

Bottom up planning and financial performance: a perception in Amudat District Local Government, Uganda

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Abstract

This study intended to establish the effect of Bottom up planning on performance in Amudat district local government. The independent variable is conceptualized in terms of needs assessment; needs prioritization and needs identification and the dependent variable in terms of service delivery. A cross sectional survey design was adopted using questionnaires to collect data. A sample of 364 multi-stake respondents was used. Using simple linear regression, findings revealed that; bottom up planning have a very strong positive effect on performance. We therefore, conclude that bottom up planning is a good predictor of performance in local governments. The central government to enable the local government to engage the people at grass root level to identify community needs through bottom-up approach. The central government through experts should develop policies in tandem with community needs through participative planning. The expert or technocrats should be involved at the stage of needs identification.

Key words: *Bottom up planning; Performance; Local government*

1. Introduction

Bottom-up planning refers to the method where plans are developed at the lowest level of the organization. These plans are then channeled through each next higher level for its participation until they reach the top most level for

the final approval. A bottom-up approach also known as inductive reasoning, is the piecing together of systems to give rise to grander systems, thus making the original systems sub-systems of the emergent system (De Grauwe, 2009). The ultimate goal of bottom-up approaches is strengthening the livelihood strategies of both households and local communities. Local governments are supposed to provide services to the communities for the betterment of such communities. The ideas that originate from lower levels stem from need identification to how such needs are satisfied by the services that the local government should offer.

2. Decentralization in Uganda

[9] indicate that local governments have powers to make and implement their own development plans; to make, approve and execute their own budgets; to raise and use resources according to their own priorities in consultation with the electorate; to appoint statutory committees, Boards and Commissions; to make ordinances and bye-laws that are consistent with the Constitution to implement a broad range of decentralized services previously handled by the centre. Further, [2] revealed that the decentralization process practiced in Uganda is based on devolution of powers, functions, and responsibilities to popularly elected local governments who have to regularly consult their

electorate of their urgent needs to be addressed by the local government. This seem a clear approach to bottom-up planning, hence participatory and consultative where needs are identified such that resources can be channeled appropriately to meet such needs.

Extensive devolution of powers is intended to improve financial performance and service delivery by shifting responsibility for policy implementation to the local beneficiaries themselves; to promote good governance by placing emphasis on transparency and accountability in public sector management; to develop, broaden and deepen political and administrative competence in the management of public affairs; to democratize society by promoting inclusive, representative and gender-sensitive decision-making; and to alleviate poverty through collaborative efforts between central and local governments, donors, Non-government organizations, community based organizations, the private sector and other stakeholders [4]

3. Literature review

In local governments, bottom-up planning recognizes that local communities play an active part in needs identification. For the government to achieve the intended objectives there should be interaction between beneficiaries, policy makers, and policy implementation. Citizen participation programs are initiated in response to public reaction to a proposed project or action. There are tangible benefits that can be derived from an effective citizen involvement program. [3] identify five benefits of citizen participation to the planning process as; Share of information and ideas on public issues; Public Support for planning decisions; Avoidance of protracted conflicts and costly delays; Reservoir of good will which can carry over to future decisions; and Spirit of cooperation and trust between the agency and the public.

These benefits are a reflection of good service delivery to the beneficiaries of goods and services provided by government. There mutual enhancement of the understanding the common goals that need to be achieved.

[6] Suggests that traditional comprehensive and strategic planning processes are insufficient for current resource management planning and advocates a more interactive approach to planning. An integrated approach to resource planning must provide for interaction with the stakeholders in the search for relevant information, shared values, consensus, and ultimately, proposed action that is both feasible and acceptable. Lang further, suggests that conventional planning tends to be dominated by a technical/analytic style where the planner is a detached value-neutral expert advising decision maker about the best way to accomplish their goals and serve the public interest.

According to [1], successful community-based planning efforts are “bottom-up,” rather than “top-down,” meaning planning starts at the local level and builds to the state level. By comparison, “top-down” strategic planning is where the key executive or a leadership team of an organization makes a decision and imposes it on the organization. This is common and in fact necessary in military organizations and in some corporate cultures.

With bottom-up planning, a greater number of employees are involved, each with a specialized area of expertise. Team members work together and take their plans to the next higher level until reaching the senior management level for approval. The advantage of bottom-up planning is that lower-level employees take a personal interest in the planed needs identified which can improve motivation and moral of employees hence, the organization will perform well [11]. Organizational programs are not far different from government programs where community participation is necessary for effective and efficient achievement of government programs in the community. In the modern environment, it would illogical to ignore the community who are the beneficiaries of such programs in the planning process.

In a decentralized system investments in education, health and rural roads are channeled through district councils whereas village plans should be based on village resources to succeed. Local level finances are, however, limited and yet implementation requires a strong financial base of the local level. Participatory Rural Appraisal is expensive but it enhances ownership of programs and outcomes making it more sustainable [13]. This means that participatory approach in planning can help in improving service delivery, since local (lower) level stakeholders get involved in decision making at preliminary stages of planning.

In practice, development activities implemented at the district and village levels are strongly influenced by national sector policies and by the presence of governmental and non-government organizations' development projects in their area. This leads to mixed approach which can result in competing demands for resources, in reality this approach does take into account factors outside of the local government's area of control, such as government policy and resource constraints.

Engaging local citizens and community organizations in decision making processes, not only increases efficiency but also provides a higher chance for the project's sustainability, due to the development of the community sense of ownership of the programs [7].

Table 1. Interactive Planning Vs. Conventional Planning

Interactive Planning	Conventional Planning
Includes information/feedback, consultation and negotiation Interaction occurs early on and throughout the planning process, with full range of stakeholders Assumes that open participation leads to better decisions Planner as value-committed advocate Focuses on mobilization	Limited information/feedback; maybe some consultation Early interaction with implementers; affected interests not involved until late in process Assumes that better information leads to better decisions Planner as value-neutral expert Focuses on manipulation of data

of support Plan = what we agree to do Success measured by achievement of agreement on action	Plan = what we should do Success measured by achievement of plan's objectives
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Source: Lang, 1986

Planning practice is dominated by a perspective that is sometimes called "technical rationality." However, three other perspectives, in addition to the technical are central to resource planning. These are organizational, political, and personal [6]. Lang further notes that multiple perspectives comprise an essential feature of integrated resource planning. [8] Describe this to include sharing and coordinating the values and inputs of a broad range of agencies, publics, and other interests when conceiving, designing and implementing resource policies, programs or projects. Rationality of plans for the community should be consultative rather than "desk bound and expert oriented". This has led to failure of most projects and failure to deliver adequate services to the community. [5] Contend that new ways will be found through inclusionary, open-style forms of discussions among the various stakeholders of any given local community.

4. Methodology

Researchers used a cross sectional survey research design whereby both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used. Quantitative approach was used to quantify and analyze numerical data gathered from a sample of 364 respondents. The design chosen was used in the study because we intended to generate quick self reports from the participants under the study. Also, cross sectional survey design was chosen because the study involved collecting data from a relatively large number of respondents in its natural setting, involving various categories of stakeholders. To derive the results, regression analysis was carried out and our findings presented in tabular form. Decision rules as far as the level of significance were set as; $r^2 < 15\%$ very weak; $r^2 > 15\%$ but $< 25\%$ weak; $r^2 > 25\%$ $< 50\%$ strong and $r^2 \geq 51\%$ and above very strong. We took a

positivist philosophical reasoning and thus assume the positive hypotheses.

5. Findings

Findings of the study are presented in line with the constructs of the independent variable as the intension was to find out the effect each of these constructs have on performance of the local government, performance is understood to be service delivery.

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis

variables	R ²	F-value	Sig	H _a
BPL Vs Per	.893	415.187	.000	Accept
Coefficients	Beta	t-value		
(Constant)		.520	.604	
NA	.221	3.359	.001	Accept
NP	.348	4.467	.000	Accept
NI	.407	5.431	.000	Accept

Source: Analysis of primary data

From a multiple regression analysis results in table 2 above connoted that bottom up planning accounted for 89% on the performance of Amudat district local government as a case study this was indicated by r^2 (0.893) leading to a conclusion that bottom up planning significantly affect the performance. The Beta coefficients denoted that all aspects of bottom up planning considered in this study significantly affect performance which was measured in terms of service delivery by the district officials. Needs assessment $\beta=0.221$; $\text{sig}=0.001<0.05$, needs prioritization $\beta=0.348$; $\text{sig}=0.000<0.05$ and needs identification $\beta=0.407$; $\text{sig}=0.000<0.05$. Needs has the highest beta coefficient. However, all variables are paramount in enhancing better performance by local governments. Because all Beta values of the constructs of bottom up planning are positive, this implies that each of these variable contribute positively on performance. The findings in this study are in agreement with [2] revealed that the decentralization process practiced in Uganda is based on devolution of powers, functions and responsibilities to popularly elected local

governments who have to regularly consult their electorate of their urgent needs to be addressed by the local government. Further, noted that on the district level, local resources could be exploited and allocated better. Thus, the efficiency of service delivery could be improved. As [11] also agree that as citizens have a greater chance to involve in urban planning and decision of policies, grass-root democracy could be promoted. As their opinions could be listened and accepted and social problems could be solved, social stability can also be raised. Stable and peaceful society benefits the development of local economy.

6. Conclusion

From our findings, the following conclusions are drawn;

Needs assessment as a component of bottom up planning through participatory approach significantly affect service delivery in local governments and hence performance.

Needs prioritization through participatory approach in bottom up planning significantly affect service deliver in local governments.

Needs identification through participatory approach in bottom up planning significantly affect service delivery in local governments hence performance.

Bottom up planning positively and significantly affect service delivery in local governments. The effect that bottom up planning may have on the performance of any local government is very strong. This should not be ignored by those in power to think that they can independently develop policies, programs and projects for the community. If done in this way, they are bound to have a minimal percentage of success, hence ineffective performance in service delivery.

7. Recommendations

The central government to enable the local government to engage the people at grass root level to identify community needs through bottom-up approach. Community needs should be

channeled through the structures up to the central government. The central government through experts should develop policies in tandem with community needs through participative planning.

The expert or technocrats should be involved at the stage of needs identification. This will lead to achievement development and effective service delivery at local government level. These aggregated results into national development, value for money and effective service delivery in the country.

There should be participatory assessment of the needs. This enables all stakeholders to understand how to achieve the set goals and if there are any failures, the blame can fairly be shared. Community members will always feel a sense of ownership when involved in the planning stages. This can reduce fraud and wastage of government resources.

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