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## Training in the Decentralized System of Governance in Africa

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### **Abstract**

*Decentralization of governance has been considered as one of the initiatives aimed at reforming governance, deepening democracy and development of the Africa state. This paper tends to investigate the relationship between training and performance in the decentralized system of governance in Africa narrowing down mainly to the systems challenges. This review samples the rapidly expanding literature on decentralization in Africa, examines the challenges of decentralization and analyses fruitful training approaches necessary to curb the challenges to enhance performance visa vie sustainability. The goal of this paper is to trace the various challenges decentralization might face, with significance of seeking training approaches for responding to various challenges around decentralization in order to make it sustainable for a substantial length of time rather than fail.*

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**Key Words:** *Devolution, challenges, training methods, role of training, performance*

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### **Introduction**

For two decades, decentralization has been implemented by a large number of developing countries, especially in Africa. Decentralization in this review is any act in which a central government formally cedes powers to actors and institutions at lower levels in a political-administrative and territorial hierarchy (mawhood1983; smith 1985). It is perceived as a way of ensuring political stability, improve accountability, responsiveness of local leaders, increase the efficiency of public policies, reduce poverty and ultimately to move decision makers closer to citizens. To achieve this: decentralization has to improve preference matching by providing greater diversity in public services to a heterogeneous population (Oates, 1972). Various scholars have written on decentralized government in line with human resource recruitment, Selection and staff performance. However, scanty literature is available on human resource training in a decentralized personnel system of governance. Related literature on the subject of staff training in Uganda in 1997 was reviewed and, themes like identification and selection of staff for training; challenges facing staff training and influence of training on staff performance were reviewed. Many scholars have written on human resource aspect in Local Governments for instance Armstrong (2009), Torrington and Hall (1987) and Cole (1990) focused their studies on staff recruitment and selection as a specialized function in decentralized personnel systems. They however did not handle the aspect of staff training after selection exercise is over, yet it may be difficult to assess performance of staff after training especially if one is not motivated and one of the aspects that lead to motivation is career training and development. The paper notes that devolution is one among several forms of decentralization, which is a characteristic some African governments are adopting. Basically it is the substantial transfer of powers, authority and functions from higher or central government to local units, upon which the local

units or governments subsequently acquire significant and autonomous financial and legal powers to function. Today Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Kenya and many more African nations have constitutions that are explicitly pro-decentralization and formally recognize the existence of local government through devolution and decentralization. (UNCDF 2000; Tote Meyer 2000:95; Therkildsen 1993:83). It is important to note “There is not a single country in Africa in which some form of local government is not in operation”, and the stated objective of virtually all of these reforms is to strengthen democratic governance and service provision. (Ndegwa, 2002 :) in his study on decentralization in 30 African countries concluded that: It is significant to note that in no country was the claim to centralization as a preferred organizational model neither made or implied, nor was decentralization considered undesirable, only difficult to effect and sustain. Hence the comprehensive transfer of many functions to the local government has catalyzed many challenges and failures ranging from poor leadership governance, conflicts, inequalities, economic stagnation, corruption and insufficient use of public resource. This review therefore begins to query the pitfalls of decentralization in Africa and perhaps induce literature on appropriate training approaches as a remedy to avert the challenges and effect performance for sustainability.

### **The Challenges of Decentralized System of Governance**

#### **Power and administrative dynamics:**

It is worth noting that the power-play and dynamics that relating to devolution have been paralyzing and intriguing at the same time. The review notes that the chaos, not entirely surprising, has posed great concern whereby there are serious human resources gaps and deficits, administrative weaknesses while chaos around staff to the devolved systems still persist.

#### **Participation dynamics: Principles of Citizens Participation**

While the County Government Act (2012) provides for a very clear process that will institutionalize public participation into the county governance system modalities for citizen participation have

not been set except for the formality one day meetings that have been convened to discuss the budget without proper structure and availing of information to the public in good time. The review notes that the framework for Civic education at the county level has not been established and facilitated as required by the CGA ( 2012) which has outlined the Principles of civic education, Purpose and objectives, Design, implementation and the Institutional framework for civic education.

#### **Fiscal dynamics at the National and the County**

The Budgeting process has theoretically shifted public finance Management power to the Legislature at the National and county levels as provided for in the Public Finance Management Act (2012). Unfortunately the architecture retains the executive at the National Level as the main decision maker on financial matters. According to the review it asserts that The National Treasury remains totally in control of decision making on fiscal policy and the county governments are yet to set up systems and capacities to handle much of the county treasury operations. One must come to the painful conclusion that a combination of centralizing tendencies at the center and structural weaknesses of local authorities have deprived them of operational autonomy and consequently made them more dependent on the central government in the discharge of their responsibilities.

#### **The service delivery dynamics**

Whilst the principles of public service delivery in the county are very clear and the standards and norms for public service delivery are outlined, the current situation is informed by the tensions around the transfer of functions and decision making on what services should be offered by the county government in the wake of the reality. Several reviews asserts that the county governments do not have the requisite resources and technical capacities to undertake certain transferred functions, this has continued to be a highly heated and politicized debate , The end result of this irrationalized transfer of functions and lack of capacity and resources to deliver services by the county governments is that most counties have only concentrated on recruiting staff and therefore applied most of the financial resources available from the share of national revenue and county sources to salaries and overheads in the process straining or stalling service delivery entirely.

### **Security Situation: Institutional vulnerability and unwillingness to secure the people and their values;**

In most of the devolved countries the review noted that there constitution has established a security system that is directed by the national government especially in terms of the management of the police services. This is a difficult system of security management which lacks in two areas. Firstly, it is a system that attracts sabotage by the county stakeholders to show that the national government is incompetent in the delivery of security and secondly because it alienates the citizens' and public participation in providing security. The youth and women particularly ought to be significantly be involved in the conflict and security conversations at the county level. This paper notes that there is need for system wide reforms that will focus on Security sector reforms and should see that communities are effectively involved in security management being key users of the security services.

### **Participation dynamics: Gender, ethnic and conflict dynamics**

A close review in the wake of decentralization by many countries there has been several debates and a major challenge as regards the place of women and men in the leadership and governance in the decentralized system of governance both local and at national level. While citizens generally have not stepped up their engagement within the local governments women are largely structurally excluded from governance and leadership processes both nationally and at the county level. Further review indicates that, ethnic and identity dynamics in the counties have generally been a challenge and are poorly managed leading to the tensions, conflicts and persistent break out of violent conflicts in certain quarters in the decentralized countries. It is important to note that African states have diverse groups with different ethnic background therefore as countries move towards devolution roll out this challenge need to effectively be addressed.

### **Training Approaches for Decentralized System of Governance**

#### **Employee training**

Employee training is defined as a set of activities which react to present needs and is focused on the instructor (Reynolds, 2004). According to (Armstrong, 2006), training is the use of systematic and planned instruction activities to promote learning. It involves the use of formal processes to import knowledge and help people to acquire the skills necessary for them to perform their jobs satisfactorily. A recent review by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development states that the shortage of skills has been identified as a major hindrance

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to economic growth and creating jobs as a means to allocate the poverty in South Africa (Ruwayne and Burke 2008) thus views training can be seen as key influence to improving the performance of individuals amidst many challenges. According to (Potts, 1998) The aim of training is to enable employees to match the organization's future needs at expert and management levels so as to achieve the organization's objectives.

### **Conference**

Refers to a formal meeting where participants exchange their views on various topics. Conference can take place in different fields, and it need not be academic in nature all the time. Thus, we have parent teacher conferences, sport conferences, a trade conference, a conference of journalists, conference of doctors, a conference of research scholars etc. The Community Law Centre's MLGI and the Katiba Institute have held several conferences in Kenya over devolution. The review identified a two day conference held dubbed "Kenya-South Africa Dialogue on Devolution" on 14 and 15 August 2013 in Nairobi, Kenya. The review noted that the conference was held as part of a book project sponsored by a grant from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP). The conference as a training approach, was seeking to evaluate and identify lessons that both Kenya and South Africa can share in the implementation of the devolved system of government, and especially from South Africa which has 17 years of experience with implementing devolution. In the process the review noted that Kenyan and South African experts participated on various aspects of devolution with a wide range of stakeholders with an aim of solving devolution challenges.

### **Workshops**

A Workshop includes experts on specific are looks at issues and presents to a seminar , a larger portion of workshop is emphasized on "hand-on-practice" workshops are designed to reinforce, imprint and bring forward an immediate functioning dimension to the participant's eye and hands by implementing and practicing the actual concept or technique that was discussed. Decentralized systems in Africa have organized workshop as training approaches to address various challenges of devolution experts at local level have to set workshops to deliberate on technical challenges, for instance one workshop on "The Role of Professionals in the Devolved Governance Structure" held at Hilton Hotel, Tsavo ballroom, Nairobi on 1st august 2012. The context of the workshop was sought to engage members and likeminded people on the need for professionals to take up proactive roles in providing leadership amongst the Kenyans on how to manage the new governance structures. Several questions were addressed and responses given. A typical example is Fredrick Riaga (Representing the CEO): Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Kenya (ICPAK): "Public Financial Management – Ensuring Financial Accountability in the Counties" Fredrick noted that public financial management is well articulated in the Kenyan constitution. He alleged that financial management is the root cause of all the evil in money management. Riaga said that the people and especially professionals need to be at the center of the devolved government and matters of financial management. He sensitized the professionals and informed them that they are obligated to facilitate monitoring and evaluation at county levels, they need to appreciate the new public financial management framework and offer expertise to the county on matters of books of accounts, budget monitoring, resource mobilization etc. Riaga challenged the professionals to take up elective positions so as to effectively influence policy and legislation. Under the auspices of the Tunisian Ministry of Women, Family and Children, the Forum of Federations (The Forum) held a workshop in Kairouan in the center west of Tunisia. This activity was undertaken as part of the Forum's Project "Support for Decentralization in Tunisia phase iii" funded by the government of Canada. participation dynamics is well captured in the Kairouan workshop that

took place from 21 to 23 May 2015 and was the second in a series of five workshops aimed at establishing a dialogue with Tunisian civil society on the role that civil society can play in the process of implementing the Tunisian decentralization process as well as the role that women can have through increased involvement and participation in local governance. The event brought together active members of civil society in the region, representatives of the Ministry of Women, Family and Children and four Forum regional and Tunisian decentralization and gender experts.

### **Seminars**

A Seminar is a form of academic instruction, either at a university or offered by a commercial or professional organization. It has the function of bringing together small groups for recurring meetings, focusing each time on some particular subject, in which everyone present is requested to actively participate. The Instructor has prepared the concepts and techniques they will present and discuss through a combination of visual materials, interactive tools or equipment, and demonstrations. It includes some take home material for the participants that relates to the lecture. A full laboratory phase is not a requirement. What has been discussed in a workshop is now being presented to a small group in form of a seminar

### **Job Rotation**

Job rotation is the surest way of keeping the employee away from complacency and boredom of routine. It involves an employee changing positions within the same organization and eventually returning to the original position. The paper notes that Job rotation can be divided into two types. The first type is task rotation which usually takes place in jobs that involve a high degree of physical demands on the body or a high degree of repetitive tasks that can become extremely tedious. Second is the Position rotation which is the process of laterally moving an employee to different positions, departments or geographic locations for the purposes of professionally developing the employee by exposing them to new knowledge, skills and perspectives. Position rotation can be further broken down into within-function rotation and cross-functional rotation. Within-function rotation is where an employee rotates between jobs with similar levels of responsibility and in the same functional or operational areas. Cross-functional rotation, on the other hand, usually involves a sequence of positions, often with increasing levels of job responsibilities. All this rotation have one goal in mind according to a review by (Pride, 2005), Stimulating human mind through diversity of challenges is a sure way to bring to forefront its creative instincts and in taking the individual and organizational performance to a higher level. Decentralized system of governance has many functions with enormous challenges ranging from: wastages, corruption, in competencies etc. to enhance transparency and accountability this approach can act as an important instrument. Since not only does it train employees but sight the challenges of different organization tasks and positions broaden employee's knowledge, experience, reduces mental fatigue, boredom and eventually causing immobility of thought, creativity, innovation and evaluating the performance of individuals in different positions. Also, it provides the enabling conditions for flexibility in interior changes.

### **Delegation**

Delegation is a very helpful training aid for succession planning, personal development, seeking and encouraging promotion. It's how we grow in the job, delegation enables employees and institutions gain experience to take on higher responsibilities. The distribution of powers and resources between the federal and the provincial governments under Constitution of various countries has, at times, become illusive making it difficult for either level of government to

deal with certain problems and challenges. The failure to empower and delegate local government with fiscal resources or revenue-generating powers undermines its effectiveness in the short run and its legitimacy over the long run. 'Inter-delegation' – the delegation of federal power to the provinces or a provincial power to the employees and stakeholders according to the review is seen as a learning process for every stake holders in the devolved government in particular employees. Employee's personal development enhances seeking solution to the many challenges of decentralization. Much of the decentralization literature evokes the need to devolve fiscal powers sufficient to deliver services at the local government (Crook and Manor 1998; UNDP 1999).

### **Benchmarking**

This is a way of discovering what is the best performance being achieved – whether in a particular company, by a competitor or by an entirely different industry. This information can then be used to identify gaps in an organization's processes in order to achieve a competitive advantage. Different counties or local government can have an opportunity to learn from each other's challenges and achievements.

### **Role of Training on Performance in the Decentralized System of Governance**

Brown (2008) defines performance as how well a person completes tasks and also the attitude with which he/she completes the tasks. According to Hersen (2004), job performance can be defined (and assessed) in terms of quantifiable outcomes of work behaviors such as amount of sales, numbers sold and also in terms of behavioral dimensions which may include work-related communication, decision making, problem solving among other skills. Baldwin (2008) defines performance as carrying out actions efficiently and effectively to meet agreed job objectives. Employee performance means using their skills, ability, experience and so forth, to perform the assigned task required by their subordinate with effectiveness and efficiency (DuBrin, 2006).

Training plays an important role specifically in employee's performance and generally on any form of decentralized system of governance. This is because through training, skills and knowledge are passed from the trainer to the trainee in whichever approach of training an institution take. It is through training that one builds the right attitudes towards work, unlearns the negative ones and tries to eliminate the challenges available and those foreseen. When training is administered, it leads to effectiveness in service delivery, increases confident at work hence job satisfaction is achieved. Training builds loyalty towards the organization and the same is passed on to the customer hence better employee performance. Training acts as an avenue to personal growth and career advancement as promotion opportunities can be easily availed to employees who may have had specific skills to handle greater challenges in those positions.

Training enables devolved governments to recognize the important role of employee training and retraining in order to successfully steer the devolved government towards better performance. It is imperative for management to invest considerable resources and time for employee capacity enhancement so as to allow local government staff to adequately realize their performance and more importantly to realize the mandate of each county government. In order for decentralized governments to survive the many reviewed pitfalls suitable human resource policies that are geared towards employee skills enhancement must be embraced. These skills should be focused towards quality outputs, customer orientation, accountability productivity, stress management, team work and leadership building. Human resources training

in Local Governments has been decentralized and funded to some extent in many African countries through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, to enable staff at Local Government level performs better. It has been realized that, despite all efforts and funding support provided, training has been arbitrarily done in Local Governments in that it is difficult to link the outputs of the training to staff performance. Human resources training as an aspect of capacity building in any organization is carried out to improve staff performance and to enable an organization meet her objectives. Human resource training when properly done; through proper identification and selection of trainees, timely scheduling of trainings and based on the gaps identified results in more knowledge, skills, abilities and change of attitude of the concerned staff. Training employees shows a strong commitment that an employer has with employees and demonstrates the value that an employer has on the employees. Schmidt (2004) in his study on the relationship between workplace training and overall job performance found out that components of job training and time spent in training determined a significant relationship to employee performance on the job.

The quality of training has maximum impact on performance since work output of a staffs in the decentralized government would be dependent on the experience level that employee would have acquired. (Sahu, 2000) The training impacts on performance in that it determines whether one will keep the job at hand or lose it altogether if not well done. in this instance it will determine if the decentralized system should be scraped or be in existence. A common cause of decentralized system challenges is that the staff and major stake holders do not have the basic skills required for their job. Teaching and training programs provided by tertiary education systems concerning lifelong adult learning is one of the trends in most organizations (Foley, 2004)

### **Conclusion**

Decentralization is the touch stone of the new constitution and its success is the true measure of the success and viability of the constitution that African states struggled for several years to give themselves. For any form of decentralization to work, a strong movement for supporting the process has to be put in place led by forces within government, politics, and the academia as well as citizens groups. Similarly, there is need to pushing for increased resources for training purposes at the county and local government. Training programs have to be organized and be structured to fit in the governance processes in order to create a foundation of knowledgeable, competent employees and stakeholders both at the national and local level. Without the appropriate institutional forms like recruitment, selection, placement training and other human resource endeavors, decentralization will not deliver the theoretically expected benefits, such as efficiency, equity, service provision and development which currently are under threat. All in all Training is very necessary to both employees in the devolved or local government. Decentralized Government training and management is the level of democracy that is closest to the people and allows local populace to actively participate in affairs which affect them directly, through conferences, workshops seminars etc. The locals of any decentralized African country will be trained on their democratic rights pertaining the public sector services and challenges affecting counties. County government can regulate matters that pertain to their local citizenry using their own knowledge and local expertise. In most instances various reviews commended that Human resource training has improved performance in other countries like Malaysia from which lessons can be drawn. But the practices in many African countries are done in different ways which is affected by a number of factors like lack of funds to meet the cost of trainings

among others. Based on this, it is realized that the approaches require a consolidated effort to achieve results.

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