



Analyzing the Evolution of Uganda's Decentralization System: Learning from Past Experiences

Michael Galukande-Kiganda^{1*}, Milly Katana², Moreen Atuheire², Emmanuel Mugisha Gacharo², Simon Kabanda², Abbey Luyoyo²

¹Consultant Public Policy and Governance, Uganda Management Institute

²Urban Managers and Scholars in Urban Management and Governance Programme at Uganda Management Institute

*Corresponding Author

Michael Galukande-Kiganda

Consultant Public Policy and Governance, Uganda Management Institute

Article History

Received: 07.07.2024

Accepted: 16.08.2024

Published: 19.08.2024

Abstract: Decentralized systems have often been associated with effective and inherent opportunities that promote citizen involvement and improve efficiency in the delivery of local services. This paper presents findings from a study carried out among local government practitioners in Uganda that aimed at analysing the evolution of the decentralization system and identifying lessons from its past experiences. Three discussion groups of public officials were organised in the Central, East and Northern Districts of the country and tasked to give account for the decentralisation policy as it evolved in the last twenty-five years. The methodology was qualitative and participants gave their own accounts based on experience as practitioners in the system. Findings revealed that the ambitious system that was aimed at giving full transfer of political and administrative powers to local communities had fallen short of its expectations and instead met far-reaching shortcomings and challenges. These included diminished local accountability, insufficient human and financial resources, corruption, patronage, and eventual recall by the central government of some of the transferred functions all of which have restricted the implementation of decentralised reforms and putting participation and efficiency in service delivery at stake. The paper recommends a redefinition of the objectives of the decentralisation policy and embracing the lessons learned in the past implementation process.

Keywords: Evolution of Decentralization, Past Experiences.

Copyright © 2024 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

INTRODUCTION

World over, decentralization has always been the goal of major reforms in many developing countries. In the past three decades, it was believed to be a potent force in promotion of good governance and the quality of lives of ordinary citizens. In recent years, most Sub-Saharan African countries have carried out comprehensive reforms of their public

administration systems, and decentralization is one of the main tools to improve the efficiency of public service delivery and strengthen citizens' participation in the local decision-making process [1]. East African countries that have embarked on decentralization reforms for different historical, political and economic reasons. Given a strong parallel between political and constitutional

¹Please refer to Steffensen, Jesper and Trollegaard, Svend: Fiscal Decentralisation and Sub-National Government Finance in Relation to Infrastructure

and Service Provision – Synthesis Report of 6 Sub-Saharan African Country

Citation: Michael Galukande-Kiganda, Milly Katana, Moreen Atuheire, Emmanuel Mugisha Gacharo, Simon Kabanda, Abbey Luyoyo (2024). Analyzing the Evolution of Uganda's Decentralization System: Learning from Past Experiences. *Glob Acad J Humanit Soc Sci*; Vol-6, Iss-4 pp- 177-185.

histories, and the fact that some forms of innovative decentralization Programme have been introduced in all some countries over the past decade, their relative experience of decentralization is likely to be mutually instructive.

The current decentralization policy reforms in Uganda hold many tangible benefits including citizen participation but above all improved service delivery for the poor (JICA,2008). Tushabe, *et al*, (2010) contends that by bringing government closer to the citizens, local leaders would be held to account for the manner in which they conduct public affairs and local governments would be in full control of their affairs at the least cost and to the satisfaction of the majority (Uganda constitution commission, 1993, 241-252). However, effective implementation of devolved powers and functions has often lacked behind rhetoric and effective promises and is been hindered by a myriad of challenges across different forms and levels of decentralization. This state of affairs has seen many lessons learnt in varying magnitude and contexts.

The evolution of Uganda's decentralization system, equally is a history of relinquishing, some powers by the Centre to its satellite administrations or local governments and regaining central control against their will, since precolonial days to the modern state of Uganda. Indeed, Uganda has experienced several attempts at decentralization since 1898 with apparent temptation of the central government reasserting its authority over decentralized units and functions. It is however, important to note that the present day decentralization policy which effectively started in 1993 with the enactment of the local government statute is exceptional among developing countries in terms of the scale and the transfer of power and responsibilities to local level (Susan Steiner 2006). the policy has won accolades and hailed as 'one of the most far reaching local government reforms in the developing world' (Francis and James, 2003, pp325) and as 'one of the most radical devolution initiatives of any country at this time' (Mitchinson, 2003, 241). Despite this applause, practically, the policy is a mixture of decentralization and recentralization of functions, fraught with daunting challenges and lessons to stakeholders involved as hitherto.

This particular paper thus, analyses the historical evolution of decentralization in Uganda, examines the lessons drawn and discusses the challenges encountered in the implementation of a

multitude of devolved functions namely, planning, political/executive, legislative, Judicial, administrative as well as fiscal/financial ones. The authors then recommend new innovative ways on how to make decentralization work for all the citizens in Uganda.

In the subsequent analysis, we review such in details but first, we examine the evolution/historical account of decentralization system in Uganda.

METHODOLOGY

In order, to analyze the evolution of the decentralization system of governance, and lessons so far learnt in Uganda, this study employed a descriptive research design using qualitative methods to collect information about the status of an existing symptom (decentralization in this case), that is the real conditions at the time the research was being carried out to make a systematic, factual, and accurate explanations. Besides, researchers used a documentary analysis collecting secondary data from text books, reports, and academic journal. Primary data was further obtained through focal group discussion and observation by practitioners. The discussion was conducted among 5 participants to capture their experiences and views regarding specific issues of the study. These included; Physical Planner, Senior Assistant Secretary Luwero Local Government, Senior Physical Planner Entebbe Municipality, Deputy Town Clerk Masaka City and Physical Planner Ibanda Municipality. Lastly, observation was used to analyse phenomena in their natural setting and reporting the various fields of study gave opportunity not only to see the way local government's functioned but also to observe them in their nature settings.

Evolution of Decentralization System in Uganda [2]

This paper analyzes the evolution development and growth of Uganda's decentralization system post and after independence in 1962. Until the early 1990s, for most of the time, decentralization was exercised in simple administrative measures operating on behalf of the central government. However, in the early 1990s, the introduction of decentralization policy, the subsequent discussions of the Constituency Assembly (CA) and the clarification of the decentralization principle, the 1995 Constitution envisioned a fairly autonomous local government system with wide ranging political, legislative and administrative powers and functions.

² Research for this article was supported by several sources including JICA, Public Policy Development System Open Research Centre.

Pre-Colonial Decentralization

Uganda's decentralization can be traced during British Protectorate Era when the Indirect Rule policy of administration established a hybrid system of administration. Early studies conducted on decentralization in Uganda, capture the system of local governments during the colonial and post-colonial periods (Galukande-Kiganda & Mzini. 2016; Nsibambi 1998; Lubanga & Villadsen 2000; Sabiti-Makara 2009; Gubser 2011; Nuwagaba 2013; Kiwanuka 2016; Olum 2017). During this time, the system was first implemented through the African Native Authority Ordinance of 1919 which provided for powers and duties of African chiefs in the colonial administration. Under this Ordinance, chiefs, were appointed at village, subcounty and county level with powers to collect taxes, preside over native courts and maintain law and order. Chiefs were however, accountable to the District Commissioner, the Executive head of the District and the principal representative of the Colonial government.

Post-Independence Decentralization under Obote 1 Regime

On attainment of Independence through the 1962 Constitution, both federal and semi-federal powers were granted that gave considerable levels of autonomy and semi autonomy to state and stateless communities respectively. The Kingdom of Buganda, for example, enjoyed federal status in delegated power, while other kingdoms enjoyed quasi-federal status. The Central government and local councils could exercise considerable authority in their geographical areas to prioritize and carry out administrative decisions. For example, decentralized local governments had the authority to increase local revenues, make their budgets, enjoyed executive powers and offered local services through locally collected taxes.

Nevertheless, the above array was never free of contradictions and challenges that affected the relationship between the Central and local authorities. As a result, in 1966, then Prime Minister Apollo Milton Obote abolished the 1962 Constitution, and replaced it with the 1966 republican constitution that abolished the kingdoms that enjoyed federal and semi-federal status and made them districts directly under the central government's Ministry responsible for local administration. Under the new Local Administration Act (1971), local councils and

municipalities were to act on behalf of the central government and were renamed 'local administration' away from 'local government' to further reflect their weakened powers. This turn around in the decentralisation policy saw over-concentration of formerly decentralised powers to the central government that effectively made local councils inevitable "attachments" to the central government as their day-to-day operations such as budgets and development plans had to be approved by the Central Government.

Decentralization under Iddi Amin's Regime

The state of affairs described above obtained until 1971, when the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) government was overthrown by the Ugandan army led by Idi Amin. The military regime suspended the constitution, abolished parliament, dissolved district councils and proceeded to rule by decree. In 1974, President Iddi Amin increased the number of districts to thirty-eight and grouped them into ten provinces directly under military generals [3]. In this era, nothing significant changed and the Local Administration Act remained in place further weakening the decentralisation initiatives that had been abolished with the 1962 independence constitution.

Decentralization under Obote II and UNLF

After President Amin government was overthrown in 1979, the number of districts were decreased to thirty-three. Also, each region was named after its capital to reduce the importance of ethnicity in politics. Under the government of the Ugandan under the National Liberation Front (UNLF), re-introduced the local administration system of *Mayunba-Kumi* (literally meaning ten-houses local administration system) that mobilized local communities at the village level to deal with security and local administration issues such as distributing necessities such as salt, soap, sugar.

Decentralization under the NRM Government

The current Uganda's decentralization policy was majorly revolutionized in the 1990's where the National Resistance Movement (NRM) led government embarked on several political and economic reforms that among others saw it (decentralisation) as one of the most remarkable public sector reforms. Politically, the NRM government introduced a unique democratic

Kampala; Buganda province – Bombo; Kiira (later named Busoga) – Jinja; Eastern Province – Soroti; Karamoja Province – Iridi; Northern Province – Lira; West Nile Province – Arua; Western Province – Mubende. Local administrations became avenues through which military directives could filter from the top to the lowest levels in villages.

³ For more detail on Amin's machinations, see Mutibwa, P. M., *Uganda since Independence: a Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*, Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc. Accessed at <http://books.google.co.ug/books>. 13 November 2009. The province and their corresponding capitals were: Southern Province – Mbarara; Central Province –

umbrella government system without political parties. This formal government aimed to expand the political participation of ordinary people in the decision-making process.

The official implementation of the decentralization policy began in late 1992 and was legitimized by the 1995 Constitution and operationalized in the Local Governments Act (1997). Ndegwa, (2002) urged that decentralization in Uganda was one of the most ambitious attempts in Africa, and the most ambitious attempt in sub-Saharan Africa (with the exception of South Africa). Such arguments ignited need to analyze the experience of Uganda's decentralisation policy from both the academia and governance circles. This paper presents the following analysis in line with the six devolved functions.

Lessons Learnt from Past Decentralization Experiences

The paper presents the following as key lessons learnt in both the precolonial and postcolonial decentralisation policies in Uganda.

Planning Powers

Planning is one of the six devolved government functions under the Local Governments Act (1997). The other functions were administrative, quasi-judicial, finance, executive, and legislative. The experience with devolved planning powers and functions to local governments in Uganda, and its implementation has gone through a cycle of experimentation and learning-by-doing and as such a local development planning framework has remained elusive. Section 35 of the Local Governments Act (1997) gives local councils power to make local development plans. Section 35 subsection (3) provides for incorporation of lower council plans into Sub County and District plans for submission to the National Planning Authority (NPA). In light of this, Ministry of Local Government (2004) guided on the implementation of a bottom-up planning approach involving village, parish, sub county and district stakeholders' involvement including civil society organizations as private sector representatives. However, in practices, this bottom-up planning seemed more of a rhetoric than reality. Experience and field evidence showed that the reverse is true as the NPA merely produces national development plans for local governments to adopt or adapt to suit local conditions as with case of the current NDPIII 2020-2025.

Whereas community participation would naturally foster ownership and sustainability of local projects that responds to local needs and priorities, field results were mixed. For example, whereas communities identified local needs such as roads,

maintenance was left to local government alone thereby creating sustainability challenges.

Besides, and with time, bottom-up-planning got negatively interfered with by changes in some key local government support programmes such as the Local Government Development Programme (LGDP) to the Local Government Management Service Delivery Programme (LGMSD) then to the District Discretionary Equalization Grants (DDEG) and the current Parish Development Model (PDM). The role of Parish Development Committees in steering local development planning was almost abandoned in the middle of the development period when successor programmes never put it into consideration save for the PDM that has tried to revamp another version of Parish Development Committees into grass root planning.

Decentralized Political Functions

Sections 12 up to 26 of the Local Governments Act (1997) provide for the political functions of local governments. Specifically, all local governments have universally elected leaders with executive and legislative functions to manage the political and development issues. However, evidence in the field revealed contradictory observations. As Sabiti-Makara, (2009) observed, local governments are accustomed to receiving directives from central which they have to implement; otherwise, they might be branded "anti-government". In practice, local authorities are increasingly more conscious of being accountable to the higher and central government agencies. This practice has greatly undermined local accountability the basic ideology of decenarization governance. The practice has also curtailed or compromised the independence and autonomy of civil society who are not only do obliged to declare their budgets and programs to the central government, but also tread lightly on matters considered as "political".

Practice over the last decade however, suggests otherwise and has resulted into disappointed expectations.

Competitive elections and their associated dynamics of party politics, where local elections are competitive and opposition parties have real opportunities to win positions of authority, incumbents will be motivated to prove their competence in the management of public affairs and will seek to find new ways of addressing important problem (Merilee s. Grindle 2007 pp 61-62). But this is not what is taking place, in reality leaders are self-seeking concerned with how they further their own interest no wonder in recently held elections, central government lost a number of members of parliament and top ministers of cabinet.

Regular local government elections have enhanced broader popular and democratic participation of the citizens in local governance affairs. Councilors are elected through universal adult suffrage.

This has brought accountability closer as elected officials are made to account for their omission and commission during their tenure of office and service by way of voting them into or out of power as evidenced in the recently held parliamentary and local government elections 2021 where many lost for failure to account for their actions to the citizens many ministers and local leaders were voted out.

There has been enhanced participation in decision making in Uganda, besides Kauzya 2007 argues that political decentralization enabled local communities to determine their local leadership through democratic elections. The provision of institutionalized structural arrangements for participatory, bottom-up development planning and for the involvement of special groups such as women, youth, and the disabled has been instrumental too. (Ndahimana, E.2002).

Further, Article 176 (1) of the Constitution and the LGA Cap. 243 (section 3), stipulates that the system of LGs shall be based on a district as a unit under which there shall be LLGs and administrative units. Such as: district and sub-county councils in rural areas, city and city division councils in a city; municipal and municipal division councils in a municipal; and town councils in a town. In addition, section 45 of the LGA Cap. 243 specifies that the administrative units include: the county, parish and village in rural areas; parish or ward, town board and the village in urban areas.

Creation of more new districts leads to increased general local service delivery in some regions and in others constrain service delivery due to exorbitant cost of administration and as such the failure on promise of bringing services nearer the people since 2004 to date they are 146 districts in Uganda (Electoral commission 2020).

The creation of new districts has mainly been justified by the need to bring appropriate services nearer to the people especially in cases of unique physical set up that make it difficult for the population to access services; increasing effectiveness in administration; responding to the wishes of the people concerned; and addressing marginalization of the areas demanding a district by the mother district. There are however associated concerns including inadequate Human resources, economically unviable districts increasing the administrative overheads and creating a greater

financial and supervision burden to the Central Government. A case in point is Mayuge District formerly part of Iganga District which resulted in an increase in the quantity and quality of services that could not be attained before elevation to district status.

Uganda has largely succeeded in increasing the democratic legitimacy and accountability of the LG system. For example, during the Joint Annual Review of Decentralization (JAR) 2004, it was argued that the local councils routinely exercise power and authority over a broad range of issues including planning, budgeting, monitoring and supervision of LG activities, as well as passing district ordinances and 'byelaws' Overview of the status of decentralization 1993–2004 presented to the JAR 2004, p. 6, 18. Annual assessment of minimum conditions and performance measures for local governments 2005, final national synthesis report, February 2006, p. 40.

Whereas the structures of elected representatives are in place, their efficiency in decision-making is hampered by a number of factors including lack of sufficient information and resources. In particular, the cost of council operations places significant encumbrances on the resources of a number of LGs. Councils receive insufficient orientation, have limited understanding of multiparty politics.

Administrative Functions

The study revealed that local government act cap 243 as amended 2017 sections 63, 64 empowers the chief administrative officer as the head of civil service and head of administration in a district. But his appointment is a prerogative of the public service commission not the district service commission hence a contradiction in devolution of this noble function. Similarly, the equivalent of executive director of Kampala City council authority is a political appointee from the Centre.

Recentralization of key appointment of administrative officers shields them from local political interference and pressures; makes them held centrally accountable since there were several cases of resource misappropriation with era decentralized Chief administrative officers .it re-introduces sanity reduces conflicts at local level; reduce the turn-over of CAOs Recentralization as against decentralization". Means for instance "CAO is not an employee of the district but work for the district and hence report to councils on matters affecting the district not the Centre (Local level service delivery, decentralization and governance (Uganda Case Report 2009).

The administrative/personnel structure in place has thus created employment for the Ugandans as staff are recruited to fill the various positions at the different levels. This as well enhance services delivery to the population.

Judicial Functions under Decentralization

It was further revealed that, the Government at first with the Local Government Act 1997 provided for judicial functions to be executed by the Executive Committees of Local Governments until amended and the Local Council Courts Act 2006 was enacted, which devolved judicial powers to Local Council I, II and III and the LC III acted as the appellant court at the lower level. This judicial services provision has helped the local people to access locally based fairness and judgment. To exemplify its importance, Saito F. (2003) quoted a sentence from Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development (MOFPED) focus group discussion, Cheema Kapchoma district man in 2000, as follows;

“LCs are close to the people and in resolving disputes, they are the most important ones to approach. The people respect and obey them because they are the ones responsible if anything goes wrong. They are recognized by the Government and are entrusted with the law – they are overall.”

However, 20 years later, today the ‘wanainchi’ no longer respect lower-level executives, accusing them of bias and sidelining with the rich especially as it relates to land conflicts, domestic issues among others.

We observe and learn that the LC courts were not trained and no wonder they do not effectively execute their functions. Unless people are equipped in the way appropriate, any talk of effective decentralized justice would be mere sloganizing if they are not trained in the art and science of adjudication of cases, then the locals would be no better off than they were earlier.

That notwithstanding, the center has maintained overriding powers of adjudication of most of the criminal and civil matters by appointing and posting judicial officers to Local Governments. Currently every District has a Chief Magistrate presiding over cases in the respective Districts.

This thus means decentralization of judicial functions is limited to the extent of territory as well as administrative jurisdiction as provided for in Local Council Courts Act and the Magistrates Court Act.

Financial Decentralization

Birds, Ebel, and Wallich, (2015) assert that ‘fiscal decentralization is the process of devolving

fiscal responsibility to lower levels of governments in accordance with their local need and preferences’. The ultimate purpose is to deliver public goods and services thus a there must be established administrative structures, human resources and mechanisms for reporting and accountability for the revenues collected as well as their expenditure.

This study found out, that the linchpin of decentralization lies in the fiscal arrangements made between central and local government. And as such the policy provided for revenue sharing, collection and spending powers (Local Government Act (section 80) empower local governments to levy taxes and other revenue sources. Although over the time, local revenue have been shrinking due to centre interventions like collection of taxi parking fees and the conditional grants from center are very stringent and defeats the essence of financial autonomy of the local governments. The equalization grants have too not helped much as such there is an acute inadequacy of funding of service delivery.

The Single Treasury Account. This required that all LGs send the revenue collected to the Center and request for if needed. This increased the bureaucracy and delays in access to finance and therefore service delivery which is contrary to the reasons for decentralization. The tax payer therefore does not get value for taxes as they can be spending elsewhere and deny him/ her the services. This criticism complements the assertion of, Obwona, et al., (2000, pp.16) “Finance is a major terrain in which stakeholders compete and collaborate.”

Besides, recently beginning with financial 2019/2020, the central government reasserted its control over local revenue and recentralizing it back to national treasury for redistribution at a later stage. This has not only created delays of remittances but compromised service delivery in urban centers for example garbage collection.

The Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Authority (PPDA) was set up under the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act (2003) as the principal regulatory body for public procurement and disposal of assets (National Public Procurement Integrity Survey Report 2007). The purpose among others was to ensure transparency, accountability, value for money and timely delivery of goods, services and works in the in public procurement.

The Local Governments Amendment Act (No.2) 2005 replaced the District Tender Boards by Contract Committees to eliminate politicking and corruption in the tendering process. Despite the changes, the procurement function especially at the

LG levels continues to be marred interference with politics from top-down to influence who the contract award winner should be. There remains delay and bureaucracies which don't only affect the timelines in services delivery but the quality as well since due diligence is hardly done before selection of the best bidder.

Central Government devolved powers to collect and spend revenue to the LGs however this has been reversed. The intention was to speed up delivery of services to the end users. The fear of corruption and embezzlement of public funds as a result of spending on source fostered the establishment of the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS).

The promulgation of the Uganda Constitution (1995) provided for Central Government transfers to Local Governments (LGs). These included the conditional, unconditional and equalization grants however the strategy is also suffering challenges the level and rate of growth and development varies from one LG to another. The amount of taxes collected and priorities for expenditure vary depending on needs of individual LGs. Besides, there are priorities of government also vary, a gap remains as to which LG is being targeted with a particular grant and whether the desired benefit will be achieved in terms of addressing the needs of the end user.

Legislative Functions

A society without laws and therefore order is chaotic and cannot sustainably develop. The study found out that local governments have mandate to make own ordinance and byelaws district and lower local governments and administrative units respectively as provided for in the local government act as amended 2017 (sections 38, and 39).

We observed that this function is one of the least executed for lack of technical expertise in legal knowledge but also for lack of funding since the process of ordinance or byelaws formulation is a lengthy one and costly in terms of finances and the time involved. No wonder, therefore, there are only twenty-five (25) ordinances from districts between 2010 and 2017 (Uganda law library 2021). Most of the concern education like Local governments (Dokoro 2011; Amuria 2010, Apac 2011, Kaabong 2012, Kaberamaido 2011 (education) ordinances. Others are on community based organizations in Rukungiri 2010, Kaabong District (prohibition of consumption and sale of crude liquor) ordinance no.0f 2012, Kaberamaido District (promotion of health and sanitation) Ordinance no 12 of 2017 among others.

Most local governments have stayed indifferent to this role and this is also reflecting at lower local government levels as well the administrative units both in urban areas and in rural localities.

Anecdotal evidence revealed that, local governments believe that after all central government is enacting many laws that also remain on paper and lacks effective implementation and where this is done its piecemeal and not universally applicable.

Challenges Encountered in Implementation of Decentralization in Uganda

Although Uganda's decentralization policy has made outstanding achievements, still has some challenges. Insufficient investment in human resources and facilities, systems and poor coordination, contradictory laws, and the incompetence of local leaders still exist. Some of the following challenges are so critical and systemic that they have the potential to weaken the commitment to decentralization envisioned by policymaker;

- Local Governments remain sub-servient to the central government, thereby undermining the thrust of devolution.
- While the creation of new local government units has facilitated service access and eased ethnic tensions, the operation of these districts, in their current form, remains a costly undertaking for example districts in the central region still renting Buganda properties.
- Some of the districts were operating below optimal functionality due to inadequate financing and staffing.
- An emerging dichotomy surrounding the creation of urban centers, was viewed by rural Local Governments as a loss of viable sources of local revenue.
- Local Governments' fiscal distress was compounded by a low revenue base and encroachment by the Uganda Revenue Authority which the respondents decried.
- While institutions created for implementation of decentralization still existed, their functionality was weakened as the new office bearers had since taken positions without any capacity building Programme to orient them.
- The study revealed that many departments and functions at the local government levels had been abandoned and had become dysfunctional. For example, the Internal Audit function across board persistently lacked capacity. With a single staff in every district and very poorly facilitated, the Internal Audit office remains weak.

- The franchise government has entered with the private sector for delivery of basic services has increasingly made it difficult for the public to have access. Services for electricity are contracted to UMEME whose bill are seen to be high thus whoever cannot afford cannot get power. In the health sector to, the private health centers are expensive yet distribution of government health facilities is not adequate/ even thus some cannot get the services.
- In terms of administration where local governments have own service commissions, it makes it hard for human resources to be recruited in areas where they don't originate. Even when there are capacity gaps, the service commissions are bound to recruit incompetent staff and trusted with management of public funds/ resources. This affects efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. According to Okidi, J. A. and Guloba, M., (2007), decentralised governance has promoted excessive emphasis on employing the indigenous residents of local government jurisdictions.

Decentralization through the local government system was meant to promote good governance and result into improvements in public service delivery through local and vertical accountability. Tushabe, G. *et al*, (2010) argues that Almost two decades later, the quality of public services such as health care, education, agricultural advisory services, transport infrastructure and many others have continued to deteriorate.

The Financial distributive principle embedded in the decentralization system where local governments share local revenue in varying percentages (Local Government act cap 243 as amended 2017 fifth schedule) in Uganda is problematic most district and municipal local governments have increasingly become dependent on central governments grants for financing their budgets and programs. (Makara, S2009 pp.161)

There is a major gap between the legal framework and practice. Competences are devolved without adequate resources. Revenue sharing remains very low and hampered by numerous conditions.

Citizens are not effectively demanding for accountability and performance from their local leaders, these leaders have been co-opted by the national government where major decisions regarding political, legislative and administrative authority or undertaken as transactional

arrangements between national and local political leader.

CONCLUSION

Although the study may not be exhaustive, from the perspective of, the study on decentralization reveals the current state of Uganda's decentralization policy and what needs to do. The result shows that Uganda's decentralization has a huge growth potential of and has a multiplier effect on the mobilization and development of citizens. This policy is supported by effective legal framework. The study further pointed out that, as a country, Uganda did not take full advantage of the opportunities provided by decentralization, namely; using it as an engine for citizen participation, beyond the political process of representation. After the formation of political and administrative institutions in considerable detail, decentralization requires rapid optimizations to promote local mobilization and local economic development.

Recommendations

- Coordination amongst the Ministries, Departments and Agencies is key in driving the Decentralization policy. The Ministry of Local Government must reposition itself as the primary instrument for coordinating the Decentralization Policy. This is possible through bargaining for more funding, driving the LG Annual Performance System, and training and retraining champions for decentralization.
- The Ministry of Local Government has since the beginning of the financial year, 1st July 2019 been transformed into a separate sector that comprises the Ministry, the Local Government Finance Commission and Local Governments. The operationalization of this Sector should be fast tracked to give supremacy to Decentralization and attract more funding.
- To drive the decentralization agenda forward, the call is for adequate financing for local economic development and facilitation of political leaders to monitor the implementation of decentralized services.
- There is an urgent need to build MoLG and LG capacities for resource mobilization and Local Economic Development (LED) to address constraints of under-funding and unfunded mandates. Policy actions should include: strong budget advocacy and negotiations with Parliament, Ministries, Sector Working Groups and Development Partners to increase the share of financing in critical sectors such as education, health and agriculture.

REFERENCES

- Arikunto, S. (2002). *Research Procedure: A practice approach* (RevisionV). Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
- Cheema, G. S., & Rondinelli, D. A. (2010). *Decentralizing Governance: emerging concepts and practices* (pp.61(1st ed) Brookings institution press Washington, D.C. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/book/decentralizing-governance/>
- Constitution of Republic of Uganda 1995
- Constitutional commission. (1993). *Analysis and Recommendations. Report chapter, 1, 24 -152* Uganda.
- Electoral commission 2020.
- European Union 2016 Supporting decentralization, local governance and local development through a territorial approach. Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development European Commission Brussels Luxembourg, November 2016. Reference Document No 23
- Francis. & James, R. (2003). Balancing rural poverty Reduction and Citizen Participation: The Contradictions of Uganda's decentralization Program, *In World Development*, 31(2), 325-337.
- Galukande-Kiganda and LB Mzini; Twenty-Four Years of Decentralized Local Government in Uganda.
- JICA. (2008). *Local level service delivery, decentralization and governance: A comparative study of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania; Education, Health and Agriculture sectors: Uganda case report* Institute of International Cooperation. *Japan International Cooperation Agency*.
- Kauzya, J. M. (2007). *Political Decentralization in Africa: Experiences of Uganda, Rwanda, and South Africa*. In G. Shabbir Cheema Dennis A. Rondinelli (eds), *Decentralizing Governance: emerging concepts and practices* (pp.91) (1st ed) Brookings's institution press Washington, D.C
- Local government Act Cp 243 as amended 2017
- Makara, S. (2009). *Decentralization and urban governance in Uganda. Thesis submitted to University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg, South Africa*.
- Measuring Responsiveness, Effectiveness, and Accountability; (2016). *Journal of Public Administration and Development Alternatives*, 1(1).
- Merilee, S. G. (2007). *Local Governments That Perform Well, Four Explanations*. In G. Shabbir Cheema Dennis A. Rondinelli (eds), *Decentralizing Governance: emerging concepts and practices* (pp.61-62) (1st ed) Brookings's institution press Washington, D.C.
- Ministry of Local government. (2004). *Harmonized Participator Planning guide for Lower Local governments*.
- Ministry of Local government. (2004). *Harmonized participatory planning guides for lower local governments*.
- Ministry of Local Government. (2004). *Overview of the status of decentralization 1993–2004, presented to the Joint Annual Review of Decentralization*.
- Ministry of Local Government. (2005). *Annual assessment of minimum conditions and performance measures for local governments 2005, final national synthesis report, February*.
- Mitchinson, R. (2003). *Devolution in Uganda: An experiment in local service delivery. In Public administration and development*, 41-148.
- Mutibwa, P. (1992). *Uganda since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*, Fountain Publishers Ltd., Kampala.
- Ndahimana Emmanuel, "Rwanda Decentralization Assessment," Government of Rwanda, Ministry of Local Government and Social Affairs, 2002.
- Nsibambi, A. (ed.), (1998). *Decentralization and Civil Society in Uganda: The Quest for Good Governance*, Fountain Publishers Ltd., Kampala.
- Okidi, J. A., & Guloba, M. (2007). *Decentralisation and development: Emerging Issues from Uganda's experience'*, EPRC Occasional Paper, 31, Economic Policy Research Centre, Kampala.
- Parish Development Model March 2021 Draft guidelines for Implementation of the Parish development Model
- Richard M. B., & Robert, D. E. (1995). (editors), *Decentralization of the Socialist State: Intergovernmental Finance in Transition Economies*, The World Bank, *Regional and Sectoral Studies*, 13.
- Saito, F. (2003). *Evolution of Decentralization in Uganda: Opportunities, Perceptions and Constraints: Faculty of Intercultural Communication Ryukoku University Seta, Otsu Japan*.
- Steiner, S. (2006) *Decentralization in Uganda: exploring the constraints for poverty reduction*. GIGA research programme GIGA working papers No.31 Hamburg Germany.
- Tumushabe, G., Mushemeza, E. D., Muyomba, L.T., Lukwago, D., & Ssemakula, E. (2010). *Monitoring and assessing the performance of Local government councils in Uganda: Background, methodology and score Card*. ACODE policy research Series, No. 31, 2010. Kampala.
- Uganda Law library. (2021). Retrieved from <https://ugandalawlibrary.net/ordinances/>
- Villadsen, S., & Lubanga, F. (1996). *Democratic decentralization in Uganda: A New Approach to Local Government*, Fountain Publishers Ltd., Kampala.