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## Challenges Facing Management of Services in Devolved Units of Government: a Case of County Government of Migori, Kenya

**Sixtus Momanyi Ondieki**

Lecturer, College of Human Resource Development,  
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya

**Obenge Philemon Ogola**

Lecturer, College of Human Resource Development,  
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya

**John Fredrick Moerwa Omwoyo**

Lecturer, College of Human Resource Development,  
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya

### **Abstract:**

*Devolution is the practice in which the authority to make decisions in some sphere of public policy is delegated by law to sub-national territorial assemblies and entails transferring governmental or political authority. Devolution assumes that institutions closest to the citizens are most likely to meet and properly articulate needs of the citizenry. Among the major pitfalls of devolution is the concern for optimality in service delivery. The general objective of this study is to determine the challenges facing the management of services in Devolved units of Government in Migori County. The Specific Objectives include: to establish the devolution challenges facing the management of health care in devolved units of government; to find out the devolution challenges facing the management of capacity Building in devolved units of government; and to determine the devolution challenges that that influences supplier relationship management in County Government markets. The study employed a descriptive case study approach. The relationship sought here involved the service management and service delivery in the health sector and capacity building. The accessible target population was 140 respondents. This included 120 health supervisors/managers and 20 human resource employees at the Level 4 Migori Hospital and 115 respondents including 5 Market Supervisors, 3 market attendants, 2 market officials, 87 traders and 18 suppliers. Random sampling was used in selecting the respondents. This study used 20% of the accessible population to draw the sample size of 28 respondents to the study. A closed questionnaire was used as the instrument to collect data. The respondents were interviewed to provide relevant information to the researcher. The researcher enhanced reliability of the interview schedules and questionnaires by subjecting it to a pilot test. In this study, there was mainly quantitative analysis. From the findings, majority of the health practitioners were fairly attracted to their profession at 66.67%. They fairly agree that there existed posting and promotion procedures. The interesting part of this was that those procedures were not strictly followed. Hiring of staff, it was observed, was politicized and corruption was at play at every step of posting and promotion. Respondents were divided on the presence or absence of empowerment policies. The respondents were skeptical about the county Government's and staff capacity to absorb about 15 of national government functions. They further noted that there lacked experienced legislative, fiscal and economic drafters. It was concluded that politicization in posting and promotion of health staff and laxity on the part of the county Government were the cause of the County Government's lack of performance in the management of service. It can be concluded that one of the important challenges of service management was the lack of experienced legislative, fiscal and economic drafters. Nepotism, partisan favoritism was the cause of incompetent membership of such vital organs. The following were the recommendations as established by the research. There was need to put in place mechanisms to ensure that promotion and posting of staff is done according to the laid down procedures. Selection to legislative, economic and fiscal organs of County Governments should be made from informed positions.*

**Keywords:** Services, Devolved units, Government, Capacity building

## 1. Introduction

The independent Kenya inherited a highly-centralized bureaucracy from the colonial administration. Later, Kenya adopted Local Government approach to governance which was the country's most substantive devolution experience prior to the promulgation of a new Constitution in 2010. The Constitution designed an impeccable devolution structure that was primarily to ensure power and service was brought nearer to the people for the development of their own good. Ondigi (2014) notes that devolution has been facing a number of challenges that has been the sole reason for under optimization of its performance. He lists intergovernmental, administrative, legislative, policy, institutional among other conflicts as the main challenges of decentralization of service. In his discourse, Ondigi (2014) sought to address these challenges. These efforts are in order to prevent devolution from collapsing. This is then the aim of this study, to find out the challenges facing management of services in devolved units of government.

Devolution is the practice of delegating decision making to sub-national territorial assemblies. Devolution engages lower-level units of government in policy decision-making. The rationale behind devolution is that institutions closer to citizens are most likely to meet and properly articulate needs of the citizenry (Katalin, 2003). Considering the fact that devolution is fairly new, it is grappling with a number of challenges. Among the major pitfalls of devolution is the concern for optimality in service delivery. The lack of which optimization of devolution is impossible. (Gender Governance Programme in Kenya, 2014) Debate on piecemeal transfer of services has been under contestation. Kenya as a result is off to a slow start (Lakini, 2013).

In order to mitigate these challenges, quality for various stakeholders has been an issue. According to (Parasuraman et al., 1988), there appear to be no studies that discuss or investigate how service quality is formulated in contracts. Devolved system of governance has as its primary aim to ensure power and service is brought nearer to the people for the development of their own good. Devolution assumes that institutions closest to the citizens are most likely to meet and properly articulate needs of the citizenry (Katalin, 2003). Katalin argues that decentralization provides an opportunity for the services. The functions of the national government include matters that concern the general nation. while devolved, units deal with functions and powers in governance at the local level (Constitution of Kenya 2010, County Government Act). These are the services provided by devolved units.

But devolution transition process has been problematic. Ondigi (2014) argues that devolution has been facing a number of challenges, the reason that has been the cause for under-optimization of its performance. In his approach, the viewed capacity management as key to understanding the service. Capacity management entails transfer of capacity useful in the provision of service to customers.

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

Management of service is an integral system of supply chain management. The goal of service management is to optimize service delivery by reducing costs and keeping inventory level low (Owida, 2016). The service economy has always been the driving force of economic growth of every developed nation.

Devolution has as its primarily aim to ensure power and service is brought nearer to the people for the development of their own good. But devolution transition process has been problematic. Ondigi (2014) argues that devolution has been facing a number of challenges, the reason that has been the cause for under-optimization of its performance. He lists intergovernmental, administrative, legislative, policy, institutional among other conflicts as the main challenges of decentralization of service. Most of players in devolution of service have participated in complication of the rolling out of devolved functions. Government structures being phased out or delegated are resentful (Ondigi 2014). Among the major pitfalls of devolution is the concern for optimality in service delivery. This optimality refers to functions and resources to be devolved and to which levels. This then serves as the purpose of this study, to determine the challenges facing management of services in devolved units.

Despite the importance of services and in world economies (Van-Ark et al., 2008). What does not appear to have been discussed well in literature is how service quality is handled in the business contracts between the parties. This then serves as the basis for this study, to establish the challenges facing management of service in devolved units of government.

## 2. Empirical Literature Review

### 2.1. Capacity Building and Skills Management

There has been considerable debate on the capacity of Devolved Units of Government to handle certain devolved services. Traders in County Markets are learning to identify appropriate markets, develop plans for their new businesses. The number of small traders is growing throughout County Governments with many traders selling their vegetables, fruit, flowers, dairy, meat, and other products. Many of these traders have limited business experience (ACLJ, 2011). The lack of understanding of key issues around devolution with some believing that the national government is seeking to frustrate devolution is a setback.

Studies have indicated that Devolved Units of Government should design programs to help beginning traders succeed by building capacity. There is a lack of strategic business planning, marketing, enterprise budgeting, and record keeping. County Market extension agents must tackle areas such as risk, insurance and issues to do with labor, legal, and finances.

Markets in devolved units of governments are deficient in IT adoption. Capacity management requires IT to know the demands of the business. Denise (2008) defines capacity management as "a process aimed at controlling the IT infrastructure in order to foresee shortage of resource and correct them. Forrester Senior Analyst Hubbert (2007) argues that due to the current economic environment, downsizing of infrastructure, resources and capabilities is a top priority for IT.

The focus of Devolved Units of Government is the sustainability of local care markets in county areas. A Report by the CNN on local market sustainability and the Care Act, reveals the reality facing county markets. The report indicated that there is evidence that the social care system on markets is already unsustainably reliant on cross-subsidization by those people that fund their own businesses

(CNN Report, 2015). The CNN report roots for the creation of market equalization strategies. The Report indicated that County Governments should engage extensively with sector stakeholders to analyze and ensure care for markets, devising national and local policy responses and strategies to stabilize the markets, reduce the reliance on cross-subsidy in local markets to achieve market sustainability and maintain local capacity, and that Governments should deliver a fair and sustainable funding. On closer scrutiny, though, county governments do not have the absorption capacity for more than 15% of the national government revenue (Laibuta, 2013)

### *2.2. Health and Service Management*

Devolution has witnessed a gradual but comprehensive transfer of responsibility from National to County Governments. Devolution has appeared in the form of major functional responsibilities such as health. This study seeks to establish how devolution of resources affects public health services in county Governments. In a study conducted in the University of Nairobi, Namu (2016) indicated that there lacked sound health by-laws, no clear system of posting staff, and a lack of training. While there may be training, staff empowerment was not enough to allow freedom to initiate and implement health projects. He suggested that County Government should have a budget and training policy. He further indicated that employment laws and policies should clearly be defined to make the citizenry confident with the county authorities.

A research conducted in Mombasa, Nakuru and Busia Counties of Kenya highlights quality of health and efficiency of service delivery after devolution (Mithia and Ahonobadha, 2015). Devolution presents unprecedented opportunities and challenges on the management of arising issues (Mithia and Ahonobadha, 2015). Devolving the health function also presents institutional and resource allocation and utilization challenges that must be examined if any positives are to be realized in the health sector.

As Kenya is going through a transformational change with the devolution and government's strong commitment to provide Universal Health Coverage (UHC) for all Kenyans, a critical challenge is how Kenya will put in place the building blocks required. On a World Bank (2014) working paper on Delivering primary health services in devolved health systems of Kenya: challenges and opportunities, there was strong evidence that provision of primary health care was critical for achieving the health outcomes. Further, there lack data on the functioning of over 1000 primary care facilities built under the Constituency Development Fund (World Bank Working Paper, 2014). In a devolved system, the units of devolution to be autonomous from each other, though interdependent functionally (ACLJ, 2011).

### *2.3. Supplier Relationship Management*

There has been a considerable shift from traditional pure market relationships without co-operation, such as has been observed among some specialist suppliers and their buyers and a black box relationship with different levels of co-ordination, such as functional or second tier suppliers and their buyers to a vertical quasi-firm relationship with a high degree of cooperation similar to relationships between some system suppliers. Relationship management is profitable to both buyer and supplier within supply chains (Wang, 2004). Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) plays a pivotal role in reducing costs and ensuring efficiency.

The need to be competitive, flexible and efficient has forced companies to enter into more

Closer relationships with their suppliers coupled with the realization that true competitive battles are fought along a network of cooperating companies (Ntayi and Eyaa 2012). Traditional relationships no longer suffice, hence adversarial buyer – supplier relationships have since been advocated for through collaboration, joint problem solving, and strategic supplier integration.

Supplier relationship management thrives well under certain conditions. These are mutual goals and shared values. Mutual goals ensure continuing relationship. Wilson, Soni and O'Keeffe (1994) argue that shared goals determine enterprise performance. Shared values are a similar but broader concept as defined by Morgan and Hunt (1994) as the extent to which partners have shared beliefs, goals and policies that are acceptable or unacceptable. Studies conclude that a model based upon buyer-seller cooperation rather than the traditional buyer-seller as adversaries was a more real representation of the data that they collected. Inayat, Rakesh, and Amar (2012) did a study on role of buyer-supplier relationship and trust in organizational performance.

2.4. Conceptual Framework

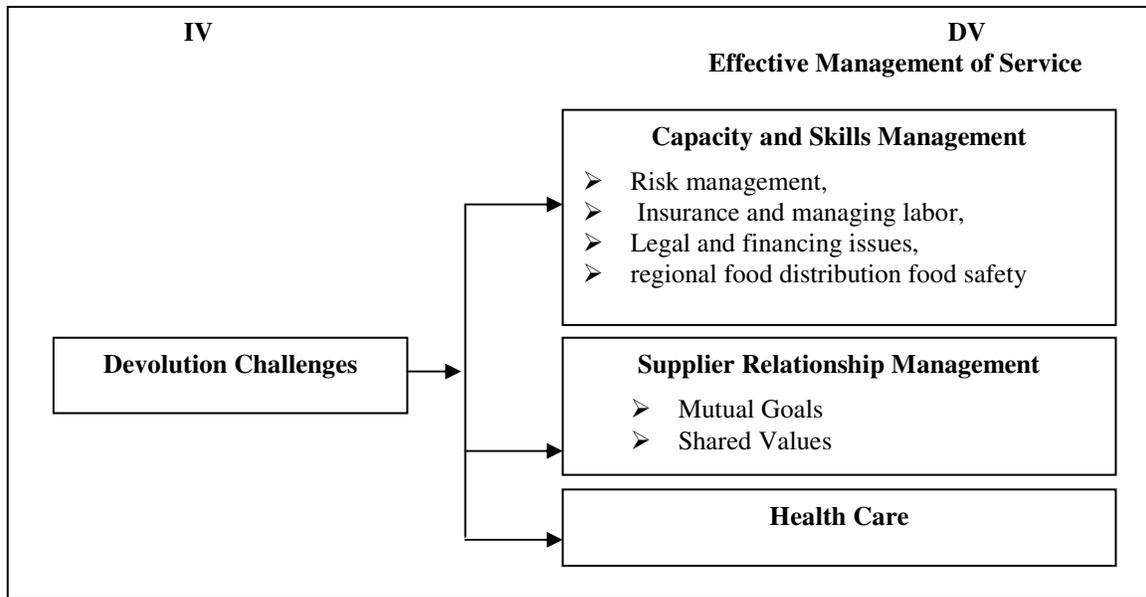


Figure 1

2.5. Research Gap

Most of players in devolution of service have participated in complication of the rolling out of devolved functions. Research shows that National Government and local government structures being phased out remain resentful of the invasion of their previous scope of authority (Ondigi 2014). It has also been contested that the Government should have transferred all the devolved functions. Among the major pitfalls of devolution is the concern for optimality in service delivery. This optimality refers to functions and resources to be devolved and to which levels. Optimality creates a number of concerns for devolution especially on the quantity and quality of participants/participation. Issues of optimality of service, resentfulness and capacity have not been extensively investigated especially as affected from the management approach offered from County Governments (Namu, 2016). This then serves as the purpose of this study, to investigate the challenges facing management of service in County Governments.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Challenges Facing Management of service at the Devolved Units of Government

This study sought to find out the challenges facing management of service at the devolved Units government. The respondents were asked questions to give their assessment of the challenges facing management of health services, infrastructure and capacity building. The results were tabulated as below.

3.1.1. Devolution Challenges Facing the Management of Health Care

This study sought to find out the devolution challenges facing the management of health care service in County governments. The 24 health supervisors were asked about the attractiveness of the health sector, whether there existed their clear systems of posting and promoting health staff, and about the presence of empowerment and training policies in place. The results were tabulated as below.

Item	Frequency			
	YES	%	NO	%
Healthcare attractiveness	16	66.67	8	33.33
Existence of posting and promotion procedures	17	70.83	7	29.17
Presence of empowerment policies	12	50	12	50
Presence of training policies	10	41.67	14	58.33

Table 1: Challenges Facing the Management of Health Care

From the analysis above, majority of the health practitioners are fairly attracted to their profession at 66.67%. they fairly agree that there exists posting and promotion procedures. The interesting part of this is that those procedures are not strictly followed. Hiring of staff, it was observed, was politicized and corruption was at play at every step of posting and promotion. Upon further interview, respondents were divided on the presence or absence of empowerment policies. There was a less than average rating on the presence of training policies. The respondents felt that the presence of such policies was not an issue as the frequency of their applicability was sluggish. A closer look at the results indicate laxity on the part of the county Government.

The findings of this study are in agreement with the University of Nairobi's Namu (2016) who indicated that there lacked sound health by-laws, no clear system of posting staff, and no meaningful training offered to the health staff to support devolution. He argued that while there may be training, staff empowerment was not enough to allow freedom to initiate and implement health projects.

### 3.1.2. Devolution Challenges Facing the Management of Capacity Building

#### 3.1.2.1. Devolution Challenges Facing Capacity management

This study sought to find out the devolution challenges facing capacity management in County government markets. The respondents were asked about the extent to which risk management in market operations improves services in their County Government Market, the absorption rate of insurance services, whether there are programs, and the traders' ability to articulate financial issues related to their businesses. The results were tabulated as below.

Item	Frequency			
	YES	%	NO	%
Risk Management done	45	39.13	70	60.87
Provision of Insurance services	30	26.09	85	73.91
Ability to Articulate Financial Issues	55	47.83	60	52.17
Government-sponsored seminars	35	30.43	80	69.57

Table 2: Challenges Facing Capacity management

From the analysis in Table 2, majority of the respondents were not satisfied with the efforts made to ensure sufficient capacity and skills management. They fairly agree that the traders have the ability to articulate financial issues at 47.83%. They however rated lowly the provision of insurance services at 30% and the County Government efforts at organizing workshops and seminars aimed at equipping readers and other stakeholders about the need for insurance services at only 35%.

The interesting part of their responses is their ratings based on the strength of their opinions. The respondents were asked to rate the extent to which risk management in market operations improved services in your County Government market, the rate of absorption of insurance services and the extent of the traders' ability to articulate financial issues related to their businesses. Their responses were tabulated below.

S. No	Category	Ranks					Weighted Averages
		5	4	3	2	1	
1.	Improvement of Services	15	25	45	25	15	3.26
2.	Absorption of Insurance services	5	19	55	25	11	2.84
3.	Articulation of Financial Issues	11	24	45	10	25	2.67

Table 3: Capacity and Skills Management

From the findings on Table 3, the respondents were in agreement that capacity and skills management improved services at the county Government markets at a rating of 3.26. They were agreeable that the absorption rate of insurance services and the ability to articulate financial issues was low and gave a rate of 2.84 and 2.67 respectively. Upon further interview, respondents were not very receptive on the provision of insurance policies. A closer look at the results indicates laxity on the part of the county Government to provide and organize seminars associated with financial risk articulation and provision of insurance services.

The findings of this study indicate that there lacks social care of markets by County Governments. The CNN Report (2015) indicated that there is evidence that the social care system on markets is already unsustainably reliant on cross-subsidization by those people that fund their own businesses.

#### 3.1.2.2. Devolution Challenges Facing Supplier Relationship Management

The study sought to determine the devolution challenges facing supplier relationship management in County Government markets. The respondents were asked questions with regards to valuing suppliers, and whether traders and suppliers should have shared values. The results were tabulated using percentages as follows.

Item	Frequency			
	YES	%	NO	%
Valuing suppliers	47	40.87	68	59.13
Shared Values	51	44.35	64	55.65

Table 4: Challenges Facing Supplier Relationship Management

From Table 4, the respondents were fairly agreeable that supplier management is of important benefit to their businesses. Valuing suppliers was fairly rated at 40.87 and trader-supplier shared values were rated at 44.35. They further noted that there lacked proper bonding arrangements between traders and suppliers. Based on the strength of their opinions, the respondents were asked to rate their relationship with their suppliers. The results were tabulated in Table 5 below.

S. No	Category	Ranks					Weighted Averages
		5	4	3	2	1	
1.	Valuing Suppliers	15	25	45	25	15	3.26
2.	Shared Values	5	19	55	25	11	2.84

Table 5: Supplier Management

From Table 5, the respondents were agreeable that there are efforts by traders to place value on suppliers. There was a moderate rating on the value that traders place on their suppliers. There was however a low rating on the presence of shared values, at a rating on 2.84. The relationship was more adversarial than collaborative. On further interview, the study found out that battles and arm-twisting occurs between traders and suppliers. This is in agreement with Ntayi and Eyaa (2012) who argue that traditional relationships no longer suffice, hence adversarial buyer – supplier relationships. This then explains why there was a moderate rating on valuing customers buys a low rating on shared values.

### 3.1.2.3. Devolution Challenges Facing Supplier Relationship Management

The study sought to determine the devolution challenges facing supplier relationship management in County Government markets. The respondents were asked questions with regards to valuing suppliers, and whether traders and suppliers should have shared values. The results were tabulated using percentages as follows.

Item	Frequency			
	YES	%	NO	%
Valuing suppliers	47	40.87	68	59.13
Shared Values	51	44.35	64	55.65`

Table 6: Challenges Facing Supplier Relationship Management

From Table 6, the respondents were fairly agreeable that supplier management is of important benefit to their businesses. Valuing suppliers was fairly rated at 40.87 and trader-supplier shared values were rated at 44.35. They further noted that there lacked proper bonding arrangements between traders and suppliers. Based on the strength of their opinions, the respondents were asked to rate their relationship with their suppliers. The results were tabulated in Table 7 below.

S. No	Category	Ranks					Weighted Averages
		5	4	3	2	1	
3.	Valuing Suppliers	15	25	45	25	15	3.26
4.	Shared Values	5	19	55	25	11	2.84

Table 7: Supplier Management

From Table 7, the respondents were agreeable that there are efforts by traders to place value on suppliers. There was a moderate rating on the value that traders place on their suppliers. There was however a low rating on the presence of shared values, at a rating on 2.84. The relationship was more adversarial than collaborative. On further interview, the study found out that there exist battles between traders and suppliers. This is in agreement with Ntayi and Eyaa (2012) who argued that traditional relationships no longer suffice. This then explains why there was a moderate rating on valuing customers buys a low rating on shared values.

### 3.2. Discussion

Findings from the study indicate that posting and promotion procedures these procedures are not strictly followed. Hiring of staff, it was observed, was politicized and corruption was at play at every step of posting and promotion. The presence of empowerment and training policies were sluggishly applied. The findings of this study concur with the University of Nairobi's Namu (2016) who indicated that there lacked sound health by-laws, no clear system of posting staff, and no meaningful training offered to the health staff to support devolution. He argued that while there may be training, staff empowerment was not enough to allow freedom to initiate and implement health projects.

From the above table, the respondents were skeptical about the county Government's and staff capacity to absorb about 15 of national government functions at 60.71% and 75% respectively. They further noted that there lacked experienced legislative, fiscal and economic drafters. Upon further interview, the respondents were not comfortable with the economic, fiscal and legislative organs of the county Government. Nepotism, partisan favoritism was quoted as the cause of incompetent membership of such vital organs. The

findings of this study agree with Laibuta (2013) who argued that Kenya currently lacks trained and experienced legislative drafters, fiscal and economic planning experts to adequately cater for the 47 counties.

#### 4. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

##### 4.1. Summary of Findings

Devolution assumes that institutions closest to the citizens are most likely to meet and properly articulate needs of the citizenry. The devolution of services has not been without challenges.

The first specific research objective sought to determine the challenges facing capacity building in county Governments. It can be concluded that one of the challenges of service management was the lack of experienced legislative, fiscal and economic drafters. Nepotism, partisan favoritism was quoted as the cause of incompetent membership of such vital organs.

The second specific research objective was to investigate the devolution challenges facing the provision of health in County Governments. Despite the attractiveness of health provision as a sector, its management is below par. It was noted that hiring of staff was politicized and corruption was at play at every step of posting and promotion. There was a less than average rating on the presence of training policies. There was laxity on the part of the county Government in the enforcement of policies.

The third specific research objective sought to determine the devolution challenges influencing supplier relationship management in County Government markets. Although there was a moderate rating on the need for supplier management, there was however a low rating on the presence of shared values between traders and suppliers. The relationship was more adversarial than collaborative.

##### 4.2. Conclusion

The researcher drew the following conclusions from the study based on the research objectives formulated in chapter one.

The first research question sought to determine the devolution challenges facing capacity building in County Governments. From the summary above, it can be concluded that one of the important challenges of service management was the lack of experienced legislative, fiscal and economic drafters. Nepotism, partisan favoritism was the cause of incompetent membership of such vital organs. From the findings of in objective two, there was acute politicization in posting and promotion of health staff. There was a less than average rating on the presence of training policies. There was laxity on the part of the county Government in the enforcement of policies.

The third research question sought to determine the devolution challenges facing supplier relationship management. Although there was a moderate rating on the need for supplier management, there was however a low rating on the presence of shared values between traders and suppliers. It can be concluded that the trader-supplier relationship was more adversarial than collaborative.

##### 4.3. Recommendations

From this study, and based on the conclusions made, the following are the recommendations as established by the research. There is need to put in place mechanisms to ensure that promotion and posting of staff is done according to the laid down procedures. Selection to legislative, economic and fiscal organs of County Governments should be made from informed positions.

Consequently, equality enforcement structures need to be in place. There should be seminars and common engagement platforms for the establishment of value-based trader-supplier relationships. County Governments should also organize workshops aimed at educating traders on financial risk mitigation and insurance services.

##### 4.4. Areas for Further Research

Further research should be undertaken to find out ways of equipping County governments to be able to absorb at least 15% of national government functions.

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