Local Economic Development for Poverty Alleviation in South Africa: A Case of Nkonkobe Local Municipality of the Eastern Cape Province

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to establish the impact of Local Economic Development (LED) as a poverty alleviation strategy in the Nkonkobe Local Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. This is done by assessing the effectiveness of the LED initiatives implemented in the Local municipality in alleviating poverty in Nkonkobe. The paper follows a qualitative research methodology and guided by a secondary analysis research design. The essential findings of this paper are that LED strategies have had some impact in improving infrastructure, agricultural activities, tourism, and enterprise development, as well as empowering local communities to take part in their own development initiatives. Arguing from a structural and historical perspective, the article shows that LED has a marginal effect in local economic activity and employment creation. LED activities in Nkonkobe are still not fully coordinated by the local municipality as the municipality is greatly affected by lack of funds and authority to independently make decisions. The article suggests a new pro-poor LED agenda which is holistic, and moves away from ‘piecemeal’ project based LED initiatives, to adopt more meaningful economic programmes, which incorporate major investment directed at economic growth and socio-economic development.

Key words: Local economic development, poverty alleviation, empowerment

Introduction

In recent years, Local Economic Development (LED) has globally grown into locality-based responses to the challenges of globalization, devolution, local-level opportunities and crises. Moreover, international bodies such as the World Bank, Organization for Economic Co-corporation and Development (OECD), and a host of national governments have embraced LED. Within the OECD, LED is particularly endorsed for urban development and business promotion (World Bank, 2001, 2002). The South African government has considerably embraced LED in its policies and strategies. To this end, LED has emerged as an integral part of a new wider emphasis upon local responsibility and power

LED is defined as a participatory process encouraging and facilitating partnership amongst the local stakeholders, while enabling “joint design and implementation of strategies, mainly based on the competitive use of the local resources, with the final aim of creating decent jobs and sustainable economic activities” (Canzanelli, 2001:9).

Local Economic Development is by its nature; a partnership among the business sector, community interest groups and municipal governments, non-governmental organizations. Its purpose is to build up the economic capacity of a local area to improve its economic future, with economic growth and employment creation and improvement of quality of life for all (Swinburn et al., 2006; World Bank, 2006). In other words, its main goal is the creation of local employment and development opportunities. It encourages the use of local resources for the promotion of livelihoods of local communities. Resources that are abundant in the local communities are in form of the five capitals namely social capital, natural capital, financial capital, human capital, and physical capital. However, a handful of overwhelming challenges confront this initiative. The main problem is the limited access to the local resources. To avert such challenges, there is need for all relevant stakeholders to mobilize resources to enable localities to adapt the competitive market environment and increase investment and employment for livelihoods enhancement. This will empower communities to improve the quality of life through creation of economic opportunities for poverty alleviation (World Bank, 2006).

LED pursued in the North is deemed to be neo-liberal, pro-growth and is dominant in Western Europe, North America, and some parts of the developing world. The aim for pursuing LED was to reduce the economic challenges posed by globalization, and assist local economies to participate in the global economy in a competitive manner, and find market niches (Nel, 2001). Whereas in the South, where the pro-poor alternatives of LED are
prominent, more so in the Sub-Sahara, LED is argued to primarily seek to address social ills, such as exclusion (marginalisation) and poverty (Helmsing, 2001; Nel & Rogerson, 2005).

Research Methodology

The study employed qualitative research methodology guided by a secondary research design. Secondary research data was used to establish the social reality of LED and poverty alleviation. Creswell (1994) states that secondary research involves gathering data that already exists from various sources, while adopting a structural and historical perspective.

The information sources included previous research reports, printed sources (books and professional journals), statistical literature from governmental and non-governmental institutions, and free access data on the internet, annual reports and various documents on case studies from local economic development initiatives within Nkonkobe local municipality, as provided in the Nkonkobe Integrated Development Plan. The analysis was descriptive in nature. Interpretative analysis was used through “description of the characteristics, processes, transactions, and context that constitute the phenomena being studied, couched in language not alien to the phenomenon, as well as the researcher’s role in constructing this description” (Terre Blanche et al, 2006:321).

Findings

Nkonkobe local municipality identified projects and programmes in skills training, tourism and agricultural development, in its endeavour to foster local economic development, alleviate poverty, and largely, the initiated programmes were meant to promote gender equality. It can thus be deduced that the local municipality thrived to drive economic development under the anchor of women and youth empowerment.

Agricultural projects

Local Economic Development in Nkonkobe local municipality is strategically inclined towards agriculture to maximize the agriculture potential in this rural municipality.
The area has diverse climatic conditions, which permit farming of various agricultural enterprises.

LED in Nkonkobe is predominantly spearheaded through projects, as the area does not have an industrial base to depend on as an anchor in economic development. In this light, Nkonkobe initiated a variety of projects, such as the Citrus production project that is a major contributor in the economic development of the area and employs workers on permanent and seasonal bases. The citrus production projects generate the much-needed employment for the locals that will go a long way into improving their livelihoods through the income they earn, and can comprehensively have an impact on poverty alleviation in Nkonkobe. There are also related projects, such as essential oils, olive oil, and paprika production, which complement citrus production as forms of economic development activities.

Contrary, the Alice Fresh produce market, which was meant to be utilized by all farmers within the area for selling of their produce, did not perform as expected, despite the support it got from the local stakeholders. It faced dire constraints such as limited technical skills and inadequate financial resources, lack of equipment, and poor leadership within projects. A crucial issue that arises is that there is a problem of dependency within communities and this poses difficulty in that projects are not sustainable. Assistance in the form of training for managerial, technical and leadership skills was offered by the Department of Labour.

In addition, the Siyazondla Homestead food programme helps the poor by providing training, infrastructural support and follow-up programmes to households. This is mean to backyard food production. People are able to sell their surplus produce to the surrounding communities to raise income. The Siyazondla project slightly curbed the dependency syndrome where communities were in the past heavily dependent on government for continuous assistance.
Partnerships between local associations and government projects have also been established. This is evidenced by the partnership between the Department of Agriculture in the Eastern Cape and the National Wool Growers Association (NWGA). The agreement in place states that the NWGA receives R4.5 million annually to champion wool & sheep production in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Furthermore, the project has improved communal sheep in the area. The Nkonkobe local municipality has benefited from this exercise since 2004 through the ram exchange programme. The programme encourages farmers to get rid of inferior rams in exchange of healthy and good quality rams to enhance sheep production. The primary aim is to boost the quantity and quality of wool and farmers are receiving large sums of money, thus gaining assurance of a steady income for the farmers to not only sustain their farming activities, but to sustain their livelihoods and alleviate poverty (Table 1 below shows sheep and wool production quantities in one season and the income generated). In the process, high priority is placed on Nkonkobe Local Municipality’s Local Economic Development and the promotion of an entrepreneurial environment with an emphasis on job creation (Nkonkobe, 2008).

**Table 1:** Sheep and Wool production for the season 2009/10 at Nkonkobe Municipality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wool Growers</th>
<th>No. Of bales Produced &amp; sold</th>
<th>Total Kgs</th>
<th>Net amount Received</th>
<th>Quality Rams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middledrift</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>15625,5</td>
<td>R253 483,49</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Beaufort and Saymor/Balfour</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>23461,6</td>
<td>R638308,20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>10143,3</td>
<td>R231 761,94</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>49230,3</td>
<td>R1105,55363</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Nkonkobe - IDP Review (2011/12)*

Moreso, the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) also benefited from a huge financial boost. Through CASP, the projects Nkonkobe municipality received 715 quality rams to improve sheep and wool productivity. Land Reform beneficiaries
who benefited from the land reform programme) were considered to be the priority group. The developmental priority was geared towards infrastructural development with the renovation of shearing sheds greatly improving the woolgrowers’ gains. The ultimate challenges faced by the Woolgrowers are lack of transport and skilled personnel such as professional shears and sorters.

Tourism

Tourism development within the Nkonkobe local municipality is recognized as a significant contributor towards the local economy and creates sustainable employment within the locality. The tourism sector has great potential characterized by accommodation, heritage, hiking trails, cultural villages, game farming, craft and tour guiding. Local and international partnerships have been established to spearhead rural tourism development in the area. For instance, the Department of Environmental Affairs has, through its poverty relief programme, complemented the local initiatives to promote community tourism. Members of the community are incorporated to participate in the development initiatives.

Further, the partnership between Nkonkobe and Oxfordshire County Council in the twining programme has had efforts directed towards heritage sites, and training was on the GIS system that provided a technical assistance in packaging the area per jurisdiction for marketing purposes. However, in as much as this was to equip personnel within the municipality the project faced the challenge of not having someone who was dedicated to fulfil this function. Visitors information centres (VICs) were also established to inform local and international tourists about the Heritage sites and activities. A database has been created and will be available in each of the VICs (Nkonkobe, 2008). Unfortunately the operation of VICs has not been successful as it has met challenges of employing personnel due to limited funding to cover the wage bill. Consequently, the municipality has issued out an offer to local businesses to rent the VIC buildings.
Cultural villages and craft centres and their preservation have been equally identified as critical contributors to tourism in the Nkonkobe area. Local authorities are planning to fundraise so as to support key vital areas such as small business planning, product development training and enterprise development services. A major spin-off from this initiative was the micro-credit finance scheme that helps women in their business ventures. The scheme also provides training services for entrepreneurial skills development. However, the issue of effective strategies to lend and recover funds from the borrowers remains a challenge.

One significant example of an initiative focusing on assisting women establishing and expanding their business and entrepreneurial skills was establishment of the Vusuhlanga craft centre and cultural villages in the Ngcabasa area in the Middledrift area, the main beneficiaries being the women in the locality. This initiative was spearheaded by the Department of Local government, with a sum of R 1 500 000 which assisted in the acquisition of domestic and industrial machinery. A service provider was tasked with the initiative to train the beneficiaries in fundamental skills such as business skills, bookkeeping, financial management and marketing. The programme faced the challenges, predominantly, lack of funds and the municipality sought relief from the Nkonkobe Economic Development Agency (NEDA), and the Department of Trade and Industry, to keep the programme afloat. This programme enhanced the human capabilities and general overall capacity of the locality and overall enlarges people’s choices and it is key to escaping poverty (World Bank, 2003).

**Infrastructural Development**

Infrastructural development, as highlighted in the municipal LED plan, aimed at improving access to rural communities and is of paramount importance to attract investment in the locality. It is important to reduce the backlog in access to electricity, and telecommunication and upgrade of roads, especially in the rural areas (Nkonkobe, 2004). In
other words, such concerted efforts are meant to improve the levels of service delivery to meet the needs of the local people for them to live a less impoverished life. Infrastructural development is important as it is not only for the delivery of social services to the local communities but it shapes the local economy by making different economic activities possible through the movement of input and output. Amongst other key infrastructural facets, roads facilitate transportation of goods and people; telecommunication overcomes distance in communication and electricity adds to productive potential in a variety of ways, such as use of different machines. The investments in infrastructure therefore leverage other investments and activities.

**Small, Micro to Medium Enterprise (SMME) Development**

The development of SMMEs is an ideal strategy spearheaded by the need to reduce the percentage of households living under the poverty line. SMMEs require training in business management skills, creation of business, funding opportunities, as well as company registration and auditing. Skills development empowers locals to participate in economic activities, create employment, and provide income that will sustain the livelihoods of the people. Examples of projects are brick making found in Ekuphumleni (Ward 9), Gqumashé (Ward 12) and the establishment of the ceramic factory in Ntselamanzi (Ward 6). Such projects were initiated to empower the local people and enable them to earn a decent living.

The Nkonkobe SMMEs development was streamlined in youth development for which, basic or primary Information Communication Technology (ICT), was set out to be accommodated within the VICs in line with the e-Cooperative service model for South Africa. However, the project never seemed to stand the test of time as the VICs were not operating accordingly as they were rented out to local businesses (Nkonkobe, 2008). On the other hand, according to the Seminar Report (2007) by the Commonwealth Local Government Good
Practice Scheme, the partnership between the Nkonkobe and Oxfordshire more than met its desired expectations as it created about 300 jobs. This mainly absorbed women into the employment stream, from its prior mandate of developing the craft industry in Nkonkobe, so that it could benefit from and add value to the Nkonkobe/ Oxfordshire County Council Heritage and the Tourism Development Programme. The overall strategy aimed at improving the livelihoods of Nkonkobe Craft producers (Seminar Report, 2007).

**Obstacles to Development through LED**

Local Economic Development has fallen short of bringing about social transformation and appears to be deriving only limited benefits. According to Dapira (2008) the main challenges faced by LED initiatives is lack of funding and participants withdrawing their energies as initiatives fail to produce benefits. The lack of funds is not only restraining these initiatives and their credibility at the local level, it also discourages participation and commitment to LED initiatives. As a result vulnerability among people living with poverty diminishes any hope for sustainable livelihoods. For instance, participants in the Nkonkobe Vegetable Market abandoned the market as they were not paid due to financial constraints faced by Nkonkobe Local and Amathole District Municipalities. The withdrawal of the participants will culminate in an increase in high unemployment and poverty.

It is also of grave concern that diminutive authoritative power bestowed on local municipalities remains a challenge. Local government authorities do not have much of a prerogative to initiate development and have to wait for directives form higher tiers of government who dictate terms on the allocation of funds. A critical assessment of the Nkonkobe’s IDP led to the deduction that the LED plan is severely lacking coordination with other districts, provincial or national programmes. It reflects a limited capacity of the municipality to put together a meaningful LED strategy and conduct day-to-day running of the municipality. The LED plan does not seem to be a reliable tool for addressing
unemployment or poverty.

**Discussion**

Local Economic Development in Nkonkobe local municipality, tended to be directed towards parallel endeavours of pro-poor LED initiatives with the aim of community empowerment, as well as economic connotation that is geared towards mainstream economic activity. However, concerted effort of LED as a poverty alleviation strategy has prompted the rise of the decentralized bottom-up approach to economic development and poverty alleviation. According to Rogerson (2008: 307), such efforts are meant to strengthen the building blocks of growth directed towards skills development and investment. Nkonkobe municipality has its economic base anchored in agriculture through the citrus and the wool, which have become the mainstay of the economy. These provide a foundation for creation of employment opportunities and income generation. This will go a long way into enhancing the people’s capabilities and choices, which is the basic starting point to poverty alleviation and other developmental opportunities will open up (World Bank, 2000 and 2003).

It has also been conceded that the lack of skill and adequate funding within the local municipality has seriously impeded the devolution of power to effect LED interventions (Nel and Goldman, 2006). This is evident in the Nkonkobe municipality, which has limited funds, and skilled administrative personnel to spearhead LED interventions, prompting most economic development initiatives to be centrally coordinated from provincial government authorities.

Partnership with external stakeholders turns out to be the anchor and future direction for the furtherance of LED goals and initiatives in the municipality. This is as evidenced by a partnership between Nkonkobe municipality and Oxfordshire County. The partnership assists women entrepreneurs with business development skills. However, partnerships with private institutions complement the capacity of local municipalities and their efforts in development.
According to Xuza (2007), municipalities are not primarily in investment attraction and thus would need to engage with partners with a different set of skills and expertise or establish Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) parallel local institutional set ups that are to comply with municipal legislation. A Special Purpose Vehicle in Nkonkobe would spearhead its heritage tourism. Private-Public Partnerships are thus critical in the progress of local economic development. This proposal is supported by Rogerson (1999 and 2009). Partnerships with the private sector are likely to offer the critical financial resources needed for LED.

Partnerships between local municipality and the external stakeholders not only empowered local people to acquire skills and expertise. It enabled the local municipality to use its comparative advantage of having the vital human resources who can play a role in their own development. The Ngcabasa local area has benefited from the Vusuhlanga craft centre.

On the other hand, tourism is a fundamental sector especially in the peripheral local areas. Nkonkobe has also embraced tourism as a developmental strategy in poverty alleviation and this could contribute to the broader pro-poor economic growth strategy (DFID, 1999). Craft centres and the Heritage sites such as University of Fort Hare, Hogsback, and the Manqoma route that crosses a greater part of Nkonkobe to Nxuba Local Municipal area could be developed.

It can be asserted that LED has the potential to be a key driver of economic development in the study area. However according to academic research (see Rhodes University et al. 2006, in Rogerson, 2008), LED remains mixed with the lack of appropriate monitoring mechanisms for evaluating LED. It also needs to be conceptualized in a coherent and consistent manner for successful poverty alleviation (Meyer-Stammer, 2003).

There is also need to promote a conducive environment for SMME development and a swift implementation as well as endorsement of high skills and education levels, which will
enable SMEs to explore global markets where they earn higher incomes. Nkonkobe municipality can effectively direct its LED interventions on poverty alleviation through SMMEs development. Moreover, Rogerson (2003; 2009) supports this assertion by proposing that Local government recognizes the role and significance of building an effective business service sector to assist enterprises to attain necessary competitiveness. It will be fundamental to foster positive relations with the business sector, which has the funds and expertise that local government do not have and cannot provide. Another linked issue is to support the development of service markets for the provision of Business Development Services in order to make markets work for the poor especially in small towns and rural areas.

Nkonkobe should continue with the adoption of the pro-poor ‘bottom –up approach’ to LED and more so offer a community based approach associated “with a new, more sustainable paradigm” , as prescribed by Rogerson (2003). The new paradigm stresses the importance of local governments working with low-income communities and their organizations and “explicitly aims to link profitable growth and redistributive development” (Bond, 2002: 5) as cited in Rogerson (2003).

LED initiatives are predominantly ‘project-based’ as is the case with Nkonkobe local municipality. There is therefore need to adopt a new paradigm which is more coherent, comprehensive and integrated (Patel, 2007 as cited in Rogerson 2008). There is need for an integrated economic development plan coordinated by both the Nkonkobe Economic Development Agency (NEDA) and the Local Municipality. Such coordination should be complemented with direct participation of larger institutions and private stakeholders such as the Department of Local Government and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) who would bring complementary roles and responsibilities. The coordination will lead to the development of strategies for strengthening the local municipality to make headway in poverty alleviation. However, caution must be exercised to avoid duplication of duties.
There is need for training and transfer of skills to municipal personnel involved in LED activities so as they can be able to perform. As such Rogerson (2009) suggests establishing a national network of appropriate trainers in the area of LED. This would lead to competent LED practitioners with appropriate skills and knowledge (Patterson, 2008:20). The focus should be towards improving vocational advantage and a shift towards market-based support structures, with a ‘pro-poor’ developmental undertone (Rogerson, 2009).

In its developmental efforts, the local municipality should strategically ensure that the local farmers’ associations are strengthened to promote collective action among producers and focus on participation, as these organizations can play a critical role in widening marketing opportunities in the agricultural sector. Emphasis can be placed on small group membership such as the Siyazondla Project of which the municipality may not only provide technical support but also encourage them to be a collective unit, which attends regular training exercises on project management and efficient management of resources. This should be exercised with the aim to improve on significant capacity building business skills, access to technologies and marketing of their produce. This will ensure project sustainability for livelihood enhancement.

In principle, LED strategies and processes should entail community involvement to encourage the development and adoption of appropriate visions for their future and to ensure local ownership of the development process. The development strategy should be a blend of market-led and market-critical community focused strategies. Strategy implementation should be flexible and adapt to dynamic environmental circumstances, which allow for creativity and unique actions (Nel, 1999). More importantly, human capital development should be prioritized in whichever developmental approach that is adopted, as for projects to have any hope of long-term success (Nel, 1999). This ought to be implemented with necessary consideration of addressing basic needs within marginal communities. Moreover,
this can be established and implemented in collaboration with NGOs and development facilitators through their community outreach programmes.

Conclusion

LED is a multi-focus development strategy, which appears to have some potential to help address development needs in a variety of localities in the country including Nkonkobe Local Municipality. Despite the hopes which are currently pinned on LED in most localities, it is clearly not and cannot be regarded as a panacea capable of solving the nation’s economic problems. Regardless of these assertions, LED should still be supported and pursued because of the potentially inestimable contribution, which it can play in helping to address poverty, in providing alternative growth options, in reconciling communities and in addressing issues of empowerment, not only in the Nkonkobe Locality, but also in South Africa as a whole. This leads to the need to adopt a new paradigm in Local Economic Development, which are inclined towards pro-poor LED initiatives, which are to entail the coordinated pursuit of economic development. Such LED should explicitly target low-income and the marginalized communities, linking profitable growth and redistributive development. Empowerment through skills development training and literacy programmes are vital components, which can have reciprocal effects on the development of localities. Thus, the capacities of the local communities are enhanced. Without enhanced capacities, the local people are bound to be excluded from major socio-economic development activities.

The local government unit of government has been tasked to be the facilitator and driver of LED because of its proximity to the people in the communities. However, the challenge remains that the local municipalities do not have much of authoritative power to influence economic development policies, as they are compelled to await decisions which are made at provincial and national levels. This delays the implementation of local development policies. Despite this challenge, there are other bottlenecks experienced by local
municipalities such as Nkonkobe amongst others, which are the lack of skilled and experienced LED practitioners who do not only have the commitment and drive for the furtherance of LED as a development strategy, but also lack the expertise of executing practical LED interventions.

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Abstract

The transfer of staff hiring and firing decisions from the central government to the district local governments through the District Service Commissions (DSCs) is considered to be one of the cornerstones of the Ugandan decentralization reforms. Architects of Uganda’s decentralization policy opted for a separate personnel system because it increases responsiveness, enhances accountability of civil servants to elected leaders, and overcomes the challenge of dual allegiance by civil servants to central and local government masters. However, the decentralization of civil service management has come along with unintended or perverse effects. One such effect is sacrificing merit by the DSCs during recruitment and selection processes. In this paper, we argue that the legal framework for appointing the DSC and the defacto local eligibility criteria for appointment to the DSC; the size and ethnic composition of district local governments; and the tendency to associate districts with employment for indigenes are some of the key obstacles to merit-based recruitment and selection in local governments in Uganda.

Key words: Human resource management, local governments, Uganda

1. Introduction
This paper identifies and discusses key factors that militate against merit-based recruitment and selection in the local government civil service in Uganda. The paper is based on data collected from face-to-face interviews that were conducted with three Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) in March 2010. The three CAOs were selected owing to their wealth of experience with Uganda’s decentralized system of governance. They had worked in several districts in various capacities prior to recentralization of the appointment of CAOs in 2005 and in at least two districts following recentralization of the appointment of CAOs. They were therefore able to give perspectives that were beyond their current duty stations. Secondary data was collected from journal articles, dissertations, and administrative reports. Data from interviews and secondary sources were analyzed using thematic and content analysis methods.

2. Background

Over the past decades, decentralization has become a worldwide trend (Loffler, 2003; Sharma, 2005). The wave of decentralization gathered momentum in Africa from the early 1980s with several African states expending substantial resources on political and administrative decentralization (Crook & Manor, 1998; Wunsch, 2001; Sharma, 2005; Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2006). In Uganda, the decentralization policy was launched in October 1992 with the first 13 pilot districts (Kakumba, 2008). The Local Government (Resistance Councils) Statute, 1993 was enacted with a view to giving a firm legal basis for the decentralization policy reform. In 1995-following the promulgation of a new Constitution-the decentralization policy was rolled out to the entire country. The Constitution empowered local governments as focal points in managing development and social service delivery (Nsibambi, 1998). Under Uganda’s decentralization legal framework, the district is the highest level of local government and below it are lower local governments (municipalities, city divisions, town councils and sub-counties). The key political organ at each level is the council, which includes directly elected members and members that represent specific groups, namely: women, youth, and persons with disabilities. Each local government was designated a legal entity with delineated power to raise taxes and provide basic services (Manyak & Katono, 2010). The district council is the highest political organ of local government and comprises the District Chairperson as the political head plus a number of councilors representing electoral areas of the district and interest groups.
Current recruitment and selection practices in Local Governments

Uganda’s decentralization experience is generally considered a success story in terms of its extent and impact (Ndegwa & Levy, 2003). The transfer of staff hiring and firing decisions to the district governments through the District Service Commissions (DSCs) was considered to be one of the cornerstones of the Ugandan decentralization reforms (Bossert & Beauvais, 2002). Prior to civil service decentralization, local government officials were either seconded to local governments or placed in a unified personnel system for all local governments in the country (Olowu, 2001). With the onset of decentralization, civil servants posted to the districts were formally transferred to local governments and separate DSCs were set up to manage human resources in districts and local administrations. The right of DSCs to hire, fire and oversee district staff was anchored in the 1995 Constitution and further consolidated in the Local Government Act (1997). Members of the DSC are appointed by the district council on the recommendation of the district executive committee with approval of the central government’s Public Service Commission (PSC), hold office for a period of four years, and are eligible for appointment for one more term. From 2006-following a Constitutional amendment the previous year- Uganda witnessed a wave towards recentralization of some elements of local government personnel administration (Nabahó, 2011, 2012). The power to hire and fire Chief Administrative Officers of districts, their deputies; and town clerks of municipalities were shifted from DSCs to the central government’s PSC. The goal of recentralizing the high level administrators was to improve accountability and enhance the performance of local governments (Manyak & Katono, 2010). It was further intended to make them more effective than working under the patronage of local politicians (IGG, 2008). Critics of recentralization of top most administrators in local governments strongly argue that Uganda made a fundamental error by solving administrative problems in local governments through centralization and predict that recentralization would result in a snowball effect, where local accountability mechanisms would become totally undermined (Steffensen, 2006).

It can now be inferred that Uganda’s local government personnel system is now largely manifested in a separate personnel type and partly in an integrated one (Kakumba, 2008). While exercising their mandate, DSCs are by law required to conform to standards established by the PSC for the Public Service generally. Article 166(1) [d] of the Constitution and Section 58 of the Local Government Act (Cap 243) (GoU, 1997:5343) insulate the DSC from any external influence by unequivocally stating that, ‘The District Service Commission shall be independent and shall not be subject to control or direction of any person or authority’. Section 56(1) [a]-[d] of the same Act spells out the minimum qualifications for
member of the DSC: being ordinarily a resident of the district; being a person of high moral character and proven integrity; possessing a minimum of ten years working experience in a responsible position; and being in possession of a diploma qualification. It should be noted that it is upon the above minimum criteria that the PSC approves members of the DSCs.

Article 166(1) [d] and [e] mandates the PSC to guide, coordinate and regulate the DSCs. Section 59(2) of the Local Government Act provides for people aggrieved by decisions of the DSCs to appeal to the PSC. When an aggrieved individual appeals against the decision of the DSC to the PSC, the decision of the former remains valid until the appellant body has ruled over the matter. District Service Commissions are required to appoint staff in strict adherence to merit principles. This requirement echoes Max Weber—the German Sociologist—who stressed that merit should be the foundation upon which civil servants, at whatever level of government, should be appointed. Weber advocated for a civil service where selection of personnel should be competitive and based on demonstrated merit. Selection based on merit arguably reduces the likelihood of incompetence that can result from appointing civil servants through nepotism and patronage. Since Weber’s days, merit has become synonymous with an effective bureaucracy. Public sector reforms in developed and developing countries have and continue to stress merit-based recruitment and selection. Merit can simply be defined as appointment of the best person for any given job (McCourt, 2007). The “best person” definition implies a focus on individual jobs at all levels; the appointee is the best candidate; posts are open to all eligible candidates; and the appointment process is systematic, transparent and challengeable. In public administration systems where merit is observed in breach than in practice, focus is on the point of entry; the appointee is merely able (not outstandingly able) to do the job; posts are restricted to certain candidates; and the appointment process may be arbitrary, secretive and unchallengeable. It may therefore be inferred that in merit-based recruitment and selection, civil service appointments are devoid of patronage or illicit payments. In other words, job offers should be made to persons who are ‘outstandingly able to do the job’ as opposed to those who are ‘merely able to do the job’. Merit systems provide public sector organizations with the opportunity to place the right persons in the right jobs. Breach of merit in recruitment and selection can, without doubt, breed undesirable and potentially negative consequences on good governance and service delivery. There is no doubt that appointments based on patronage undermine the capacity of the bureaucracy; lower the integrity of the civil service; and limit economic growth and therefore poverty reduction. Merit-based appointment has over time been
associated with the quality and integrity of the civil service at various levels of government. Anti-corruption crusaders have discerned it out as one of the major factors associated with low incidences of corruption in the implementing arm of government (World Bank, 1997:16; United Nations, 2005:80). Merit is increasingly being accepted in policy circles as an anti-corruption strategy. Merit-based recruitment is further associated with economic growth. Bureaucracies with strong meritocratic tradition are associated with superior economic growth (Rauch & Evans, 2000). The ‘miracle’ era in East Asia is attributed, in part, to meritocratic selection.

Studies on recruitment and selection practices in local governments of Uganda show that it is less than adequate in relation to the ‘best practices’ in recruitment and selection (e.g. Francis & James, 2003; Kakumba, 2003; Ministry of Public Service, 2003; Ministry of Local Government, 2004; IGG, 2008; Therkildsen & Tidemand, 2007; Galiwango, 2008; Kakumba, 2008; Amony, 2010; Nabaho, 2011, 2012). The above studies have revealed that factors such as patronage, nepotism, favoritism and political interference, to some degree, interfere with recruitment and selection processes in local governments in Uganda. With regard to patronage and nepotism, technical ‘know-who’ as opposed to ‘technical know-how’ has an immense potential to bolster a candidate’s chances of getting appointed in the district civil service (Galiwango, 2008; Kakumba, 2008; Nabaho, 2012). The recruitment process in local governments can also be described as inward looking and biased against candidates from other districts. It favors ‘sons and daughters of the soil’— a phrase that refers to preference of workers who originate from the local government. Rather than DSCs hiring staff ‘for the district from the national labor market’, as demanded by the current legal and policy frameworks, some DSCs persistently appoint staff ‘for the district from the local/district labor market’ (Nabaho, 2012). The National Integrity Survey by the Inspectorate of Government (IGG) in 2008 confirmed discriminatory tendencies when it was reported that ‘DSCs had persistently chosen to recruit people from local areas’. Breach of merit principles undermines the issue of equity and equal opportunity, especially when someone is granted a civil service position because of connections and district of origin rather than because he/she is qualified for the job. The practice further undermines the national character of public administration (Francis & James, 2003). Similarly, when merit principles assume a back seat in recruitment and selection, technical capacity of the civil service is greatly undermined and this consequently weaken the overall performance of local governments. For example, Therkildsen and Tidemand (2007) established that districts in
Uganda that upheld merit principles performed better than those that had not and partly attributed differences in performance across local governments to merit-based recruitment and selection. One conclusion emerges from the pioneer work of Therkildsen and Tidemand-strengthening appointments on merit is a simple and yet powerful way in which local governments can improve their overall performance and quality of service delivery to residents. The above academic works (e.g. Kakumba, Galiwango, Nabaho, 2011, 2012; Amony, 2010) have made a notable contribution by identifying a problem that undermines the efficacy of Uganda’s decentralization policy. However, with the exception of Kakumba (2008), the rest of the studies do not delve into the explanatory variables for non-adherence to merit principles by local governments, and can therefore not inform policy decisions aimed promoting merit-based recruitment and selection. Consequently, we know little about what sustains patronage, nepotism and favoritism in civil service selection in Uganda’s local government system. The next section explores the obstacles to merit in local governments of Uganda.

4. Obstacles to merit

In this section, we explore obstacles to merit-based recruitment and selection in Uganda’s local government system. It is the earnest desire of the central government and other stakeholders in local governments to ensure that recruitment and selection in local government are not at variance with merit principles. It should be appreciated that the starting point for ensuring merit-based recruitment and selection is to comprehend the myriad of possible forces which oppose it. In problem solving, it is often said that a problem is solved by understanding a range of forces that sustain it and accordingly weakening them. In discussing the obstacle to merit, we take cognizance of the fact that appointments are not made in an organizational vacuum, and are affected by the general climate and practices which surround them (McCourt, 2007). Below are the forces that sustain patronage, nepotism and favoritism in local governments that emerged from our investigation.

**Legal framework for appointing the DSC and the defacto local eligibility criteria for appointing members of the DSC**

Our study has established that malpractices in recruitment and selection at the local government level cannot be divorced from legal framework for appointing the DSC and the local eligibility criteria that has covertly been set by some district councils. The recruitment agencies are appointed by the district councils, on the recommendation of the district
executive committees, with approval of the PSC. The approval of district nominees to the DSC by the PSC is intended to ensure that the minimum qualifications for appointment—as provided in the Constitution and Local Government Act—are achieved. One theme that strongly emerged from our investigation was that the appointment of people into the DSC adopts unfair and unethical patronage practices based on considerations and criteria other than merit. There are concerns that those appointed into the DSC are former campaign managers/agents of the political heads of the districts or local politicians. Asked about criteria district chairpersons use to nominate persons to serve on the DSC, one respondent in Galiwango (2008:206) replied,

One cannot be appointed to the DSC unless one was a campaign agent of the ruling [district] chairperson. It has become one way of appeasement and entrenchment for incumbents

The above assertion is a confirmation that merit is observed in breach than in practice while appointing people into the DSC. The legal framework for appointing the DSC and the local eligibility criteria for appointing DSC members have two major implications for recruitment and selection of civil servants.

First, the DSC is susceptible to undue political influence by appointing authority. Some DSCs find it hard not to dance to the tunes of local politicians who are perceived to be their bosses by virtue of having nominated and consequently appointed them to the DSC. There are already clear indications that DSCs are responding to the wishes of the appointing authority despite the Constitutional provision which safeguards them against external influence. In the Draft Restructuring Report for Local Governments in Uganda (2003), the Ministry of Public Service (2003:3) noted that, ‘District Service Commissions tended to appoint staff recommended by [local] politicians’. During our interviews with CAOs, one of them strongly responded as follows, ‘...the hand of the district council is invisible and yet very powerful in almost every selection decision by the District Service Commissions’. The same respondent called for working out an arrangement that would ensure that the DSC is not an organ of council. Galiwango (2008:209) reports one respondent—a senior civil servant in a district—having said:

‘It is difficult to get a [civil service] job in the district unless the councilors have talked to the chairperson [of the DSC]. The DSC is just a rubber stamp’
Second, the way that a DSC is constituted significantly influences how it conducts its mandate or behaves. A DSC appointed in total disregard of merit principles is unlikely to exercise its functions on merit. With regard to recruitment and selection, such a DSC has low chances of appointing civil servants on merit (Nabaho, 2012). This implies that when merit becomes the overarching consideration for appointing the DSC, there is a high likelihood of such a DSC to appoint staff on merit. Furthermore, a DSC that is constituted on narrow interests—such as rewarding former campaign agents—will be predisposed to serve narrow interests: appeasing the appointing authority or their ‘appeaser(s)’

Now that we have linked breach of merit to the way that the DSC is appointed, the largely unanswered question is: how do we move forward? We must assert that this paper is not prescriptive—it is only intended to inform further discussions on how to put local governments on the much needed meritocratic path. We will therefore provide thematic areas upon which the discourse to fix the problem may be based. The first theme has to do with enhancement of appreciation of merit by local council leaders and members of the DSCs. The second theme, one which was proposed by one of the respondents, is to break the umbilical cord between the DSC and the district council or more precisely ensuring that the DSC is not an organ of the district council. The third option would be fundamentally altering the personnel system/arrangement in local governments. Two alternative personnel systems quickly come to mind: an integrated personnel system and a unified personnel system. An integrated personnel system would imply that the personnel of the central government and that of local government form part of the same service and transfers are possible not only between local governments but also to the departments of the central government (Maheshwari, 2011). The central government would be mandated to appoint and post staff to local authorities to meet service delivery needs. Such a personnel arrangement would be offensive to proponents of decentralization by devolution since it leads to direct control of civil servants by the central government and further occasions a split between loyalties of senior officials managing decentralized services: their ‘operational’ loyalty to local councils and their ‘career’ loyalty to central masters. It is often argued that senior officials who have any ambition for their future would unlikely defend the council’s interests where such interest demonstrably clash with the ideas of a minister or the central government. In addition, centralized structures have been criticized for inherently being incapable of satisfying local needs since; rarely do incentives exist for central government officials to perceive citizens as their clientele (Lubanga, 1998). Similarly, such a system would undermine the accountability of civil servants to local
councils. The second menu of the personnel system is the unified one. In unified personnel arrangements, local government staff are employed locally but organized nationwide in a single civil service parallel to the central one (Mawhood, 1983). In practice, all local government civil servants would be members of a national ‘local government civil service’ and would be eligible to be transferred between local governments. Normally, a national body—Local Government Service Commission—takes charge of the local government staff. The Local Government Service Commission (LGSC) does what the PSC does for the national civil service. There is also a possibility of having a separate personnel system operating side by side with either an integrated or unified personnel arrangement. In Uganda, the integrated personnel system operates for top most administrators in districts and municipalities while the rest of the district staff are appointed under the separate personnel system. Malawi presents an interesting case where senior officials are appointed under the unified personnel arrangement while the rest of the staff of local governments are managed under the separate personnel system. In the case of Uganda, this would mean enlarging the category of staff to be managed under such a hybrid system. We also take cognizance of the fact that there could be those who are opposed to any variation in the current separate personnel system in Uganda’s local government system. Such stakeholders may argue that the current personnel system has no problem; the problem is with the actors in the system.

Size and ethnic composition of district local governments

The wave to create new districts in Uganda has gathered and continues to gather momentum. In 1991, Uganda had 39 districts. By 2008, Uganda had 79 districts and the fourth largest number of sub-national administrative units after Russia with 83 federal units. We cannot tell with precision the global position that Uganda currently holds as far as the number of higher administrative units is concerned. Uganda has the smallest average number of people per sub-national administrative unit (district) among large countries in Africa (Green, 2008b). As on 1 July 2010—a few months to the presidential and parliamentary elections— the number of districts had skyrocketed to 111 with one city. The central government has already tabled a proposal in Parliament to create 25 more district local governments. The unprecedented growth of districts in Uganda, especially during President Museveni’s regime, has attracted scholarly attention into the plausible reasons for the demand for districts by citizens and the inability of government to reject such demands. Green (2008b) has identified the following as reasons that have frequently been advanced for creating new sub-national governments in Uganda: improving service delivery; ethno-linguistic conflict management; gerrymandering;
the inability of the central government to resist local demands for districts; and patronage, job creation and electoral politics. He concludes that the plausible reasons for creating districts are patronage, job creation and electoral politics. It is not our intention to engage in a discourse on the politics of district creation in Uganda. But one thing is clear: the creation of new districts has reduced what were once ethnically heterogeneous districts to ones largely populated by one or two major ethnic groups. We argue that the size of the districts and their attendant ethnic composition have major implications for civil service management in local governments. Small districts—and more especially those formed along ethnic lines—heighten patronage, nepotism and favoritism in civil service appointment. With small districts, there is a high likelihood of conglomerating highly homogeneous people. This homogeneity can be in terms of ethnic group, religion, etc. Commenting on implications of the size of districts in Uganda on human resource management in local governments, one CAO remarked, ‘Districts [in Uganda] are too small to the extent that almost everyone is related to the other’. The above assertion has two implications for human resource management generally and for recruitment and selection in particular. First, with a small district, it is easier to find a patron. Second, people who are related to each other would preferably hire those who are related to them. Hence, the size and ethnic composition of districts can heighten patronage, nepotism and favoritism in civil service recruitment and selection (Nabaho, 2012). This should lead us to rethink the criteria for creating districts under the decentralized system of governance. A more rational criterion for creating districts is that one which takes into account factors such as population and geographical area. This criterion may be difficult to employ with big ethnic groups in Uganda such as Baganda, Basoga and Bagisu. It is doubtful whether such a criteria would put an end to appointing the so called ‘sons and daughters of the soil’. But what is certain is that it can change the character of the district civil services from those dominated by a single or few ethnic groups to those comprising multi-ethnic groups.

Association of districts with employment

Among the local people, having their ‘own’ district is associated with creating employment for the indigenes. There have been discernible cases where, specifically in multi-ethnic districts, some ethnic groups have agitated for district status simply because of perceived marginalization in the district civil service or because they hold few senior civil service positions. One of our respondents corroborated this notion by observing that, ‘One of the major reasons for agitating for district status by the local people in most parts of Uganda is to create jobs. Once the district status has been given, applicants from other districts are
considered persona non grata when it comes to accessing job opportunities in the district’. Because districts are associated with employment, districts tend to first consider ‘sons and daughters of the soil’ while appointing staff in various civil service positions. District Service Commissions advertise job opportunities in national newspapers to elicit responses from across the entire country—merely to give an impression that jobs are eligible to all qualified Ugandan—but the actual selection to fill vacant positions is in most cases done from the local (district) labor markets. Applicants born and residing outside the district and seeking to fill vacant positions are, in some cases, shortlisted and interviewed purposely to give credibility to the recruitment and selection process. However, a caveat needs to be put here. Asserting that appointment in the district civil service favors ‘sons and daughters of the soil’ does not connote that district public services are devoid of people hailing from other districts. In exceptional circumstances—principally where suitable local candidates have not been found—DSCs may appoint from the national labor market but in some respects, such appointments may not be purely on merit.

5. Conclusion
Unlike previous studies that focused on providing evidence that merit is sacrificed during recruitment and selection in local governments, this study has made a contribution by identifying factors that undermine merit based recruitment and selection in sub-national governments. The study has demonstrated that three factors work in concert to promote patronage, nepotism and discrimination in recruitment and selection in local governments: legal framework for appointing the DSC and the local, albeit illegal, eligibility criteria for appointing individuals to the DSC; size and ethnic composition of district local governments; and association of districts with employment for the indigenes. We therefore believe that any intervention aimed at entrenching merit in recruitment and selection should take cognizance of these factors. We also recommend a quantitative study with a view to establishing the strength of the factors we have identified.

References


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Urban Terrorism and Political Violence in Southern Thailand: The Case of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat

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ABSTRACT

Urban terrorism is gaining greater salience because of the unpredictability and adaptability of terrorists in the changing urban-built environment. Higher population density also increases opportunities for terrorist activities. This paper uses three models to explain political violence in Thailand's southern provinces with a focus on Pattani. I conclude that the proximity to violence begets deeper potential for urban-centric conflict.

Keywords
Thailand, terrorism, military, political violence, urban terrorism, Southern Thailand

Introduction

Globalization has generated greater access to news and information in a breath of an instance. But rather than making the world more tolerant through understanding, globalization has made more people less tolerant of religious, economic, social and gender issues. People appear to be less forgiving despite living in a world that has generated more information about human life and activities than previous civilizations. Urban terrorism is gaining greater interest because of the unpredictability of the urban environment. The higher the density of an urban population increases the likelihood as a target for urban terrorists. Urban terrorism is a central feature of modernity and such urban violence has its roots in the late 19th century’s formative development of political ideology. The enmeshing of political ideology and religion, as well as culture and religion, has created a keg of unpredictable violence.

There are many interesting models that try to explain urban terrorism, too many to include, but sufficient in number to add salience to the topic of urban terrorism and political
violence. In this paper, I highlight three useful models that explain different aspects of such violence.

   West and Orr’s model that was modified – without permission – in order to capture a trait not commonly found in other theoretical models in security studies and political science. The idealist Urban Democratic Model (UDM) is one that attempts to capture impressions and the impact of violence across all forms of social media, both virtual and real. This model is based on the four freedoms of expression, movement, opinion, belief, and voluntary non-participation/right of refusal. Another model introduced in this paper is the Proximity Attack Model of Urban Violence (PAM) Model, which was designed to capture the fear, and anxiety that emerges when a proximate or regional center is attacked by terrorists. This model suggests that there is a fear that an attack in one place increases the chances of attack in another place that is close by.

THE CASE OF SOUTHERN THAILAND

The case from which observations were made between 1987 and 2012 involves the Kingdom’s provinces of Yala, Narathiwat and Pattani. Insurgent leaders celebrate the fabled 14th century Islamic Pattani Sultanate with roots that some scholars have traced back to the late 19th century by which time the Sultanate was already known to be a vassal state of Siam. The primary language used in these three provinces is Yawi, which sounds very close to Malay language and may be a derivation of the Javanes Jawi-influenced Empire across the Strait of Malacca. The word ‘petani’ is the Malay word for rice farmer. The region is known for its rice-yielding soil. Historians have used the words Patani, Pattani, and Petani to describe the place, culture, and politics. “Thailand has faced secessionist movements since it annexed the independent sultanate of Patani [Note: Thailand's annexed sultanate is spelled "Patani"; the country's southern province is spelled "Pattani"] in 1902, making the area the southernmost tip of the country. A policy of forced assimilation enraged the ethnically Malay Muslims, who represent the majority in the region. Many of the region's Muslims adopted Thai names and the national language. But local traditions were secretly cultivated, and between the 1940s and the 1980s separatists staged a series of opposition uprisings. The insurgency is largely confined to the three provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat and five districts of Songkhla province—Chana, Thepha, Na Thawi, Saba Yoi, and Sadao”.

geography of the south ranges from hilly jungles to open coastlands and sparsely populated farmland on undulating terrain. The major concentrations of all the terrorist activities have been in the rural areas but most of the targets have been located in built-up areas as well as urban centres such as towns and cities.

At the height of the British Empire in Malaya, the Siamese king had forged a reconsolidation of territories. Siam had not intervened with the occupation and takeover of Singapore in 1819, then a tributary state to the Kingdom, by the Johor Sultanate. But politics changed a century later especially since the Pattani Sultanate was contiguous to the Kingdom. The Siamese king decided to exert greater control from the north. Before the start of World War I, moves were made to develop greater diplomatic ties and by 1909 the Anglo-Siamese Treaty that created the boundaries that separated the Thai provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat and the British-controlled Malayan states of Kelantan, Perak, Kedah and Perlis. Note that it was not named Malaysian till 1963 when the Federation of Malaysia was formed. Up till then it was known as Malaya. The Malaysian factor remains a key variable in the restive Thai South:

In Thailand, the main external actor associated with the conflict has been its neighbour Malaysia. But because of the historical role and affinity of Malaysia to the Pattani Malays, the country’s involvement seems to be tenuous and unsustained. It must be remembered that a territory of 15,000 square miles once part of the domain of the Pattani sultanate was ceded to Britain in 1909. Furthermore, the last sultan of Pattani Tengku Abdul Kadir Kamaradin and his sons, particularly Tengku Mahmud Mahiyuddin, operated from these Malaysian states in their campaign to regain or re-establish their sovereignty over the areas annexed by Thailand. There have also been two major incidents of Malay Muslims fleeing across the border to Malaysia in 1981 and 2005 that caused strained relations between the two countries.2

Four Phases

There were four broad phases that may have contributed to the rise of the insurgency in Pattani (as well as Yala and Narathiwat). The cultural roots of contemporary residents of Pattani are also said to go back to 1390 when the fabled Pattani Sultanate was ‘founded’. The first ruler, Sultan Ismail Shah was said to have converted to Islam. But the Portuguese records of the period have different historical accounts. Nevertheless, the first Pattani Sultanate was finally annexed by Siam in 1771. This meant that it had significant autonomy including the use of its ‘own’ choice of language and the practice of religion.

The second phrase was the consolidation of political power in 1909 by the King of Siam. The ending of the Pattani Sultanate did not end the practice of Islam. Additionally, the ending of the Pattani Sultanate did not weaken the local people’s attachment to their sense of history. Nevertheless, the power consolidation was followed by an attempt to assimilate the local cultures into the Siamese one. Most non-Thai historical accounts suggest some degree of resistance against Siamese political assimilationism especially those accounts written from the Islamic perspective. Western accounts tend to be less imbalanced than those from the Siamese and Malay worlds but the literature is vast and needs more researching. Nevertheless, the end of World War I saw political machinations and moves made by the Siamese King to assimilate the Southern provinces and replace Islamic religion with Buddhism and Thai culture. Quite naturally, this was what most states had done in the past. A far-reaching historical example would be the Christening of the Roman Empire or the later unification of Malacca under Islam before first contact with the Portuguese.

The third phase was a resurgence of the Siamese assimilationist policies that included the Western-influenced Compulsory Primary Education Act (1921) that required compulsory education in Buddhism and Siamese culture for all children. That was the kind of policy enforcement that made the locals even more resistant against the state (Bangkok).

A fourth phase was after the 1939 coup when Siam was renamed Thailand and a new nationalist sentiment saw the imposition of marshal law on the Southern provinces that resisted assimilation.

Post War Era

After World War II, there was growing concern about nationalist sentiments among the Islamic populations in Thailand’s Southern provinces and Malaysia’s Northern States. This prompted the Thai authorities to introduce a number of measures to appease the Malay
Muslims — like permitting the use and application of Islamic Sharia Law within the provincial administrative structures.

**Patronage of Islam Act**

The Patronage of Islam Act (May 1945) generated state-friendly Thai-Muslim (Thai first, Islam second) institutions in order to gain the cooperation of Muslim Ulama. The act revived what western observers perceive as the *chularajamontri*, the highest Islamic authority in the country. The chularajamontri was responsible for the religious affairs of all Muslims in Thailand. The problem was that the choice of the chularajamontri from the Sunni would not be acceptable to the Shi’ite Muslims.³

Between 1946 and 1948 the political relationship between Bangkok and the Malay Muslims of Pattani deteriorated significantly. The political battles and urban violence resulted in the creation of the Pattani People’s Movement (PPM) in early 1947. That was the period of heightened nationalism and national fervor that was sweeping the entire Southeast Asian region. That was also the end of diplomacy, at least any chance of it, between the state and the restive provinces.

The PPM demanded autonomous, self-rule in the South, language and cultural rights, and reintroduction of the Islamic Sharia Laws. Bangkok refused. This resulted in greater political violence that spread deeper into the rural Southern provinces as confrontation between the Thai authorities and Malay Muslim groups such as the PPM escalated with untold numbers injured and killed on both sides. Innocent Muslim and Buddhist children also fell victim. The rise of charismatic leaders such as Sulong Haji Abdul Kadir of the Provincial Islamic Council in Pattani (PPIC) and Mohammad Haji Abdul Rahman (Tengku Bira) merely made the situation worse. They paved the way for the emergence of the Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO) in the mid to late 1960s. Abdul Rahman was also being observed by members of the Special Branch (Malaya) and he remain influential in shaping the politics of the insurgency till he was believed to have been killed in 2008. At the height of its power, PULO had close to 5,000 armed full-time combatants who were trained and equipped by Syrian forces. Global Security reports that Tengku Bira conducted business in Sweden before his death. There are unverified reports of Tengku Bira being poisoned by Thai intelligence but it is more likely to be a rumour perpetrated by his followers to make him into a martyr. The distinction between the four and five star PULO is a myth. However, Thai

military intelligence may be credited for destabilizing PULO by the end of 2008. Yet PULO leaders managed to reorganize themselves by merging with other splinter groups from the larger disaffected ones. PULO itself was a clever “political compromise” programme between the BNPP and the BRN to appeal to most of the modern Muslims while appeasing the harder right wing locals. Muslim insurgents were sent to train overseas in Indonesia, the Middle East and the Southern Philippines. Some Pakistan ISI agents now retired had revealed that he had known (and eaten dinner with some) Malays from Thailand. The King of Thailand had appointed a native southerner, General Prem Tinsulanonda, to resolve the southern problem.

PM Prem masterminded a brilliant plan to recover the lost political ground and found a way to attain a new peace initiative among the fragmented and warring groups on one hand and the military security agencies on the other. Most Thai and foreign scholars of Thai politics note that it was only in 2005 when PM Thaksin enforced an emergency decree that the violence erupted again. This is widely known as the Executive Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situation (EEDPAES). The EEDPAES empowers Bangkok to take offensive and coercive action against the insurgents without recourse for the latter. Apart from the tri-monthly renewal of the EEDPAES, the whole region remains under the jurisdiction of the Southern Border Provinces Administration Centre (SBPAC), the ISOC (Field and Command HQs in the South) and the local administrative offices in Yala, Narathiwat and Pattani.

In March 2012, Pattani province remains the primary focus of insurgent attacks totaling over 5,090 deaths across three provinces. Two more deaths occurred in July 2012 and like the others, no group or party claimed responsibility. Even religious buildings are not safe. The following month unknown assailants attacked a small mosque but no one claimed responsibility: “Pol Lt-Col Manit Panthong, chief of the Pattani forensic police, said 16 spent AK47 cartridge shells were recovered from in front of the mosque at Ban Na Phrao in tambon Panare”. Some observers believe that the EEDPAES has loopholes, which heighten the risk of arbitrary detention and the potential for the cruel treatment of detainees. Some liken it to martial law with no accountability. The decree is renewed every three months and was renewed in April 2012.

However, in September 2012 a truce was established between the military command, ISOC, and the main insurgent groups in those three provinces. This is a positive testament to

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4 See for example, “Three slain leaving Pattani mosque” Bangkok Post 12 April 2012.
Yingluck Shinawatra’s government since the levels of political violence escalated after General Prem Tinsulanonda stepped down as prime minister (PM) and then again later and quite ironically when Thaksin Shinawatra, Yingluck Shinawatra’s eldest brother became the PM and was democratically re-elected. As of early October 2012, only the locals know for sure which groups had been responsible for the 5092 deaths.\(^5\) The actual body count of the number of deaths in the three provinces is illustrated in Table A that follows.\(^6\)

Table A:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Cumulative Death Toll</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1950-1968</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>PULO formed and other right wing Islamic groups formed in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1970-1980</td>
<td>1395</td>
<td>Killing and stabbing by soldiers of youngster on a Pattani bridge; Protests by over 3,000 students and faculty from Thammasat, Chulalongkorn, Ramkhamhaeng, Mahidon, and Chiang Mai on December 12, 1975.(^7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1981-2003</td>
<td>2034</td>
<td>Total number of injured people passes the 8,000 mark; more splinter groups formed out of former anti-state insurgent groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2004-2007</td>
<td>2595</td>
<td>Krue Se Mosque; Fall of Thaksin; exile of Thaksin; raid on Narathiwat armoury and theft of 400 weapons and ammunition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2008-2010</td>
<td>3500</td>
<td>PULO leader found dead; Yellow Shirts conflict; Red shirt siege; merger of PULO and Pattani Liberation Organization (PLO).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^5\) See also RSIS Commentaries and Thailand’s political issues in the Singapore Institute for International Affairs.

\(^6\) Note that while the total death toll since the 1950s appears to be high, and hence begs the question what price human life? Ironically, the Thai case pales in comparison with the insurgency in the Southern Philippines. The Moro and other rebellions in the Philippines Southern provinces resulted in over 120,000 fatalities.

\(^7\) “Thai Muslims campaign for civil rights” [http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/thai-muslims-campaign-civil-rights-1975](http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/thai-muslims-campaign-civil-rights-1975)
Yingluck becomes PM; peace between SBPAC, ISOC and main insurgent gangs; foreigners allegedly involved in insurgency. Allegations include some members of the OIC; Hat Yai Hotel Bombing.

This is the approximate increase over the next 3-5 years should there greater urban violence.

**THEORY**

There are three theoretical models that help shed light on the Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat cases of terrorism. These models have been introduced to explain political violence in these Thai provinces. The models provide a useful handle on the decades’ old confusion, chaos and uncertainty. The current residents of these three provinces are themselves descendants of Buddhists and Muslims who were killed since the 1950s. Some might be able to trace their roots further back to the time of foreign intervention.

The three models are the Modified Conversation Model (MCM), the Urban Democratic Model (UDM), and the Proximity Attack Model of Urban Violence (PAM). These models are briefly discussed in the following section.

**West and Orr’s Modified Conversation Model (MCM)**

The MCM is based on logical and emotional responses to urban terrorism. West and Orr argue that at least two independent variables impact perceptions/responses of/to urban terror. At the heart of their model is the importance of “conversation” which includes a mixture of subjective impression as well as verifiable fact. One could interpret this model as an attempt to account for the impact of “personal conversations” on violence and terror in urban centres. More often than not, conversations between two persons at the very least contain both logical and emotive questions, statements, and answers. The speaker and the

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receiver exchange ideas and opinions that are logically reasoned or subjective and emotive. This has led to the problems of discerning quid pro quo in quotidian situations between for example terrorists and hostages, counterterrorist agents and officials, as well as among insurgents. It is only through a deconstruction of these narratives that we can ascertain the logical and emotive divide. The MCM has been modified for (sustainable) political development fieldwork. The MCM is itself based on three premises: (1) what a male speaker says is dependent on his physical strength; (2) what a female says is dependent on whether she has children; and, (3) both men and women are shaped by their religion. There are three considerations while applying West and Orr’s modified Conversation Model as follows: (1) every utterance must be entered into the original language database including pauses; (2) only political items used in conversation are tagged; and, (3) the dataset of political items must be updated yearly. Note that the modifications hope to achieve three goals: (1) Profile individual participants from the characteristics of their conversations; (2) deconstruct the individual conversations in the context of the original languages; and, (3) simplify their conversations for a linguistic database in the original language (e.g. Standard Thai).

Table B-1

West and Orr’s Modified Conversational Model (MCM)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Premise</th>
<th>Male/Physical Strength</th>
<th>Female/Children</th>
<th>Men/Women/Religion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consideration</td>
<td>Utterances in Original Language</td>
<td>Tag only political items</td>
<td>Annual updates to dataset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Conversational Profiles</td>
<td>Deconstruction</td>
<td>Simplify Conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Violence in the three restive provinces of Pattani, Narathiwat and Yala</td>
<td>High: the presence of more males leads to higher levels of urban terrorism and political violence</td>
<td>Low: the presence of more females leads to lower levels of urban terrorism and political violence. Children and offspring define women.</td>
<td>This is dependent on how many males/men or females/women are present. More religious males = greater violence; more religious females = lower violence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The MCM was used to understand the kinds of conversations that were made in the process of interviewing the respondents in Pattani, Narathiwat and Yala. The conclusions made of the various recordings of the respondents is captured in Table B. The conversations were made in simple Standard Thai and simple English between the Principle Investigator, the interpreters and the respondents. The MCM classified the Level of Violence as High during conversations where there were more religious-minded males present as compared to females in a given population. The MCM classified the Level of Violence as Low during conversations within populations where there were more females and children.

Urban terrorists in Thailand are interested in getting media attention but these groups are not interested in claiming a name for themselves or their organizations. This model was discovered to be useful in proxy interpretations of the 2010 Songkran riots and the Red Shirt siege across the urban space centered at Langsuan, Ratchadamnoen, and Ratchadapisek. The emotive responses and narratives were captured by fieldworks conducted before, during and after the widespread demonstrations where over 91 Thai people including 2 foreigners were killed. West and Orr’s model was particularly useful because it could capture the shards of rhetoric of the Red Shirt supporters, Yellow Shirt supporters and government officials who crossed over to the Red or Yellow sides. I discovered that the importance of “gossip” arising out of personal conversations used through handphones were the primary organizational modes of those within and outside the siege compounds. I also discovered and confirmed that the watermelon soldiers – those who were Red Shirts at heart and who usually had relatives from the Isan region to the northeast of the country – green on the outside and red on the inside were those least likely to shoot at Red Shirts. All those interviewed claimed that they “went slow” when instructed or commanded to disperse Red Shirt supporters and also claimed that they pretended to shoot or shot their weapons at a different height when ordered to open fire.

**Rappa’s Urban Democratic Model (UDM)**

There are three main premises in UDM which are: (1) democracy is the most popular choice among most nations; (2) liberty through democracy; and, (3) freedom through wealth. The main consideration is that democracies tend not to go to war with other democracies (after the Kantian democratic peace proposition).
UDM focuses on the multiple applications of virtual and real public spaces as sites of expression and articulation of the four freedoms. Minetos et al cite Rappa’s theory of mass consumption that generates a chasm between people and the (urban-built) environment. In this model, terrorism is extrapolated as a multidimensional urban-centric series of power bases that emerge and submerge at different points in late modernity. The four freedoms goals in this democratic-values model are: (1) The freedom of expression in any language through any medium including the internet, radio, television, satellite, handphones, and any other form of social media or new media that broadcasts opinions and beliefs in a non-violent, and peaceful manner. (2) The freedom of movement to any place or space at any time as long as it does not trespass or violate another individual’s or common right to privacy; (3) The freedom of expression of opinion through religious and cultural beliefs and belief systems that do not violate other’s rights to the same and are expressed in a non-violent and peaceful manner. (4) The freedom of voluntary non-participation in any act, expression, ideology, politics, religion, culture, society, regime or state that violates or has proven to violate any of the four freedoms.

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**Table B-2 Urban Democratic Model (UDM)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Premise</th>
<th>Popular Democracy</th>
<th>Liberty through Democracy</th>
<th>Freedom through Wealth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consideration</td>
<td>Democracies do not go to war with other democracies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Freedom through Language</td>
<td>Freedom of Movement</td>
<td>Freedom of Opinion and Belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Urban Terrorism and</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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This model was useful because it could account for the multidimensional applications of virtual and real public spaces as sites of expression and articulation of the four freedoms. Minetos et al cite Rappa’s theory of mass consumption that generates a chasm between people and the (urban-built) environment. In this model, terrorism is extrapolated as a multidimensional urban-centric series of power bases that emerge and submerge at different points in late modernity. The UDM is perhaps more accurate in mature democracies rather than ones still undergoing the democratic transformation as appears to be the case for Thailand. The third and final model used in this paper is the proximity attack model.

**Rappa’s Proximity Attack Model of Urban Violence (PAM)**

The PAM assumes that man is irrational by nature and has to be educated to think logically and rationally. Man’s political insecurity is biologically based and stems from the fear that an attack in one place increases the chances of attack in other places. The creation of anxiety among citizens in a state is common in the literature (Bar-Tal and Jacobson, 1998; Wilkinson, 2006; Sorkin, 2008; US Department of Homeland Security, 2011). This model is a post-cursor to the garrison state mentality where defence was the best form of attack and where the common good was about providing fortress-like protection for all citizens. The advancement of the post-cursor to the garrison state model in this case involves the use of advanced garrison state perspectives used in Vietnam and in notions of forward defence such as NATO in Europe from 1981-1991. The insecurity model appears to be most effective in explaining post-blast activities as well as globally impactful events such as 9-11, London, Madrid, Jakarta, and the Bali bombings. However this model is not valid for long-time insurgencies such as those in Palestine (1949-2009), Moro (1972-present), Iraq (1959-1990) and the three provinces of Yala, Narathiwat and Pattani (1970s-present). Based on the (2008-2012) survey (of unidentified citizens) that was conducted in northern Malaysia along the Thai-Malaysian border, there remains an irrational fear that an attack in Yala increases the chances of attack in Narathiwat and Pattani. The results show that the respondents who have lived and worked in these three provinces all their lives have a constant fear that they will be the next victims of sudden, unpredictable and violent attack. This survey showed that such an
irrational fear cuts across ethnic identity, national identity, gender, religion and culture. Table C-1 to C-10 lists the variables and questions used in the survey. The word Pattani originated from the Malay word petani meaning farmer. Based on the survey results conducted in northern Malaysia along the Thai-Malaysian border, there remains an irrational fear that an attack in Changwat Yala increases the chances of attack in Changwat Pattani or Changwat Narathiwat. The results show that the respondents who have lived and worked in these three provinces all their lives have a constant fear that they will be the next victims of a sudden, unpredictable and violent attack. This survey showed that such an irrational fear cuts across ethnic identity and national identity; it also cuts across gender, religion (Buddhism, Islam) and (Thai, Malay) culture.10

CONCLUSION

There are three main conclusions made in this paper: (1) higher levels of violence are associated with the presence of disproportionately larger numbers of religious-minded males as to females in Pattani and Narathiwat; (2) linguistic freedom, freedom of movement, freedom of opinion and voluntary non-participation in political activities are positively correlated with low levels of political violence. In Pattani, the absence of linguistic freedom, the curfews placed on civilians and the muzzling of local protestors are positively correlated with high levels of political violence; and, (3) the absence of a logical explanation or rational explanation for the political violence and urban terrorism in Pattani, Narathiwat and Yala provinces of Southern Thailand. The level of urban terrorism and political violence tended to range from “high” in places where the freedom of language expression was concentrated as opposed to “low” in places where there was freedom of mobility and greater wealth/lower poverty. The Thai case has seen the net number of people living below the poverty level swing widely from between 310,000 in the 1950s to over one million in the late 1970s. The possibility of political violence increases with the proximity of people to violence prone areas. The higher the concentration of people the greater the likelihood of terrorist activity. This is because urban terrorists tend to target people first and buildings second.

The paper began with modest observations in 1987 and over the course of those many years; the paper had taken its final shape only after the 2008 survey and later incarnations.

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10 Details of the fieldwork and fieldwork notes are available for inspection upon direct request from the author at rappaa@unisim.edu.sg
Various parts of the restive South were surveyed, mainly in Pattani Province, but the survey also included other provinces such as Songkhla Province and Trang Province as well as the northern Malaysian states of Perlis, Kedah, Perak, and Kelantan. The Southern political problems can neither be political, military nor economic alone. Neither can the Royal Palace and its courtiers solve the problems. The way to sustainable political peace in the South is through complete disarmament of all rebel and insurgent troops. There must also be a reduction in corrupt activities and drug-related ones. All weapons must be serialized and controlled only by security forces. No weapons must be allowed to go missing, be stolen or traded. Wages for all security personnel must be increased by 30% and administrators must not be resistant against policy changes. Local democratically elected officials must learn to abide by the sovereign principle that no nation in modernity can afford to breakup internally or to lose its outer lying territories or provinces. Thailand is no exception.

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Decentralized Governance in Multi-Party Systems in Uganda: Challenges to Service Delivery in Local Governments of Uganda.

Abstract.
Political parties are believed to play an essential role in the functioning of modern democracy. They are central actors in a democratic system that organize and articulate interests and ensure political participation and competition, a major feature of local governance and democracy. Political parties perform several roles critical to the functioning of a democracy as they are the central means to aggregate interests and thereby translate mass preferences into public policy. Uganda’s case has been an ambitious decentralization policy with real power transfers from central government to local governments. The country has also transited from a non-party ‘movement system’ to a multiparty dispensation. In spite of this, the country is still grappling with the challenge of service delivery. This study was a cross sectional survey that adopted a case study design to examine the challenges of local governance in a multi-party dispensation on service delivery in Uganda. Findings indicate that the functioning of local governments in this new political discourse of multiparty dispensation is yet to have a positive impact on service delivery. The multi-party awareness does not tally with the practice. The study concluded that the policy disharmony, the multiparty operation awareness and the internal party democracies have had minimal contribution to service delivery in local governments in Uganda.

Key words: Multiparty, Local Governments, Challenges, Service delivery, Uganda

Background

Decentralization in developing countries has emerged as one of Governments’ major administrative reform strategies for democratization, people empowerment and poverty reduction. With regard to governance, decentralization is often thought to bring government closer to the people (Kiwanuka, 2012). According to Meagher (1999), this is so because of the greater trust, generated capacity for collective action, and the subsequent legitimacy of decision making that comes with popular public participation in own governance. Decentralization under the right circumstances (where government actions are transparent and civil society is permitted to operate freely), can promote accountability, facilitates the allocation of efficiency, support cost recovery and reduces corruption in service delivery. In
this respect, decentralization is thought to increase the likelihood that governments respond to
the demand of the local population by promoting competition among sub-national
governments (Tiebout, 1956). According to him, Competition among sub-national
governments allows for a variety of bundles of local public goods where individuals are said
to reveal their preferences for the same goods by moving to those jurisdictions that satisfy
their tastes—“voting with their feet”. Tiebout (1956) argues that this would exert pressure on
sub-national governments to pay attention to the preferences of their constituents and tailor
the service delivery accordingly.
Many countries are promoting decentralized governance as a measure for democratization,
people empowerment and poverty reduction. As part of the efforts to structure governments
to promote good governance and effective public administration with participation of the
people in the decision-making processes as well as in development activities, decentralization
in multiparty systems is increasingly adopted and applied in many African countries. Political
parties are organizations whose prime objective is to mobilize its supporters to assume a
leadership role (Sabiti Makara, 2010). According to him a political party of any significance
is viewed or views itself in terms of providing alternative policy platforms, ideological
direction, as well as redefining the agenda of government. In a liberal democracy, political
parties perform the function of integrating individuals and groups in society into the political
system. According to the political parties and Organizations’ Act (2005), political parties are
political organization, the objects of which include the influencing of the political process or
sponsoring a political agenda. The act also seeks to sponsor or offer a platform to a candidate
for election to a political office or to participate in the governance of Uganda at any level.
According to Sabiti Makara(2010), Political parties are important ingredients in building
democracy and vehicles for strengthening the electoral systems and processes. This implies
that Political parties are the means for strengthening accountability institutions (at all levels)
and strengthening the partnership with civil society organizations. To this end political parties
supplements the efforts of decentralization by mobilizing disadvantaged groups such as
women, the people with disabilities, and the youth to actively participate and be involved in
public decision making in local governments. Political parties have a continuous engagement
with the government in all matters of public concern, including and most importantly, holding
the government accountable for their policies and actions.
Effectively with the constitution amendments of 2005, multiparty politics was unleashed in
the political system in Uganda. As MISR (2008) put it, this represented a high degree of
unpreparedness on the side of the population since local structures and institutions on which
to operationalize the multiparty system of governance, and more so in the context of decentralization, were lacking

This study was guided by the public choice theory developed by James Buchanan and Gordon Tulloch to try to explain how public decisions are made. The theory is often used to explain how political decision-making results in outcomes that conflict with the preferences of the general public (political market failures). Public Choice Theory was largely developed in the context of democratic political systems seeking to analyze collective decision-making based on rules and institutions that characterize the Less Developed Countries (Malik, Muzaffer 2009). Public choice seeks to understand and predict the behavior of politicians and government officials in the polity, as mostly self-interested agents and their interactions in the social system, as such. The theory involves the interaction of the voting public, the politicians, the bureaucracy and political action committees. According to the theory, good government policies in a democracy are an underprovided public good, because of the rational ignorance of the voters (Tulloch, 1989). In which case, each voter is faced with a tiny probability that his/her vote will change the result of the elections, whereas gathering the relevant information necessary for a well-informed voting decision requires substantial time and effort. The rational decision for each voter is generally ignorant of politics and perhaps in some instances even abstains from voting. In the multi-party local governments, voters, political parties, bureaucrats, and politicians are assumed to seek their own self-interests as in the market place. Decisions made depend on the costs and benefits of an action taken, with each group attempting to maximize its own net benefits. Benefits in this respect can take the form of monetary or non-monetary rewards and can include ideologies, votes, policies and cultural values. According to Malik, Muzaffer (2009), the seeking of self-interest by bureaucrats and politicians and the collective action by the various interest groups in turn result in the adoption of a particular stance in the specification of the nature of social services. To this end the voices of vocal minorities with much to gain are heard over those of indifferent majorities with little to lose.

**Surfacing Problem.**

Decentralization and multiparty democracy are both believed to promote good governance and consequently improve service delivery through strengthening local/plural participation, accountability and involvement in governance (John Okidi & Madina Guloba; 2006).
Developing countries the world over, have been required by their nationals and the developed world to embrace democracy by adopting decentralization and multiparty in order to improve the quality and quantity of public services.

Political parties are believed to play an essential role in the functioning of every modern democracy. Democracy is indivisibly linked to the concept of multipartyism, in which effective participation and competition should be guaranteed. Political parties are central actors in a democratic system, as they organize and articulate interests and ensure political participation and competition, which constitute major features of local governance and so, democracy (Yusuf and Mathias, 2010). They perform several roles critical to the functioning of a democracy as they are the central means to aggregate interests and thereby translate mass preferences into public policy (Yusuf & Mathias, 2010).

12 years after adopting the present decentralization policy, Uganda transited from a non-party ‘movement system’ to a multiparty dispensation effective 2005. All these were intended for effective service delivery (Mushemereza, 2007). 6 years along the course, the country is still grappling with the challenge of effective service under this new multiparty dispensation. While the country’s experience with devolved powers was long hailed as an African success story, the advent of a multiparty system in Uganda is threatening the gains so far achieved through decentralization. Not only has the nature and style of decision making been affected, but multiparty politics has undercut the foundation of local government independence (Wasswa & Terrell, 2011). The functioning of local governments in a multi-party dispensation has not yet had a positive impact on service delivery. There is a disharmony between decentralization policy and the multiparty framework, the multiparty operational awareness in local governments is fragmented and there is evidence of lack of internal party democracies.

These are casting doubt on the social service implications of multiparty systems on young democracies, its functionalities at local levels, its ability to mitigate the negative effects of the conflicts that arise from multiparty competition and denting co-existence within and outside parties in the country. The examined the challenges of decentralization governance in a multiparty dispensation on service delivery in local governments in Uganda.

Study Questions:
1. How does policy disharmony affect service delivery in local governments in Uganda?
2. What is the effect of multiparty operational awareness on service delivery in local governments in Uganda?
3. How does internal party democracy affect service delivery in local governments in Uganda?

Methodology

The study was cross sectional survey that adopted a Case study design that supported an in-depth study of four districts purposively selected from the four major geographical regions of the country (Northern, Eastern, Western and Central). The descriptive case study was used to collect data from 110 respondents using surveys and elite interview. Open ended questionnaires were administered to selected district officials and members of the private sector, to enlist and encourage full and meaningful responses using the respondents’ own knowledge and/or feelings. 62 out of the 82 Open ended questionnaires administered were returned valid giving a response rate of 75.6%. Out of the targeted 28 elite interviews, 19 were conducted suggesting a response rate of 67.8%. The average response rate was 71.7% was high enough to validate the study findings (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

Findings and Discussion

Demographic Findings indicated that a biggest number of respondents (57%) had worked in the respective districts for over 7 years. On top of having the required experience to appreciate the operations and dynamics of local governments, they also had hands on experience as pioneers of the multi-party dispensation in Uganda from 2005. In terms of gender characteristic, both the female and males were fairly represented with 33% and 67% respectively, given the gender employment levels in local governments in Uganda that favors males.

Although there was a general consensus by the majority of respondents that basically the local governments Act (1997), the constitution (1995), the political parties Act CAP and the District Council rules of procedures were the policy documents guiding the day today local governance, there was contradictions on the policy guidelines supporting multiparty local governance in the country. Findings indicate that although the local government Act provides for multiparty local governance, on ground there is still a lot of disharmony in the procedures, roles, representations and operations of district councils in the multiparty dispensation. This finding is supported by Wasswa & Terrell (2011) who established that the legal framework of the decentralization policy and the individual political parties’ constitution are inconsistent with the intention of the decentralization policy. The ruling party has made it practically not
easy for any District chairperson coming outside the ruling party, to constitute a government. According to Wasswa & Terrell (2011), the NRM party which has overwhelming majority of councillors in all District councils has at times used its constitution to bar its members from serving on an executive committee of any District chairperson coming from outside the party. At times the same councillors may just move out or boycott council sessions denying council meetings the required quorums to deliberate and pass any decisions that may not be in their interest, as a ruling party. The same finding was echoed by Mushemereza (2007) that local governments were still operating as they did under the Movement system. He attributed this to a number of failures both at the national and local levels to put in place mechanisms and procedures to facilitate the functioning of the multiparty system. Whereas the councils’ rules of procedure are not consistent with the multiparty system and in some instances undermining the role of political parties, the Local Government Act still reflects the spirit of the Movement system (Mushemereza2007).

According Oloka Onyango (2007), the policy disharmony has been even more convoluted by the more contradictory actions of the national executive which exerts tighter control over affairs at local governments, while at the same time appearing to be giving more autonomy. He argue that the executive power, whether directly from the president, through ministers, through Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) or through other central government organs, is increasingly very dominant in local government processes. The office of RDC has transited from being a link between the local and central governments, to being a mechanism for central government control and an agent for the ruling party at the local level (Oloka Onyango, 2007). There is also considerable overlap between party and government. This is because the RDC who influences many local governance issues in the new multiparty dispensation, is appointed in a political arena. Oloka Onyango (2007) contends further that even the divorce between the movement and the party has not yet been completed. This in effect implies that government institutions like the local governments, which were previously under the movement, are still paying primary allegiance to the governing party. The movement party therefore, still exerts a lot of influence in local government elections and their subsequent operations. This is already being manifested in the treatment of oppositions’ motions in councils and in service deliveries. There is already in the country substantial divergences between Government intentions for decentralization, including the intentions as stated in the Constitution and the actual practices in the country. These are happening at the expense of service delivery.
Concerning multiparty operational awareness in service delivery, majority of the respondents were aware and supported the new dispensation. However the study also established that the said awareness did not tally with practice. Very few respondents had actually interfaced with a multi-party council. Even with those that had councilors coming from more than one political party, the majority of respondents (technical officers) would not accurately remember the number of opposition councilors in their District councils. And again although most respondents indicated that there was political space for participation in the council deliberations, the said space was very limited, if any for some contentious issues. According to one counselor,

*I detests the tendency to suffocate us under the “party position” because it deprives us of our individual, independent and most considered contributions. Most of the party positions are determined at Kampala (the center), thereby denying us an opportunity to determine our local priorities.*

Such feelings are not any different from by Boyne, George (1996) who submitted that the traditional intra and interparty competition is often ineffective at the local level because:

- **Local parties enjoy large majorities and thus have no reason to compete.**
- **Local parties lack incentive to compete because they are controlled by national political issues.**
- **Local politicians lack the freedom to compete in their parties**

Even among technical officers who are ideally protected by the constitution (1995) and the Local government Act (1997), in reality they exercise a lot of reservations when handling any issue driven by the opposition. Indecisiveness and at times total lack of direction has been observed among technical officers with regard to “controversial issues”. These negative consequences of multi-party democracy in local governments are not only eroding the independence of both the technical and political officials, but are also slowing down service delivery in local governments in the country.

As for internal party democracies and service delivery, findings indicate that all parties lack the internal democracy which substantially affects their performance in councils. Political parties at the sub-national level in Uganda lack both institutional mechanisms and internal democracy to inspire and influence service delivery. All parties including the ruling NRM-O party have a number of issues of internal consistence, honesty and transparency especially in
determining party flag bearers, financing and other support decisions for party candidates. Likewise, Mushemereza (2007) submitted that Political parties at all levels lack the institutional mechanisms and the internal democracy to inspire the lower branches which would be the actors in local governments. He maintains that Political parties lack or have weak secretariats, their offices at the district and Sub-counties are non-functional, the organs of the political parties rarely hold meetings and parties lack financial resources to run party activities. Consequently, cases of in-fighting between party members and at times defections have been on the increase especially among the opposition parties. In the country today, the ruling party, NRM-O is in reality the only party on the ground that could manage to field candidates at virtually all levels. Out of over 33 registered political parties in the country, only four were represented(had councillors) in the study and out of which NRM-O constituted 96%. This is supported by Oloka Onyango, (2007) who confirms that the NRM is largest and financially best endowed party, by virtue of her having structures linked to the state. A further analysis of internal parties system from Sabiti Makara (2010), supplements that it is not only funding that undermines the efficacy of political party operations, but there are some other influential factors. Factors like ethnic cleavages, religious affinities, and class-based dominance have crippled the work of political parties as drivers for democratic governance and service delivery in local governments. All these have so far been observed with varying effects on service delivery in Uganda’s local governments. These are not only subverting building of strong social bases, but also and unfortunately, promoting clientelist politics and extensive patronage in local governments. To the already numerically disadvantaged opposition parties, this is making them invisible in District councils. The opposition parties and their members are too busy fighting themselves to fulfil their oversight role in determining the nature of services delivered in local governments

**Conclusion.**

This paper has submitted that disharmony between the decentralization policy and the multi-party system has negatively affected service delivery in Uganda. The particular provisions in the respective laws which are inconsistent with the constitution and the multi-party system of governance are being exploited by some players for self-interests and in the process delaying and derailing service delivery.

The mismatch between the multiparty operational awareness and practice in local governments does not support effective service delivery. The delay to grasp, appreciate and respect the ground rules by all players in local governments (including national government officials) is weakening local government institutions and slowing the quality and quantity of
the social services delivered.
Finally the apparent lack of internal party democracy is not only weakening the political parties, but also failing the opposition parties in their oversight role of holding the ruling party on principles of good governance in local governments. All political parties in Uganda are still too weak democratically and structurally to effectively mobilize citizens to play a more active role in their own governance and cannot effectively hold local governments accountable for their policies and actions.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE FRAGMENTED DEVELOPMENTAL MANDATE: A CASE OF OFFENDER REHABILITATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

Development, especially at the local government level, is complex and multifaceted. For this reason, approaches to development need to be integrated. Acceptance of this theoretical position is clearly demonstrated in a new South Africa where the integrated development planning approach was adopted and implemented. Hence, the local government in South Africa has a constitutional developmental mandate which requires an integrated development approach. But practice seems to suggest that development initiatives undertaken by local government have been fragmented. However, cooperative governance legislation provides the opportunity for different spheres of government to collaborate in addressing a variety of challenges that face South Africa’s public service. One of the most neglected challenges at the local level is that of rehabilitation of offenders and support to their families. This paper asserts that the local government developmental mandate circumvents the rehabilitation of offenders and support to their families, amidst the fact that crime is one of the factors central to the challenges of poverty, deprivation and inequality. The paper argues, therefore, that the mandate of local government is not holistic because it hopes to provide for sustainable service delivery and development in isolation from other equally important determinants of “a better life.” It concludes that the challenge of the local government attaining its developmental mandate would remain unaddressed if the approach continues to be fragmented and incomplete.

Key words: Developmental state; Incarceration; Rehabilitation; Recidivism; Prisoners’ families.

Introduction

South Africa has three spheres of government and they are: national (responsible for the
formulation of policies), provincial (monitoring the implementation of such policies) and local (charged with the implementation) (RSA 1998). The local government is closest to the people, where service delivery is anticipated (Thornhill 2008; Koma 2010). It is in this sphere of government where most basic services have to be delivered. The local government has politicians that are also closest to the community known as Local Ward Councilors who are expected to carry the mandate of the communities they represent and supposedly to be sensitive to the views of the communities. It is in this respect that local government’s developmental role plays a pivotal role in the local developmental state system (RSA 1998; Thornhill 2008; Coetzee 2010; Koma 2010).

The South African government has clear policies on how the local municipalities are anticipated to operate and how significant is consultation with the communities they serve (RSA 1998; Thornhill 2008; Coetzee 2010; Koma 2010). Consequently, local government should form partnerships with the civil society in order to address almost all the local issues pertaining but not limited to development. Consultation is at the forefront of all the laws that mostly outline participation processes to be utilized by the local government to the communities that they serve (RSA 1998). On 5 December 2000, South Africa held its first fully democratic local elections. Under the democratic dispensation, the Constitution of South Africa (1996) states that the government must unequivocally ensure that all South Africans have access to basic services wherein the local municipality is mandated to play a developmental role. The RSA (1998) has details on how local government should operate. It further states that development should target members and groups within the communities who were marginalized, mostly women, poor people and people with disabilities (Coetzee 2010; Koma 2010).

The apartheid era had caused drastic disparities in terms of development planning and the municipalities are charged with the task of addressing such disparities where a huge backlog emanated (Coetzee 2010; Koma 2010). For the local government to address these disparities, they would have to work together with local citizens, communities and businesses (Coetzee 2010). This principle is to ensure that the local government is having a great influence over local economic development such as working in partnership with business and the community to improve job creation. Hence, local government has to play a major role on job creation, for instance in provision of basic household infrastructure such as sewage or shelter, such that contracts should be preferably awarded to local businesses and then the local
business to be encouraged to employ local people.

Notwithstanding the globally applauded local governance and democratic systems that South Africa has adopted, practice appears to have been scarcely comprehensive. Despite being one of the most complex and integrated legislative provisions, a democratic South Africa’s local government development mandate has been applied in a fragmentary manner (Coetzee 2010; Koma 2010). Thus, the integrated development planning requirement for local government has appeared to be oblivious of the strong linkages between household poverty, crime and justice systems. This paper sets out to explore this drawback in order to demonstrate that despite being the most complex and advanced local developmental state system, practice has been fragmentary causing significant social exclusions of crime on the offenders’ household poverty background, which creates a vicious cycle.

The households of the incarcerated prisoners who are breadwinners are most of the times in poverty trap as there is no income being generated during the period of incarceration. Research has shown that when a member of the family is incarcerated, more especially when it is the breadwinner, the family is in most cases faced with a challenge due to the cost of living, which exposes them to poverty and a cycle of crime emanating from that (Seymour & Hairston 2001; Travis & Waul 2003; Manganyi 2007; Strydom 2009). According to Strydom (2009), incarceration affects not only the prisoner but also the family. Research on how incarceration impacts on prisoners’ families has shown that families that try to maintain the relationship with the offender, mostly end-up failing to keep-up due to financial implications (Fishman 1990; Hagan & Dinovitzer 1999; Braman 2004; Arditti 2005; Christian, Mellow & Thomas 2006). This paper is presented in five sections, including the introduction. Section two theorizes the complexities of the local developmental state system; section three deals with the application of this multifaceted system in a democratic South Africa, including the discussion of the prevailing state of the system; section four analyses the omissions associated with the fragmentary practice of the local developmental state system; and, a conclusion is provided in section five.

**Complexity and the multifaceted nature of the local developmental state system**

A developmental state ought to be staffed with efficient and effective public services that are among the nation’s brightest, able to be innovative in addressing municipal challenges and functioning without constraints. The appointments during recruitment should be based on
merit rather than patronage, ethnic or religious considerations. Similarly, a developmental state municipality has to be well-placed to appropriately respond to local expectations of the communities (Koma 2010). Local government can be regarded as the public organization that is assigned with the provision of basic services to the communities with authority to manage and govern the affairs in the area of jurisdiction. However, local government signifies a sphere of government where all the municipalities form part (Roux 2005). Consequently, as a sphere of government that is closest to the people, it is tasked with the provision of variety of basic but essential services to the people (Roux 2005).

Coetzee (2010) defines the concept ‘developmental state’ as a situation where each side of the party uses the other on mutual beneficial grounds to achieve development. He further states that if the developmental state works very well, no one between the government servant and the populace would prevail over the other (Coetzee 2010). According to Coetzee (2010), there are various types of developmental states such as the democratic developmental state; the authoritarian developmental state; the developmental welfare state; the classical developmental state; and the developmental network state. In terms of literature, there is no clear-cut definition of the word but can be reputed to mean ‘the development of economies and society’ for the sake of this paper. Coetzee (2010) construes a developmental state as:

’a state with a particular and appropriate leadership structure; an active and strong central state with a particular organisational architecture; a state with strategic entrepreneurial focus, vision and orientation; an entrepreneurial state machine that thinks and works like a business; an export-oriented state with strong international partners; a learned and attuned state (society) with high levels of competency and skills, and an embedded state that is in close contact with the people.’

The above description of the concept ‘developmental state’ means local government should have all the qualities that are mentioned to be what it is expected and required to be. These expectations and requirements are in terms of the developmental state system to properly serve the communities. It could be arduous to accomplish all the qualities but it might be emboldening if municipalities are benchmarked on them.

The aims and objectives of local government are to provide for the social and economic upliftment of local communities; provide universal access to essential services that are affordable to all; promote a safe and healthy environment; remain financially viable; and
encourage community involvement and participation (Scott 2005). The mandate of the developmental local government is to fulfill their constitutional obligations by ensuring efficient and sufficient municipal services while promoting social and economic development and then encourage working with communities to create an environment in which all people can lead uplifted and dignified lives (Koma 2010). The East Asian Tigers success stories that were realized under undemocratic governments cannot be duplicated in South Africa due to democracy (Chang 2010; Coetzee 2010). The country has to find ways to put together a democratic developmental state system that will work for South Africa (Chang 2010; Coetzee 2010).

The democratically elected governments in East Asia, have been embroiled in political turmoil. In 2006, Thailand had a crippling political crisis that triggered a military coup. These democratically elected governments in East Asia all suffer from fragile foundations of legitimization. In Thailand, Philippines and Taiwan; most populace lost confidence on the democratic procedures and wanted to depose leaders by means of “people’s power”. Even Japan that is the oldest among the democratically elected governments in the east, owes more to the lack of support of the less democratic alternatives by the populace. Democracy and development go hand-in-hand together with prosperity, vitality and technological progress of its populace that is mostly related to the degree of their liberty. Democracies have also shown their capability to doing a far much better job than their authoritarian counterparts.

The adoption by South African government of the local developmental state system

The South African government attempted to adopt a system that would be performance-driven and able to reconstruct and develop the country and that could stimulate growth and development in all sectors (Coetzee 2010). The challenge is that the government has since 1994, promulgated various Government Papers, Policies and Acts aimed at developing growth and development in all sectors that were published. Some of the government documents in question are the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (1994); the Development Facilitation Act (1995); the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR) (1996); the White Paper on Local Government (1998); the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) (1997 – 2000); and the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (Asgisa) (2006) (Coetzee 2010). South Africa in 1995 signed an agreement with other governments in the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development as well as in Geneva in 2000, where they were committing to reduce poverty (Scott 2005). It
is also constitutionally endorsed that local government should play a key role in poverty reduction (Scott 2005). The primary tool to address this is through the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) where all the needs and necessities of the community are put together by the municipality in an attempt to reduce poverty through service delivery. The first IDPs were established in 2002. Presently, South Africa has a number of legal documents that were promulgated to assist in defining developmental local government and what it intended to achieve. Some of these documents are the Municipal Systems Act (1998); the Municipal Structures Act (1998) and the RSA (1996).

Coetzee (2010) argues that these convalescence documents were developed under tremendous transformational pressure by the government and were not provided enough space for proper implementation. The assumption is that this might be the cause of the functions in the developmental local government state system to be fragmented and confused. Currently, people from various sectors and disciplines are presenting to government on how developmental local state system should operate but there seems to be some confusion on the role of the government in South Africa (Koma 2010). It is the author’s opinion that there is still a need for more research in order to turn South Africa to a developmental state. For South Africa to perform in terms of its developmental mandate, the local government has to radically increase its developmental performance.

Just after the new dispensation, South Africa had a challenge of poverty, crime and unemployment that were as a result of worldwide sanctions towards the apartheid regime (RSA 1998; Thornhill 2008; Coetzee 2010; Koma 2010). Urban municipalities had to extend their services to rural areas that were previously catered for by homeland governments and self-governing states (RSA 1998; Thornhill 2008; Coetzee 2010; Koma 2010). These municipalities were also struggling with environmental threats, possible effects of global warming and the worldwide economic recession (Coetzee 2010). The assumption is that the mainly rural municipalities had a challenge with skills shortage among staff members and also the lack of payment for services provided due to poverty in their areas of jurisdiction. The above challenges meant that the government had to intervene in support of such municipalities by initiating Project Consolidate in 2004 in provision of support to low-capacity municipalities and also the provision of Municipal Infrastructure Grants that amounted into billions of South African rands (Koma 2010). This intervention was also accompanied by the formulation of the Local Government: Public Finance Management Act,
Various efforts have been made by the South African government since the dawn of democracy in 1994 to institute a developmental local government system (Coetzee 2010). After the democratic local government elections in 2000, the country had to institute measures that are in-line with the developmental local government system such that all the citizens should have access to basic services, including the very poor in order to combat poverty (RSA 1998). Municipalities face grave encounters to be able to promote human rights, meeting human needs and addressing backlogs caused by apartheid’s poor planning, that was not developmental focused (RSA 1998; Thornhill 2008; Coetzee 2010; Koma 2010). Conversely, the provision of services by municipalities is a constitutional obligation including those that are falling concurrently within the national and provincial competence constituent units in terms of Part B of Schedule 4 & 5 of the South African Constitution (Koma 2010). To achieve this, local government had to adopt a developmental approach to meet these challenges by working together with local citizens, communities and businesses (Koma 2010).

In terms of service delivery, in March 2008 pit latrines were only common in Limpopo at 64.5%, bucket toilets mostly in the Free State at 12.7% and the national average regarding access to piped water within 200 metres of a household from 72.1% to 74.4% (Koma 2010). However, out of the 283 municipalities, only 36 in the whole country that did not have sanitation backlog (Koma 2010).

Failure to promptly address this backlog might be attributed to the capacity gap in the municipalities. It is recorded that 31% of municipal managers had qualifications other than those related to finance, legal, public administration, planning and development and that 28% of chief financial officers did not hold finance related qualifications (Koma 2010). Still, 35% of technical managers were without engineering qualifications (Koma 2010). There is a serious capacity gap in the municipalities to such an extent that most of senior management do not have relevant qualifications including most staff members. Very few employees qualify for the positions that they are holding (Scott 2005; Thornhill 2008; Coetzee 2010; Koma 2010). The low-capacity municipalities were found to be really struggling more especially in financial management such that 60% could not account for the revenue they had received (Scott 2005). The developmental local government is faced with challenges and problems with regard to sustainable development (Scott 2005; Thornhill 2008; Coetzee 2010; Koma 2010). For the municipalities to be developmental, a serious intervention is necessary
with the strong and informative executive leadership that is needed to steer implementation in
the correct direction. A high priority should be afforded to staff recruitment including
headhunting in order to find best suitable candidates for employment positions.

**The essential omissions by the local government developmental state system**

Impoverished communities with poor education rate usually have spiraling rate of
incarceration, and communities with high incarceration rate tend to have an extreme
unemployment rate that commonly leads to economic hardships (Gibson, Roberson & Daniel
2009) and usually excessive crime rate. The logical conclusion to this theory is that people
living in poverty are far more likely to commit crime and then recidivate. Nothing is much
said about crime and poverty while they are at the helm of local governance. The Department
of Correctional Services (DCS) (2005) states that most South African offenders come from
communities and families that are dysfunctional and plagued by poverty, unemployment,
hunger, and absent figures of authority and care. These dysfunctional families are mostly
prisoners’ families that have a family member under incarceration. Research has shown that
there is some form of relationship between low literacy levels, unemployment, poverty and
crime (Dissel & Kollapen 2002; Hasselink-Louw 2003). Poverty, unemployment and
illiteracy need serious attention if the crime rate and the prison population in South Africa are
to be successfully reduced (Sefara 2002; Hasselink-Louw 2003).

If offenders are returning to neighborhoods that do not provide access to the sort of services
that are important for re-integrating them into the broader community, it stands to reason that
they will be less likely to succeed in their post-release transition and more likely to recidivate
(Travis et al. 2005). Barbary (2007) indicates that the prisoners in Britain who were released
from custody in 2004, 65% of them re-offended. Barbary (2007) also states that the local
level is at a better position to break the cycle of re-offending. The DCS (2005) is based on the
South African Constitution (Act No. 108 of 1996), which has a provision of a detention
system that is based on a Bill of Rights that provides the premise within which the
Department of Correctional Services (DCS) should handle incarcerated inmates (Cilliers &
Smit 2007; Singh 2008). The research conducted in Britain during 2002, demonstrated that
employment reduces the risk of re-offending by a third and a half and that stable housing
reduces re-offending by more than 20% (Barbary 2002).

**Conclusion**

Literature proposes that a combination of family, community and societal conditions,
especially poverty collude to trap offenders and their families into a cycle of crime (Cheliotis 2008). The DCS currently has no assessment structure in place to identify the needs, readiness for treatment and personality traits of prisoners or the causes and motives behind crime. Consequently, the effective treatment of offenders cannot be ensured (Hasselink-Louw 2003). Thus far, little or no attention has been focused on the working together of social services, criminal justice system, health care providers and communities to meet the needs of families left behind (Travis et al. 2005). It is in working together where Developmental Local Government System has to play an important role. The linkage among all the spheres of government would make most of the functions that are partially attended to, to be given priority.

This paper would assist in addressing the challenges that are faced by developmental local government system. The omissions mentioned above could be circumvented if this collaboration among these spheres is realized.

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A study of managing information for community management of the local administrative organizations in Thailand

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Abstract
This preliminary study on managing information for community management of the local administrative organizations of Thailand was aimed at compiling data related to information management for community management under the research project on the development of Information System for Community Management in Thailand. The researchers selected 6 local administrative organizations comprising 2 subdistrict administrative organizations, 2 municipalities, and 2 provincial administrative organizations, all of which are in Khon Kaen Province and Nakhon Ratchasima Province, two big provinces in the Northeast of Thailand. Documentary study and non-participation observation were conducted with 12 local administrative organization administrators and personnel in charge of information management of each local administrative organization. The result showed that since local administrative organizations are in the relevant areas, they are closest to the population and are expected by other organizations in the country to compile information for them. This results in local administrative organizations having a lot of information storing systems. For instance, there are the local administrative organization baseline data by the Department of Local Administration Promotion, information on evaluation of public service standard of local administrative organizations by the Decentralization Committee. The said information systems differ in structure and information required by each system since it has been developed at the central organization and transferred to local administrative organizations to further compilation work. However, the information management workload has not been assigned as the major mission of local administrative organizations. Thus, problems emerge in practice, i.e., there are no personnel appropriately qualified to take responsibility of information management. We therefore would like to propose the federal government to promote and strengthen the capacity of local administrative organizations in being the areal information centre for benefits of information usage by the central and other regions.

Keywords: information management (IM), community information (CI), areal information (AI), local administrative organization (LAO)
Research Background

The present organizational administration in Thailand, no matter whether it is governmental or private, sees the importance of information and the use of information as the major foundation for organizational planning, management and decision making of the executives. Hence, different organizations are all attempting to compile and store necessary information for their management. A local administrative organization (LAO) is one type of governmental organization. It is an important mechanism in transferring or implementing government policies related to areal population through official management that opens up a chance for the people to take part. This is the system of decentralization of the national administration from the centre to localities. Decentralization involves all aspects of policy setting, developmental planning, revenue raising, budget expenditure, mission operation, or evaluation of work outcomes (Phuang-ngam K., 2007). Presently, Thai LAOs can be categorized into 4 types, namely, 1) Subdistrict administrative organizations (SAO), 2) Municipalities, 3) Provincial administrative organizations (PAO), and 4) Special local administrative organization such as the city of Pattaya, and Bangkok Metropolitan. All of these organizations are composed of the “Local Council” acting as the legislative side and the “Local Administrators” doing administration work. The members of the local council and local administrators come from election so as to represent local people who elect them in order to use their rights and power. Since LAOs are an official unit closest to the people, administration is based on the participatory principle with an aim at problem solution and response to the areal people’s needs so that all are well and live happily (Tantisoonthorn U., 2010).

Management of local administrative organization is therefore management of communities involving administration as well as development based on local resources and aiming at optimal benefits to all people, resulting in a strong and self-dependable community. At the same time, however, community problems have to be solved. Integration of development in community management necessitates participatory administration, where local administrators must understand, obtain rapport, and develop the community according to H.M. the King’s sustainable development concept. In this concept, community management requires situational understanding of basic factorial reasons that reflect genuine conditions of the community and the people in order to gain holistic view of the problems. Local administrative organizations therefore have to emphasize surveying of information, storing the information, compiling and managing the information system in order to equip
themselves with important tools for community-access management and participation with the community at the locality. This enables administrators to upgrade their understanding, accept the real situations and condition and hence become the owner of the problems with the community (Wongtra-nga K., 2009).

The Department of Local Administration Promotion is the central governmental organization with which LAOs all over the country are affiliated. The department places importance on information systemization for local administration, and hence supports LAOs to operate their own information system in their work. In this regards, the department has developed its own information centre and assigned all LAOs to use it. This system was developed without a true study of the real context of each LAO that is the user. Besides, the system developed emphasized information technology rather than analysing information which is the major component of the system. Problems thus arose in lack of information which has never been compiled. Information available for most LAOs is still at the basic level, i.e., BMN and NRD 2C, which do not contribute to planning and complicated proactive operations that are integrated to a lot of organizations. Most of the information stored is derived from estimation, and so lacks validity and cannot be checked. Therefore, the real situation of each LAO cannot be revealed (Watthana D. et al, 2005).

Since LAOs themselves, no matter whether they are SAO or municipality, are closest to the people who own the local information, they are expected to be collecting mostly accurate basic information of the people and community that can be applied to support other organizations. Therefore, many other information systems have been developed at the central department, which LAOs are assigned to apply. However, with different information systems derived from different organizations, the workload is on LAOs that are required to conduct surveys and enter a great amount of information into diversified systems which are not interconnected. Most of the information entered into the systems was found inaccurate when checked against the true areal situations. Some pieces of information have not been stored in LAOs at all. They are not connected to the people and the community who owns them. As a result, most information systems of LAOs are used for reporting to organizations but cannot be efficiently used for planning, management, or decision making of LAOs. The reason is that these systems have been developed from the centre in a top-down pattern. Information has not been developed from real sources and problems even though there are different administration and contextual problems. Even their perspectives toward information use are different. The researchers therefore studied the information system development for community management based on the real areal context. This was used as the data for
developing the information system in a bottom-up pattern. One important problem to be studied in the area is managing information as it is. This research was thus aimed at studying specific information management of LAOs, with the following objectives: 1) to analyse Thai LAOs’ administrators’ information use and 2) to study the present situations and managing information problems for community management of LAOs in Thailand.

**Research Conceptual Framework**

In the study of managing information for community management of Thai LAOs, the researchers developed conceptual framework based on information management concept by Chun Wei Choo (1995) and community information concept by Allan Bunch (1993) as follows:

1. In order to analyse Thai LAOs’ administrators’ information use, information reflecting real community situation was based on, which is an important basic component in community management. This kind of information can be holistically called community information. Allan Bunch (1993) stated that community profiling means basic information related to daily life and activities of community people that can be used to build participation from the people in that community both at an individual level and groups. Community profiling comprises: 1) Demography data 2) Socio-economic information 3) Local issues and 4) Residents’ viewpoints.

2. In local managing information process, we applied the information management concept by Chun Wei Choo (1995) which comprises 6 important steps: 1) Information needs 2) Information acquisition 3) Information organization, storage and retrieval 4) Information products and services 5) Information distribution 6) Information use; all of which supported organizational implementation. The interrelation of information management cycle can be explained in Figure 1 below:

![Figure 1 The information management process (Choo C. W., 1995)](image)

Thus, our process comprised 2 important issues, namely 1) the use of information of local administrative organization administrators, and 2) the present situations and problems in managing information for community management of LAOs.

**Research Methodology**
The qualitative research and case studies were applied with documentary analysis, interviewing, and non-participation observation. The research sites were in two big provinces in the Northeast, Khon Kaen and Nakhon Ratchasima. The researchers live in one of the province and have good understanding of local community profiles and contexts. It was believed that this would enable us to obtain profound and clear information that could well represent LAOs in other regions. The venues studied included 6 large LAOs that are located close to the cities. These were selected from their consent to participate in information provision and for close observation of their operations. The organizations comprised 1 PAO, 1 municipality and 1 SAO from each province.

Key informants included: 1) 6 administrators of LAOs, namely, presidents of PAOs, Tambon mayors, and presidents of SAOs, and 6 staff members in charge of LAO managing information. The research data collection instruments comprised an interview form for administrators to find needs for information and an interview form for managing information personnel to study the present situations and issues in information management of LAOs. We collected data by ourselves starting from documentary analysis to find the power and duties of each type of LAOs, including the Act governing each type of LAO foundation, the Act of decentralization to LAO. Documents related to plans and work outcomes in different aspects of LAOs were studied including local development plans, regulations, municipal codes, project reports, etc. Following this we analysed the documents based on the conceptual framework in order to establish interviewing items for administrators. This emphasized use and information requirement for community management, managing of information and problems. Researchers carried out non-participatory observation on the process of managing information at all LAOs under the study. The results were brought to check accuracy of the interviewing related to managing information process of LAOs. The data collected was analysed, including baseline data on each type of LAOs, data on information required by administrators for managing community, present situations of information use for administration, and present situations on managing information in LAOs.

Research Findings
1. The study revealed that a LAO is a local official organization closest to the people, making the people and other organizations expect LAOs to provide them with accurate and real local information. Major target information users are divided into 2 groups:

1.1 Information users within LAOs, i.e., administrators and affiliated units that require information to assist in their planning, administration, and decision making. This kind of information involves basic infrastructures, local issues, needs of the community and the
people. Affiliated units such as the mechanical division, educational division, public health
division, require information concerning the people to assist them in developmental planning.

1.2 LAO external information users comprise: 1) The upper organization group or
central official units including the Department of Local Administrative Promotion, the
Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, the Department of Community
Development, the Department of Disease Prevention, the Department of Agricultural
Extension, the Office of Decentralization to LAO Committee. The information required by
these departments are demographic information, infrastructures such as roads, electricity,
water sources, areal epidemics, natural disasters, peoples’ troubles, units’ operational
outcomes, whether budget is enough, and personnel data, etc. This information is required for
evaluating if the locality is ready for being transferred central missions in the decentralizing
process. 2) The regional official units including provinces and districts also need information
on local development plan, regulations and codes, situational issues such as natural calamities,
cold weather, drought, flood, data of disaster victims, epidemics, drug addiction. This type of
information appears in annual reports which are usually repetitive. 3) The local organizations
such as police stations, schools, hospitals, health stations, etc. require information related to
the population, location, number of villages, occupation data, education data, etc. Other
LAOs also ask for data on revenues of PAO and may request for budget assistance if
available. 4) Academic institutions for example universities, colleges require information for
their research work. These ranges from local development plans, demographic data,
infrastructure data, occupation data, etc. 5) People group require information related to
different development projects in order to know if any project is to be conducted in their area.

1. Key information used by administrators of LAOs for their community
management can be categorized into 5 groups as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1 Key information used by administrators of LAOs for community management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructures</td>
<td>Infrastructure data includes communication, public services such as roads,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>electricity and lighting, waterworks, river, spillway, drainage, dam,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rain, potable water, water sources for agriculture, health service centres,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>meeting place, young children development centre, transportation station,</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>pawnshop, dormitories, market, slaughterhouse, boundaries, town planning,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demography</td>
<td>Demographic data includes occupation and income, employment, household security, education, health and hygiene, social welfare, social security, participation. This kind of information includes, for example, birthrates, death rates, number of those entitled to health service, number of patients having contagious diseases, number of pupils, number of children, number of the elderly, number of the disabled, number of the underprivileged, number of hidden population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economics</td>
<td>Information related to the well-being and ways of living of people in the community, for example, gross community products, types of community businesses, company registration, revenue, agricultural information, industrial information, trading and service information, production and marketing, tourism, laws and regulations of community, volunteers, etc. This type of information also includes farm land area, farm productivity, number of industrial factories, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local issues</td>
<td>This is information related to impacts on community and locality for example, under-development, unemployment, poverty, community expansion, infrastructure, communication and traffic problems, drug addiction, problems related to natural resources and environment. Examples are the number of damaged roads, bridges, number of flood victims, total land area facing drought, number of households struggling from cold weather, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs of community and villages</td>
<td>This information includes needs and wants of community and villagers in various aspects such as needs for educational development, health development, occupational development, etc. This information was derived from letters, announcements, local newspapers, community television and radio programs, information from people groups. Unofficial information was obtained from observations carried out at restaurants, public parks, etc. This information is basic and necessary for community management.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The information sources for LAO administrators can be classified into the 4 following groups: 1) The central official departments, for example, the Department of Local Administration Promotion, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, etc. 2) The organizations related to areal work, for example, educational zones, schools, hospitals, health stations, police stations, agricultural offices, animal husbandry offices, community development offices, prisons, correctional institutions, Drug Therapeutic Camp, War on Drug Center, etc. 3) Organizations within local administrative organizations, for example, mechanic division, educational division, public health division, agricultural extension division, division for disaster prevention and mitigation, budget and planning division, office of the permanent secretary, etc. 4) Individuals including officials, leaders, and volunteers for example, district officer, assistant district officer, sub-district head, village head, assistant sub-district headmen, village committee, village representatives, members of municipality, members of SAO, village health volunteers, the people, students and prisoners. The strategy LAO administrators use to acquire information comprises: 1) their own data-acquiring approach using their experiences, asking relevant personnel, e.g., consultants, academy, etc.; 2) data-acquiring from documents and reports, e.g., written executive reports, monthly meeting, inviting relevant individuals to the meeting, auditing reports, training handouts, brainstorming results, local newspapers, etc.; 3) data-acquiring by visiting sites, for example, opening a venue for community meeting, mobile meeting, areal investigation, surveying of data, and hiring someone to survey data etc.; 4) data-acquiring from other organizations such as official requesting of information or inquiry or interview on the telephone, etc.

All LAO administrators see the importance of information as a support for their decision making, as can be seen from their opinions as follows:

“I think for the issues proposed by the central organization, we should prioritize them. If any problem is vital, I will enter the area to see for myself the truth. Sometimes, the information is the same as before, for example, figures. But when we enter the area we see the trouble people are facing. For example, if they say a road is damaged, we think anywhere roads can be damaged. We have to see it so that we can decide which road urgently needs to be repaired and which one can wait. Sometimes I was reported that my house was on fire. When we looked at it, there was a house that could be repaired, and only 20,000 baht was needed. There were houses that were burnt down, and so the owners had to be taken care of. If the report was only a fire we have to go and see in order to decide what to do and what priority it is. If I don’t go, then I send someone who will report to me.” (LAO administrator 1, May 15, 2012)
“Information is very important for decision making. Real database must be available in doing so. It also requires experiences, knowledge, learning, seeing, and thinking reasonably since decision making is not easy.” (LAO administrator 2, May 17, 2012)

“Information system as I think is not enough because the past system has not intensively stored data. Usually, the work is routine with not enough details. For example, town planning should be adjusted to accommodate municipal expansion. Our area comprises both urban and rural communities, and so there are things we should improve, for example, sewage system. We haven’t had proper infrastructure. Therefore, when the people are in trouble, we still don’t have enough information for mitigation. Therefore, we just solve the confronted problem first, such as if a villager is old, we lay a simple system. If there is earth filling around the place, it will become a pool. When villagers are in trouble, they make a request. We then solve at the end route. It should be better to have proper planning. For flooding, since we announce victims village by village, enlisting for assistance can be a problem. We have to coordinate with agricultural units in order to know how much farmland is flooded and how many villagers are in trouble. In surveying officials from all divisions will go. Agricultural supporting division looks at how much land is flooded. We surveyed for instance that Mr. A had 50 rai of land where 30 rai was flooded. Likewise at the Office of the permanent secretary, the disaster mitigation division did another survey. There was some repetition, so when the data were combined more inspection had to be made. That’s why it was difficult.” (LAO administrator 3, May 23, 2012)

“Subdistricts all need information for setting problem-solving policies and decision. But today subdistrict heads mostly solve problems from experiences. They obtain superficial data and plan the budget on that. If there is research work on this, it should be better - for example in public health, occupation, farming. Studies in these fields in detail will support our decision.” (LAO administrator 4, May 25, 2012)

It can be concluded from administrators’ opinions that information begins to have an important role in the decision of LAOs. In the past they only rely on experiences. In fact, they require information that is true based on the area, and the details must be enough for their decision making processes.

3. Information management process of the present LAOs

3.1 Acquisition or compilation of information is performed in three dimensions: 1) Compiling from different units under LAOs. Holistic information is stored at the office of the permanent secretary (or the planning division in case of PAO). For instance, number of roads, number of students, number of patients, etc. are kept in a format of the local
development plan. Details, however are filed at different LAO’s sub-units, for example, what kind of diseases the patients have, how they are. These are filed at the public health division. Roads and streets are at the mechanical division, while details about students are retained at the educational division. Compilation of data is carried out by the office of the permanent secretary, who acts as the unit in charge. Requests for information can be made formally with official letters or informally via information technology such as facsimile or e-mail, etc. 2) Compilation of information from external organizations – for instance, demographic data is requested from the district office, data on troublesome of the people is obtained from the subdistrict headmen or village heads. PAOs ask for information according to other localities’ requirements in order to allocate budget that is inadequate in those localities. The data can be obtained by different approaches such as sending an official request, holding a meeting with the target unit, arranging community meetings, etc. 3) Compilation of information from site survey by LAOs - For instance, when administrators want to help needy people in the area, they order officers to survey for the truth and report via relevant division director to the local administrators. The survey is truly conducted in the area with community leaders. Often, pictures are taken. Sometimes, reports are made via village headmen or sub-district heads to LAOs. If administrators want to know who are poor in a certain village, and who needs to repair their houses, they will order the mechanical division to estimate the costs and carry out repair immediately. As regards BMN, which is normally under the responsibility of the community development unit, at present the data is surveyed by LAOs, who compile the data and hand over to community development units. In terms of investigation of facts such as in time of flood, the number of victims is surveyed by LAO at the site, and report is made to the district office. The report includes how many houses are inundated, how much damage it is. LAO officers have to carry out survey in the area to obtain the fact.

3.2 There are 2 methods of storing and retrieval of information carried out by LAOs:

3.2.1) Manual storing and retrieval based on indexes of existing documents. Therefore, documents are used as the major elements, for example, village data is kept under each village file. All information of a village is in one file. Information is also kept under different topics. For example, the infrastructure file consists of roads, bridges, water resources. There is still no storage under the index of users’ requirement such as information related to situations, administration. Most of the data of LAOs is kept in this method by separate files of each division under LAOs. The important holistic information is duplicated and also kept at the office of permanent secretary (or the planning division at PAOs).
3.2.2) Storing and retrieval based on computer or information technology. LAOs rely on 2 patterns: 1) Use of computer program or office application. Most LAOs model data on paper and put it in the office computer, for example tables are kept in spreadsheet program, written information are kept in documents, pictures are kept in folders. The files are saved in electronics files in officers’ computers at sub-divisions of LAOs. 2) Storing in the LAOs’ website – Here, important data is selected, such as local development plan, regulations and codes, work outcomes, summary of basic data of the locality. Some divisions have the main computer to store LAOs’ website at the office of permanent secretary (or the planning division at PAOs). Some divisions store their website information on internet networks. 3) Storing of data in the LAOs’ computer databases, for example, the taxation map, asset registration, storage of land use plans, land ownership, buildings, billboards. This is for annual taxation of the local people. The system is operated by the financing division and kept in the division’s computers. Cooperation exists between this division and mechanical division in order to update the information regularly. 4) Storing in the databases of the central organizations via internet network comprising: 4.1) LAO database by the Department of Local Administrative Promotion. The data in this respect includes infrastructures and utilities, economy, social and public health, prevention and mitigation of disasters, the environment, finance and accounting, etc. 4.2) The system of auditing of LAOs’ operation standard by the Department of Local Administrative Promotion. Data related to management, personnel administration, council functions, finance and accounting administration, and public services are audited. 4.3) The evaluation system of LAO public service standardization by the Board of Decentralization to LAOs, Office of the Permanent Secretary, the Prime Minister Office – Information related to basic data, infrastructures, quality of life enhancement, community zoning and social ordering, peace-making, investment promotion planning, trading, tourism, administration, natural resources conservation, art, culture, tradition and local wisdom, and satisfaction of public services is involved. 4.4) The system of local development planning, local accounting, database of pension are kept by the Department of Local Administrative Promotion.

3.3 Report and information services – Since there are 2 important target groups who require information from LAOs, report and information services have to be provided as follows:

3.3.1 The requesting groups for information who are under LAOs including administrators and sub-division units. Local administrators regularly present information related to work outcomes of sub-divisions. When administrators want the information, an
inner official document is prepared and attached with information or report. Therefore, official written letters are the principle means of acquiring information.

3.3.2 The external information users, namely: 1) upper organizations or central organization which make information reports in 2 types; reporting on the official website via the internet. For this, LAOs complete the information according to the request of the central organizations. This can be made in month, fiscal year, etc. The reports can be on paper to be completed. There has to be a leading official letter with it, even when the information is competed on the website of the central organization. The document has to be printed on paper and submitted separately. If no information is submitted, an official letter will be sent to LAO to ask for it. The information required from central organizations can be similar, and is usually on infrastructures like roads, electricity, water sources, etc. 2) The regional official group, namely provinces and districts that report their information using official letters. Usually, they send a survey form for LAO to fill in and in turn send the information back to the organization that requires it. 3) The group of organizations in the area such as police station, schools, hospital, health station, or other LAOs, which require information service via an official letter similar to the regional organizations. The service is provided according to their needs. 4) The higher education group including universities and colleges – this group relies on official letters as the areal group and services are tailor-made. 5) The people in general ask for information via LAOs’ websites and through information services offered by LAOs. When people walk in for information the office of permanent secretary is responsible for locating the information for them.

The result of the study on managing information process of LAOs at present can be illustrated in the following figure:
3.4 The problems in managing information of LAOs – The study revealed 3 major problems: 1) Shortage of knowledgeable and skillful personnel to manage and systemize information. LAOs at present have not framed the position of information officer or information management officer in the operational structure. There is only the data recording officer. Therefore, no officer can be directly responsible for managing information in LAOs. 2) There are various information problems developed by the central organizations which have been sent to LAOs to implement. As a result, the system is not flexible enough and is not compatible to LAOs’ operational system. Sometimes the data required by the system is not in accordance with the data that exists in the area. Sometimes the system requires more data than what exists. This is because many information systems have been developed without considering the context of users, i.e., LAOs. 3) Shortage of areal information system of LAOs themselves that is workable and can support information services internally as well as externally.

Conclusion and Discussion

The research results revealed important issues leading to the following conclusion:

1. In the eyes of other organizations in Thailand, LAOs are close to the people and are responsible for community areas. Therefore, LAOs are the owner of areal information and can best collect the areal information such as demographic, infrastructure, economic, social,
public health, and education information. This perspective makes other organizations ask information from LAOs or ask LAOs to compile the information for them. Thus, LAOs have many systems for data storing, for example, LAO database system by the Department of Local Administrative Promotion, the system of auditing of LAOs’ operation standard by the Department of Local Administrative Promotion, the system of evaluation of LAO public service standard by the Board of Decentralization to LAO, the system of local development planning, the system of local accounting, etc. These systems add to the workload of LAOs while SAOs, Municipalities and PAOs are not aware of their own responsibilities in this respect or their being the centre for collection of areal information. Problems therefore follow in terms of operation. LAOs have not stipulated any terms of reference as a centre for areal information or centre for community information. Thus, there has been no position set for information officers. Existing personnel does not have any knowledge or skill for information management. LAOs’ acting as the centre for areal information and providing services to other organizations in the country that expect to use the accurate and true information is hard to realize.

2. Even though LAOs are close to the people, when it comes to explanation of how the information is derived, LAOs obtain information from other sources, especially from the centre such as the Department of Local Administrative Promotion, the Department of Governing (census data), the Department of Community Development (BMN/NRD 2C). Areal information that should be collected by LAOs is derived from other organizations. Therefore, the reliability of the information is lessened and is not as expected. In reality, LAOs should be responsible for collecting and storing the information systematically. On the contrary, LAOs have not implemented anything on areal information. The information system that exists has been developed temporarily and no system is designed for the effective and intensive use by LAOs so that other organizations can request for it.

3. The abovementioned results led to conclusion that LAOs at present still lack systematic information management although various information systems exist in the organizations and sub-divisions. No system can stand out as a community information system and can be used as the basis for relevant community management. The existing information system can neither support other organizations both regionally and centrally in their work.

Suggestions

Local administrative organizations should act as the main organizations to collect, manage, and develop community information system that can be used for community management. Meanwhile, LAOs can be the centre for community information where information stored
can be shared by all. Therefore, the government or the unit acting as supervisor for LAOs should strengthen the potential of the administrators and personnel in LAOs to be acknowledged and understand managing information and use of information. Personnel to be responsible for information management should be recruited. An efficient system for information management should be established that enables LAOs to efficiently operate.

References
ANALYSING DECENTRALISATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT’S ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

This paper aims to contribute to the on-going debate over the significance of decentralised development strategies to achieve sound local development in developing countries. It can be argued that decentralised development could further enhance the role of local governments, particularly their role in social and economic transformation in the context of South Africa. In this regard, effective design and execution of decentralisation in the form of devolving power, responsibilities, and resources from national to local levels can improve the development role of local authorities. Taking into account the need for decentralised development in South Africa, the new democratic government has introduced various types of policy and legal reforms to implement development oriented decentralisation. One of the major reforms was the institutionalisation of a system of developmental local government, that is, a local government committed to work with citizens and groups in the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social and economic needs and improve the quality of their lives. Accordingly, the reform has created ample opportunities for local governments to improve service provisions and development activities within their area of jurisdiction by engaging communities and community based organizations in local planning and implementation. Since the inception of the new system, many local authorities have designed and produced their Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) to comply with the policy requirements. Yet in practice, these local authorities are still facing serious difficulties, notably, lack of capacity and low level of beneficiary participation in the preparation and implementation of local plans. This implies that the responsiveness of local authorities with regard to
achieving services, infrastructures, and development at local level continue to be a critical challenge in South Africa.

**Key Words**: Decentralisation, Development, Local Government, Integrated Development Plan, South Africa.

**Introduction**

Development has been a contentious issue for decades because the implementation of early theories of development such as modernization and dependency did not produce positive and meaningful impacts on people’s life. Literature shows that despite the economic growth in some situations, the approaches failed to alleviate widespread poverty and inequality among the population in developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America (Haynes, 2008; Todaro and Smith, 2008). This had created dissatisfaction and contributed for a paradigm shift towards rethinking of the conceptual approaches to development.

As a result, the focus on development has shifted from the narrow concept of achieving economic growth to a more comprehensive way of addressing the multidimensional aspects of development. In the past, development was equated with economic growth, but gradually it has been expanded to encompass other dimensions, including social, political, institutional, and environmental aspects (Bellü, 2011). Likewise, the emphasis on approaches to development has also moved away from a traditional centralized top-down to a more decentralised and people-centred development methods. Burkey (1993) argued about the need to mobilize local resources and transforming institutional approaches in order to promote self-reliant participatory development at local level. Some of the people oriented micro-level development approaches include: community development; integrated rural development; participatory development; sustainable development; capacity building approaches (David’s *et al.*, 2009).

The shift away from traditional thinking and approaches towards people-centred and micro-level development strategies, have created an opportunity for local governments as the most powerful and significant institution for making decisions with regard to achieving the social and economic transformation at grass root level. Despite a number of criticisms, particularly lack of capacity for planning and implementing development initiatives, the local authorities have become more recognized for their important role in local development.
It is believed that local governments must play a crucial role in their community to promote the multi-dimensional needs of their community such as social, infrastructural, economic and sustainable environment.

As part of the country’s decentralisation initiatives, South African local governments have been given a development mandates to implement various development policies formulated by the national provincial levels. In practice local authorities are required to redress the past imbalances caused by colonial and apartheid legacies. The constitution of Republic of South Africa of 1996 as well as the White Paper on Local Government of 1998 mandates local governments to be developmental. In essence, local governments must commit themselves to work with community towards maximising social and economic growth, enhancing integration and coordination, democratising development, enhancing a learning process.

Having adopted a decentralised development approach, South African government has introduced integrated development planning as a local planning tool to achieve community participation, empowerment and integration in all local development initiatives. In line with this, the paper aims to contribute to the ongoing debate concerning decentralised development by focusing on the role of local government in development in the context of South Africa.

Decentralisation

Literature shows that the concept of decentralisation is broad and embraces a variety of other concepts and ideas (Rondinelli et al., 1983; Oxhorn et al., 2004). The meaning differs depending on the type of disciplines and the various individuals and organizations involved in a research related to the importance of decentralised approach for development planning and management. The application of the concept also varies according to the contextual realities of countries which design and implement the approach (Rondinelli et al., 1983).

Rondinelli (1981a) argues that responsibility should be transferred for planning, management, and resource utilization and allocation from central government to local level authorities and agencies in the form of de-concentration, delegation, devolution, and privatisation. Decentralisation process, therefore, should consider certain essential aspects, mainly: the form of decentralisation process; the type of actors involved in decentralisation process; and the degree of distribution of decision making power. The authority or power to
make decisions over priorities and resources constitutes the essence of decentralisation process and this creates a situation where more power is shifted to locals to decide on matters that affect their lives.

Regarding the forms of decentralisation, there is inconsistency in literature. However, the classification generally may take three forms such as: political decentralisation, administrative or fiscal decentralisation or a mixture of these (UNDP, 1998; Jütting et al, 2005). Political decentralisation also called ‘democratic decentralisation’ or ‘devolution’ entails the transfer of powers and authorities from central government to elected local representatives (Rondinelli, 1986; Smith, 1996; Manor, 1997). Whereas administrative decentralisation mainly refers to transfer of policy making, planning and management responsibilities from central to local levels, administrative decentralisation takes the form of de-concentration and delegation. Fiscal decentralisation refers to the redistribution of financial management responsibilities (Rondinelli, 1986).

Local Government’s Role in Development

Local governments are the lower level of governance structures which are closer to the communities and have their own defined geographic area and authority to implement their policy mandates. Local governments have been established and existed to achieve diverse development objectives.

- First, local governments can contribute for increased popular participation in development planning and management through initiating and facilitating practices that can encourage mutual partnership and interaction among communities, community based organizations and local government (Butler, 2005).

- Secondly, local governments can contribute for creation of enabling conditions for pro-poor economic growth that encourages community empowerment in the form of poverty alleviation through better service provision, improving conditions for local economic development, and creating job opportunities (Vander Wal and Hilhorst, 2007).

However, the major concern behind achieving these development mandates of local governments is that they should be given equal attention for maintaining sustainability of the
development initiatives and benefits for the community at large. It has also been debated that in order for local governments to achieve their policy mandates, they must be given a central place in development through sharing of power, responsibilities and resources from higher spheres of governance. This process involves designing and implementing decentralisation reform in a particular context that facilitates three conditions (Nibbering et al., n.d):

- Transfer of political power for ensuring local autonomy in programming and spending;
- Transfer of decision making authority, responsibilities and resources for provision of basic services; and
- Providing authority to access funds from central government, generate revenue and decide on expenditure.

Decentralisation and Local Development

It can be argued that the local government’s role in development can be further enhanced through decentralised approach. Decentralised approach to local development has been promoted and implemented in a number of developing countries (Bardhan, 2002; Steiner, 2005). The rationale to adopt decentralised approach for development mainly includes the need to enhance development role of local authorities in relation to community participation and poverty reduction. The expectation was that decentralisation can facilitate improved local development planning and implementation because it brings governance in close contact to the grass root community.

Decentralisation in the form of devolution of power, responsibilities and resources from national to local authorities can contribute to increased local participation depending on consideration of certain conditions and critical factors. There are evidences that show the positive impact of devolution of power on improving local participation, in particular to increasing participation and representation of marginalized and disadvantaged groups in society such as women and minority groups (Heller et al., 2007; Blair, 2000; Sanni, 2010).

In contrast, some researchers have indicated on the failure of decentralised approach to improve local participation in certain cases (Friedman and kihato, 2004). These studies generally suggest that an appropriate consideration should be given by designers and implementers of decentralised approach. The following are some of the key factors conditions
and factors:

- Availability and accessibility of established structures and systems;
- Inclusion of disadvantaged groups in community; the scope and clarity of agenda for decentralisation; and
- Capacity of local authorities to implement the process.

With regard to the impact of decentralisation on poverty, studies broadly highlighted the fact that the relationship between decentralisation and poverty reduction is not one-way rather it is shaped by a number of factors that affect outcomes of services and development activities (Steiner, 2005; Jütting et al., 2005). The key factors include:

- Devolution of power and resources (financial and skilled human power);
- Participation of the poor in development process; commitment of all stakeholders (government and civil society); and
- The capacity of government bodies.

Therefore, proper planning and implementation of decentralised development can not only mitigate the negative effect of the critical factors but also enhances the role of local authorities towards achieving development mandates. Broadly, the mandates in terms of local participation and poverty alleviation are of critical importance in transforming the social and economic situation of the disadvantaged and marginalised groups in society such as women and minority groups.

**Decentralised Development in South Africa**

The pre-democratic era in South Africa was mainly characterised by the centralised top-down administration of the apartheid government, which was based on the system of institutionalized racial segregation. This system generally acted towards lack of freedom, lack of democracy, and separate development (South Africa, 1994). As a result, the majority of black South Africans were marginalized and disadvantaged due to policy restrictions on their socio-economic rights such as forceful removal from their farm land and lack of access to various household basic services, including quality education and health services. The impact was that millions of people in rural areas and townships of the former homeland continued to
lead poor quality of life under extreme poverty and inequality.

After inheriting such legacies of racially divided societies, extreme poverty and inequality, the post-apartheid South African government focused its attention on promoting democracy and development for the benefit of its citizens. Concerning development, The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, clearly provides more emphasis on the important role of public institutions in promoting social and economic transformation by stating the need for public administration to be development-oriented (South Africa, 1996).

The national government has also put in place various policies and strategies. For example, currently government has adopted a long-term development plan entitled ‘The National Development Plan 2030. The plan, especially chapter 13, seeks to build a capable and developmental state and emphasise on strengthening intergovernmental relationship among the three spheres of governance such as national, provincial, and local government in South Africa. This strategy can be seen as the most important component of the plan because it aims to build the capacity of local authorities to enable them to contribute effectively in reduction of poverty and inequality, creation of job opportunities, expansion of infrastructural investment, efficient utilization of resources, anti-corruption initiatives, and improvement of human capability through quality education and health services. It has been adopted by government, however, critics argue about its implementation due to lack of capacity in local governments.

Developmental Local Governments

As part of the country’s decentralisation initiatives, South African local governments have been given a development mandates to translate and implement various development policies formulated by the national government. In practice local authorities are required to redress the past imbalances caused by colonial and apartheid legacies.

The White Paper on Local Government of 1998, defines developmental local governments as ‘local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives’ (South Africa, 1998:17). This description implies about the crucial role of developmental local governments in identifying and addressing the priority needs of community through improved participation of grass root people in local development process for poverty alleviation and improving quality of life. The White Paper
outlines and explains development role of local governments as follow:

- First, developmental local government is responsible for maximizing socio-economic development through provision of basic household services and infrastructures, arts and cultures, provision of recreational and community facilities, and social welfare services. Local governments must also play critical role in partnership with local business and investors to promote job creation and investment.

- Secondly, developmental local government must ensure integration and coordination. To this end, developmental local governments must work in partnership with national and provincial departments, private sectors and civil society groups to mobilize resources and increase investment opportunities.

- Thirdly, democratizing development, empowerment and redistribution are essential mandates. Developmental local governments should promote strategies such as subsidized services to low income households and provide financial and technical support to community organizations.

- Finally, local government must play leadership role and enhance learning process. This can be achieved through building social capital in order to create shared vision and find local solutions for development.

**Integrated Development Plan (IDP) as Strategic Tool**

IDP can be seen as a planning and strategic tool to assist local governments in designing and implementation of development initiatives. IDP can be defined as:

- “Participatory approach to integrated economic, sectoral, spatial, social, institutional, environmental and the fiscal strategies in order to support the optimal allocation of scarce resources between sectors and geographical areas and across the population in a manner that provides sustainable growth, equity and the empowerment of poor and the marginalized” (DPLG, 2000:15).

- IDP is a process through which a municipality prepares and establishes a short, medium and long-term development plan (South Africa, 1998).

IDP, therefore, can be considered as the major tool of local planning because it helps
local governments to match resources with priority objectives as well as improve coordination. The major value of IDP is to improve coordination and integration among different spheres of governance with regard to achieving development mandates and it is also hoped to contribute towards empowerment of community.

The Implementation of Developmental Mandates

The developmental mandate of local government is generally considered as overambitious and broad in scope (Pieterse et al., 2008). Given the difficult situation of South African local governments, it becomes more complicated for local authorities to find the match between their limited resources and developmental policy objectives.

Due to the mismatch, local governments have been struggling with several challenges with regard to the implementation of their developmental mandate (Asmah-Andon, 2009; Malefane, 2009; Maserumule, 2008). The explanations for ineffective implementation of developmental local authorities mainly include:

- Lack of capacity;
- Weak communication; and
- Lack of effective coordination among local governments;
- Ineffective municipal structures;
- The notion of bureaucracy and authority;
- Low level of public participation;
- Poor service delivery,
- Failure of poverty alleviation projects are some of the problems related to ineffectiveness of developmental local governments.

These impediments have generally impacted negatively in the local planning and implementation process. It is also noted that many South African local authorities have been producing IDP documents in order to comply with the policy and legal requirements. Nevertheless, the quality of these documents is still questionable due to problems related to planning such as lack of current and adequate information as well as limited capacity.

Concerning the implementation of IDPs, studies shows that the implementation of IDP programmes and projects has been inadequate and slow and limited impact on lives of beneficiary people and generally lacks sustainability (Tshikovha, 2006; Lelope, 2007; Mashamba, 2008; Asmah-Andon, 2009). For instance, in 2005 majority of the local
governments in Limpopo province were earmarked for project consolidation (Sefala, 2009). Project consolidate was launched in response to poor performance in local governments to implement service delivery. Its aim is to enhance participation of the public in prioritizing needs, building of capacity, fighting corruption and deployment of experts to empower local government.

Studies have also revealed the fact that public participation is weak in IDPs (Maphunye and Mafunisa, 2008; Mafunisa and Xaba, 2008). Mafunisa and Xaba indicated that there is inadequate public participation, for example, in Limpopo province due to lack of culture of public participation, lack of information, inadequate skill for public participation, population diversity, and negative attitudes. Moreover, past studies reported that there is much to be done to improve service delivery to community in South Africa (Phago, 2009). This implies that the situation calls for identifying ways to improve local enhanced planning and implementation of development initiatives.

**Conclusion**

The paper demonstrated the significance of decentralised development for empowering local government and community. It has also been argued that development role of local authorities can be enhanced through effective design and execution of decentralisation processes. Furthermore, devolving power, responsibilities and resources to lower level authorities can potentially impact on local development initiatives, specifically local participation and poverty alleviation.

The South African developmental local governments are mandated with power, responsibility and resources in order to promote development within their area of jurisdiction. However, achieving developmental policy mandates will remain a serious challenge for many local authorities.

Therefore, empowering local government in all aspects is necessary to promote their developmental agenda. As indicated in the discussion section, the decentralisation process in South Africa has created opportunities for local government to work closely with community and community based organizations with regard to planning and implementation of development initiatives. To this end, Integrated Development Planning (IDP) has been adopted as a strategic tool to assist local authorities in managing development processes in their area. Evidences shows that many local authorities have been producing their Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), however there are various challenges including the lack of
capacity and low level of beneficiary participation in local planning and implementation of Integrated Development Plans (IDPs).

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The Role of Local Government in Local Economic Development in South Africa
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ABSTRACT
Local Government literature purports this sphere of government to be the engine of Local Economic Development (LED) because of its close proximity to the people. Given the “goodness” in the integrated planning processes, local government should ably lead and provide for an enabling local development environment wherein jobs, income, market and economic output opportunities are created. That is, local government can create conditions in which local people could take and use productive opportunities whilst simultaneously resisting the attendant risks and vulnerability to poverty and inequality. Therefore, local government’s ability to establish an enabling local development environment could be measurable through, among other things, its capacity to create productive opportunities accessible to the locales and to support people’s ability to resist threats.
This paper demonstrates that South Africa’s local government integrated development planning processes, notwithstanding the LED rhetoric, do not provide for measures necessary for the creation of an enabling local development environment. Instead, its local government has helped to deliver development to a passive citizenry. This paper concludes that the role of local government in establishing an enabling local development environment is compromised by the lack of measures for supporting local people’s ability to attain the three core values of development: high standard of living, high self-esteem and total freedom of choice.

Key words: Local Government, Local Economic Development, Enabling Development Environment, Integrated Development Planning, South Africa.
Introduction and Background

Local government is a sphere of government which is close to the people, as it operates in close contact with the local communities. The close relation that local government is assumed to be having with the public suggests that there should be an interaction between the two in terms of development and service delivery, to the satisfaction of the inhabitants of the local area or municipalities. The fact that local government is the closest sphere of government to its community provides a platform for municipalities to interact closely with its inhabitants in order to play a meaningful role in the development of the socio-economic conditions for its locales (Phago, 2004). However, in many instances, especially in South African municipalities, it has appeared that over the years, local government made negligible success in terms of service delivery and in creating an enabling development environment within local communities, especially those in the rural and previously disadvantaged areas. Galvin (1999), Beall (2004), Hoffman (2007) and Seduma (2011) are of the notion that through participation of communities and other stakeholders in the integrated development planning processes and Local Economic Development (LED), the local government should be able to lead the municipality towards accomplishing set development goals, as stated in their Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and LED strategies.

This paper proposes that South Africa’s local government does not provide the necessary measures for the creation of an enabling local development environment, which supports the local people’s ability to attain the three core values of development: high standards of living, high self-esteem and total freedom of choice. In order to deliberate more on this argument, the paper will address the following: local government in South Africa, the determinants of an enabling development environment, the connection between local development environment and Local Economic Development, and lastly, how South Africa’s local government legislation and practice contribute towards the creation of an enabling local development environment. This paper will be based on theoretical discussions; and, empirical experiences of the practices of local government, especially in South Africa will be made reference to.

Local Government in South Africa

Authors such as Galvin (1999), Phago (2005), Nyalunga (2006), Hoffman (2007); Pieterse (2007) refer to local government as the lowest tier of government in a country, where authority and mandate are delegated by the state’s legislation, as stated in chapter 5 of the
Local Government Municipal Systems (RSA, 2000). Local government is regarded as the lowest sphere of government as it is responsible for basic service delivery and governance of local municipalities (www.etu.org.za/localgovt; www.wikipedia.com). South Africa has three spheres of government, the national provincial and local government, wherein national is the highest and local the lowest. The South African local government system, as discussed in the Municipal Systems Acts of 1998 and 2000, has two main divisions which are determined by the municipalities in which they are located. Local government in South Africa consists of municipalities of various types; and, Chapter 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996), Section 155, outlines the three categories of municipalities thus: category A which constitutes metropolitan municipalities, referring to urbanized regions that encompass multiple cities; category B which are the district municipalities and are also referred to as the main divisions of South Africa's provinces; and lastly, category C which consists of the subdivisions of districts into local municipalities. The largest metropolitan areas are governed by metropolitan municipalities, while the rest of the country is divided into district municipalities, each of which consists of several local municipalities. South Africa has 44 district municipalities and 226 local municipalities which share the same authority from district municipalities under which they fall; and, eight metropolitan municipalities which have their own authorities (Phago, 2004; www.demarcation.org.za/).

The White Paper on Local Government (RSA, 1998) states that a developmental local government is a local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic, and material needs and to improve the quality of their lives. This developmental role of the local government is also stipulated in the Republic of South Africa’s Constitution (Section 153), together with the objectives of local government which include ensuring there is provision of services to communities, promotion of social and economic development, and encouragement of the public and community organizations to participate in matters of local government. Phago (2004) suggests that local government is in a good position to play a crucial role towards development and creating a local economic development environment for the local people in order to develop their socio-economic conditions. This proposition is mainly founded on the assumption that local government is the closest sphere of government to local people; and, it can be tenably assumed that through participation and consultancy, socio-economic development can be realized. Not only can the local government solely achieve local development, it is also through the assistance of structures such as the South African Local
Government Association (Salga), that they can be assisted in order to fulfill their developmental role. South Africa, as a developing country, accepted that development is about people and that for people to have a hold on their process of development, a local government was necessary to devolve power to the local scale. The primary aim of establishing the local tier of government was that it would help in addressing issues faced by locales at grass-root level, and promote their socio-economic situations as most of them, predominantly Africans, are located in previously disadvantaged areas. The establishment of the local government sphere resulted in the decentralization of power and responsibilities from National and Provincial governments to the local government. The decentralization and restructuring of the government system was meant to assist in fast tracking development and addressing development issues where local government is the primary state agency driver for service delivery (Tsheola, 2012); however, evidence shows that to-date negligible progress has been made in this regard and in some instances the conditions have worsened (Phago, 2005; Hoffman, 2007; Mzimakwe, 2010).

Credit can be awarded to local governments in many rural areas in South Africa, and it is through the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and Local Economic Development (LED) strategies, that they have been able to make significant improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the people they serve. Strategies such as the IDP and LED, give local government the platform to plan on how to generate employment, improve infrastructure and provide basic needs for the communities, which in turn result in the creation of an enabling development environment (Cashdan, 2000; Tshishonga and Mafema, 2010). Looking at the bigger picture, the development of any country is affected by the systems and accomplishments of local government. Galvin (1999) and Tsheola (2012) supports this view by arguing that in addition to the relationship held with civil society and the general citizenry in its jurisdiction, the intergovernmental relations affect the ability of local government to respond successfully to the challenges of development. This is a clear indication that participation is crucial for the attainment of sustainable socio-economic development of local municipalities, which in turn contributes to the development profile of the country.

**Determinants of an Enabling Local Development Environment**

Local governments have an important role to play in society, one of which is to create favourable environments for business success and job creation; in doing so, an enabling local
development environment can be created. One may ask what the determinants of an enabling local development environment are; the determinants of an enabling local development environment differ from area to area, as developmental needs are determined with acute consideration of the beneficiary communities. Also, an enabling local development environment is characterised by community self-help services, entrepreneurial initiatives and freedom of participation by community members.

South Africa is one of the most unequal nations, having the worst Gini coefficient, with half the population living in poverty on just 11% of national income (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_distribution_of_wealth; Rawson Property Group, 2012). South African settlements are deeply divided, often with a physical ‘buffer zone’ between racial and economic groups. Whereas townships and rural areas have weak tax bases, white suburbs generate substantial revenue through commercial property rates (Sherer, 2000; Nattrass and Seekings, 2001; Ozler, 2007). South Africa’s unofficial unemployment rate was rated very high in 2004 (Bhorat, 2004), currently, it is still ranked as one of the highest in the world with the unemployment rate of 25.2% (Statistics SA, 2013). Given such a high rate of unemployment, local government in South Africa is faced with the challenge of creating an enabling local development environment so that the immediate needs of the local people are met. Local government has different approaches of addressing developmental needs of the people, including the creation of a conducive development environment through, among other things, the implementation of the IDP, LED, service delivery, and democratisation (Cashdan, 2000; Nkuna and Nemutanzhela, 2012). As to whether local government succeeds or not is another challenge altogether.

Whether an enabling local development environment can exist in South Africa is a function of the laws and policies which allow for an environment that stimulates local initiative and draws inward investment, both of which can have rapid and dramatic effects on employment and human resource development as well as boost the economy. Basic services enhance the quality of life of citizens, and increase their social and economic opportunities by promoting health and safety, facilitating access to work, education, recreation and stimulating new productive activities (Cashdan, 2000). The availability of business development services, knowledge networks and education/business links are all crucial in increasing the dynamism of local economies as well as creating an enabling development environment (Swinburn, Goga and Murphy, 2006). Local governments have an essential role in creating favourable environments for business success and employment generation. However, a question would be raised as to how local government can play a role in creating an enabling environment
through consultation with the communities and representation of their interests, participation
of all affected parties, and generation of inward investments as well as business opportunities
for the local people. An enabling local development environment is an environment that
allows for job opportunities, availability of basic infrastructure and services, and also the
freedom from servitude. There are a number of strategies that can be used in creating an
enabling local development environment; and, in South Africa the attempt is made through
measures entailed in the IDP and LED.

Strategically planned local economic development is increasingly used to enable
communities to improve their economic futures as well as being in a state that allows them to
archive the three core values of development (Meyer-Stamer, 2006; Hindson and Meyer-
Stamer, 2007). Effectively pursued, LED has the ability to unleash endogenous potentials that
generate a genuine growth dynamic, as the factors, such as lack of electricity, transport, water,
sanitation, housing, health, educational services, training opportunities and public transport,
which affects the development environment, will be addressed. As a result, an environment
where there is progressive development will be created (Hindson and Meyer-Stamer, 2007;
Swinburn, 2006). The question whether an enabling environment exists in South Africa
remains contestable because the municipal LED has not been fruitful or effectively functional.
Thus, local government has been unable to create an enabling environment for economic
development. Recent mass demonstration and community protests against municipal
underperformance, corruption and maladministration attest to the claim that South African
municipalities’ IDP and LED have not been fruitful and effective (Meyer-Stamer, 2006),
which however slows down the process of creating an enabling environment where people
are able to archive the three core values of development. Development improves
applicability to local conditions, remove options for corruption, and improve accountability
to beneficiaries (Galvin, 1999; Mzimakwe, 2010).

The Connection between Local Development Environment and Local Economic
Development

Local government literature purports this sphere of government as the engine of local
economic development (LED) because of its close proximity to the people (Tsheola, 2012;
Mzimakwe, 2010). However, the presence of municipalities does not guarantee the
achievement of government goals including the improvement of the general welfare of
society. Hence, the accessibility of municipal services to its community serves the purpose
for the right of existence of municipalities (Phago, 2005; Patterson, 2008). Municipalities
should be close to the people mainly because of their constitutional positions, but should also be accessible to ensure the necessary interaction with municipal stakeholders such as the private and community sectors, in order that they may make informed service delivery decisions (Phago, 2005; Sachs, 2008; Mzimakwe, 2010). There are five stages of a strategic planning process necessary to guide LED initiatives, which if followed accordingly can contribute to creating an environment for local development. These are:

- **Stage 1** is effort organising, which involves the creation of shared values between stakeholders, as well as the identification of who should be involved;
- **Stage 2** is local economic assessment, which refers to the context of the local economy, including the identification of strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, with the purpose of establishing baseline understanding of the local economy;
- **Stage 3** is the creation of LED strategy, which caters for the formulation of vision, goals, objectives, programmes as well as projects and action plans;
- **Stage 4** is the implementation of LED strategy, which depends on the skilled human resources to follow procedures, in ensuring institutional capacity such as budgeting; and,
- **Stage 5** is the reviewing of LED strategy, which refers to the establishment of monitoring and evaluation measures. These measures assist in quantifying impacts of local economic development towards the community in particular (Phago, 2005:133).

Developmental local government is local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic, and material needs and improve the quality of their lives (Pieterse, 2007; Tsheola, 2012). Though developmental local government is explicitly about economic development, very few municipalities knew how to pursue such development.

The Constitution provides for a developmental model of local government (RSA, 1996). Thus local government is not just an important site for the delivery of services, but is crucial for the economic and social development of people. The Constitution provides that municipalities should be in charge of providing access to vital services, such as electricity, primary health care, sanitation, and water. Moreover, local government is everybody’s business; and, in South Africa local government has contributed to the achievement of a number of significant social and economic development advances, since the ushering in of the new democratic municipal dispensation in December 2000 which gives local people a platform for achieving the three core values of development (Mgwebi, 2012). The majority of our people have increased access to a wide range of basic services and more opportunities have been created for their participation in the economy (Cogta, 2009). It is worth noting that
South Africa’s local government is still in the process of transformation. One of the critical constitutional features of local government in South Africa after 1994 has been its developmental orientation. Given the range of structural disadvantages created by apartheid, rural areas still require a high level of government intervention to promote development; and, for these interventions to be successful and sustainable they must be guided by a clear vision (Pieterse, 2007).

How Does South Africa’s Local Government Legislation and Practice Create an Enabling Local Development Environment?

It is almost two decades after the attainment of political freedom, and South Africa remains profoundly marked by very high levels of inequality, underpinned by stubbornly high levels of unemployment and pervasive poverty (Nattrass and Seekings, 2001; Ozler, 2007; Pieterse, 2007). Poverty in South Africa is largely driven by a lack of income, and there is a significant percentage of unemployed people. One can ask as to why there is such slow development in regard of service delivery and employment generation to improve the living standard of the people. Notwithstanding the policies, and strategies that have been put in place to deal with such problems at local, provincial and national level, this question remains relevant. The Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996) provides for the developmental duties of local municipalities which locate local government at the forefront of development; and, in Section 40.1 it states that “government is constituted as national, provincial and local spheres of government which are distinctive, interdependent and interrelated”. The three spheres of government are supposed to work in relation to one another, in order to realise the developmental goals of localities, provinces and also the nation. Not only does local government play an important role in development, it also is the key player in improving the socio-economic profiles of the local people.

The local government model is expected to be advanced, progressive, and transformative. However, it is not working well in practice. There are a variety of reasons for this, including the lack of capacity, inability to raise enough revenue, inadequate intergovernmental fiscal transfers, the complexity of the two-tier model of District and Local Municipalities, inadequate community participation, undue party political interference in municipalities and corruption (Mitlin, 2004; Mzimakwe, 2010; Tsheola, 2012).

Local government has a developmental role to play within municipalities; there are developmental approaches that it engages in the hope of improving the wellbeing of the people. The development approaches include integrated development planning, service
delivery, local economic development (LED) and democratisation. This paper discussed IDP and LED only. In terms of the Municipal Systems Act, each municipality has to develop an Integrated Development Plan (IDP) reasonably soon after local government elections for the five-year term of the council. Important aspects of the IDP should ideally be based on key elements of the Election Manifesto of the party that wins the elections. The White Paper on Local Government (RSA, 1998) notes that developmental local government is local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives. Section 25 of the Municipal Systems Act requires that “each municipal council must, within a prescribed period after the start of its elected term, adopt a single, inclusive and strategic plan for the development of the municipality” which “(a) links, integrates and co-ordinates plans and takes into account proposals for the development of the municipality; (b) aligns the resources and capacity of the municipality with the implementation of the plan; and (c) forms the policy framework and general basis on which annual budgets must be based…..”. The IDP must also “be compatible with national and provincial development plans and planning requirements binding on the municipality in terms of legislation” (RSA, 2000).

In terms of the Municipal Systems Act, the core components of an IDP should also include a municipality’s local economic development plans, a spatial development framework, disaster management plans, a financial management plan with a budget projection for at least three years, and key performance indicators and targets. The more effective the cooperative governance system is, the more the conditions of a developmental state are created, and the more a developmental state is built, the more the conditions for a more effective cooperative governance system are created. These are based on the Constitution and set out mainly in the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act (2000). As pointed out above, among the aims of local government set out in the Constitution are “to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities” and “to encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in matters of local government” (Mitlin, 2004; Sachs, 2008; Mzimakwe, 2010). In terms of the Municipal Systems Act, a municipality “must develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance” (RSA, 2000). The Act makes it clear that residents have the right to contribute to the municipality’s decision-making processes. They also have the right to submit recommendations and complaints to the council and are entitled to prompt responses. Furthermore, residents have the right to “regular disclosure of the state of affairs of the
municipality, including its finances” (RSA, 2000, 2001).

Conclusion

The paper demonstrated that there is a necessary linkage between local government and local economic development mainly for the realisation of an enabling local development environment, which is affirmed by Hoffman (2007) and Pieterse (2007). One of the objectives of local government is to work with citizens in local communities to help them find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs for the attainment of the three core values of development. So far, there is credence to the notion that local government has made negligible progress in terms of creating an enabling environment for local development. In some instances, the conditions have worsened. Regardless of the close proximity of local government to the people, this sphere of government has appeared to perpetually fail local people hence access to services has remained tenuous for the majority of poor people. To halt this trend, South Africa will require implementation of regulations in line with the policy prescriptions.

References


Republic of South Africa (RSA). Constitution of the South African Local Government Association as adopted on November 1997 and recognized in terms of section 2 (1) (a) of the organised local government act, 1997 (act no. 52); and as amended by the salga national conference of 24-27. April 2007.


Understanding Discretionary Service Behavior in The Public Sector : The Role of Organizational Justice, Satisfaction with Supervisor and Organizational Commitment

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between organizational justice, satisfaction with supervisor, organizational commitment, discretionary service behavior and satisfaction with public service. Samples are taken from 123 public servants in the district government of Karanganyar, Indonesia. A structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test the model.

The result shows that interpersonal justice has a significant effect on satisfaction with supervisor. In turn, satisfaction with supervisor relates to affective commitment. Affective commitment is found to be associated with satisfaction with public service and discretionary service behavior. No evidence is found that procedural justice has an impact on affective commitment. Discretionary service behavior does not affect the satisfaction with public service as well.

Keywords : Discretionary Service Behavior, Organizational Justice, Satisfaction with Supervisor, Organizational Commitment

Introduction

Following the institutional reform, local governments in Indonesia at the provincial and municipal levels nowadays have more authority over public services and over the decentralization of the public services. Therefore, bureaucratic reforms should be
promoted to bring a better local government, including the quality of public services. Public servants as the core resources are expected to demonstrate an excellent performance in order to provide better public services. The customers of public services expect that high-quality services are provided by the local governments. As a proxy of organizational performance, a service quality is widely known to be associated with the effectiveness of Human Resource Management (HRM) in organizations. As public sector is a labor intensive organization, HRM practically plays an important role in influencing the behavior of the public servants.

A fair treatment has an important effect on individual employee attitudes, such as satisfaction and commitment, and individual behaviors, for instance absenteeism and citizenship behavior (Colquitt, et.al, 2001). Colquitt et. al., (2001) also find that organizational justice influences the individual performance. Simon & Roberson (2003) contend that fair policies and treatment of employees in organizations might increase the capability of an organization to address the need of their customers. Barling & Phillips (1993), find the relationship between interactional justice and organizational commitment. Konovsky & Cropanzano (1991) report that affective commitment is significantly related to manager’s decision making process. It means that the extent to which decision makers explaining the rationale for decisions affect employees commitment. Organizational commitment is also expected to influence employees’ prosocial behavior. As described by Simon & Roberson (2003), commitment drives prosocial behavior that indicates a personal concern with the organization or that reflect personal sacrifice solely made for the organization. Blancero & Johnson (1997) propose the discretionary service behavior (DSB) as a subset of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) that focuses on the customer-employee interaction. Furthermore, Blancero & Johnson (1997) define DSB as behavioral choices that are not necessarily explicitly prescribed or scripted by an organization. DSB is important because it can affect customer satisfaction, which in turn impacts the organization. Recently, the study of public employee behavior is getting more attention. However national culture may bring unique behavior patterns in organizations. Thus, the applicability and meaningfulness of the concept of DSB across other cultures need to be considered. This study examines the relationship between organizational justice, satisfaction with supervisor, organizational commitment and DSB.

**Literature Review**
Organizational Justice

The equity theory has inspired new stream of research to explain employee attitudes and behaviors. The essence of the equity theory is that employees compare their efforts and rewards with others in similar work situations. This theory is based on the assumption that individuals, who work in exchange for rewards from the organization, are motivated by a desire to be equitably treated at work. This will lead to organizational justice. Gibson, et.al (2006) define organizational justice as the degree to which individuals feel fairly treated within the organizations for which they work. Justice perceptions of employees hold a crucial implication to managers and organizations (Simon & Roberson, 2003). It is therefore reasonable to consider that employee of an organization may develop positive attitudes and behaviors when they are treated fairly (Shah, 2011).

There are three components of justice that have been outlined in the literature. Distributive justice is defined as the perceived fairness of how resources and rewards are distributed in an organization. This concept often deals with compensation. However, researchers have applied the concept of distributive justice to a wide variety of workplace situations, including organizational politics, promotion decisions, mentoring and satisfaction with benefit levels (Gibson, et.al, 2006). Procedural justice refers to the perceived equity or fairness of the organization’s processes and procedures used to make resources and allocation decisions (Gibson, et.al, 2006). That is, employees are concerned with the fairness of decision making in all areas of work, including decisions related to compensation, performance appraisal, training, and work group assignments. Some studies have further highlighted the importance of interactional justice, or the quality of interpersonal treatment received during the implementation of decision-making procedures (Simons & Roberson, 2003).

Organizational Commitment

According to Gibson, et.al (2006), commitment to organization involves three attitudes: (1) a sense of identification with the organization’s goals; (2) a feeling of involvement in organizational duties; (3) a feeling of loyalty for the organization. The absence of commitment can reduce organizational effectiveness. Committed people are less likely to quit and accept other jobs. Furthermore, a committed employee perceives the value and importance of integrating individual and organizational goals. The employee thinks of his
goals and the organization’s goals in personal terms. Meyer & Allen (1990) identify three components of organizational commitment as affective, continuance and normative commitment. Affective commitment refers to the employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. Continuance commitment refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization. Normative commitment reflects a feeling of obligation to continue employment.

**Satisfaction with Supervisor**

Gibson, et.al (2006) define job satisfaction as the attitude that workers have regarding their jobs, which is resulted from their perception of the jobs. It is generally argued that supervisor is one of important aspects associated with job satisfaction.

As explained by Noe, et.al (2003), a person may be satisfied with his supervisor for one of following reasons. First, she/he may have many similarities of the same values, attitudes and philosophies that his/her supervisor has. A number of organizations try to foster a culture of shared values among employees. Even if one cannot generate a unifying culture throughout an entire organization, it is worth noting that increasing in job satisfaction can be simply derived from supervisors. Second, the person may be satisfied with his supervisor because the supervisor provides a social support. Some studies provide evidence that a social support is a strong predictor of job satisfaction. Third, one’s supervisor may help the person attain some valued outcome.

**Discretionary Service Behavior**

Blancero & Johnson (1997) explain that discretionary service behavior (DSB) is a part of organizational citizenship behavior which is focused on the interaction between employees and customers. DSB involves a set of behavioral choices that is not necessarily explicitly prescribed or scripted by the organization. DSB can satisfy minimum standards of service quality that are established by organizations, but may exceed such standard (Blancero & Johnson, 1997). Moreover, Blancero & Johnson (1997) explain that DSB involves customer service behavior only, not execution of job content or other non-customer focused employee role behavior. DSB focuses more on process than output : employees can decide how they deliver service, not what the service delivery entails. The discretionary aspect of DSB suggests that employees can choose to personally engage in
moments of task behaviors through self-expression. Defining DSB, Blancero & Johnson (1997) use organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) as a conceptual foundation for the discretionary nature of DSB. According to Organ & Ryan (1995), OCB includes extra role activities that are not formally or explicitly recognized by the organization. OCB has been defined to include such as altruism (helping others), conscientiousness (following through), and courtesy (being nice).

**Hypotheses**

Some studies in organizational justice have shown that the fairness of decision making policies and practices is an important consideration for employees. Martin & Bennett (1996) argue that procedural fairness is the direct trigger of organizational commitment. In other words, organizational commitment could be determined by the perceived fairness of the policies and procedures used to achieve organization’s outcomes. Aryee, et.al (2002) find that procedural justice is associated with organizational commitment. They also reveal that trust in an organization partially has mediated the relationship between distributive and procedural justices and the work attitudes of job satisfaction, turn-over intentions and organizational commitment. Being consistent with previous findings, Simons & Roberson (2003) reveal that procedural justice is positively associated with affective commitment. It means that a fair treatment in an organization will strengthen employees’ commitment to the organization. Thus, we hypothesize:

**H1.** There is a significant and positive relationship between procedural justice and affective commitment.

Another dimension of organizational justice, which is interpersonal justice, is also found to be related to employee behavior. Colquitt (2001) find that there is a significant link between interactional justice and evaluating on supervisor. Aryee, et.al (2002) confirm that interactional justice has an indirect effect on organizational commitment through trust in organization. Accordingly, we hypothesize :

**H2.** There is a significant and positive relationship between interpersonal justice and satisfaction with supervisor

**H3.** There is a significant and positive relationship between satisfaction with supervisor and affective commitment
Organizational commitment has received a substantial attention in the literature due to its significant impact on work attitudes (Yousef, 2000). Meyer & Allen (1993) find a relationship between attitudinal and behavioral consequences among employees, such as motivation and organizational citizenship. Likewise, Yousef (2000) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between organizational commitment and job satisfaction. In the public sector, public employees’ commitment to act in the interests of their organization has been recognized as an important aspect to the success of public organization (Perry & Wise, 1990). Another study by Hosmer (1994) finds that employees’ affective commitment can affect their willingness to expend discretionary effort to serve the companies service goals. This discretionary effort will lead to a greater customer satisfaction. Simons & Roberson (2003) also explain that affective commitment can have direct impact on consumer satisfaction. Therefore, we hypothesized:

H4. There is a significant and positive relationship between affective commitment and satisfaction with public service.

H5. There is a significant and positive relationship between affective commitment and discretionary service behavior.

H6. There is a significant and positive relationship between discretionary service behavior and satisfaction with public service.

Research Method

Sample and Procedure

We collected data from public servants in Karanganyar, which is located in the province of Central Java, Indonesia. Questionnaires were distributed to 280 respondents, comprising two sources, 140 public servants and 140 public service users. Public servants completed a survey describing their perceptions on organizational justice, satisfaction with supervisor, affective commitment and discretionary service behavior. Public service users provided data for the measures of satisfaction with public service.

Construct Measurement
Organizational Justice. To measure procedural justice, five items from Niehoff & Moorman (1993) were used, pointing at how often the listed procedures were observed at work (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.83). This study also used Niehoff & Moorman’s (1993) items to assess interpersonal justice reflecting interpersonal treatment received during the implementation of decision-making procedures (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.76).

Satisfaction with Supervisor. For measuring satisfaction with supervisor, three items were used retrieving from the study of Bass & Avolio (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.81).

Affective Commitment. To measure affective commitment, eight items from Allen & Meyer (1990) were used, indicating employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization.

Discretionary Service Behavior (DSB). DSB is measured using the conceptual work of Blancero & Johnson (1997) to describe employees’ behaviors that exceed standard prescribed by organization.

Satisfaction with Public Service. For satisfaction with public service, this study used the society satisfaction index. Service quality is measured using the society satisfaction index, based on the Decree of Minister of Information, No. 25/KEP/M PAN/2/2004.

Results

A structural equation modeling (SEM) using maximum likelihood estimation was employed to test our hypotheses. This study used the likelihood ratio chi-square test, comparative fit index (CFI), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) to assess the goodness-of-fit of our model.

The results of the structural model are presented in Table 1, which show that the value of $X^2$ is $695.504$, $p<0.05$. This indicates that our original model does not adequately fit. Some other fit indices are GFI = 0.758; AGFI = 0.722; CFI = 0.87 and RMSEA = 0.06, which indicate the same symptom as well. Therefore, it is necessary to modify the model by estimating the correlation between error terms to have better fit indices.

Table 1. Results of Fit Indices

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<tr>
<th>Goodness of fit</th>
<th>Expected Values</th>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
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Model Modification

The results of model modification are presented in Table 2. Chi-square is significantly reduced ($X^2 = 558.834$, $p<0.05$). Other fit indices (GFI=0.798; AGFI=0.758; RMSEA=0.04) also satisfy the requirement. Therefore, in general the model is acceptable.

Our results show that procedural justice does not affect the level of affective commitment of public servants. As expected, interpersonal justice has a significant impact on satisfaction with supervisor. Similarly, there is a significant relationship between satisfaction with supervisor and affective commitment, which supports hypothesis 3.

Table 2. Results of Fit Indices after Model Modification

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Goodness of fit indices</th>
<th>Expected Values</th>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi square ($\chi^2$)</td>
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<td>Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probability</td>
<td>$&gt;.05$</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
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Hypothesis 4 is proven in this study, in which there is a positive and significant relationship between affective commitment and satisfaction with public service. Moreover, our results support hypothesis 5 indicating that affective commitment influences discretionary service behavior. Lastly, our finding does not support the hypothesis 6 as the relationship between discretionary service behavior and satisfaction with public service is not significant at $p = 0.728 (>0.05)$. In other words, discretionary service behavior cannot improve satisfaction with public service.

**Discussion**

This paper aims to investigate the relationship between organizational justice, employees’ commitment, and satisfaction with supervisor in determining discretionary service behavior and satisfaction with public service. We do find that interpersonal justice has a significant effect on satisfaction with supervisor. In turn, satisfaction with supervisor is associate with affective commitment. This is consistent with the finding of Simon & Roberson (2003), which means that fairly treatment perceived by employees in relation with their colleagues will affect satisfaction with supervisor, which in turn increasing affective commitment.

Furthermore, we find a positive and significant relationship between affective commitment and satisfaction with public service, indicating employees who commit to their organization will provide better service which in turn will satisfy the general public. This result is in line with some previous studies (e.g. Perry&Wise., 1990; Hosmer., 1994; Simon & Roberson., 2003). Our result also corroborates that affective commitment has an effect on discretionary service behavior, indicating that those who commit to their organization
have more willingness to expend discretionary efforts. However, some hypotheses are not supported. Procedural justice does not have a significant effect on affective commitment, which means that justice perceived by employees in relation to organizational procedures may not improve employee commitment to the organization. This might be due to the fact that respondents are public servants, which in the context of Indonesia, individuals are most likely to remain in organization until the retirement. In the context of Indonesia, there is a little possibility that a public servant has intention to move to other workplace. It negates any significant impact from procedural justice on affective commitment.

This study also finds that discretionary service behavior does not relate to satisfaction with public service. It might be argued by the fact that discretionary service behavior is not a common habit among public servants which need to be improved. Managerial implications provided regarding our results. Since there is a significant relationship between interpersonal justices, satisfaction with supervisor, affective commitment, and discretionary service behavior, managers should create a positively close relationship between supervisors and employees, by formulating and implementing all systems and policies in a transparent manner by taking into account employees’ opinions, by developing employee-oriented leadership, etc. Managers should also develop the discretionary service behavior which can motivate employees to provide optimum public service, by giving rewards to all kinds of behavior which is beyond formal job prescription, giving opportunities for developing employees’ creativity, etc. Nevertheless, several limitations should be considered in interpreting our results. Firstly, this study uses a particular organization, in a specific setting. Hence, the results may be applicable for similar context but could not be generalized to a wider context. Secondly, based on the prosocial behaviors literatures, there are several other aspects that could potentially interact with prosocial behaviors, such as intention to quit and employee turnover.

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As Thailand embarks on its important transition to a decentralized governance system, a number of problems confronting the Thai local administrative organizations (LAOs) begin to emerge. While fiscal and political issues are two salient problems with which the majority of local government officials are concerned, personnel management poses another administrative challenge for the Thai LAOs. Confusion over lines of accountability, unclear promotional criteria, unfair fringe benefits, and the public distrust of local public officials are the primary problems found in the current personnel management system in the Thai LAOs.

Currently, efforts have been made to form a union that represents all Thai local government officials in improving the local personnel management system. In this essay, the researchers provide a preliminary analysis of “the windows of opportunity” for the emergence of the local government officials’ union in Thailand. Based on the in-depth interviews with several local government administrators in Thailand’s central region, the findings indicate that even though the right to create a union is guaranteed by the 2007 constitution, the Thai local government officials still need to develop alternative financing mechanisms for their future union, other than the annual membership fees. Multiple sources of income will strengthen the future union, so that it will not have to rely on the national government subsidies. Equally important is the Thai local officials’ acknowledgement of the union’s roles in promoting both the membership’s economic gains and the local community interests.

Keywords: Local Public Professional Association, Public Workers’ Unionization
**Introduction**

Amid the increasing interdependence of the 21st-century national economies, organizations of all types are engulfed by a thick fog of challenges and uncertainties. For private organizations, global economic interdependence may not be too much of an alien concept because their businesses have always hinged upon the borderless flow of capital and labor (Bell 1974). Yet, beyond the business sphere, the globalization process has both “integrative” and “disintegrative” effects (Wallerstein 1980). On the one hand, the “integrative” impact of globalization manifests itself as a culture of cosmopolitanism—a common or trans-national culture that bridges diverse national cultures. On the other, an integrated global economy poses a host of complex environmental, social, and political problems that necessitate both management innovation and unwavering commitment to environmental sustainability.

As public organizations at the level closest to the citizens, local administrative organizations (LAOs) in Thailand are not immune from the “disintegrative” effects of globalization. Despite their young age, the Thai LAOs have become important actors in safeguarding and promoting their local constituents’ welfare in recent years. For almost two decades after the decentralization reform began, the LAOs’ position in the Thai polity has gradually changed from a collection of geographically deconcentrated public agencies executing national government-sanctioned programs to local self-governing entities charged with translating the local people’s basic needs into policy initiatives. Parallel to this decentralization process, the guiding principles for public organizations have also shifted from the command-and-control paradigm to the governance paradigm that emphasizes citizen participation (Tanet 2008).

The paradigm shift in public sector management, coupled with the decentralization reform measures, present both opportunities and challenges for Thai LAOs. The local self-
governing autonomy enshrined in the 1997 and 2007 constitutions makes Thai local authorities the primary driving forces of local socio-economic development. Based on the constitutional framework, Thai local government bodies assume a wide range of responsibilities, including local infrastructure, transportation, sanitation, natural resource management, tourism promotion, and some health and education functions (Walker 2012). Yet, a significant gap exists between the constitutional principle of local autonomy and actual policy implementation. The major shortcoming of Thailand’s ongoing decentralization reform is the slow progress in transferring the administrative decision-making authority and budgetary resources from the central government to the LAOs. In recent years, the quintessential management problems facing Thai local authorities are limited revenue sources and the central government’s lack of standard formula for determining the equalization grants (Achakorn 2012). These two budget-related issues have widened fiscal disparity among the rich and poor LAOs and affected the quality of local public services, particularly in the rural areas. Equally critical is the intensity of political struggles among the local strongmen for the LAO chief executive positions (Walker 2012). In many communities, these political struggles often turn violent, resulting in casualties and deaths of political opponents (Arghiros 2001).

Another important issue in the Thai LAOs is the local personnel management system. In light of Thailand’s ongoing decentralization reform, this paper provides exploratory insights into the possibility of a union within the local government workforce. More specifically, based on the in-depth interviews with selected local and national government officials, the researchers will demonstrate the causes and necessity of a union for Thai local government officials. In the concluding section, alternative organizational structures of a union will be proposed.

Public Personnel Management Problems in the Thai Local Administrative Organizations.
Apart from the fiscal and political challenges, personnel management in the Thai LAOs is also in a state of flux. Even though managing an organization’s most valuable asset—human—is one of the essential administrative tasks (Berman, et al. 2009), the Thai LAOs still grapple with three major personnel-related issues: structural, procedural, and attitudinal (Nakarin 2009). First, the structural issue stems from the confusion over lines of accountability for local government personnel. Thai local government officials are technically public agents who are obliged to serve multiple principals, particularly their LAO chief executives and the interior ministry. Prior to the decentralization reform, the LAO chief executives—chief executive officers of the Provincial Administration Organizations and mayors—possessed less authority and autonomy from the provincial governors and district officers—the Ministry of Interior’s representatives in each province. After decentralization, the LAO chief executives’ authority is now similar to the presidential authority in the separation-of-power system (Tatchalerm, Wood, and Thurmaier 2008). For instance, under the current municipal government structure, mayors now consider themselves as the municipal government’s chief executives with the legal authority to manage both intra-organizational affairs and public service responsibilities (Chandra-nuj and Tatchalerm 2010).

However, the Local Government Personnel Management Act of 1999 added another layer of complexity to the local personnel structure by creating the National Commission on Local Government Personnel Standards. Placed under the interior ministry’s permanent secretary, the national commission and three sub-commissions produce a broad range of standards.

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11 Chief executive officers of the Sub-district Administrative Organizations (TAOs) are omitted from this statement because the TAOs were officially created in 1994, while the Provincial Administrative Organizations (PAOs) and municipalities in the current forms were formed several decades prior.

12 The commission further breaks down into three sub-commissions: the National Sub-commission on Municipal Government Personnel, the National Sub-commission on Provincial Administrative Organizations’ Personnel, and the National Sub-commission on Sub-district Administrative Organizations’ Personnel.
policies and standard operating procedures for the recruitment, promotion, and transfer of local government officials. The responsibility of implementing these national standards rests with the three provincial committees that oversee personnel management in each type of local government bodies: provincial administrative organizations (PAOs), municipalities, and sub-district administrative organizations (TAOs).

Second, the procedural issues of local personnel management are related to the structural problem. The national commission’s standard operating procedures that dictate the recruitment, promotion, and transfer procedures are not flexible enough for the Thai local authorities to design an effective strategic plan for their organizations (Nakarin 2009). Importantly, the remunerative and incentive structures for local government personnel are not as clear as those for the national government officials (Siamrat 2011). This lack of clarity means limited career paths for those working in the Thai LAOs. Moreover, despite the iron fist of regulations imposed upon the LAOs by the National Commission on Local Government Personnel Standards, the remunerative and incentive policies in large localities are implemented more effectively than in small localities.

Third, the negative attitudes harbored by citizens and central government officials towards the Thai LAOs also hinder effective personnel management practices at the local government level (Nakarin 2009). Local government officials do not command as much public respect as the central and regional officials. For local citizens, the recruitment, promotion, and transfer processes in the LAOs are widely believed to be riddled with clientelism and corruption.³ Meanwhile, central government officials consistently emphasize that local government bodies lack the capacity to nurture their human assets, hence insisting on the necessity of centrally planned personnel management guidelines for the LAOs.

³ A citizen attitude survey was conducted by Suan Dusit Rajabaht University in December 2012 to assess the public perceptions of corruption in Thai public sector organizations. The survey results indicate that the majority of respondents (45.39 percent) ranked local government officials as the most corrupt among all types of government employees.
Even the local government officials have bad images and negative feelings about themselves: many consider themselves as second-class public officials (Siamrat 2011). In addition to their socially inferior status compared to their counterparts in central and provincial agencies, Thai local government officials enjoy significantly less fringe and welfare benefits than other groups of government employees (Tatchalerm 2011). Even though there are eight (8) professional associations for Thai local government officials, none has succeeded in improving their members’ public images or even in pressuring the central government to provide all the local government officials with the same fringe and welfare benefits as those working for the national and provincial agencies. Increasingly, though, there are discussions about the unionization of local government bureaucrats in Thailand (Siamrat 2011). The local government officers’ union is expected to negotiate fair employment benefits for their members and to help steer local personnel management in the right direction.

Although the idea of forming a union for Thai local public officials remains in its infancy, it is necessary to explore an extant body of public administration literature to answer three (3) questions. First, is local government administration a profession and could it be professionalized? Second, is it possible for the public officials to form professional associations (or unions) analogous to those created by other occupational groups in Thailand, such as medical doctors and civil engineers? Third, what are the differences between a union and a professional association and their roles in enhancing their members’ welfare and professionalism?

Public Service as a Profession

An attempt to improve the public service quality has a long history in the field of public administration. Many scholars and practitioners are poised to endorse the idea of enhancing the degree of public professionalism, particularly at the local level where governments are closest to their citizens. Nonetheless, others distrust the idea of
professionalism, arguing that the professionalization of public administrators, as well as the emergence and consolidation of professional communities, would only make them less accountable to the public. Criticisms of public service professionalism often take an extreme form and suffer from the lack of understanding of the historical development of various professions, professionalism, and modern democratic society since the late 19th century.

The debate over the professional status of public administration has erupted since the founding of the earliest public administration graduate program in the 1920s (Pugh 1989). The concern with professionalism in the public service grew as the late 19th-century society became more complex (Gargan 1989). Through Alexis de Tocqueville’s observation of the American cities in the early 19th century, state and local governments were haphazard and unsystematic. Public works were completed only when everyone in each community deemed necessary and by ad hoc arrangements or by volunteers. Nevertheless, in the late 19th century, ad hoc public work arrangements were no longer sufficient. Increased urbanism and industrialism necessitate the involvement of those who claim to have specialized knowledge and skills. Into the 20th century, professionals from many fields have contributed through application of their specialized knowledge and reform proposals to achieve efficient, effective, and equitable operation of an expanding administrative state (Wiebe 1967; Skowronek 1982).

Nonetheless, whether local public administration is a profession and could be further professionalized remains uncertain. Hughes (1963, 655) argues that “a profession delivers esoteric services—advice or action or both—to individuals, organizations, or governments; to whole classes or groups of people or to the public at large.” Cooper (2004) offers a more elaborate list of a profession’s characteristics: esoteric knowledge, social values, organizational structure, and professional code of ethics.

*First*, professionals must possess the esoteric knowledge that is so technical that outsiders cannot easily acquire it; this means that professionals ought to have a firm theoretical understanding of their areas of expertise (Cooper 2004). *Second*, professionals
(e.g., physicians, lawyers) must dedicate themselves to serve important social values that cannot be entrusted to incompetent individuals (Cooper 2004, 61). Third, Cooper (2004, 62) asserts that “to exercise moral control over professional practice, professions need a way to standardize practice, communicate new techniques to professionals, and ensure that only people of integrity and competence become members of the professions.” To achieve this aspect of professionalism, professions need an institutional structure that establishes standards for professional education programs and a code of ethics. Fourth, professions claim in their code of ethics that their members have an uncommonly strong moral commitment to the quality of their work (Camenisch 1983, as discussed in Cooper 2004). The concept of professionalism dictates that professionals join their professions, not purely for financial incentives and social privileges, but for fulfillment of their professional values as well. An extra-strong moral commitment to professional values must take priority over personal and particularistic interests by emphasizing the general obligation to the public interest.

Cooper’s four criteria of a profession—coupled with an immense list of public service responsibilities and the complexity of problems facing the local communities—justify the conferral of professional status on those working in the LAOs. Yet, the degrees of professionalism in local public administration vary among countries. Only the first two criteria have become the common features among local government officers regardless of their geographical locations and cultural values. Increasingly, local government works require sophisticated problem-solving techniques and technical skills from diverse disciplines, such as civil engineering, management science, economics, and public policy. With regard to the social values espoused by local public administrators, the notoriety of professionalism stems from close association between public management and the concerns with organizational efficiency economy (Green, Keller, and Wamsley 1993). Svara (2009) however argues that in addition to the concern with efficiency and economy, public service professionalism also
includes the moral commitment to the public interest and democratic governance. The evolution of the public service profession in many countries over the past one hundred years confirms Svara’s normative argument of the public professionalism concept. The lesson learned from the analyses of civil service reforms in England and the United States is that professionalism has been an important force for the establishment and maintenance of normative social order in modern times (Spencer 1896; Dingwall and King 1995; Dingwall 1996).

Cooper’s last two criteria of a profession are problematic, especially in the developing countries. In the United States, public administration, especially at the local and state levels, has been the target for professionalization. Pugh (1989, 2) observes that, “the rise of the city manager and municipal research bureau movements…helped to establish the credibility of public administration activity as a means by which to pursue a rationally planned society and propelled it along as a legitimate candidate for ‘professional’ status.” The 19th-century municipal reform movement in the United States triggered and led to the success of the ensuing federal civil service reform under the 1897 Pendleton Act. Further, the municipal reform movement in the 19th-century United States gave birth to a number of professional associations of local public administrators in each state, such as the National League of Cities, the Municipal League, and the Association of City/County Management. These professional associations supply the necessary organizational and institutional arrangements in which the standard practices and ethical guidelines for local public officials are collectively formulated and enforced (Svara 2009; Tatchalerm 2011; Tatchalerm and Achakorn 2012).

A contrasting picture of local government professionalization is found in the developing countries. Due to a prolonged period of centralization since the late 19th century, local public administration and public official associations have not developed independently
of the central government apparatus (Tatchalerm 2011; Tatchalerm and Achakorn 2012). Considered the creatures of national government in those countries, local governments and professional associations are responsible for a limited number of functions decided by the higher levels of government (Shah 2006). As a result, administrative capacity and the degree of administrative professionalism at the local level in the developing countries are different from the developed countries.

Professionalism in the public sector is a dynamic concept. Inarguably, public administration in the developed countries—particularly at the local level—has met all the criteria of a conventional profession (Mosher 1982; Pugh 1989). Experiences with the public sector reform in the Western countries reveal the importance and necessity of “strong and autonomous” professional associations in enhancing the democratization process and quality of public services. In the developing countries, on the contrary, public service professionalism in local government organizations remains underdeveloped, mainly due to the absence of strong and autonomous professional associations similar to those found in the developed world.

**Unions or Professional Associations?**

As previously discussed, professional associations have important roles in advancing the quality of local public services. In contemporary Thailand, professional associations of local government officials are now in existence, but have not been effective mechanisms of their members’ career paths and professional development (Tatchalerm 2011). Currently, efforts have been made to unionize all local government officers in Thailand (Siamrat 2011). In this section, relevant literature is examined to investigate the distinction between two types of occupational groups—a union and a professional association—and the potential roles of improving personnel management practices in Thai LAOs.
Associational life helps resolve collection action problems that would otherwise emerge if each individual pursued his own interest (Parsons 1959). By providing the consensual normative frameworks (i.e., mutually agreed-upon values) that do not defy the social and legal order, professional associations create a unified culture for each profession, institutionalize codes of conduct and educational standards, and encourage change and innovation within the professions (Van Maanen and Barley 1984; Galaskiewicz 1985). While professional associations emphasize standardization and integration, labor unions symbolize conflicts between management and workers (Hovekamp 1997). However, Galaskiewicz (1985) point out two other essential function of a union, particularly in the case of white-collar labor unions: (1) to galvanize reactions to occupational injustice and (2) to pressure the employers to improve the working conditions. Further, an empirical study by Hovekamp (1994) reveals a statistically significant positive relationship between an individual’s union commitment and the commitment to his employing organization. In other words, individuals who consider unions as having a positive impact on their welfare may also rely on the union organizations to resolve conflicts with their employing agencies.

Nonetheless, it is popularly believed that professional associations strive for the advancement of public welfare, although unions emphasize their memberships’ private gains—mainly economic gains (Alexander 1980; Hovekamp 1997). However, the professional associations’ focus on the public goods and social services has come under close scrutiny over the past several years (Haug and Sussman 1973). For instance, a survey of university librarians in California unveiled empirical evidence that personal interests, rather than the public interests, are a primary motivator for joining professional associations (Anderson, et al. 1992). Hovekamp (1997) argues that in this example, unions’ members are clearer in their pursuit of the memberships’ private financial gains than members of professional associations who pursue such private gains by improving the profession’s public
image and by persuading the public of the value and indispensability of the practitioners’ technical knowledge and special skills.

All in all, professional associations and unions do not differ much in maintaining professional cohesion, securing work autonomy, responding to the members’ demand for economic benefits, and promoting both professional and social values (Hovekamp 1994; 1997). The main difference is each profession’s internal dynamics (Anderson, et al. 1992; Hovekamp 1997). For teachers, medical doctors, and nurses, for instance, their professional associations and unions are morphed into a single form that exhibits the characteristics of both an association and a union (Hovekamp 1997). The library professionals, on the other hand, differentiate between their professional associations and unions (Anderson, et al. 1992). While the library professional association addresses broad educational issues, the unions more openly advocate the professionals’ work interests through collective bargaining and other more aggressive tactics, such as lobbying.

**Windows of Opportunity for Forming the Local Government Officers’ Union in Thailand**

Local public officials in Thailand have always been affiliated with the national civil service (Tatchalerm 2011). Their affiliation ranges from sharing the same pay scale as those working for the national government, observing the same promotional criteria, to belonging to the same professional association. In the 1990s, several factors were involved in the real changes in Thailand’s central-local relations. In the international arena, the spirit of democratization that developed in many parts of the world reached Thailand in the early 1990s. The 1991 military coup d’état and the junta’s reluctance to give up control heightened the pro-democracy movement and convinced the Bangkok and urban middle class to stage street protests against military authoritarianism in May 1992. The landscape of Thai
administrative politics altered significantly after 1992. The national civil service’s influence gradually faded and many changes began to surface. The drafting and enactment of several decentralization-related laws illuminate the legal change, while attitudinally the local government officers started to consider themselves as a different group of public officials. In light of these legal and attitudinal changes, one of the key informants in this study—one of the sub-district administrative organization’s administrator—emphatically argued in favor of a separate association or a union for the local government officials, viewing such form of occupational group as a “excellent” strategy to strike a balance between the officers’ welfare and the public interests.

Prior to the 2007 constitution, there were no legal or constitutional guarantees for the public officials’ right to organize a union. In 1997, however, local autonomy was constitutionally mandated for the first time in Thailand’s modern history. Since then, efforts were made to form a union for those employed by the LAOs. Yet, although the 2007 constitution explicitly protects the local officials’ right to form a union, the creation of a Thai local government officers’ union remains in limbo. Based on an in-depth interview with one of the Thai local officials, members of the Association of Thai local government officers submitted a petition to the Prime Minister’s Office, asking for the cabinet to issue an executive order to grant formal permission to create a union. Such a move by the Thai local government officers’ association is problematic because they could have formed a union without having to seek the national government’s authorization. However, because the national government’s influence over the private and social sectors remains strong, the Thai local public officials are concerned that founding their union without the national government’s blessing would jeopardize their future relationships with the national public agencies, such as the Ministry of Interior, who controls the flow of equalization grants to the local authorities.
Nonetheless, other key informants in this study pointed out that it is necessary for the local public officials to secure the national government’s sanction before any union group can emerge. This is because although the 2007 constitution guarantees the local officials’ right to unionize, they still have to comply with other laws and governmental regulations—particularly the Ministry of Interior’s regulations. In addition, they are concerned with the union’s financial capacity; had the local officials decided to form a union independent of the national government, they would have had to rely on the membership fees, which might not be sufficient to sustain an organization. In the past, the Thai local officials have already established several associations, such as the Association of Municipal Administrators and the Association of Sub-district Administrative Organizations’ Administrators. However, these associations have not been effective in promoting their members’ welfare and professional development due to their limited financial capacity. Thus, where this financially-related issue is concerned, the national government assistance is of paramount importance and formation of a nationally funded union requires approval by the cabinet or the Ministry of Interior.

Yet, a government-sanctioned union may not be a bad idea at all. Neither is their affiliation with the national government officials’ association. Wasakorn (2010) finds in his study that both national and local officials in Thailand perceive the need for a strong professional association or a union to negotiate their salaries, promotional criteria, and welfare benefits with the national civil service. Also, in Wasakorn’s findings, Thai public officials did not necessarily favor any particular form of an occupational group, as long as such group works to secure the membership’s collective benefits and also the public interests. Similarly, Komgrit (1999) argues that a sample of public officials in his study were supportive of the unionization idea—especially a union’s negotiation function. On the contrary, the Thai public officials in Komgrit’s study did not consider a union’s strike action to be appropriate because refusal to work would have a considerable adverse impact on the overall quality of
Another important point of concern for the formation of Thai local government officials’ union is the intra-organizational management issue. The key informants in our study agreed that there should be multiple unions for each group of local government officers, instead of a single union of local government officials. Two unionization models were put forth. First, the local officials may choose to organize their unions based on the types of local jurisdiction (i.e., provincial administrative organizations, metropolitan municipalities, city municipalities, sub-district administrative organizations). The second model emphasizes the formation of professional unions among local government officials (e.g., local public health officials’ union, local planners’ unions, local teachers’ union). One potential problem with these two models is the confusion and communication difficulty among members of different unions. As one of the preventative measures, our key informants suggested that there should be a formal organizational structure charged with keeping membership record, organizing meetings and conferences on a regular basis, and disseminating information about each union’s activities.

**Concluding Remarks**

Professions and professionalism are widely believed to cause occupational closure and jeopardize the public interests. This essay has demonstrated that despite such claims, professionalism and the public interests are not necessarily antithetical; professional groups are capable of promoting desired social values through their standard practices, educational programs, and enforcement of the professional code of conduct. Professionalism in the public sector in particular can enhance the quality of democracy and ensure equity in public service provision. Based on a review of the public administration literature, local public administration qualifies as a profession. However, the professional status of local public
administration in the advanced industrial countries is clearer than in the developing countries.

As Thailand is undergoing a transition from a centralized to a decentralized governance system, local public administration experiences a variety of challenges. Personnel management at the local government level needs considerable work. In this essay, the researchers explore the possibility of forming a union or a strong professional association as one solution to strengthen the personnel management system in local administrative organizations. The Thai local officials’ union is expected to enable their members to negotiate their salaries and benefits more effectively than other mechanisms, such as reliance on political connections. However, the union must also work towards advancing the technical skills and knowledge for its members.

Based on this exploratory study, Thai local government officials still need to address two important issues before the unionization idea can bear fruit. First, they have to develop an effective financing mechanism that does not rely primarily on membership fees and national government subsidies. Second, Thai local government officers—potential union members—must develop a firm understanding of their roles in local governance. A union of local government officials must promote both the membership’s economic gains and the local public interests.

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