a customer-focused practice in Local Authorities and Government departments.

Despite these efforts, district councils are still facing challenges in service delivery. For example in Meru District Council, service delivery faces several challenges including shortage of staff in specialized fields, inadequate infrastructure, inadequate supply of water and electricity, unreliable transport facilities, low community awareness, community resistance to contribute to community water fund, inadequate awareness on laws and by-laws governing water management and water rights, lack of plans for maintenance and rehabilitation of water schemes, low morale amongst teachers and little involvement and preparation of key stakeholders (Meru District Council, 2017) [1].

The Government of Tanzania recognizes good governance as a critical element to improve delivery of public services (Open Government Partnership Action Plan, 2012-2013). This means that good governance plays a great role in improving delivery of services to citizens. According to OHCHR (2007) [11], good governance strengthens accountability of administrators as important actors in provision of services in district councils, and empowers

members of disadvantaged groups to defend their rights through participating in decision making processes. Therefore, this study focused on examining the influence of good governance through accountability, transparency, and participation on public service delivery in Tanzania, with the case study of Meru District Council.

Research purpose

The main purpose of the study was to examine the linkage between good governance and service deliveries in Meru District Council, Tanzania. Specifically, the study sought to establish the role of transparency, accountability, and participation in service delivery.

Research methods

The study adopted the case study design covering a sample size of 74 respondents drawn from a target population of 153 employees comprising District Executive Director, District Advisory Secretary, and Head of Departments at Meru District Council. Primary data were collected through questionnaires and interviews instruments. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results and Analysis

Role of transparency in public service delivery

The study found the overall mean of access to information to be 3. 18, indicating that somehow information is accessed in Meru district council. On the quality of information, the study found the overall mean of quality of information to be 3. 27 indicating that somehow there is quality of information in Meru District Council.

Further, the study conducted correlation analysis and results indicate that transparency has positive and significant coefficient value with two attributes of service delivery namely all citizens are satisfied with the services (.352), and public services are effectively monitored during and after service delivery (.327). Also, transparency had negative relationship with other agencies such as government ministries are effectively involved (-.194), and everyone has equal access to public services (-.100). Furthermore, the overall correlation between transparency and public service delivery at coefficient value of .243 indicating the presence of positive and weak relationship between transparency and service delivery in Meru District Council. These findings indicate the presence of weak relationship between transparency and public service delivery in Meru District Council.

Table 1: Correlation between transparency and public service delivery

| Conditions for public service delivery | Other agencies such as government ministries are effectively involved | Public services are effectively monitored during and after service delivery | Everyone has equal access to public services | All citizens are satisfied with the services |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| Transparency | -.194 | .327** | -. 100 | . 352** |
| Correlation of transparency and public service delivery is .243 | | | | |
| *. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). | | | | |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). | | | | |

Influence of Accountability on Service Delivery

According to the study findings, the overall mean on accountability within Meru District Council was at the mean score of 3. 22, implying that the accountability within Meru District Council is somehow high. Also, the study found the overall mean on the influence of external stakeholders in Meru District Council at the score of 3. 41 signifying that

somehow the influence of external stakeholders in Meru District Council promotes service delivery. Accountability had positive and significant relationship with service that are effectively monitored during and after service delivery (.253). Also, accountability had positive but weak relationship with service delivery as all citizens are satisfied with the services provided (. 65), and everyone has

equal access to public services (.126). Also, accountability had a negative coefficient value with other agencies with a contention that government ministries are effectively involved (-.244). Moreover, the study found the correlation

between accountability and public service delivery at coefficient value of .197, indicating the presence of positive but weak relationship between accountability and service delivery in Meru District Council.

Table 2: Correlation between Accountability and Public Service Delivery

| Conditions for public service delivery | Other agencies such as government ministries are effectively involved | Public services are effectively monitored during and after service delivery | Everyone has equal access to public services | All citizens are satisfied with the services |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| Accountability | -.244* | .253* | .126 | .165 |
| Correlation of Accountability and Public Service Delivery is .197 | | | | |
| *. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). | | | | |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). | | | | |

Effect of Participation in Service Delivery

According to the study findings, the overall mean on participation was 3.03 implying that respondents agree that the participation is somehow high. The correlation analysis revealed that participation had positive and significant coefficient with service delivery where services were effectively monitored during and after delivery (.513). Also, participation had negative coefficient with other agencies

such as government ministries (-.263). Also, participation was negatively correlated with two attributes namely; everyone has equal access to public services (-.190), and all citizens are satisfied with the services (-.020). Lastly, the study revealed an overall correlation between participation and service delivery of .247, indicating presence of positive but weak relationship between participation and service delivery at Meru District Council.

Table 3: Correlation between participation and Public Service Delivery

| Conditions for Public Service Delivery | Other agencies such as government ministries are effectively involved | Public services are effectively monitored during and after service delivery | Everyone has equal access to public services | All citizens are satisfied with the services |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| Participation | -.263* | .513** | -.190 | -.020 |
| Correlation of Participation and Public Service Delivery is .247 | | | | |
| *. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) | | | | |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) | | | | |

Conclusions

From the study findings, it is concluded that information is not accessible by employees and clients, despite the presence of official website where important information can be accessed. Further, there is newsletter and website where information is reported and circulated to clients and staff. Furthermore, the study found that sometimes the report received do not show all important issues even though there is instance where the issues like planning, budget, and expenditure are disclosed to important stakeholders. The reports are usually prepared in a way that is easy for many stakeholders to understand.

The Council maintains an accountability framework which involves the internal audits and an oversight committee and there are laid down procedures that give chance to hold accountable administrators and ordinary employees when there are scandals of bad public service delivery in district councils in Tanzania. Ordinary citizens and administrators participate in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of different activities. Further, the study found that there is an accountability framework that involves the government ministries, CAG, and commission for public service management and good governance. Also, the management in district councils takes seriously the recommendations from external accountability bodies including CAG and PCCB and the external accountability agencies such as PO PSMGG and PCCB are working effectively to monitor different activities in district councils. Lastly, there exists a participation framework which helps staffs and ordinary citizens to be involved in different activities and citizens are directly or indirectly involved in decision making processes in district councils in Tanzania.

Also, citizens are encouraged to protect and mobilize district's resources

Recommendations

The study recommends that the government of Tanzania should invest more on information disclosure so as to enable more participation of citizens and development stakeholders in service delivery in district councils. This will reduce the challenges such as such poor participation, crimes and corruption in district councils which stifle quality service delivery. In line with this, the council authority should allocate and provide adequate budgetary resources to district councils in order to improve systems that will make services more accessible to citizens.

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