EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE DELIVERY OF QUALITY SERVICES IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS: A CASE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION - COAST REGION

Hellen Makokha

MBA Student, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya

Fridah Theuri

Lecturer, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya

ABSTRACT

The public sector is collectively the world's largest service provider and thus any incremental improvement in public services positively impacts millions of people. Quality has become an immensely popular term where the organization of public service is concerned. Driven by growing customer expectations the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery is increasingly seen as key metrics of public sector performance. The main purpose of this study was to determine external factors influencing the delivery of quality services in public institutions. The study sought to establish the politico-legal, economic, socio-cultural and technological factors influencing the delivery of quality services at the department. The study population was obtained by use of stratified sampling of areas where immigration services are offered to the public. From the coast region the researcher sampled an airport, a seaport, a land border and the passport control office to be representative of areas where immigration services are offered. The researcher employed descriptive study where data collection was done through self administered questionnaires. Data collected was analyzed using SPSS and presented in tables, bar graphs and pie charts. The study findings are based on responses from immigration staff. The study targeted 79 respondents from the four (4) selected work stations within coast region where the researcher obtained data from 73 respondents a response rate of 92.4%.These data is adequate, reasonable and representative of the sample population. The data is also reliable and dependable for the purpose of this research. The findings show that the external environment has an immense impact on the actual quality of services offered in public institutions and the way quality is perceived by the public. The study recommends continuous strategic management of the external environment by public institutions if they are to meet then need of their customers. Despite having gathered opinion from department of immigration staff from the coast region about the influence of the external environment on service quality, there is a gap as the scope of the research was too wide to be adequately covered. The research should be validated by taking a more detailed study in each of the four variables so as to elicit a deeper understanding of their

influences on service quality. The study suggests that these findings are to be validated by a more detailed study in each of the variables, and by a study on the views of public sector clients.

Key Words: Public Institutions, Service Quality, External Environment

Introduction

Public services are rendered in public institutions within the realm of public administration which is described as the world in which government and its institutions function to deliver services (Crouse, 2002). The public sector is collectively the world's largest service provider and thus any incremental improvement in public services positively impacts millions of people. Public services are defined as those services which are mainly or completely funded by taxation and they can differ markedly from commercial private sector services in a number of ways. Public services would include areas of public management such as the central and local government, the health authorities, education, defense, justice, home affairs, social services and non-commercial semi-state organizations.

Quality has become an immensely popular term where the organization of public service is concerned. There are many different meanings and different ways of operationalizing the concept. In the private sector and commercial markets the feedback links between seller/producer and customer/user are very direct and constantly serve to remind the producer of the importance of meeting consumer wants whereas in public services, feedback on quality is much less forceful (Pollit, & Bouchanert, 1995). The public service operates in an environment different from the environment in which the private sector operates. To begin with, the service is frequently provided free at the point of use, or at least at a charge which is only weakly related to the costs. There is greater public expectation on the part of the public service than on the private sector and public institutions are exposed to greater public scrutiny as well as unique public expectations. Driven by growing customer expectations the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery is increasingly seen as key metrics of public sector performance. Addressing this is therefore a stated priority in most countries.

The public sector around the world faces a common set of challenges if their services are to meet the increased expectations of their clients i.e. both citizens and businesses. One common challenge faced by every organization, public sector included, is how to service its customers better. Traditionally, the public sector has been seen as a passive vehicle for executing social policy mandated by legislation. Increasingly however, accustomed to enhanced service delivery from private sector, citizen's/businesses view the public sector as another provider of services for which they pay taxes. To address this public sector must find ways of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its service which means providing value for money by improving quality of services and reducing the costs involved in providing those services.

A fundamental change is occurring whereby the world economies are witnessing the forces of globalization and liberalization of trade. Globalization has a great impact in today's international

business as well as service delivery in the public sector. The rapid advancement of technology and new business processes, regional trading blocs and foreign direct investments (FDI) are key drivers of changes in the service industry globally. The new environment reality affecting the operation and performance of organizations is being characterized by continuous and often unpredictable change. As a result, many calls have been voiced for organizations to build the ability to respond and adapt to changing and uncertain environmental conditions in order to sustain their competitive situations (Aapo & Tomas, 2008).

A public institution, just like other firm, is an open system that gets its resources from the environment and supplies its goods and services to the environment (Morgan, 2006). According to him, organizations cannot change the environment, they just react to it. The environment has been characterized as complex, dynamic, multi-faceted and having far reaching impact (Kazmi, 2002). Organizations have found themselves in a position where they not only have to address environmental changes but actually anticipate them. Liberalization and globalization has opened up the markets to environmental forces. Coping with the increasingly competitive environment has called on firms to rethink their marketing strategies (Pearce & Robinson, 2005). The services rendered by public institutions are influenced by the economic environment, the technological environment, the socio-cultural environment and the statutory environment. These environments affect each other and impact either positively or negatively on service delivery. They are responsible for what kind of services can and will be delivered and in setting the standards of the services to be delivered (Zubane, 2011).

Traditionally, public trust in public sector performance in delivering services consistent with citizen preferences has been considered weak in developing countries. The public sector service providers operate in a challenging environment facing difficult circumstances from within, which include inadequate budgetary allocation, inadequate staff and challenges in adopting to technology. The situation is made worse by poor management practices and ineffective supervision which in turn affects overall service delivery. The external environment has also affected the operations in public institutions. The effectiveness of a public institution in playing its role of providing quality services depends on its ability to adapt its functions and tasks to changes and developments in the environment, which impacts on its organizational ability to accomplish its goals and objectives. Many governments have restructured their public sector in an attempt to deal with the problem of growing citizen disenchantment with government (Shah, 2005). According to Shah, efforts at introducing result-based management have began in most public sector organizations.

In Kenya, the business environment has been undergoing drastic changes due to globalization and liberalization of the economy. These, together with the adoption of millennium development goals and vision 2030 have brought with them demands for reforms in public sector management. These include economic reforms in the public sector, increased international competition as well as regional integration. In November, 2003 the government of Kenya (GOK) underscored the strategic perspective that efficient and effective public service management was

a crucial framework for achieving rapid and sustained economic growth and poverty reduction which is the goal of Economic Recovery Strategy (ERS) for wealth and employment creation. The government introduced numerous pieces of legislation, all aimed at improving the delivery of quality services, such as Rapid Results Initiative (RRI),service charters, appraisal and these have not completely produced the required quality and level of service delivery (GOK, 2009).

The department of immigration (DIS) now under the Ministry Of Interior Affair and National coordination in the new government is a service department charged with the responsibility of controlling entry and exit of persons seeking to live temporarily or permanently in Kenya as well as issuance of travel documents to Kenyans to facilitate travel. The department derives its mandate from chapter Three of The Constitution of Kenya, 2010 and the Kenya Citizenship and Immigration Act, 2011. In ensuring compliance to international standards, the department complies with rule s and regulations by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) regulations and the GENEVA conventions (MIRP, 2008).

The core functions of the department are formulation of national immigration policy; control of entry and exit of all persons at the country's border posts; issuance of Kenya passports and other travel documents; control and regulation of residency through issuance of entry permits and passes as provided by law; and the enforcement of all immigration related laws and regulations (MIRP, 2008).

The operations of the department are affected by both internal and external factors. The external factors have an impact on the operations of the department and consequently on the quality of services provided. Accelerating technological and social change, advances in information technology, national and global socio-political changes have led to the need for the department to be more responsive to the environmental challenges.

Statement of the problem

Quality service delivery in the public institutions is one of the vital factors which need to be put into consideration for better performance of the organization. Immigration is an emotive issue which often generates sensational headlines in the media. It has been noted from the media and other reading materials that there has been delayed service delivery in DIS, and therefore, it is an issue of disturbance to understand which key factors contribute to the same. The challenges emanate from both within the department and from the outside operating environment. Strategic management views environment as an important contextual factor that has a strong impact on a firm's strategic direction (Hamel & Prahalad, 1994). The major external and uncontrollable factors that influence an organization's performance and strategies, have been the subject of considerable research in both business and marketing literature recently. Studying the external environmental factors is an important issue in terms of increased pressure placed upon public institutions to deliver quality services.

Several political factors surround the issue of immigration and have a bearing, for instance, on employment legislation for foreigners. Regional integration has an effect on existing immigration policy. The prevailing economic situation may influence the supply and availability of certain products and services. It also has an effect on the purchasing power of those who seek for goods and services. Demographic and socio-cultural factors like population size, population growth, age, composition, spatial dispersal, occupational status, educational level employment patterns among other affect the demand for goods and services and the perceptions toward the same. With more people getting education there is greater mobility of persons both within and out of the country for purposes of labor, consequently, more people are seeking immigration services. The way these people perceive service delivery differ from one person to another and the same is affected by different environmental factors.

Technology is the most important element of the external environment due to the fact that advances in technology have facilitated product improvement and introduction of new products and services. Government institutions are often criticized for being bureaucratic, slow to respond, inefficient, and ineffective. Several media reports on inefficiencies and poor quality of services at immigration coupled with various complaints by members of the public on the services offered necessitated the need for a study to establish the causes. Moreover, an informal interview done to members of staff and the public seeking services informed that factors both internal and external affect the quality of services offered at the department. This has led to many citizens losing patience and service delivery protests have ensued. This study carried an assessment to find out whether the quality of services delivery is influenced by external environmental factors.

Specific Objectives

1. To determine the politico-legal factors that influences the delivery of quality services at the department of immigration.
2. To examine economic factors that influences the delivery of quality services at the department of immigration.
3. To establish the socio-cultural factors that influences the delivery of services at the department of immigration.
4. To determine technological factors that influence the delivery of service at the department of immigration

Literature Review

The Systems Theory Approach to business environment

Systems theory was introduced by biologist L. von Bertalanffy in the 1930s as a modeling devise that accommodates the interrelationships and overlap between separate disciplines. The reality is that when scientists and philosophers first tried to explain how things worked in the universe,

there were no separate disciplines so that related components of a problem were investigated in isolation from one another. The Systems Theory introduced by von Bertalanffy reminds us of the value of integration of parts of a problem. Problems cannot be solved as well if they are considered in isolation from interrelated components. A system is a set of related components that work together in a particular environment to perform whatever functions are required to achieve the system's objective. A system is goal-seeking by definition. When the definition of a system says that a system's components work together to achieve a common objective it means that the system seeks to complete a goal. Every system has input and outputs and thus a system may be evaluated by determining if its output results in the achievement of its objective. To be effective and efficient a system needs a feedback mechanism that can ascertain whether the outputs of the system are what they should be. If not a system should have the ability to adjust its inputs or processes to improve the outputs. An ideal system is self-regulating where the feedback mechanism in an information system may be automated or may be manual. One of the most important concepts in Systems Theory is the notion of interdependence between systems or subsystems since systems rarely exist in isolation (Lodewijks, Ottjes, and Veeke (2008).

All systems are subsystems of other systems in nature except the supra system or cosmos. Formal organizations or businesses are made of groups of people who are together for a specific purpose (Churchman, 1983). Very similar to the organization we personally are the members of our family and that is a component of a broader society. The same society is a component of a nation, and a group of nations with similar interest are grouped in regional alliances such as the European Union (EU), and the East Africa Community (EAC).In this approach nothing is in isolation but all is integrated and interlinked.

Organizations are open systems that get resources from the environment and supply their goods and services to the environment. A firm deals with a number of business environment forces. These forces from where a firm gets resources and supplies its produce and services, forces that influence the business operation and factors that present opportunities and threats are taken as the business environment. In this sense a business can be viewed as an internal system or controllable, but, other broader systems that cover the business may not be controllable. Public institutions, just like business firms, get human resources, capital, technology, information, energy and raw materials from society. It follows government rules and regulations, social norms and cultural values, regional treaty and global alignment, economic rules and taxation policies of government. Thus it is a dynamic entity because it operates in a dynamic business environment. Organizations cannot change the external environment but they just react to it.

According to Cooper, Lee, & Funnel (2012), for the system to be operating properly to achieve optimum efficiency, all components must be interacting in a harmonious manner, therefore, in a goal directed organization composed of autonomous individuals, coordination among elements, communication of clear objectives to organization members whenever possible and the monitoring of results to ensure that the system is heading in the right direction is crucial to the success of a system. Cooper et al., (2012) further argues that the major influence on system

responses will be the external environment. Open systems do not exist independent of their environment; neither can the public sector hope to meet the demands placed upon it which emanate from its external environment by denying their legitimacy.

According to Shaikh (2010) every business organization has to interact and transact with its environment, hence, the business environment has a direct relation with business organizations. The environment imposes several constraints on an enterprise and has considerable impact and influence on the scope and direction of its activities. According to Fernando (2011) it is the environment that is likely to determine to a great extent the success or otherwise of business. Fernando (2011) says that even though the success of an organization is invariably linked to its own internal micro-environment such as how it is structured, how it is provided with working capital and other resources, co-operation of labor, the effectiveness of its technology and so on, it also depends on the macro environment such as policies of government, external trade and international environment, the socio-cultural environment and the technological environment.

The political or regulatory environment influences how businesses through the government in place by means of legislation. The economic environment is influenced by the political, social technological and international environments, but conversely, influences the other environments significantly. Changes in technology have a dramatic influence on the lives of individuals and businesses (Niewenhuizen, 2009).Technology increases the capabilities of individual and has a direct influence on the economy and the social structure. Inventions such as the internet, new computer systems and software have an effect on existing products. The socio-cultural environment describes the people, their attitudes, social behavior and impact of education, knowledge explosion and public opinion. The cultural environment deals with values, norms and accepted behavioral patterns (Fernando, 2009).

The gap model of service quality

Service quality gap is defined as the difference between customer expectations and perceptions of service. If expectations are greater than performance, then perceived quality is less than satisfactory and customer dissatisfactions occurs (Lewis and Mitchell, 1990). From the view point of business administration, quality is an achievement in customer services and it reflects at each service encounter where customers form service expectations from past experiences, word of mouth and advertisement (Kenzelmann, 2008). He argues that in assessment of how well a delivered service conforms to the clients' expectations, service business operators often assess the service quality provided to their customers in order to improve their services, to quickly identify problems, and to better assess client satisfaction. In recent years, greater emphasis has been placed on understanding the role of expectations, given the fact that consumers' expectation of quality are increasing and people are becoming more discerning and critical of the quality of service that they experience (Philip and Hazlett, 1997).

The most well known model on service quality is the model of Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, (1985) which is widely utilized in literature. The model attempts to show the salient activities of the service organization that influence the perception of quality. Moreover, the model shows the interaction between these activities and identifies the linkages between the key activities of the service organization or marketer which are pertinent to the delivery of a satisfactory level of service quality. The links are described as gaps or discrepancies, and they represent a significant hurdle to achieving a satisfactory level of service quality. Parasuraman, et al. (1985) proposed that service quality is a function of the differences between expectation and performance along the quality dimensions. They developed a service quality model (Figure 2.1) based on gap analysis. The gaps include: Gap 1: Customer expectation-management gap - which addresses the difference between consumers' expectations and management's perceptions of service quality; Gap 2: Management perception-service quality specifications gap - which addresses the difference between management's perceptions of consumer's expectations and service quality specifications, i.e. improper service-quality standards; Gap 3: Service quality specification-service delivery gap. This gap addresses the difference between service quality specifications and service actually delivered, i.e. the service performance gap; Gap 4: Service delivery-external communication gap. This gap addresses the difference between service delivery and the communications to consumers about service delivery, i.e. whether promises match delivery; Gap 5: Expected service-perceived service gap. This gap addresses the difference between consumer's expectation and perceived service. This gap depends on size and direction of the four gaps associated with the delivery of service quality on the marketer's side.
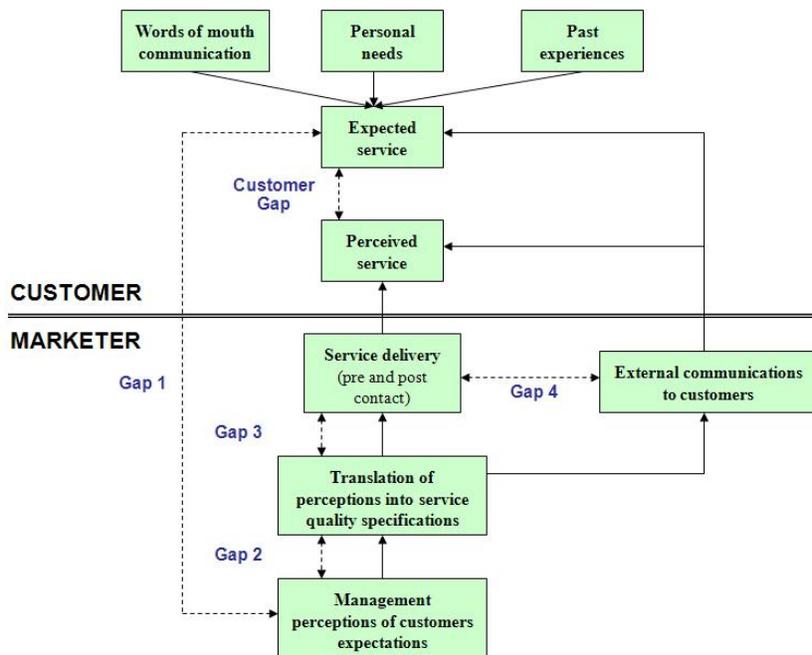

Figure 1: Gap Model of Service Quality

Source: Parasuraman, et al. (1985)

According to this model, perceived service quality exists along a continuum ranging from the customer's ideal quality to totally unacceptable, with a point along the continuum representing satisfactory quality. The SERVQUAL scale as proposed by Parasuraman et al.(1988) for measuring Gap 5 mentioned ten factors for evaluating service quality including: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, courtesy, credibility, security, accessibility, communication and understanding the customer.

These ten factors are simplified and collapsed into five factors by Shahin, (2006). These five dimensions are stated as: Tangibles (Physical facilities, equipments and appearance of personnel); Reliability (Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately); Responsiveness (Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service); Assurance including competence, courtesy, credibility and security (Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence); and Empathy including access, communication, understanding the customer (Caring and individualized attention that the firm provides to its customers).

The gap model of service delivery offers service organizations a framework to identify services in the form of the gaps that exceed or fail to meet customer expectations. According to Parasuraman et al., (1985) customer satisfaction occurs when perception of the service received equals or exceeds expectations.

The business environment model

According to Pearce and Robinson (1991) business environment consists of all those factors that have a bearing on the business. The term business environment implies those external forces, factors and institutions that are beyond the control of individual business organizations and their management and affect the business enterprise. These forces are customers, competitors, government, socio-cultural organizations, political parties, national and international organizations etc. Some of these forces affect the business directly while others affect the business indirectly.

Pearce and Robinson (1991) classify the environment into the internal and external environment as shown in figure 2.2.They show in their model that the external environment consists of two interactive and interrelated segments which are the micro and macro environments. They refer to the micro environment also as the task or operating environment and the macro environment as the general or remote environment. The operating environment consists of competitors, customers, creditors, labor markets and suppliers that is the immediate business environment while the remote environment consists of the economic, political, social and technological aspects which are further afield. The operating environment is easily controllable by the firm. Customer relationships can be cultivated and a successful supply chain can be cultivated. However, (Pearce & Robinson 1991) postulate that the remote environment consists of forces that originates beyond the firm's operating environment and are therefore much harder to

manipulate or handle. According to Trehan & Trehan (2008) the internal business environment includes internal factors of the business which can be controlled by the business, that is, the environment within the organization. It includes the objectives of business, managerial policies, different departments of the organization, management and employees of the organization, physical resources, vision, research and development activities of the organization, working conditions, moral and commitment of the employees e.t.c. The components of the internal environment are usually within the control of business.
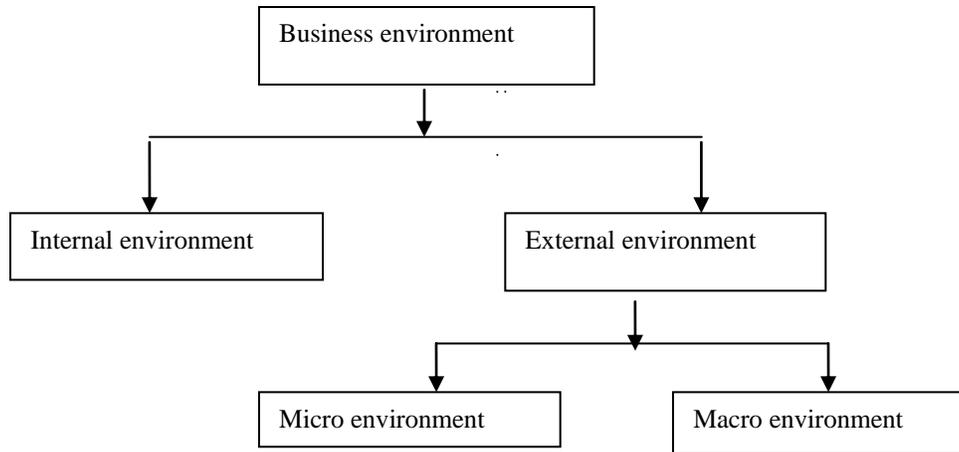

Figure 2: Components of the business environment

Source: Pearce and Robinson (1991)

The external business environment is largely consisted of uncontrollable factors which influence a firm's action and direction, organizational structure and internal processes. According to Glueck & Jauck (1998) in environment there are external factors, which constantly bring opportunities and threats to the business firm. These include social, political technological and economic conditions.

According to Fernando (2011) the macro environment of business consisting of both economic and non-economic environments is of great strategic importance. He further says that it is this environment that is likely to determine to a great extent the success or otherwise of business. Even though the success of an organization is invariably linked to its own internal micro-environment such as how it is structured, how it is provided with working capital and other resources, co-operation of labor, the effectiveness of the techniques of production, the technology of its machinery and so on, it also depends on macro environment such as the policies of the government, the prevalent economic system and the economic policies of the government.

Research Methodology

The study was descriptive in nature since descriptive survey is generally superior in answering the questions What? Who? When? and How? on a topic and elicits quantitative data. This is the most appropriate method since the research is qualitative and was be based on subjective and judgmental information such as employees' opinions and experiences.

According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) a population is an entire group of individuals, events or objects with some common observable characteristics.The population under this study was the 201 staff working in various sections in department of immigration (DIS), Coast region. According to Oso & Onen (2009), a sample is part of the target (or accessible) population that has been procedurally selected to represent it. A representative sample was obtained from the population by the researcher where the sample was carefully selected from the whole population of 201 staff in coast region to relay relevant cross cutting characteristics to represent the entire population. The study used stratified random sampling as the study population is not homogeneous in terms of the services that the department offers. In this study, the sampling frame was the list staff working in four stations. These are; the Mombasa region head office, the Moi International Airport, Kilindini Port border control and the Lunga Lunga border control offices, to be representative of areas where immigration services are offered.

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) a representative sample is at least 10% representative sample size. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), suggest that where time and resources allow, a researcher should take as a big as possible sample size. However, Gay (1983) argues that samples depend on many factors such as, the number of variables in the study, the type of research design, the methods of data analysis and size of the accessible population. In this study the researcher chose to work with a sample size of 50% of each of the four strata which gives a sample size of 79. This sample size is accessible to the researcher and big enough to give reliable findings to the study. The stratification was in accordance to the number of staff in each of the four selected stations in the region. The researcher used stratified sampling technique to divide the population in to four strata. Each stratum was then randomly sampled individually to ensure equal representation of the population.

The study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data was gathered by use of closed and open ended questionnaires, which were self administered. The secondary data for this study was collected from research papers, reports and newspapers and books.

The study sought to turn the data into information that people can understand. This was through analysis of the results by use of statistical package for social scientists (SPSS). Once the researcher collected the raw data, the same was organized and tabulated, each question for each respondent in a data sheet using the coded values and a construction of a summary sheet. After collecting qualitative and quantitative data, the research sought to find out what questions can be

answered by the data. Qualitative data was summarized and categorized according to common themes and presented in frequency distribution tables, bar graphs and pie charts.

Research Results

The study targeted 79 respondents from the four (4) selected work stations within coast region where the researcher successfully obtained data from 73 respondents. Of the 79 targeted respondents, 32 (94.12%) out of 34 responded from the Moi International Airport, 30 (88.24%) out of 34 responded from the Mombasa Passport Control and all the targeted 8 (100%) and 3 (100%) responded from Lunga Lunga and the Kilindini Port respectively making an overall response rate of 92.4%.These data is adequate, reasonable and representative of the sample population. The data is also reliable and dependable for the purpose of this research.

Based on the duration of service, 5 (6.8%) of the staff who responded had served the department for less than one year, 26 (35.6%) had served between 1-5 years and 42 (57.5%) of the respondents had served for more than five years. Of the 73 respondents, 61 indicated that they had worked in more than one section while 12 had only worked in one section. This figure makes the findings reliable since a good number of staff had served the department for several years and at different stations and are therefore able to give reliable opinion.

The study sought to find out to what extent the respondents support the view that the external operating environment has an influence on the quality of services offered by the department. The study found out that the external environment greatly determines the actual quality of services offered and/or the way these services are perceived by the clients and public. From the findings, 33 (45.2%) of the respondents were in strong agreement while 35 (47.2) of them agreed with this view. On the other hand, 2 (2.7%) of the respondents disagreed and 2 (2.7%) others did not give their opinion. Cumulatively 68 (93.2%) of the respondents were in agreement that the external environment has an influence on the delivery of quality services. Asked to explain their opinion, those in agreement cited that other than being a service provider, immigration is a security arm of the government. They added that the actual and perceived quality is largely determined by the local and global security situation, relations with other agencies, cultural aspects of the population, the political régime, state of the economy, and the technology in place.

Discussion of the Findings

According to the study findings, the services rendered by public institutions are influenced by the economic environment, the technological environment, the socio-cultural environment and the statutory environment. These environments affect each other and impact either positively or negatively on service delivery.

Influence from the political legal environment

The first objective of this study was to determine which politico-legal factors influence the delivery of quality services at the department of immigration in coast region. To achieve this, respondents were asked to react to if and how various politico-legal aspects influence service quality. These were: the political government in place; appointment of department's management; government directives and circulars; centralization/decentralization of services; government bureaucracy; regional integration; and interagency relations.From the study findings, the politico-legal environment influences quality of services delivered in varied ways. Some respondents mentioned that the political regime in place and its directives to a great extent determines the management of the department. The process of appointment and persons appointed determine levels of motivation. They cited that appointment of management is most often politically skewed thereby rendering the full potential of the staff to be curtailed. Some respondents cited that the security situation affects movement of people within and across national borders which has a bearing on the services that the department offers. Others said that there is considerable reliance on other government and non-government agencies such as the Department of civil registration, the National Intelligence Service (NIS), Kenya police, Customs and other, ICAO, among others depending on the need. Success thus depends on the level of cooperation and response from these agencies. Some respondents said the spirit of bureaucracy is for checks and balances but that in government, it is unnecessarily long delaying the decision making process.

These findings agree with Fernando's view (Fernando, 2011) who says that Civil servants should be mindful of certain political and legal responsibilities as they execute their everyday duties including political guidance; ideology and policy; nation building; affirmative action; promoting economic growth; communicating with public and legislation of all processes.teh findings are also in agreement with Zubane,(2011) who contents that service delivery in the public sector cannot be divorced from the politics of the country. The public service is not a depoliticized or politically neutral institution since the shape, structure and content of public services are the result of the political activity.

Influence from the economic environment

The second objective of this study was to examine which economic factors influence the delivery of quality services at the department of immigration in coast region. To achieve this, respondents were asked to react to if, and how, various economic aspects influence service quality. These were: the general state of the economy; exchequer funding; size of population; and the economic status of the clients. From the study's findings the general state of the economy both locally and internationally influences service delivery. Boom economic conditions positively affect demand for services and a depression slows down the demand. The economic condition affects level of international investment which in turn affects demand for travel documents, entry permits and

employment permits. Most respondents cited recent phenomenon of house-keepers who sought travel documents to access the Middle East with a promise of good pay for their services.

Funding of the department from the exchequer determines availability of material and equipment to offer services. A number of the respondents strongly felt that the department may not be adequately funded owing to lack of or delays in provision of material and equipment. The lack of materials in most cases slows down service delivery.

Influence from the socio-cultural environment

The third objective of the study was to establish the socio-cultural factors that influence the delivery of services at the department of immigration. The study first sought to find out to what extent the respondents were in agreement that the culture and practices of the people at coast region influenced service quality. It also sought to find out if the education level of customers, ethnicity, religious belief, values and attitudes and the HIV/AIDS had any influence on quality service delivery. The study found that the socio-cultural environment has an influence on service quality in that the level of literacy, the language in use, the pace of life, religion, attitudes, values, and practices influence how services are perceived and delivered. The respondents cited that the coastal community is dominantly Islamic and that rendering services to Muslim women demand a lot of respect for their beliefs. The respondents added that generally, the indigenous coastal community have a repulsive attitude towards non-coastal and always wish to be served by 'their own'.

The respondents noted that most of the indigenous costal community is not well educated, since most of them cannot competently make an application in the prescribed manner. Zubane (2011) contents that the different spheres of government exist to serve and meet the needs of the society or the community in a given geographical location. The findings of this study agree with this view since the type of services delivered to specific communities are influenced by the social, societal factors, trends and changes that take place in that area. Some respondents noted that the pace of life is relatively slow compared to other regions, necessitating patience on the part of civil servants.

The society is one of the important non-economic external components of business environment and the culture of a given society shapes the thoughts and behavioral patterns of members of that society.

Influence from the technological environment

The fourth objective of the study was to determine the technological factors that influence quality service delivery and in what way. The study set out to find if the department employs modern computer technology and whether the applications are in-house or outsourced. The study also sought to find out the level of system integration, the impact that E-government has had on service quality, and the influence of ICAO technological requirements on travel documents. The

research also wanted to establish if the respondents had encountered incidences of document fraud and forgery. The study found out that, modern technology in use has positively impacted on the efficiency of service delivery. These findings are in agreement with Kotler (2011) who argues that technology is the most dramatic force now shaping the destiny of the business world. Dramatic advancements in updating technology affect not only the products and services offered by organizations to customers but also the work processes needed. The findings are equally in agreement with Reddick & Weerakkady (2013) who argue that with advances in ICT public service delivery has fundamentally changed to be better, faster and more transparent. They however argue that public sector service transformation is a complex undertaking involving distributed decision-making that require a good understanding of the political context, business processes and technology as well as design and engineering methods capable of transcending the traditional boundaries.

On the influence on service quality from technology, 90.4% of the respondents said they employ modern technology at their work stations and that this has improved the efficiency at work. They cited the international standardization of travel documents by ICAO and the technology in place to detect fraud and forgery has made the department to be more efficient. They added that the E-government initiative has made it easier to access vital information about services offered by the public service. They however noted that some activities like record keeping are dominantly manual posing a challenge to records management.

On the overall the findings are in line with Zubane, (2011) that the politico-legal issues, the economic situation, the culture and practices of people and the technology in place, are responsible for what kind of services can and will be delivered and in setting the standards of the services to be delivered. The study findings are also in line with Cooper et al., (2012) who content that public institutions are Open systems that do not exist independent of their environment and further argues that the major influence on system responses will be the external environment.

Conclusions

From the findings of the analysis of all collected data, the researcher poses the question: how does this study mirror the influence of the external environment on service quality in other public institutions? It is evident that external environmental factors have an influence on the actual and perceived quality of services offered. The way service quality is perceived varies from one client to another depending on their expectations, attitudes and the prevailing environmental set-up.

The research findings showed that strategic management of the internal and external environment is key to customer satisfaction in public institutions. Public institutions are faced with greater expectations from the public and therefore need to strategically plan for and manage their environments if they are to meet customer needs.

Recommendations

From the findings of the research study, the researcher recommends that in their strategic plans, public institutions need to take into consideration the ideology of the political regime, local and global laws and regulations, the prevailing economic condition, the culture and practices of the society they serve and the technological environment that is very dynamic.

To minimize negative influence from the political régime, there is need to maintain professionalism, to adhere to both local and international rules and regulations and to seek to offer opinion on policy issues as the implementing authority. The researcher recommends decentralization of services and authority so as to take services closer to people.

In order to curb the influence from the economic factors, the public institutions should always have in place contingency measures to provide for fluctuations for demand of their services in terms of material, equipment and human capital.

To address the influence from the socio-cultural environment the researcher recommends concerted efforts to understand and address the needs of the particular community by understanding their attitudes, beliefs, practices, trends and expectations.

To effectively benefit from technology, the public institution should invest in technological training and always seek to impress appropriate technology that can enhance efficiency in service delivery. There is a need to employ modern technology in all service activities and to integrate their systems where there is need for integration.

References

Aapo, L.A., & Tomas E., (2008) Comparison of the suitability of the self organizing map for analyzing the macro and firm environment – an empirical field survey. Retrieved on 19/04/2013from www. iamsr:aho.f:/publications/?year=any&author=toeklind&group=on

Ackoff, R.L (2010) Systems thinking for curious managers. Triachy press

Barker, S (November, 1999) "S. A is still in a state of denial about AIDS" Business day.

Benkler,Y. (2006) The wealth of Networks: how social production transforms markets.New Haven, Yale University press. Retrieved on 24/07/2013 from www.worldcart.org/title/wealth-of-networks-how-social-production- transforms markets-and-freedom/oclc/61881089.

Bouchanert, G. & Pollit, C. (1995) Quality improvement in European public services: concepts, cases and commentary.

Churchman, C.W. (1983) The systems approach.Bern, Switerland.Haupt Academic publishers.

Contini, F. & Francesco, G. (2009) ICT and innovation in the public sector:European studies in the making of E.government.London.Palgrave Macmillan.

Cooper, K., Funnel W., & Lee J. (2012) Public sector accounting and accountability in Australia,2nd edition, Australia. New south publishing.

Crouse, M. (2002) Service delivery in the South African public service: implementation of the Batho Pele principles by statistics South Africa. University of Pretoria (M Admin)

Fernando, A.C (2011) Business environment. India. Dorling Kindersley

Glueck, W.F., & Jauch, L.R(1998)Business policy and strategic management. Singapore. McGraw-Hill international book company.

GOK, (November, 2009) public sector transformation strategy: from Reform to Transformation2010-2014.

Gunraj, J. & Kernaghan, K. (2004)Integrating information technology into public administration: conceptual and practical consideration.Retrieved on 15/06/2013 from wiki.dbast.com/…integrating_technology_into_public administration.

Guy,Peters, & Donald jr. Savoie (2000) Governance in the twenty-first century:revitalizing the public service.Canada.McGill-Queen's University press.

Hamel G., & Prahalad C.K (1994) Competing for the future. Havard business school. Retrieved on 13/14/2013 from www.amazon.com/competing_future_gary_hamel//dp/0875847161

Hanseth, O. (2000) From Systems to infrastructures.London, Oxford university press.

Hazlett, S.A. & Philip, G. (1997) The measurement of service quality: a new P-C-P attributes model. International journal of quality and reliability management

Jain, T.R., Trehan, M. & Trehan, R. (2009) Business environment. New Delhi.V.K(India)Enterprises.

Kallinikos, J. (2006) The consequences of information:institutional implications of technological change.Cheltenham:Edward Elgar.Retrieved on 24/07/2013 from www.shiboleths.net/3/2/Brandon.EdReview.pdf.

Kazmi, A., (2002).business policy and strategic management.New Delhi.Tata McGraw-Hill

Kenzelmann, P. (2008) Dimensions of service quality. Netherlands,linde verlag

Kotler, P., (2011) The impact of technology on business. Canada, University press. Retrieved on 15/06/2013 from www.impact.echbusinesswordpress.om/tag/Philip_kotler/

Lewis, B.R. & Mitchel, V.W. (1990)Defining and measuring the quality of customer service: marketing intelligence and planning.Retieved on 15/06/2013 from www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ijbm/article/download/9696/6949.

Lodewijks, G., Ottjess, J.A., &Veek, H.P.M (2008) The delft systems approach: analysis and design of industrial systems.Netherlands,Springer-verlag.

MIRP, (2008) Ministry of Immigration and registration of Persons strategic plan 2008-2012.

Mugenda,A.G & Mugenda O.M (2003)Research methods: Quantitative and qualitative approaches. Nairobi Kenya.ACTS press.

Niewenhuizen C. (2009) Business management for entrepreneurs. Cape town, Juta publishers.

Oso, W.Y & Onen, D. (2009) Writing research proposal and report. Nairobi. Sitima

Parasuraman,A.,Zeithaml.V.A., &Berry, L.L(1985) A conceptual model of service quality and its implication for future research. journal of marketing

Parasuraman,A.,Zeithaml.V.A., &Berry, L.L(1988)SERVQUAL:a multi-item scale for measuring customer perceptions of service quality. journal of retailing.

Pearce, J.A.,&Robinson R.B.,(1999)strategic management: formulation implementation and control. Retrieved on 14/05/2013 from www.books.google.co.ke

Pearce, J.A &Robinson, R.B (2005) Formulation, implementation and control of competitive strategy. New Delhi, McGraw-Hill Company.

Reddick, C.G . & Weerakkady, V. (2013) Public sector transformation through E-government: experiences from Europe and North America. Newyork, Routledge.

Shah, A (2005) Public sector governance and accountability series: public service delivery. Washington DC. World bank.

Shahin, A. (2006) SERVQUAL and model of service quality gaps; a framework for determining and introduction .Andhra Pradesh: ICFAI university press.

Shaikh, S. (2010) Understanding the business environment, 2nd edition New Delhi.Pearson.

Shoshana, Z. (1984) In the age of the smart machine: the future of work and power. Newyork, basic books.

Trehan, M. &,Trehan, R. (2008) Government and business. India.FK, publications.

Zubane P. (February, 2011)Alternative service delivery models for the South African public service for the year 2020:a research report,university of Stulen Bosch.