SERVICE DELIVERY IN NGOS: AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN MARSABIT COUNTY IN KENYA

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the extent to which board of directors contribute to service delivery in NGOs in Kenya. The objectives of the study were two: to establish the determinants of quality service in NGOs and to determine the board roles which lead to higher contribution of board members to service delivery. The study used the descriptive research design. The target population which comprised of both local civic organizations and international non-governmental consisted 128 managers and the sample size was 64. Data was collected using questionnaires. Data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS and interpreted in percentages, mean and standard deviation and results were presented using tables and figures. The roles that were found to be of most importance with regard to boards' contribution to service delivery to a greater extent included fundraising managing resources and also managing the entity.

Introduction

Researchers have documented the contribution made by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in providing service to the poorest people in communities (Ferrington, Bebbington, Wellard and Lewis, 1993). In this connection, Carroll (1992) points out that one of the visible and most observable roles played by NGOs in development work is service delivery. In this role, the most basic goods and services are provided by NGOs to the neediest communities. In Kenya, the importance of the important role played by NGOs in service delivery has been recognised by the Kenya government. Brass (2011) indicates that since 2002 the Kenyan government, through different ministries and provincial administrations reached out to NGOs to encourage them to engage in the policy-making process and in service delivery.

In order to impact in service delivery, organizations need to provide effective service which meets the needs of the recipients of the service. When the service meets the needs of the recipients, then it is likely to be perceived to be good or of high quality. In the business sectors, there is a big concern on provision of quality service with an aim to improve organizational performance. In this regard, scholars have documented the prominent determinants of quality service as integrity, reliability, responsiveness, availability and functionality (Jonson, 1995). Although NGOs are service delivery organizations, it is not clear what their determinants of service quality are.

Another aspect of concern with regard to service delivery has been the components of organizational systems which affect service delivery in organizations. Several components which affect service delivery have been identified. In this regard, Crow and Lockhart (2013) showed that that the most important organizational systems with regard to service delivery is governance structure which includes organizational

structure, roles and responsibilities of board members and problem solving. Of these three aspects researchers have focused on structure (Teixeira, Koufteros, Peng, and Schroeder, 2008) and problem solving (Cohen, 2006). Few scholars have focused on the roles and responsibilities of board members in relation to contribution to effective service delivery in NGOs. The responsibility of the management board is to provide good governance which would result to effective service delivery (Salas, Eduardo, Gerald, Goodwin and Burke, 2009).

Narrowing down to Marsabit, the county covers a vast area most of which are marginalized areas of pastoral communities. The county has a rural absolute poverty level of 89% (Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey, 2006) and therefore heavily depends on the civil society organizations for support in provision of the basic utilities to the general population which include food aid, health, water and sanitation, education and many other services. It is estimated that more than 36 civil society organizations, both international and local are functional in Marsabit County (Hunger Safety Net Programme, 2011).

Theoretical Background and Concept

Miller-Millesen (2003) classified the typical functions of non-profit boards into three theories; the agency theory which suggests that the duty of the board is to resolve any conflict relationship between the board and the top management and align to the interest of the stakeholders and, ensure that their (stakeholders) interest are protected. The second is the resource dependency theory. Going by this thinking, in non-profit organizations the board functions as a resource, therefore this theory is more applicable to non-profit organization's governance (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). The board provides the link between the organization donors and also the different kinds of expertise that are required by the organization through their social networks, the board members are able to secure relational capital and the board capital which combines both the human capital and the relational capital (Hilman and Dalziel 2003). Another function is classified as the institutional theory which aims to describe how and why these activities take place in non-profit boards.

Roles and Responsibilities of Board of Directors in NGOs

A board of directors is a group of people legally charged with the responsibility to govern a corporation (McNamara, 2008). The authors adds that in a NGO the board reports to the stakeholders particularly the local communities which the NGO serves. Hendry (2005) remarked that the work of boards is not just about ensuring accountability for performance, even though this is important, it is also, and primarily, about ensuring good performance.

To perform a board requires an effective board's policy framework with comprehensive written expectations for each member where all board members are expected to act in the best interest of the organization rather than their own or third party interests (Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations, 1999). The board's role needs to be well defined. Lack of a clear definition of the board's role has been a major obstacle in exploring its effectiveness (Letendre, 2004; Sonnenfeld,2004). McNamara (2008) provides an elaborate list of roles and responsibilities of board of directors. These include providing continuity to the organization by providing vision and mission, hiring the chief executive, acquisition of resources to finance the organizations activities, accounting to

stakeholders about services, prudent management of resources, making decisions about the organizational services, promoting public image of the organization, assessment of self-performance and serving as the court of appeal.

Despite the numerous roles and responsibilities outlined for board members in NGOs, there is no evidence that the board through their roles contribute to effective service delivery. Research in Kenya has focused on the collapse of service in NGOs due to lack of proper management (Ochieng and Andrew, 2009).This study addressed the contribution of board members to service delivery.

Methodology

This study used the descriptive research design. The target population was 128 managers of NGOs which had activities in Marsabit. They were deemed the appropriate population because they were well versed with the roles and responsibilities of NGO board members. A simple random sampling was applied to collect a sample of 64 respondents. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected using a questionnaire. The qualitative data was analysed according to thematic areas. The quantitative data was analysed using the SPSS tool. It was interpreted using, percentages, mean and standard deviation.

Findings

Profile of Respondents

Results of the respondents who participated in the study showed that majority were males (68.6%) as compared to the females who constituted 31.4%. From Figure 1, it is evident that a most of the respondents had received university level education. Also, a majority of the respondents had over one years' service as shown in Figure 2.

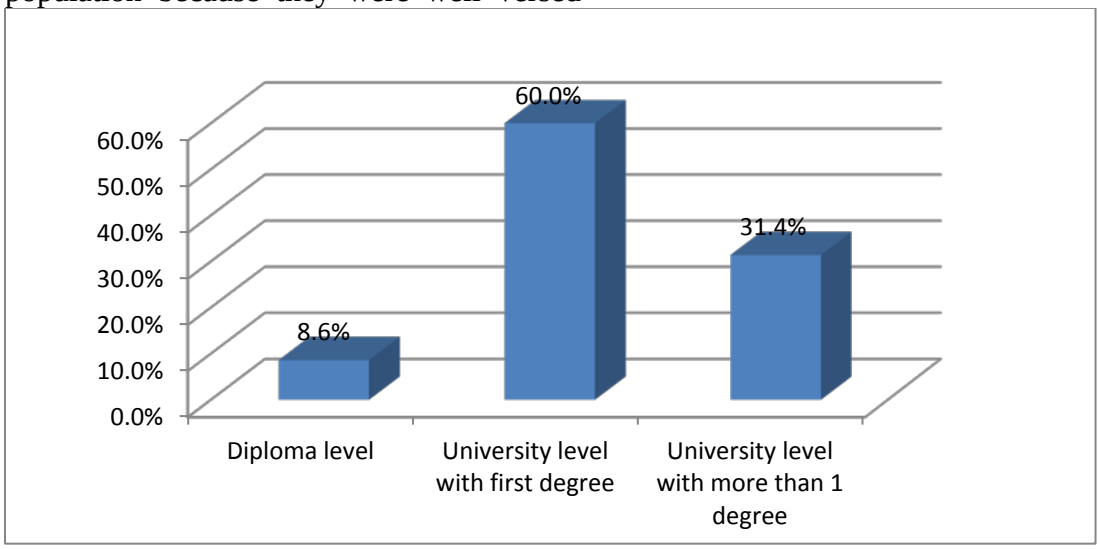

Figure 1 - Level of Education of the Respondents

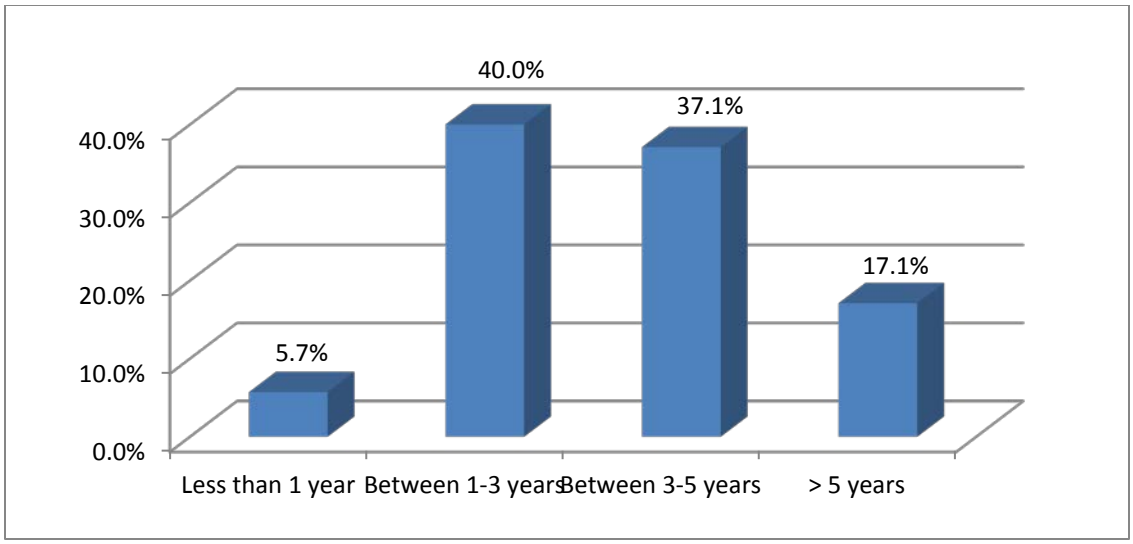

Figure 2 - Length of Time Worked in the Organization

Determinants of Quality Service

Concerning the first research objective which sought to address the determinants of quality service in NGOs. The respondents were required to write down the factors they considered important in service delivery. They identified four factors in the following order: number of beneficiaries reached, the quality of the service, usefulness of the aid provided and timely completion of projects. According to the respondents, the number of beneficiaries was a prominent factor in aid delivery because of the population heavily depends on the NGOs for support in provision of the basic utilities to the general population which include food aid, health, water and sanitation, education and many other services. The more the number of beneficiary reached with these supplies the more they felt their needs were addressed. The quality of service was important in the sense of logistics and coordination of delivery of aid. Sometimes the logistics were poor aggravated by the poor road network which contributed to the failure to reach some beneficiaries.

Board of Directors Contribution to Service Delivery

The respondents were required to give their opinion on the extent to which the board's roles and responsibilities contributed to service delivery. Results in Table 1 show that high means tending towards a great extent. Fundraising and managing financial resources indicated the highest means of 3.49 and 3.48 respectively.

Table 1: Board of Director's Roles and Responsibilities Contribution to Service Delivery

Issue	Great extent (%)	Some extent (%)	Some little extent (%)	Too little extent (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Fundraising	60	31.4	5.7	2.9	3.49	0.742
Proper management of the entity	31.4	60	2.9	5.7	3.26	0.747
Managing resources	57.1	28.6	11.4	2.9	3.48	0.812
Assess own performance	44	31	13.6	11.4	3.16	0.652
Monitor programs	40	33	24.1	2.9	3.17	0.822
Budget	54	33	5.2	7.8	3.22	0.664
Organizational plans	45.7	28.6	17.1	8.6	3.11	0.993

Discussion and Conclusions

The study also sought to find the determinants of quality service in NGOs. The study established that the determinants were number of beneficiaries reached, the quality of the service, usefulness of the aid provided and timely completion of projects. This finding was different from that of Johnson (1995) who indicated that in the banking sector the prominent determinants of quality service as integrity, reliability, responsiveness, availability and functionality. From this observation, it is reasonable to conclude that quality service parameters may differ in various sectors. Fundraising was shown to be the of top importance regarding the contribution of a board to service quality. This is confirmed by Hilman and Dalziel (2003) who in their study showed that the boards which provides the link between the organization financial providers and also the different kinds of expertise that are required by the organization and that through their social networks, are able to secure relational capital and the board capital which combines both the human capital and the relational capital. This was closely followed by the board of directors paying great attention to long-term plans in the organization which the majority of the respondents agreed with. The issue that the boards of directors were to some extent attentive included whether the entity is being properly managed and budget as was reported by the study participants. This is as evidenced by Hendry (2005) who remarked that the work of boards is not just about ensuring accountability for performance, even though this is important, it is also, and primarily, about ensuring good performance

within the organization. From the findings and conclusions of this study, it is recommended that boards in NGOs should play their roles actively in order to contribute to service delivery.

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