

Practices and Opportunities of Devolved Governances in Kenya; A Case of Garissa County, Kenya.

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ABSTRACT: The interest and quest for devolved governance have been yearned by worldwide over the last two decades. Devolved governance was the only panacea against the discretionary use of power by the central government as well as to promote participatory democracy that enables citizens to have an opportunity to communicate with personal preference views and ideas to the elected officials are subsequently rendered accountable for their performance to the electorate. Devolution was often thought to bring resources and services closer to the ordinary citizen so that they can get effective services. An increasing number of countries are decentralizing the administrative, fiscal and political functions of the central government to lower level governments. Though these decentralization efforts are typically politically motivated, they have profound impacts on economies by influencing governance in the public sector including public services. Decentralization has often appeared of devolving significant functions and responsibilities such as education, health, water and sanitation, agriculture and rural feeder roads from the central government to the local governments. The objective of this study was to investigate the practices and opportunities of devolved governances in Kenya the case of Garissa County. The findings of this study can be applied to other forty six counties in the country since they have the similar structure and system of governance. The population of this study constituted the political, technical and civic leadership of Garissa County who were residing the environs of Garissa. Stratified random sampling was employed to select respondents from the categories of sub-counties. Primary and secondary data collection source was fully utilized.

KEY WORDS: (Governance, Power, Devolved units, Democracy, Opportunities, Resources)

I. INTRODUCTION

The clamor and tempo for devolved governance have been sweeping fast across the world. This was attributed to the discretionary use of power by the central government to promote the efficiency of social service provision. Kenya was a colony of Britain. Post-independent has been characterized by centralization of both political and economic power in the hands of the government, kins and kinsmen. Hence this resulted in an unfair distribution of resources and access to social and basic services in all the regions of the country. Devolution granted powers from the central government of a sovereign state to government at the sub-national level or regional level. This kind of governance had a significant assertion. Decentralization promoted competition among sub-national government, decentralization is thought to increase the likelihood that the government will respond to demands. This means that competition allows for a variety of bundles of local public goods to be produced and individuals can reveal their preference for those goods by exercising some form of exit option at the extreme moving to that jurisdiction that satisfies their taste. Garissa County where the study was conducted is one of the 47 county governments that have been established under the new constitution. It is located in the Northern part of the country. It is approximately 367km from Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. In Climatic conditions, Garissa landscape is mostly arid and desert. The town lies along the Tana River and has a very warm and hot climate due to the low elevation and distance away from the cooler coastal areas. Garissa County has six sub-counties namely; Township, Ijara, Daadab, Lagdera, Balambala and Fafi.

Literature Review

(Kauza, 2007) distinguishes vertical decentralization, which offers a vote from horizontal decentralization which also offers voice. This implied that devolution was one among several forms of decentralization. Thus it is not whether governments decentralize but rather how and why they do; considerations that are significant for the choice between alternative modes of decentralization.

Ndegwa (2002) suggested that it was significant to note that in no country was the claim of decentralization considered difficult to effect and sustain. However, proponents of the independence constitution believed that regional autonomy sought to empower the local communities (Task force report, 2011). The report had been trying to emphasize the significance of devolved governance.

The constitution of Kenya which was promulgated on 27th august, 2010 established a devolved system of governance in accordance with the principles and values of devolution articulated in articles 174 and 175 of the constitution. Therefore devolution is articulated through the constitution of Kenya under the devolution laws namely; The County Government Act 2012, The Transition Devolved Government Act 2012, Public Finance Management Act 2012, The Urban Areas and Cities Act 2012.

Mbondenyi and Ambani (2012) suggested that in order to strengthen the practices of devolution, 'parliament came up with intergovernmental relations Act which provided the three major institutions that were useful in resolution, coordination and intergovernmental cooperation. These included the council of county governors (council), the national and county government coordinating summit (summit) and the intergovernmental relations technical team. The above team played a significant role, for instance, the summit consisted of the president and the forty-seven governors mandated to look the national interest that included monitoring and evaluation of both national and county government.

Kilonzo (2011) asserted that devolution provided an opportunity in enhancing investment and mobilize savings that can be used in funding developmental projects in the country thus creating the ability to raise capital within the county. Garissa residents have expected devolution to promote equitable distribution of resources, effective and efficient service delivery.

Ogot, (1995) accentuated that Garissa was marginalized since independence in 1963, services such as electricity, communication network, transport and other basic services was a nightmare. Many tend to believe that devolution had been panacea to the above challenges, unfortunately, nothing was forthcoming.

Kilonzo (2011) demonstrated that when county government becomes operational, there were many incentives and an opportunity for transformative development in all the sectors. Moreover county governments can prioritize on the needs of their residents and implements viable projects that addressed their needs. For instance, Kericho County is agriculturally productive and produces tea that has been exported to other countries.

Tiebout (1956) asserted that decentralization promoted competition among sub-national government, decentralization was thought to increase the likelihood that the government responded to demands. In addition, competition allowed for a variety of bundles of local public goods to be produced and individuals can reveal their preference for those goods by exercising some form of exit option at the extreme moving to that jurisdiction that satisfied their taste.

Studies have shown that decentralization promoted a huge collection of taxes if managed well. Qian and Weingast, (1997) suggested that sub-national governments were induced to pay attention to the preferences of their constituents and tailor services accordingly to avoid risking the loss of tax revenues''. Indeed this assertion by the scholars was significant in such a way that the tax collected can be used in financing essential activities within the county. The revenue raised belongs to the county and the leaders need to use amicably to finance developmental projects.

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Sampling

Kothari, (2004:152) defined sampling as the process of taking a sample from an entire population. Therefore, to investigate the research problem and the research question related to practices and opportunities of devolved governance, the researcher selected 7 political leaders and 80 employees of county public service board in Garissa County. Factors such as educational level, age, experience and gender were the significant consideration in the sampling selection.

2.2 Sources of data collection

a. Primary Sources

Data was collected directly from the political leadership of the county and staffs of county public service board that were solely responsible for promotion and implementation of devolved governances that included well-structured questionnaires.

b. Secondary Sources

This comprised of existing literature, published articles and journals that articulated devolved governance.

2.3 Tools and Techniques for Data Collection

Questionnaires, interviews and observation were the important tools for collecting data. Books, reports, journals and articles that were relevant to the study were reviewed and studied.

III. PLAN OF ANALYSIS

Data was well tabulated and corresponding percentage given. Table and graph were used to get accurate information. Inappropriate and biased responses were discarded.

3.1 Objective of the Study

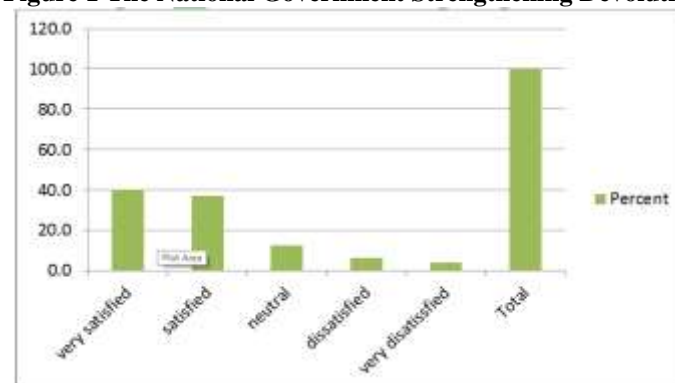
1. Perception of the staff on the role of National Government in Strengthening Devolved Governances;
2. Staff opinion on existences of Strong Political will to Implement Devolved governance by Different Stakeholders in Garissa;
3. Staff Suggestions on Whether Central Government Organizes for Conferences and Workshop for County Governors
4. Services have been Effectively Devolved from the Central Government to the County Government

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 National Government in Strengthening Devolved Governances;

After the dispensation of 2010, constitution, devolution was born taking resources to the citizen's disposal. This new approach needed capacity in order to fully operationalize. Therefore it was the role of the national government to strengthen devolution through allocation of funds, providing human resources among other ways. It was indeed important to find out whether the national government was strengthening the county government.

Figure 1 The National Government Strengthening Devolution



Source: Based on Survey Conducted by Author in August, 2018

Analysis

Figure 1 illustrated that 40.3% of the respondents were very satisfied that national government were supporting devolution. 37.2% of the respondent were similarly satisfied that the central government were providing the necessary support required for devolution to take its course. 12.4% of the respondent were neutral, they neither favor any side, while 6.2% were dissatisfied that the national government were not providing the basic avenues to support devolution. 3.9% of the respondent were also very dissatisfied with national government in promoting devolution.

4.2 Existences of Strong Political Will to Implement Devolved Governance by Different Stakeholders in Garissa; The county government actors such as members of county assembly, senators and governors are the implementing agents of devolution and therefore they needed to have the political will to implement devolution in order to achieve devolution objectives.

Table 1 Strong Political will to Implement Devolution from Different Stakeholders

Respondents	Percent
very satisfied	37.2
Satisfied	40.3
Neutral	12.4
Dissatisfied	7.8
very dissatisfied	2.3
Total	100.0

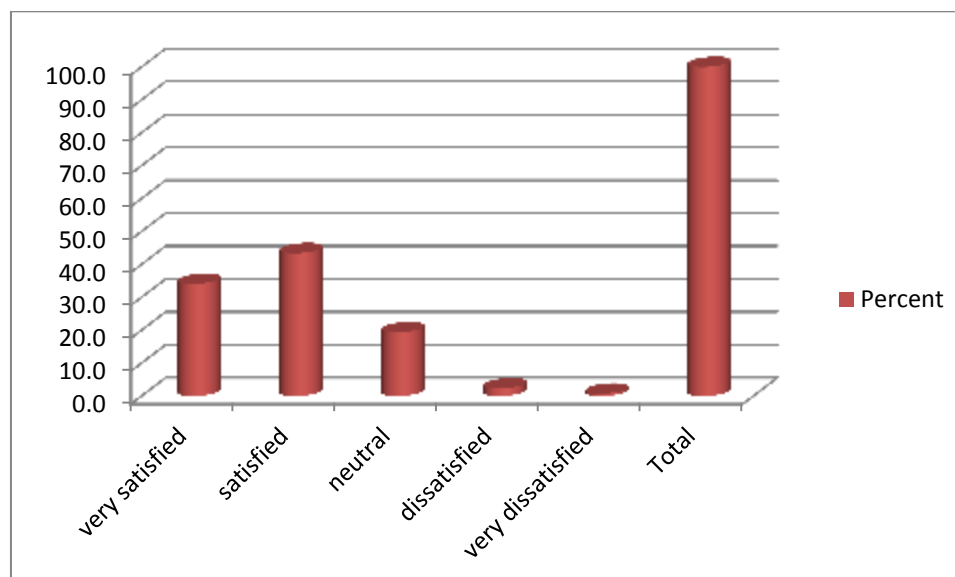
Source: Based on Researchers Survey Conducted in August, 2018.

Analysis

In table 1 showed that 40.3% of the respondent were satisfied that there were strong political will to implement devolution, 37.2% were also very satisfied, 12.4% were neutral on whether strong political will existed or not. 7.8% were dissatisfied that there were strong political will existed while a minimum number of 2.3% of the respondent were very dissatisfied if the desire to implement devolution existed.

4.3 Central Government Organizes for Conferences and Workshop for County Governors

Since devolution was a new approach of governance, it was important for the central government to organize retreat, workshop, conference, fieldtrip and seminar in order to orientate the leaders and the staff on the mission, vision and objective of devolution so that they acquaint with the relevant skills and knowledge to perform the task ahead. It was critical to know whether the central government had organized for conferences and workshops for the county governors.



Analysis

In Figure 2 above, 43.4% of the respondents were satisfied that the national government was providing capacity building for county governors, 34.1% of the respondents were also very satisfied that central government was empowering county staff through providing trainings and workshops. 19.4% of the respondents were neutral regarding on provision of training and conferences while 2.3% of the respondents were dissatisfied and another 0.8% were very dissatisfied with central government providing capacity building measures for Garissa county staff.

4.4 Services have been Effectively Devolved from the Central Government to the County Government

One of the rationales of devolution was to devolve services thus bringing closer to the ordinary citizens. It is good to ascertain whether these services have been devolved or not.

Table 2: Services have been Effectively Devolved from the Central Government to the County Government

Respondents	Percent
very satisfied	48.8
Satisfied	33.3
Neutral	5.4
Dissatisfied	9.3
very dissatisfied	3.1
Total	100.0

Source: Authors own Survey, August 2017

Analysis

In the above table 2 presented that 48.8% of the respondent were very satisfied that a number of services had been effectively devolved from the central government to the county government, 33.3% of the respondent were equally satisfied that potential services had been effectively devolved, 9.3% of the respondent were dissatisfied, 5.4% of the respondent were neutral hence not sure whether services had been effectively devolved while a small number of 3.1% of the respondent accentuated that they were indeed very dissatisfied whether services had been devolved from the central to the county government.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The research recommends the following;

- i. The constitution of Kenya has mandated the central government in strengthening and promoting devolved governance in all counties in Kenya. Therefore the national government should fully support in enhancing service deliveries at the county levels.
- ii. County government of Garissa should promote effective and efficient service delivery for the services that are at their disposal. These services include access to health, water, feeder roads, early childhood and vocational trainings.
- iii. It's significant for the county government to enhance close relationship and promote checks and balance with the county assembly for proper legislations of bills that can strengthen effective service delivery.
- iv. Further study needed to be done in order to examine the role of elected leaders in promoting devolution of public sector services

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