

# Decentralization and Local Government Service Delivery in Uganda: A Case of Mbale Municipal Council

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## Abstract

*This study examined the effect of decentralization and local government service delivery in Mbale Municipal Council. A cross-sectional research design with qualitative and quantitative approaches was used for the study. A sample of 292 respondents was mobilized, based on Solven's sampling formula. The quantitative findings of this study were analysed using SPSS v 23, and a regression analysis was done to establish the effect relationships between decentralization and local government service delivery. Content analysis was done to provide thematic appreciation of the Qualitative data and generate a detailed narrative and context sensitive presentation. Study findings indicate that there was an improvement in local government service delivery but a lot remains to be done to meet the people's expectations. That is to say, improvements in the administrative, fiscal, and political aspects of decentralization had a positive influence on efficiency of services delivered ( $\beta = 0.229$ ). As measures to improve local government service delivery, the study recommends that people should be involved in decision-making so that they make choices of adjustments in services and how these should be delivered. In conclusion, to guarantee effective service delivery, political leaders, civil servants and agents of target populations should be accountable.*

**Key Words:** Decentralization, Local Government, Service Delivery, Decision making

## Introduction

The recent wave of decentralization around the world presents particular challenges to the process of meeting and addressing people's needs and wants. Not only does decentralization transfer resources, power and authority to lower local governments, but also more people get more involved in allocating and deciding the resources and power that affect them. At the same time, decentralization offers the prospects of increased local government service delivery to citizens through the greater accessibility of decision-making (Conyers, 2007).

Among the countries in Africa, Uganda was considered particularly valuable for research on decentralization, since it had been pursuing one of the most systematic decentralization policies in Africa. Although Uganda's conditions of living were generally more problematic due to civil strife than in other African countries, some of the leading districts like Mbale attracted frequent visits from donors and policymakers of other African countries (Human Rights Watch, 2003).

Although Uganda was still heavily dependent on foreign assistance for government activities, the series of decentralization reforms were not imposed by external aid agencies as is the case with other African countries (Saito, 2012). Therefore, lessons from the country's

experiences would be valuable for academics, policymakers, and practitioners involved in decentralization. Furthermore, Human Right Watch (2003) stated that Uganda's political system can be described as being "semi-authoritarian". This type of policy usually displays some procedural democracy including constitutional separation of powers, contested presidential and parliamentary elections, as well as providing some degree of political freedom to their citizens.

Golooba (1999) argued that after the enactment of the Local Governments Act in 1997, a new relationship between political leaders and constituencies was established, making the decentralization policy in Uganda unique. Since these events had significantly altered the policy environment, it was essential to reinvestigate whether the current situation made any contribution to the policy objectives, including the attainment of democratic participation and reduction of pervasive poverty, hence local government service delivery in Uganda. This scenario presented a unique opportunity for this research by intending to evaluate how the decentralization policy is operationalised by analysing decentralization and how it interfaces with local government service delivery in Uganda.

This study, therefore, examined the decline in service delivery by assessment of the effect of decentralization policy on local government service delivery in Uganda by focusing on Mbale Municipal Council after the ushering in of decentralization from the 1990s to the time of the study. An effort was made to analyse the decentralization policy design, its implementation, monitoring and evaluation concerns and how that affected the influence of local government's service delivery to the level that it did appropriately meet the peoples' needs in Uganda. Specific emphasis in the study examined the effect of decentralization of powers by the Central Government on local government service delivery.

### **Statement of the problem**

Before the advent of the decentralization policy in Uganda, Mbale was economically vibrant, attractive to investors and known to be the cleanest town in East Africa with well-planned and organized streets (Mbale Municipal Council Education Report 2020). While decentralization has been a major policy agenda item across many African countries over the last few decades, Conyers (2007) states that Uganda has the legal reforms to strengthen the system as provided in the 1995 constitution and the Local Governments Act of 1997 (GoU 1997). Decentralization policy raised people's hopes as it was expected to result in efficient service delivery, increased infrastructural development and accountable governance through the increased involvement of the people that call for sustainable development (Bardhan, 2001; Olowu, D. & Wunsch, J. S 2004).

Contrary to the expectations, in Mbale municipality, most tarmac roads are dilapidated having reached terminal age and the road unit is not fully constituted (Auditor General, 2017). There is constant shortage of drugs and other medical facilities in health centres which compromises the provision of quality and timely health care services to the residents of Mbale Municipal council. People have also registered complaints about inadequate waste

management facilities that have become a health hazard to the people living around these areas (MMC Report 2018-2019). Statistics for Universal Primary Education (UPE) indicated less than 30% of candidates across Mbale Municipal Council scored Grade One for the three years of 2015 (19%), 2018 (25%) and 2019 (22%) (Mbale Municipal Council Education Report, 2020).

Reports of Mbale Municipal Council (2019) reflected decline in education and health service delivery with no indication of sustainability. The above poor performance statistics and the community outcry for appropriate solutions necessitated this study to interrogate potential adoption of a Decentralised Sustainable Consensus Model for Local government.

## Study objective

The study examined the effect of decentralization on local government service delivery in Mbale Municipal Council.

## Literature

Decentralization is a process, a set of policy reforms aimed at transferring responsibilities, resources, or authority from higher to lower levels of government (Gershberg 2003). Decentralization is a set of state reforms. In general, the decentralization reforms analyzed here followed the collapse of the developmental state and accompanied the move toward free-market economies characteristic of the last quarter of the twentieth century. Finally, as defined here, decentralization reforms may take place in authoritarian as well as democratic contexts, which means that the concepts of decentralization and democratization should not be conflated, (Nsibambi, 1995). Decentralization policies belong to one of three categories administrative, fiscal, and political depending on the type of authority devolved.

The main theory in this study was the Participatory Decision-making Theory which is used to throw light on the functions of the system of governance and its fundamental aspect of people's participation in running their affairs in pursuit of economic and social development. Anderson (2003) stated, "In participatory theory, 'participation' referred to (equal) participation in the making of decisions. Participatory development enhances the satisfaction of service users which in turn increases locally generated revenues (DTT, 2021). People who are empowered usually value the services they receive through more willingness to pay for those services (Cheema, et al, 2007). This is true for Uganda's case because appointed officials are expected to be accountable to the people through Local Government Public Accounts Committees (LGPAC) which enhances value for money.

Varma (2014) regards participation not only as necessary for self-development but the very foundation upon which a free society depends. Participation theory emphasizes the element of empowerment of the population. In other words, people are supposed to be the principals while both the politicians and bureaucrats are supposed to be the Agents (Eckardt, 2008). One major area where citizens must participate is in local elections and also to understand

the concept of accountability better, we need to comprehend it in the light of participation (Schumacher, 2000).

In the new Millennium, there was a trend to broaden the participation debate to include governance issues. This was accompanied by the emergence of the ‘participatory citizenship’ concept, which links participation in the political, community and social sphere about service provisions namely: Education, Health, Roads on top Security (Gaventa, 2004). Nevertheless, the practical part that would ensure actual participation by people through receiving provisional services has lagged, Gaventa (2004) added. This study, therefore, seeks to establish why and for reasons to be established, there is a decline in sustainable service delivery in local governments like Mbale Municipal Council even after the ushering in of decentralization.

Decentralization reforms in Uganda followed a long period in which the institutional links between the centre and locality had weakened to such an extent that neither could control the other nor allow the other to access its resources. Thus, the failure of the government in providing social goods and services in the 1970s and 1980s was attributed to the limited and often fragmented local involvement. In Uganda, urban councils like Mbale Municipal Council took advantage of decentralization reforms by outsourcing some services that improved local revenue mobilization and enhanced efficiency in service delivery. There was evidence that in some specific areas, the privatization of the market had produced some measure of ‘successes’ as stated by Nsibambi, (1995).

Quoting Lubanga (1996), “Since 1993, NRM administration has, through the enactment of laws and the constitution, worked towards dramatically changing the framework within its location governments operates. Given that decentralization has deep implications for service delivery, the framework established in Uganda is worth describing in detail. Birungi et al. (2001), continued, “The introduction of local choice into the delivery of social services promises to enhance the sustainability of development projects by fostering a sense of ownership. It is assumed that progressively, decentralization will create conditions that are conducive for decision making rooted in local opinions and local circumstances,”. The above literature addressed the aspirations of decentralization, emphasizing sustainability and participation as avenues for quality service deliver.

Due to scanty empirical literature on the objectives of the study, we selected the theory of participation and service delivery that were proxies for efficient and effective services provided to the people of Mbale Municipal Council in their most fundamental competencies in line with the provision of services delivery. This may represent an improvement with respect to previous literature, which so far has not explored in depth the objective of this study.

Despite the government’s good intentions in launching decentralization at the local government level like Mbale Municipal Council, the performance of social services had not met people’s needs. Part of the evidence to that effect was the Report of the State of affairs (2018). For example, the lack of efficient and effective services in hospitals and health centres which existed before the launch of decentralization had not improved as no recruitment of staff to cope with the increased number of clients, had been carried out since 2010.

## Methodology

A cross-sectional design was adopted as recommended by Saunders et. al., (2007) served better to capture the status of service delivery in Mbale Municipal Council because it showed the trend at the time of study and considered aggregated sets of results, given that the study focused on three divisions within the Municipal Council. The study also used a descriptive study design to describe the characteristics of variables in the study (Sekaran, 2008). The qualitative approach was employed to capture the information on attitudes and behavior hence supplementing information from quantitative sources captured quantitative by use of a structured questionnaire.

The study population comprised 1078 subjects who included: Head Teachers and Teachers, Technical Staff, Municipal Councilors and Local Councilors, and Health Staff. The selection of the sample size was based on the sample size selection table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), cited in Amin (2005). A sample of 292 was compiled using Solvin's formula. Questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussion guides were used in evaluating primary data.

Ethical clearance of the study was obtained from Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) requirements. Qualitative data collected from the field was transcribed, sorted, coded according to the study themes and extracted to facilitate reporting. Quantitative data was entered into a computer using statistical software (SPSS) and analyzed to answer the study questions.

The study involved 160 participants for the questionnaires in the process of data collection out of the planned 175 participants; henceforth, constituting a ninety-one (91) per cent return rate. Of the 25 planned interviews, the study only managed to reach 21 interviewees in the process (84%). The study was expected to conduct ten (10) focused group discussions (FGDs) of nine (9) persons each with a total of ninety-two (92) respondents, and all were covered. This constituted 100% of the FGDs participants. The researcher read through all the data to obtain a general understanding of the information collected and conducted the content analysis. The content analysis was used to analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of certain words and concepts systematically and objectively (Elo et al., 2014).

On the whole, the entire study sample had a combined response return rate of 93%. Most of the respondents targeted had busy schedules and could not be easily reached. However, the study tried to gather as much information as possible from the participants.

## Philosophical underpinning of the study

The purpose of this chapter was to highlight the philosophies concerning decentralization and local government as it relates to the performance of Mbale Municipal Council in Uganda which may bring about new knowledge. The chapter expounded on the two theories: Libertarian and Ubuntu philosophies that brought out their rationale for decentralization and how this underpinned Mbale Municipal Council service delivery before and after the launching of decentralization in Uganda.

## Libertarian socialism

Libertarian socialism refers to a group of political philosophies that promote neither a non-hierarchical nor non-bureaucratic society, without private property in the means of production. Libertarian socialists believe in converting the present-day private productive property into common or public goods (Berkman, 2012). Libertarian socialism is opposed to coercive forms of social organization. It promotes free association in place of government and opposes the social relations of capitalism, such as wage labour (Chomsky, 2003). The concept of libertarian socialism is used by some socialists to differentiate their philosophy from state socialism (Zarembka, 2007).

Accordingly, libertarian socialists believe that “the exercise of power in any institutionalized form whether economic, political, religious, or sexual – brutalizes both the wielder of power and the one over whom it is exercised” (Ackelsberg, 2005). Libertarian socialists generally, place their hopes in decentralised means of direct democracy such as libertarian municipalism, citizens’ assemblies, or workers’ councils (Rocker, 2004). This could usher in improved performance in local governments like Mbale Municipal Council.

## Ubuntu philosophy

African philosophy and way of life called “Ubuntu” (humanness) is important in the inclusion of community members into the societal processes (Prinsloo, 1995). This is based on the fact that African traditional culture has infinite capacity for the pursuit of inclusion of all community members in societal proceedings (Teffo, 1994). Democracy in the African way does not simply boil down to majority rule but communal consensus. Traditional African democracy operates in the form of lengthy discussions (Busia, 1967). Although there may be a hierarchy of importance among the speakers, every person gets an equal chance to speak up until some kind of agreement, consensus or group cohesion is reached. This important aim is expressed by words like *simunye* (“we are one”, i.e., “unity is strength”) and slogans like “an injury to one is an injury to all” (Broodryk, 1997). Therefore, the consensus of communal living is in cohesion with deliberations of decentralization whose main emphasis is centred on service to humanity.

For the proper discussion on decentralization issues in the African setting, there is the desire for members to have communalistic agreements within the context of Ubuntu to safeguard the rights and opinions of individuals and minorities. The Ubuntu philosophy puts a strong emphasis on community well-being where decentralization underpins a conducive atmosphere among people within their locality (Louw, 1995).

The Ubuntu philosophy articulates such important values as respect, human dignity and compassion with the desire for consensus that is central in the decentralization process of any African local government system. Ubuntu philosophy requires authentic respect for human rights and related values, and an honest appreciation of differences (Sindane, 1994 Degenaar, 1996). Essentially, these fundamental requirements of Ubuntu philosophy are central in the

decentralization process of local government systems, because, Ubuntu becomes a medium of enabling the societal members to foster humanism in the various services within a given jurisdiction (Sindane1994) concluded.

## Findings

In this section are the correlational and multivariate results relating to decentralization and local government service delivery.

### Local government service delivery in Mbale Municipal Council

**Table 1: Descriptive Results on Local government service delivery in Mbale Municipal Council**

Local government service delivery	Mean	Std. Deviation
Decentralization has improved the water supply for the people of Mbale Municipal Council.	3.5	1.083
Decentralization has enabled the people of Mbale Municipal Council to access essential services.	3.37	1.204
Decentralization has brought efficient services nearer to the people of Mbale Municipal Council.	3.47	1.051
The Technical staff of Mbale Municipal Council have been recommended for giving efficient services to the people	3.69	1.299
The decentralization has brought for people of Mbale Municipal Council meaningful training services.	3.3	1.051
<b>Pooled Mean &amp; Standard Deviation</b>	<b>3.47</b>	<b>1.14</b>

**Key: 4.20-5.00 Very High, 3.40-4.19 High, 2.60-3.39 Average, 1.80-2.59 Low, 1.00-1.79 Very Low**

Source: *Primary Data (2018)*

The study results indicate a high level of Service Delivery in Mbale Municipal Council (Mean = 3.47, SD = 1.14).

As shown in Table 1, levels of service delivery indicate that decentralization has brought services nearer including improved water supply for the people of Mbale Municipal Council. This resulted in appreciation of technical personnel of the district. Participants complemented staff of the districts in interviews conducted:

*In some areas, there have been improvements in service delivery. Some areas still need improvement but we commend the leadership for trying their best to create improvement in the aspect of service delivery. There have been some serious changes witnessed. For the loopholes, we can close one eye though we cannot stop asking for more and better social services as it is the real contract between the Municipal masses and its leaders such as the Mayor and LC3 Chairpersons. **Municipal council official (Male, 2019)***

The achievement of sustainable service delivery was a result of decentralization that ushered in access to essential services, which features as the fundamental purpose of decentralization policy of bringing services closer to the people and more so in this case, Mbale Municipal Council. Data collected in interviews and focus group discussions was in agreement with the fundamental purpose of decentralization. For instance, during one focused group discussion, a respondent went on to say:

*Efficient services I think are an impossibility in Mbale. The only thing I can say is that I have at least seen some fair improvement and I commend the leadership of the local government and the central government for working hard to improve the provision of services to the local people but there is still more they could do to make things better.*

**Representative Quote (Male Councillors, 2019)**

Furthermore, in the area of health services, for instance, participants from interviews largely cited improvement, though they also raised a concern that there was a need to take assessment exercises that reveal gaps and weaknesses. For instance, participants pointed out the dilemma of inadequate human capital and lack of training despite easy accessibility of the resources at district level.

One of the respondents mused that “since 1998, people of Mbale have been experiencing good service delivery because there was close monitoring of all public offices by political and technical wing of governments”. This was applauded by the participants in FGDs who added that decentralization should give people the mandate to choose the leaders of their own choice to provide a basis for holding elected leaders and technocrats accountable.

There were additional issues that were raised during the FGDs sessions:

*Civil servants not being accommodated at their workplace has affected service delivery. The planning unit should ensure that services rendered in the newly created districts meet peoples’ expectations through proper arrangements for staff offices as well as accommodation.* **Representative Quote (Female Councillors, 2019)**

Issues such as “a smaller number of nurses, specialized doctors and inadequate staff quarters” were also cited. Although they insisted that service delivery had somehow improved. Medical equipment such as X-ray machines, OPDS machines and orthopaedic machines were installed at the Regional Hospital but there was a lack of well-skilled manpower to match the medical equipment. Apparently the issue was raised though there was an interjection which voiced that Mbale Municipal Council was not the only local government with such problems.

In agreement with the findings, a participant said that;

*Poor services in Mbale Municipal Council is not a new thing. Even in other municipalities in the country, it is just the same story. In fact, there are some municipalities in Uganda where things are worse – Mbale is just an example. To find that Mbale is not delivering to its expectation levels should not be a surprise to anyone.* **KII10. Municipal council official (Mbale, 2019)**



In a related development, it was pointed out during key informant interviews that political influence in the activities of the municipal council has been one of the causes of poor service delivery in Mbale.

The respondents also pointed out the inadequate revenue collected by the municipal council which has hindered effective service delivery under the decentralised system of government. This was raised during the focus group discussions where it was stated that:

*You see most revenue we raise now is not adequate ... the poor people are exposed and you can now see where they belong ... if you look at the figures you realize that without grants from the central government, nothing can be done ... and because of this power of resource flow we have to dance to the tune of what comes in the plan guides ... We have to follow what they tell us because we don't want to annoy our bosses but sometimes it is not the right thing. **Representative Quote (Female Councillors, 2019).***

This therefore is another instance that affirms the challenges that make decentralization fail to meet expectations. When the local government is not empowered economically, it leaves room for much influence from the central government, a factor that has greatly affected exercises like to implement key decisions concerning the welfare of their populace.

However, this alone could not determine the relationship between decentralization and local government service delivery or the effect of decentralization on local government service delivery. Therefore, correlation and regression analyses were further conducted to establish the relationship between decentralization and local government service delivery and also the effect of decentralization on local government service delivery in Mbale Municipality.

### Correlation between decentralization and local government service delivery

In the table below are the correlational results that depict the relationship between decentralization and local government service delivery in the municipality.

**Table 2: Correlational Results on the Relationship between Decentralization and Services Delivery**

Correlations		
		Local government service delivery
Local government service delivery	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	160
Political Decentralization	Pearson Correlation	.594**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	160
Admin Decentralization	Pearson Correlation	.733**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	160

Fiscal Decentralization	Pearson Correlation	.552**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	160

\*\**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

From table 2 above, there is somewhat a statistically significant relationship between the different decentralization aspects and efficient services. Changes in decentralization are somehow correlated with changes in efficient services. This is based on the Pearson's Correlation results for the relationship between political decentralization ( $r = 0.594$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), administrative decentralization ( $r = 0.733$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and fiscal decentralization ( $r = 0.552$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). For this reason, we can conclude that there was a strong positive relationship between decentralization aspects and efficient services.

### **Multiple Regression Results for the effect of decentralization on local government service delivery.**

This section provides the multiple regression results for the effect of decentralization on local government service delivery in Mbale Municipal Council. The multiple regression findings are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Multiple Regression Results for the effect of decentralization on local government service delivery**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.270	.185		6.870	.000
	Political Decentralization	-.046	.092	-.050	-.496	.621
	Admin Decentralization	.727	.100	.770	7.238	.000
	Fiscal Decentralization	.006	.083	.007	.075	.940
	R =	.734				
	R Square =	.538				
	Adjusted R Square =	.529				
	F=	60.578				
	P Value =	.000				
<i>Dependent Variable: Efficient Services</i>						

Table 3 results in relation to the one-way between subject analysis of variance were unsuccessful in revealing a dependable effect of decentralization on local government service delivery ( $F_{(2, 153)} = 60.578$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). In this case, the p-value equalled 0.000, which was less than the level (.05), so the null hypothesis  $H_0$  which showed an insignificant effect of decentralization on local government service delivery in Mbale Municipal Council was rejected. There is thus adequate evidence that fiscal decentralization, political decentralization and administrative decentralization explain the efficiency of service delivery in Mbale Municipal council. This

result is consistent with what was reported earlier that local governments are formally structured and contain elements of self-governance that are enabled by informal systems of rules, trust and reciprocity norms, credible commitments, and informal mechanisms for rewarding or punishing those who violate rules and norms or defect commitments (Ostrom et al., 1994).

Other results in Table 3, display the  $R$  and  $R^2$  values. The  $R$ -value represents the simple correlation and is 0.734 indicating a high degree of correlation. The adjusted  $R^2$  value indicates how much of the total variation in the dependent variable 'efficient services,' can be described by the independent variable 'decentralization'. In this case, 52.9% can be explained, which is equally large. Furthermore, to establish the exact effect of the different decentralization aspects, a multiple regression model was fitted. Results from Table 3 show that for improved efficiency in services delivered, there is a need to consider utilizing effective administrative decentralization. This is because compared to the rest of the other decentralization aspects, administrative decentralization was statistically significant. The favourable  $Beta$  weight of 0.727 indicates improvement in efficient services, meaning at a 100% improvement the aspect of administrative decentralization improves efficiency in service delivery by 72.7%, with other factors held constant.

## Discussion of findings

The statistical significance of the regression model that was run resulted in a positive  $p$ -value  $> 0.000$ . It is clear from the findings of this study that decentralization significantly affected local government service delivery in Mbale Municipal Council. From the research findings, decentralization had a high effect on local government service delivery. This was evidenced by the fact that the majority of the respondents agreed with the statements in the questionnaire, although this was to a minimal extent since the mean value according to the legend used in the study reflected to be nearing moderate effect or at the level of indifference. This matched with what was happening in Mbale Municipality at the time. Results, in terms of local government service delivery, were not so visible.

It was argued by Christie et al. (2003) that the decentralization decision is an endogenous choice that depends on and affects other policy choices. Therefore, Mbale Municipal Council has to be obliged to be so careful on policy issues. Moreover, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) failed to reject  $H_2$  that there had been an insignificant effect of decentralization on local government service delivery in Mbale Municipal Council. Though the study seemed to show some effect, the insignificant effect could not also be ruled out since participants also disagreed that decentralization had a significant effect on local government service delivery in Mbale Municipal Council.

For instance, it was reflected that 8.1% of the study participants strongly disagreed, 16.9% disagreed, 23.1% were indifferent, 32.5% agreed, and 18.8% strongly agreed that decentralization had enabled the people of Mbale Municipal Council to access essential services. Such findings showed a clear balance between the significance and insignificance of decentralization in local government service delivery. Marume & Jubenkanda (2016) of

Zimbabwe Open University in their publication on centralisation and decentralization argued that one of the demerits of decentralization is that it makes administration expensive due to duplication of work and lack of centralised housekeeping services. However, this study suggests that decentralization makes corruption affordable and cheap due to a rigorous process that seems to be so decentralized. The pertinent issue would be the laxity to do what one is supposed or required to do.

The common issues that are pulling down decentralization efforts in Mbale Municipal Council and which interviewees and FGD participants pointed out so many times were moonlighting and late reporting to places of work. Another was nepotism and bad cultural or habitual clings among the serving populace. What's more, Myerson (2014) contended that decentralization and democracy could improve the chances for successful economic development in Africa because the reputation of local government and democracy is manifest in the history of many countries, yet autonomous local governments had remained not as much of a common phenomenon in Africa as elsewhere on the globe. He further detailed that; democratic political competition can improve governance only if voters have a choice among qualified candidates who have good reputations for exercising power responsibly in public service.

Myerson's trepidations have not been able to open up the case of African nations, where leaders seem to be inclined to the 'lifetime-saviour-supreme-leader' mentality. Even biblically, God's appointed gave up power when their time elapsed but our African leaders seem not to be on the literate end when it comes to the element of passing and transitioning leadership service. Yet for Myerson (2014), the crucial supply of trusted democratic direction and governance can develop best in responsible and liable institutions of local government where successful indigenous leaders can attest to their qualifications to turn out to be strong competitive contenders for higher office. Adopting and agreeing to his ideas, therefore, a federal constitutional structure that devolves substantial powers to autonomously elected local government could upsurge the likelihood of an up-and-coming democratic development in Uganda and Africa at large.

Generally, just as Batchelor, Smith, & Fleming (2014) put it, decentralization resulted in some improvement in public service delivery, although some sources debate this premise noting that it is difficult to create a causal link between decentralization reforms and improved services (*Cabral, 2011; Sharma, 2006: cited*). Notable examples where decentralization seemed to have improved the delivery of localized public services had been observed (Bashaasha et al, 2009; Dege Consult, 2007; cited). In fact, each of the national studies in ten African countries noted a slight improvement in service delivery (Dickovick and Reidl, 2010: cited).

## Conclusion

Local government service delivery was not at its desired maximum. There was however some improvement attributable to decentralization although it was minimal. Therefore, the delivery of efficient services needs more than just decentralization.

## Recommendations

Considering the study results, Mbale Municipal Council should enable the people to exercise their rights by accessing information that makes them aware of their political and technocratic leaders' tasks in providing effective and efficient service delivery. To achieve sustainable service delivery, citizens need to be able to achieve maximum levels of service delivery, fulfil their citizenry role as the principals while both political and appointed leaders as agents must meet peoples' demands as guided by the Sustainable Consensus Model of Decentralization.

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