

Interagency collaboration for graduate employment opportunities in Uganda

Gaps in the structure of organizations

Interagency
collaboration
for graduate
employment

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Peter Ntale

*Directorate of Doctoral Training, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research,
Makerere University Business School, Kampala, Uganda*

Jude Ssempebwa

*East African School of Higher Education Studies and Development,
Makerere University College of Education and External Studies, Kampala, Uganda*

Badiru Musisi

College of Education and External Studies, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda

Muhammed Ngoma

*Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, Makerere University Business School,
Kampala, Uganda*

Gyaviira Musoke Genza

Foundations and Curriculum Studies, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda

Joseph Kimoga and Christopher Byalusago Mugimu

College of Education and External Studies, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda

Joseph Mpeera Ntayi

*Faculty of Economics, Energy and Management Sciences,
Makerere University Business School, Kampala, Uganda, and*

Wasswa Balunywa

Makerere University Business School, Kampala, Uganda

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to identify gaps in the structure of organizations that hinder collaboration of organizations involved in the creation of graduate employment opportunities in Uganda.

Design/methodology/approach – Data was collected from staff and leaders of 14 organizations that were purposely selected to represent government, private, and civil society organizations. These organizations were selected based on their mandates, which touch on the employability of university graduates in the country in very direct ways. This was a cross-sectional survey design—based on a self-administered questionnaire, key informant interviews, and documentary analysis.

Findings – Organizations were found to have “Tell”/directive decision-making, high power distance between employees, and jobs were not coded in a way that gives employees freedoms to interact and build collaborative relationships. Finally, rules and regulations were very restrictive, disorienting employee’s abilities to collaborate.

Research limitations/implication – This research concentrated on the gaps that exist in the structure of organizations from which the results point to inadequate relational, interactional, inclusive, and democratic space among different stakeholders. It would be useful for future research to examine the extent to which the structure of organizations not only impacts collaboration but also measures the level to which it affects organizational performance.

Practical implications – The knowledge economy of the twenty-first century demands for collaborative engagements with different stakeholders if they are to survive the competitive business environment. Collaborative engagement helps in the sharing of knowledge, expertise, and resources, development of more



coherent services, facilitation of innovation and evaluation, avoiding duplication of work, and minimizing conflicts and competition while creating synergy among partners.

Originality/value – Unlike previous studies, which have examined employability of graduates from a supply side perspective, this study investigates organizations from both the supply and demand perspectives and identifies synergy that is as a result of bringing organizations to work together.

Keywords Inter-agency collaboration, Graduate employment, Organizational structures, Uganda

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Organizations need to adapt to emerging conditions if they are to survive and succeed in today's volatile business environment (Pulakos *et al.*, 2019). This is because emerging challenges such as unemployment, climate change, and epidemics are increasingly becoming complex (Pfothenhauer *et al.*, 2019), exceeding the traditional means to resolve them (Jarmin, 2019). Many scholars such as Peterson and Morris (2019) concur that collaboration is one of the means by which organizations may create the synergies and mobilize the resources they need to deal with the challenges they are working to address. In the United States of America and United Kingdom, for example, interorganizational collaboration is used to fight drug trafficking (Ledebur and Youngers, 2013), improve the health sector (Bunger *et al.*, 2014), road network (Bryson *et al.*, 2014), creation of employment opportunities (McQuaid *et al.*, 2007), and industrialization (Audretsch *et al.*, 2019). Similar success stories have been reported in Australia (Butcher *et al.*, 2019) and Canada (Bullock *et al.*, 2018) where collaboration helped in capacity building of government, private, and the third-sector agencies, the development of more coherent services, and the development of more flexible and responsive policy solutions. However, for interorganizational collaboration to occur, organizations should be structured in ways that allow them to work with other organizations (Huxham and Vangen, 2013). It would seem that in the more developed countries, this has been achieved, leading to high levels of interorganization collaboration. In low-income countries, however, observable practice shows limited collaboration among organizations. Whereas these countries have stepped up their efforts to address challenges such as graduate unemployment, their efforts remain largely individualistic and highly fragmented in which case they lack physical and cognitive resources that would positively impact on the creation of graduate employment opportunities. With lack of evidence of collaboration among organizations making these efforts, we present a case of organizations responsible for creation of graduate employment with a view of identifying gaps in their structures that impede collaboration, which seems to accelerate the ever-increasing graduate unemployment problem in the country.

Since it reformed its higher education system in the 1980s, the country has struggled with an ever-increasing graduate unemployment problem (Datzberger, 2018). Over the last two decades, several efforts have been made to alleviate the graduate unemployment problem. Higher education institutions have reformed their curricula to develop the skills and attitudes that can allow graduates to cope with the demands of the contemporary labor market (Kintu *et al.*, 2019). The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal, Industry and Fisheries has provided several incentives (e.g. tax exemptions, free inputs such as seeds and extension services) to support graduates to take up employment opportunities in the agricultural sector. For example, 99 billion shillings has been allocated to the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) to provide more agriculture extension services to different youth groups. The Ministry of Labor, Gender and Social Development implemented a 10 billion Youth Livelihood Program under whose auspices youths, including graduates, are given start-up capital to take up projects where they might work and provide opportunities to other people (State of the Youth Report, 2016/2017). Microfinance institutions and civil society organizations are also providing credit facilities that are tailored to the needs of youth borrowers (e.g. Village Savings and Loan Associations, group lending, etc.) with the view to spur their entrepreneurship potential

and thereby gain employment while creating opportunities for others. With the support of multinational organizations such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), nongovernmental organizations and private sector organizations such as Enterprise Uganda, The New Vision Publishing Company, the Uganda Private Sector Foundation, Standard Chartered Bank Uganda Limited are also providing various forms of support toward youth entrepreneurship development. Several government and private sector organizations such as Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), Meera Investments, and UAP Properties have also built expansive social infrastructure in the form of commercial buildings, stores, and markets to support the creation of employment opportunities for youths. With funding from the African Development Bank, for instance, KCCA invested USD 5 million into low cost markets in which youths in various parts of the City could trade (Holden *et al.*, 2011).

Despite these efforts, however, the problem of graduate unemployment is unabated, raising the question of why organizations working to alleviate the problem have been largely unsuccessful in their efforts. Although several reasons have been cited in response to this question, authors like Osher *et al.* (2019) suggest that it may be the consequence of their failure to work synergistically—a cogent hypothesis considering that the organizations do not only fail to work together but sometimes go as far as undoing each other's efforts (Shein, 1992). Seen from Huxham *et al.* (2000)'s view that interorganization collaboration requires organizations that are structured for collaboration; therefore, the persistent graduate unemployment problem in the country begs the question of how well the organizations responsible for alleviating it are structured for collaboration. This study was conducted to respond to this question, taking the case of 14 organizations responsible for promoting employment opportunities in the country.

Related literature and knowledge gap

Hage and Aiken (1967) conceptualized organizational structure as consisting of two major constructs, that is, organizational centralization and formalization. Centralization deals with two subconstructs: those that deal with decision-making and those that deal with the hierarchy of authority. Formalization on the other hand deals with job codification and rule observation.

Decision-making and interagency collaboration

Decision-making refers to a cognitive process that results in the selection of a belief or a course of action among several alternative possibilities. The courses of action, the alternative possibilities, resource constraints, and the general environment create a complex loop that makes it difficult for organizational leaders to identify the most suitable course of action from such a complex environment (Saaty, 1990). Unfortunately, the speed at which decisions must be taken should be faster given the volatility, competitive and aggressive societal demands. To manage this complexity and remain afloat, organizations are encouraged to pursue collaboration with one another so that they can be in position to take quick, wiser, and inclusive decisions, which help them in creating synergy, minimize risk, and reduce exposure to financial and managerial constraints (Bennis and Townsend, 1989). However, for such quicker, wiser, and inclusive decision-making to succeed, it is suggested by scholars such as Gray (1989) that organizations should be structured in ways that crisscross administrative and hierarchical functions with high level involvement of all organizational members to allow them select and identify what they consider the right courses of action for the progress of their organizations. According to the leadership judgment indicator (LJI) by Faraci *et al.* (2013), hierarchical/centralized organizations often make “Tell”/authoritative decisions, which are made from top to bottom. A few members at the top of the hierarchy make all

organizational decisions of which they expect the rest of the members to follow and respect even when they are not part of the decision-making process. Authoritative decision-making is sometimes mixed or complimented with consultative decision-making style in which case the views of other stakeholders are actively sought but a final decision can only be taken by the leaders. These two decision-making styles according to [Kapucu and Garayev \(2011\)](#) are tools of a centralized structure that do not create a free, inclusive, interactive, and democratic governance that would allow collaboration between different parties. According to [Mattison \(2000\)](#), organizations with “Tell” or authoritative decision-making structures are characterized by fear, mistrust, internal conflicts, and disharmony among the employees. Where such exists, relational exchanges between different stakeholders are strained, which puts any collaborative efforts between organizations at stake ([Ciulla, 2009](#)). According to [Siddique and Siddique \(2019\)](#), consultative decision-making can be disastrous when decisions are not made in accordance to the opinions of the stakeholders collected during the consultative processes. This may cause poor relational exchanges between leaders and subordinates and also between organizations, which may strain any further collaborative efforts.

To facilitate relational exchanges, which ultimately lead to collaboration, [Wang et al. \(2014\)](#) suggested that organizations should embrace inclusiveness to promote openness, interactionism, and clarity behaviors between leaders and their subordinates. This is a strong hypothesis for the development of collaborative initiatives between different parties, which can be relied upon to solve collective problems such as the creation of graduate employment opportunities.

The question to ask is, which decision-making style leads to the development of interactive and inclusive environment, which may lead to collaboration between different partners? According to [Faraci et al. \(2013\)](#), they suggested participatory and delegated decision-making styles, where participatory decision-making is the extent to which employers allow or encourage employees to share or participate in organizational decision-making. Participatory decision-making deals with finding a common ground and solutions that are acceptable to all and best for the group. It is consensus-based, inclusive, and highly democratic process that calls everyone in the group to agree to a decision for it to be adopted ([Young, 2001](#)). In a participatory decision-making organization, there are considerable relational exchanges between different stakeholders, which strengthen trust, relationships, and mutuality of the involved parties and which facilitate collaboration between agencies ([Huxham et al., 2000](#)). On the other hand, delegated decision-making refers to the extent to which leaders give powers and authority to their subordinates to act on their behalf ([Probst et al., 2000](#)). According to [Booher \(2004\)](#), these two decision-making styles (participatory and delegated) are inclusive, interactive, and democratic, which give employees a sense of empowerment and ownership, obligating them to collaborate to achieve organizational and collaborative goals.

According to [O'Flynn et al. \(2015\)](#), cross-boundary operations that seek to solve society needs should exploit decision-making mechanisms that offer relational and interactive opportunities based on openness, clarity, trust, and reciprocal exchanges between the involved parties. [Nauwelaers et al. \(2013\)](#) confirm that an organizational structure that is relational and inclusive in decision-making leads to synergy development between the actors, trust, mutual relationship, and respect for each other, which leads to collaboration between different parties. These scholars argue that without interactional openness and inclusiveness of all organizational members, which created clarity and trust between different employment agencies in Northern Ireland, it would have been difficult for the organizations responsible for creating jobs in that country to collaborate for the achievement of a common goal. To create employment opportunities for young adults with developmental disabilities in Washington, USA, the collaboration between the state schools and adult service systems created 21

partnership projects from which many youth with developmental disabilities were employed. The success of this project was attributed to the interactive and relational decision-making between different actors (Winsor *et al.*, 2011). Similar findings were posited by (Heidenreich, 2016) in which they propose that for European stakeholders to deliver social and employment services in Europe, there is a need to integrate social and employment policies into a coherent active inclusion approach that fosters social cohesion and enhances the employment chances of vulnerable groups, which the centralized and formalized organizational structures may not deliver due to their shortcomings on inclusiveness, interactions, high power distance, stringent rules and regulations, and the general lack of freedoms of the partners in participating freely in organizational matters.

H1. The decision-making style of organizations responsible for graduate employment opportunities is structured in ways that allow collaboration between different organizations.

Hierarchy of authority and interagency collaboration

A research conducted by Tata and Prasad (2004) found out that organizations that have high power distance between different organizational layers appeared to be less effective in building internal and external organizational relationships that would foster collaboration between organizations. Similar sentiments were shared by Hofstede (2011), who indicated that when societies accept that there is high power distance between certain classes of people, they are depriving themselves of the power to collaborate and force the change they would want. Societies or organizations structured in ways that demonstrate high power distance are characterized with organizational cynicism—a feeling that the organization lacks integrity (Abraham, 2000), frequent employee fights in search of space to be heard by the top management (Campbell *et al.*, 2000), employee alienation (Chiaburu *et al.*, 2013), less democratic space, low employee involvement in decision-making as well as pursuance of leader's selfish interests at the expense of societal needs (Vogel, 2014). This kind of attitudinal disposition of both employees and employers in a high power distance scenario is likely to damage the development of social relations between key stakeholders, which is likely to affect the initiation and promotion of collaborative efforts aimed at achieving collective societal needs (Peters, 2019). To reduce power distance, scholars such as Yagil (2002) have proposed decentralization of organizational structures. This entails reducing power of the top most organizational leaders and distributing it down to reduce the hierarchy of authority and the power they possess over their subordinates with a feeling that breaking such hierarchies will create employee freedoms to freely participate in organizational matters. This is likely to enhance collaboration between different agencies. Emery *et al.* (2019) found out that by allowing employee interaction within and outside the organization, organizations will reduce the power distance between the leaders and the subordinates. This will improve the psychological empowerment of employees, which motivates people to work together toward a common cause. Therefore, we hypothesize that,

H2. The organizations responsible for graduate employment opportunities are characterized by low power distance.

Job codification and collaboration

According to (Hage and Aiken, 1967), job codification describes the extent to which job descriptions are specified and work standardized. Job descriptions and work standards are precisely spelt out to every individual to ensure that there is no ambiguity of any form.

Organizations that describe jobs well and clearly specify job standards are less prone to internal conflicts and mistrust between employees, which enhances organizational employees to work more collaboratively to achieve organizational goals (Audenaert *et al.*, 2019).

In studying interagency co-operation of the three vanguard “Active” welfare states (Sweden, Denmark, and United Kingdom), Lindsay *et al.* (2008) found out that unless public employment services (PES) demonopolize the way they conduct business, they were far from creating employment opportunities for less privileged people. The PES was known for recruiting and specifying jobs to employees strictly following public service standards, which were known to be very restrictive in terms of communication, relationships, and interactions of employees between different functions, departments, and organizations. They emphasize that trust, mutual relationships, and outcome-focused synergy cannot be created if employees are strictly directed on what to do. In their conclusion, they emphasize that the new approaches to employability should be more liberal, providing employees with the abilities to interact and communicate cross-functionally so as to build knowledge, trust, and mutual respect to one another.

With limited scholarship on organizational employee job specifications and work standards in Uganda, there exist reports mainly from Auditor General’s Office, Parliamentary Committee on Equal Employment Commission, and the Inspectorate of Government. Common in all these reports are the anomalies in terms of biased recruitments in form of nepotism, tribalism, unqualified recruitments and mismanagement of the recruitment, and the general employment process (Jjuuko *et al.*, 2019). Could it be that some organizations do not conform to public service job specifications and work standards? Could it be that nonconformity to job descriptions and work standards are the reasons why these organizations are not collaborating? To answer these questions, we need to establish the extent to which job codification allows collaboration of agencies; hence the hypothesis:

H3. There is adherence to job specifications and work standards among the organizations responsible for graduate employment opportunities in Uganda.

Rule observation and collaboration

Rule observation deals with the way job incumbents adhere to the rules prescribed to them and the way they relate to the organization and its environment in their day-to-day dealings. Organizations characterized by stringent rules and regulations do not promote employee motivation, keep their employees on tension, and promote organizational cynicism, which disfavor any collaborative efforts between organizations (Zhang *et al.*, 2019). Olowu (2003) found Uganda’s organizations hierarchically structured with stringent rules and regulations, lack internal democracy, and are generally noninclusive. These rules sometimes lack equity, do not respond to societal wider need, and are designed to benefit a few individuals (Karyeija, 2012). Munene (1995) found out that even with tight regulatory framework and public service standing orders, organizations exhibited little commitment to collaborate with other agencies toward achievement of organizational needs. He attributes this to organizational structures that do not consider employees in organizational decision-making, inadequate interaction between the employers and employees, and the overreliance on rules and regulations to guide the organization.

To the contrary, Daugherty *et al.* (2006) suggest that organizations that are highly formalized—managed on the basis of rules and regulations—have higher chances of collaborating with one another than those that are low on formalization. They emphasize that rules and regulations create discipline and order upon which mutuality and trust between parties develop, hence enhancing collaboration. However, this assertion may not be trusted much particularly in Uganda where organizations are traditionally centralized and

formalized in nature but unable to collaborate with one another despite the existence of many challenges that would ideally force them to work together. Because of this, scholars and practitioners have suggested alternative forms of governance that propose that for organizations to collaborate and achieve collective societal needs such as the creation of employment opportunities, there is need for flexibility in rules and regulations so that interactions and trust-focused relationships between intending parties may develop. Given this contradiction in scholarship, we wonder whether it is the stringent rules and regulations that allow collaboration or the informal and relational-focused structures that would allow collaboration to take place. We therefore hypothesize that,

H4. The organizations responsible for graduate employment opportunities are characterized by flexible adherence to rules and regulations.

Despite the scantiness of literature on interorganizational collaboration in developing countries, particularly Uganda, [Olowu \(2003\)](#) says that decision-making among organizations follows a hierarchical and bureaucratic structure characterized by exclusive decision-making, high power distance, and stringent need for rule observations. As noted by [Harrison et al. \(2001\)](#), hierarchical and bureaucratically organized structures pose a danger to relational and interactional development between employees, which further restricts collaboration between parties. According to [Lindsay et al. \(2008\)](#), where collaboration is absent, there is no physical and cognitive resources that would enhance the creation of employment opportunities especially in a resource-constrained environment. However, despite these assertions, we are not certain whether this is attributed to organizational structures, that is, centralization and formalization of organizations. We are also not certain of the extent to which centralization and formalization of organizations may not allow collaboration to occur and the extent to which this may affect the creation of employment opportunities for youth graduates in the country. It is therefore the goal of this study to ascertain the gaps within the structure of organizations that may impede collaboration between different organizations and the extent to which this may affect efforts that create employment opportunities in the country.

Methodology

This study undertook a cross-sectional survey design. The purpose of using the cross-sectional survey design was to understand the gaps that impede the occurrence of interagency collaboration of purposely selected organizations whose mandate touches the employability of youth graduates in very direct ways. These organization were selected to represent government, private, and civil society organizations (Refer to [Table I](#)).

Quantitative data was collected using semistructured interviews. As observed by [Bazeley \(2009\)](#), a semistructured interview involves questioning, guided by identified themes in a consistent and systematic manner interposed with probes to elicit more elaborate responses. This approach was selected because of its ability to generate explanations grounded in reality. The interview guide was developed after a comprehensive review of literature on collaboration of organizations. The data collected sought to complement the quantitative findings using the individual's own point of view. With the respondents' permission, all the interviews were recorded. Each of them lasted between 40 minutes and 1 hour, transcribed and subjected to content analysis. We also carried out documentary analysis in all the 14 organizations. This involved review of statutory documents to obtain information on the way issues of organizational centralization and formalization are treated in the organizations' statutes. Documentary evidence reviewed included: the parliamentary acts, operational manuals, code of ethics, human resource and finance manuals, mission and objectives of the organizations, the strategic plan manuals, the memorandum and articles of association for

Table I.
Distribution of
respondents by gender,
education, duration at
work, and type of the
organization

Variable	Categories	Count	%
Gender	Male	61	58
	Female	44	42
	Total	105	100
Highest level of education	PhD	11	11
	Master's	25	24
	Postgraduate diploma	43	41
	Bachelor's	10	10
	Diploma	4	4
	Advanced level	3	2
	Ordinary level	6	6
	Primary level	3	2
	Total	105	100
Duration of organizational service experience	Over 21 years	7	7
	16–20 years	23	22
	11–15 years	31	30
	6–10 years	22	21
	5 and below	22	21
	Total	105	100
Type of organizations	Public	54	51
	NGO	30	29
	Private	21	20
	Total	105	100

private organizations, the company profiles, and the meeting minutes. We collected rich amount of data from the survey questionnaire, interviews, and documentary analyses. However, for purposes of this paper, we only used that data that was consistent with the results.

Measurement of variables

Organizational structure was measured according to [Hage and Aiken's \(1967\)](#) measurement framework. This framework measures the extent to which organizations are structured. According to [Hage and Aiken \(1967\)](#), organizations can be structured by the way they are centralized and formalized. Centralization is composed of decision-making and hierarchy of authority while formalization is composed of job codification and rule observation. Decision-making was measured according to the different styles in which organizations make decisions. These are tell, consultative, participative, and delegated. Therefore, respondents were asked to identify the commonest type of decision-making used in their organizations. Those who responded highly on a particular decision-making style regarded that as the most prevalent decision-making style used and vice versa. Hierarchy of authority was measured according to power distance index of [Hofstede \(2011\)](#). This measures the extent to which power is distributed among the social positions, clearly identifying whether the power distance is high, medium, or low. Therefore, respondents were asked to tell us whether their organizations had high, medium, or low power distance with respondents choosing high and medium indicating high power distance characterized of hierarchy, bureaucracy, noninclusiveness, and less democratic. Those that respond that their organizations have low power distance would imply that leaders and employees have chances of interactions and relational building, which can allow them to collaborate for collective needs such as the creation of graduate employment opportunities.

The second component of organizational structure is formalization, which was measured according to [Hage and Aiken's \(1967\)](#) organizational framework. This measures the extent to which organizations are formalized. It is composed of two components: that of job description

and rule observation. Job description measures the extent to which jobs are described in an organization while rule observation measures the extent to which rules and regulations are observed. For job codification, respondents were asked four questions anchored on a four-point scale. These four questions probed from the respondents the extent to which jobs in their organizations were described. The idea was that we wanted to know whether the jobs were described in a way that was mindful of employee's involvement in decision-making and whether employees' freedoms of interactions were adhered to. Those that responded that their jobs were described in a way that allowed them their freedoms to interact and to get involved in decision-making have higher chances of collaboration than those that showed less consideration of employees' involvement, interaction, and freedoms in organizational decision-making. Finally, rule observation had two questions that probed respondents to tell us the extent to which rules and regulations were observed. Those that said that the rules were strictly observed by their organizations would indicate low levels of collaboration while those that would indicate minimum or low levels of rule observance would mean higher chances of collaboration between different parties.

To elicit the respondents' opinions on the centralization and formalization of their organizations, a four-point Likert scale was used. The quantitative data was analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and Chi-square (goodness of fit). This is because the data was discreet. The data collected from the interviews was transcribed and subjected to content analysis. We also carried out documentary analysis. This involved review of statutory documents to obtain information on the way issues of organizational centralization and formalization are treated in the organizations' statutes. Organizational centralization and formalization were operationalized according to [Hage and Aiken's \(1967\)](#) measurement scale, so the quality of the data collected is dependable.

Findings

The findings on the structuring of the organizations are summarized in [Table II](#)

Hierarchical decision-making and collaboration

Decision-making considered the extent to which individuals are involved in the decision-making process. [Table II](#) indicates that majority (51 percent) confirmed that "Tell" decision-making style was the commonly used decision-making style among organizations. This was followed by consultative (30 percent), participatory (11 percent), and delegated at 8 percent. Decision-making in private organization is "Tell" (81 percent) compared to government agencies. Whereas government organizations make some decisions by delegating authority (11 percent), private organizations did not report any delegation of authority in making decisions. The Chi-square goodness of fit index returned significant values. This means that the difference between those who chose either of the decision-making style were statistically significant. To confirm the aforementioned quantitative results, we conducted some interviews, and the following are the excerpts from the respondents

Decisions in this organization is the responsibility of the senior people up in hierarchy. As lower employees, we have limited say on what they decide. Though they consult us sometimes, their aim is only to collect our views and then decide as they wish. "There is no guarantee that our input will be valid and considered" (Interview from a government organization).

Our business is privately owned with the sole purpose of making profits" The owners therefore will make decisions that they think will maximize the profitability of their business irrespective of the brilliant and professional contribution from lower employees. We only implement what they want implemented for their business, otherwise, we cannot decide anything by ourselves. . . . (Interview from a Private Organization).

Table II.
Summary of findings

Attributes	Categories	Government		Private		NGO		Total		X ²	df	Sig
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Centralization	Tell	22	41	17	81	15	50	54	51	50.61	3	0.00
	Decision-making styles followed	20	37	3	14	8	27	31	30			
	Participatory	6	11	1	5	5	17	12	11			
	Delegated	6	11	0	0	2	7	8	8			
	Total	54	100	21	100	30	100	105	100			
Hierarchy of authority	High power distance	25	46	16	76	9	30	50	83	27.14	2	0.00
	Medium power distance	23	43	5	24	17	57	45	75			
	Low power distance	6	11	0	0	4	13	10	16			
	Total	54	100	21	100	30	100	60	100			
Formalization	Job codification	SD	43	48	6	3	100	144.31	5	0.00		
		D	45	45	9	1	100	135.4	5	0.00		
		A	40	48	11	1	100	121.57	5	0.00		
	Rules and observation	SD	49	41	09	1	100	138.14	5	0.00		
		D	21	20	33	26	100	22.71	5	0.01		
		A	24	26	30	20	100	19.51	5	0.02		
	I feel i am my own boss I make decisions without consultations The person doing work makes decisions I make my own rules and regulations at work There is constant check for rule observation Employees are watched for rules observance	SD	43	48	6	3	100	144.31	5	0.00		
		D	45	45	9	1	100	135.4	5	0.00		
		A	40	48	11	1	100	121.57	5	0.00		
		Total	54	100	21	100	30	100	60	100		

A senior communications expert in a government organization remarked “Decisions in this organization is the responsibility of our bosses. Though they consult some employees sometimes, such consultations are meant to get employees feelings about particular issues. There is no guarantee that they can influence decision making nor their views to be heard”

A Business Development Manager in a privately owned business organization said “There are no mechanisms through which the top manager’s decisions can be discussed”. Whether fair or unfair to the employees, you just adhere to the decision made by the owners lest they fire you.

A Finance manager in privately owned business organization said “This is not my company. So, I do not expect to make any binding decision for this organization. Afterall, the business owners will not want to see me involved in decision making even when I have something to contribute that can take this company ahead”

These findings confirm that decision-making style commonly used in these organizations is “Tell” or authoritative, meaning that organizational decisions are entirely made by the people at the top. Lower level employees only implement what their leaders have decided with less or no input from them. These testimonies from an interview guide and the quantitative results from a survey questionnaire were well corroborated with documentary analysis. A review of the university charter of one of the universities clearly indicates that strategic decisions shall be made by the university council as the top governing organ. It clearly indicates that power and authority belong to the top most decision-making organ, which undertakes strategic and operational decisions. Much as the university council consists of members from all the other units of the university, it is not clear whether the views of the lower level employees are well represented through the council representatives. We also reviewed statutory instruments of a commercial bank particularly the memorandum and articles of association. It is a privately owned by the Catholic Church, which appoints the board of directors that also appoints the management officers of the bank units. Decisions are made right from the top governing council to lower levels of governance and administration. Lower echelon employees have little say in the decisions made even when they are consulted on a number of consultations made from them.

In all the three levels of analysis (questionnaire survey results, interview guide, and documentary analysis), it is evident that the decision-making process is exclusive to the top management with little or no involvement from the lower echelon employees. Besides failing collaboration between different parties, centralized decision-making causes employee resentment of organizational programs, employee conflicts, organizational cynicism, and employee turnover, which makes it hard for organizations to achieve their intended objectives. These were confirmed by previous researchers such as (Huxham *et al.*, 2000; Mishra *et al.*, 2019 and Lino *et al.*, 2019).

Hierarchy of authority and interagency collaboration

Table III indicates that majority (91 percent) said that the hierarchy of authority in their organizations was between high and medium. Only 9 percent said that their organizations are

Attributes		Categories	Government (n = 35)	Private (n = 25)	Overall (n = 60)	X ²	df	Sig
Hierarchy of authority	I would	High	40	40	40	18	5	0.00
	characterize the	Medium	51	52	51			
	power distance in	Low	9	8	9			
	my organization as:	Total	100	100	100			

Table III.
Hierarchy of authority

low on power distance. Private organizations exercised high power distance (92 percent) than government organizations (91 percent), but more or less all of them had high power distance.

Results from a qualitative analysis confirmed similar results. Analysis of the following excerpts indicates that the organizations in question were high on power distance. For example:

The owner of this business is not easily approachable by lower employees. I have been in this company for 15 years but have never met him personally. There are several layers of authority through which our actions in this business gets to him (Interview from a Private Organization).

Power, authority and benefits increase as the hierarchy increases. The higher the hierarchy, the more powerful the office bearers are and the more benefits they get from the hierarchy. The lower the hierarchy, the lesser the power and the lesser the benefits (interview from a government organization)

The Protocol here is strictly observed. You cannot bypass and talk to the people at the helm and vice versa. I take long to see even to hear a word from our Executive Director though she sits a few meters away from my office (Interview from a Public Service Organization)

My position in this organization does not allow me to question the decisions of my seniors. Even if something is going wrong, you just look on as if you don't know otherwise you may be mistaken for opposing the hierarchy (Interview from a Private organization).

Our managers do not understand our needs. The only people who may understand our concerns are the owners of this organization who are several layers away from us. Reaching them through official means will be blocked by the immediate managers yet going beyond them is not acceptable by the companies' standard operating procedures (Interview from a Public Service Organization).

The excerpts indicate existence of high power distance between leaders and employees. It is clearly indicated that there is low interaction between employees and their leaders. There is a clear demonstration of employees' inability to participate in decision-making due to the existence of higher power distance between employees and their leaders. These gaps were highlighted by [Craps et al. \(2007\)](#) as impediments to forging of any collaborative relationships without which organizational goals such as creation of graduate employment opportunities may not be achieved, which fails cohesiveness, creativity, and innovation and which deters organizations to achieve their objectives.

Similar results were identified when we carried out a documentary analysis. We reviewed the Parliamentary Act (2002) of one of the government regulatory bodies. It revealed existence of high power distance, which was seen in the way executive powers makes decision and pass them over to lower employees for implementation without input from the lower employees. Secondly, there exist several layers of power and control right from the chief executive officer, board of governors, line ministry, and the appointing authority (Office of the President). In the case of private organizations, the memorandum and articles of association reviewed indicate that the owners of these private businesses make unquestionable decisions.

Job codification and interagency collaboration

Results in [Table II](#) indicates that 50 percent did not feel like they were in control of all organizational matters. 45 percent felt that they did not have the freedom to make decisions in all organizational matters without consulting anybody else. Majority (74 percent) agreed that they did not have the freedoms to decide on their own. However, private organizations were the most affected with 52 percent feeling that they were not in control of all organizational matters while 83 percent felt that they did not have the freedoms to make their own rules and regulations at work.

Qualitative results confirm that the way the jobs are described limits employer's freedoms to freely interact within and across the organization, which limits their collaboration. Also, employers feel that they are not in control of organizational matters, which further curtails their abilities to collaborate. This is shown in the following response:

My job is specific to certain terms and conditions. I have my immediate boss and an overall supervisor. Am required to perform all my duties with the full knowledge of these two people. They are the only people I am allowed to communicate to regarding the execution of my work (Interview from a government organization)

When I got this job, terms and conditions were spelt out to me. Rules and regulations were issued to me. I know what to do, when to do it and how to do it. Any divergence from what is described in my job will attract serious penalties, so I always conform to the required guidelines (Interview from a private organization).

It may not matter how long it takes you to execute a given task and it may also not matter the amount of pressures from other functional units. What matters is to do the right job that conforms to the legal and regulatory framework of our organization

Results of the questionnaire survey, interview guide, and documentary analysis are consistent in confirming that jobs were described in a way that did not provide employees with their freedoms to communicate and interact with one another within or outside the organization. Lack of people's freedoms to freely interact with one another provides less opportunities for collaboration as earlier confirmed by (Ransbotham *et al.*, 2012).

Rule observation and interagency collaboration

Table II indicates that rule observation was anchored on two questions. The question that required respondent to comment on whether they were constantly being checked for rule violations, 39 percent commented that they were constantly being checked for rule violations with government organizations reporting 46 percent against the 52 percent responses from private organizations. On the question that specifically probed on whether the supervisors really monitored and checked to see whether the rules and regulations were obeyed, 51 percent agreed that supervisors watched over the employees to see if they obeyed all the rules and regulations. 66 percent were government and 64 percent being private organizations.

Interview results revealed similar results as the quantitative ones as shown in the following excerpts:

Conforming to rules and regulations of this organization is number one priority for both employees and employers. Rules for finance, for HR, for operations, and rules for everything. They are just too many and each of them must be obeyed, otherwise, you are kicked out of the system. Even when your performance is below standards, your presence can be accommodated as long as there is this kind of conformity to rules and regulations (Interview from a government organization).

Everything I do here is governed by certain rules or regulations. The organization expects me to observe all the rules without question (Interview from a private organization)

Any fault at work attracts disciplinary action. To avoid this, I obey the rules even when they are too harsh (Interview from a government organization)

The documentary review revealed different sets of rules and regulations governing the employees. These are the Public Standing Orders, the Human Resource Manual, the Code of Conduct, and the Ugandan Constitution. The statutory documents regulate the behaviors and actions of the employees whether at work or elsewhere. Their main objective is to enforce adherence to certain rules, regulations, and standards. Any divergence from them is punished punitively.

All the methods used to investigate rule observation (qualitative and quantitative) revealed similar results, a clear testimony that organizations surveyed portrayed higher levels of organization centralization and formalization. This was not very different from previous scholars such as [Huxham and Vangen \(2013\)](#) and [Majchrzak et al. \(2015\)](#), who found out that stringent rule observation was responsible for low levels of employee motivation, collaborative working, and creativity, which foiled organization's efforts to achieve organizational needs.

Discussions and conclusions

Organization's survival in the current knowledge economy depends very much on the quality of both strategic and operational decisions made by the organization ([Kaufmann et al., 2019](#)). According to [Shapiro et al. \(2016\)](#), the quality of decisions made does not exist in a vacuum. Rather, they are determined by a number of organizational and environmental parameters where such organizations thrive. According to [Pettigrew \(2014\)](#), the structure of organizations is one of the organizational factors that determine the quality of decisions made. Organizations that are mindful of the quality of decisions made are structured in a way that embraces inclusiveness of both internal and external stakeholders ([Marchiondo et al., 2015](#)). This improves employee trust and mutual relationships, thus enabling employee internal harmonious working relationships, which facilitates interagency collaboration. However, it should be noted that decision-making may not necessarily be for collaboration purposes only, but is always done for a number of many other factors such as increasing the market share, public relations, increasing profitability, creating employment opportunities, downsizing, public concern, expansion, and many other reasons. In all these aspects, leaders employ different styles of decision-making but as seen from our results, they mostly use "Tell" and or consultative decision-making styles, which falls short of collaborative means. Therefore, it is little wonder that most organizations fail in their efforts to achieve their desired goals because the decisions they make are only made by a few people at the top with little or no involvement of the lower level employees and other organizations in the same industry. This has been the reason for the restructure of most of the PES in Europe. However, as earlier seen from literature, it is beneficial for both organizational employees and the organization itself to achieve whatever their objective might be through collaborative decision-making styles, which are inclusive, participative, and democratic. Therefore, whatever the objective might be, the best decision-making style is the one that involves all stakeholders, provides freedoms of interaction, and provides democratic space between different partners within and outside organizations, a cogent support for collaborative organizational structures as opposed to hierarchical bureaucracies.

To the contrary, results from our study reveal that organizations are typically hierarchical, noninclusive, and less democratic. They always make decisions from top and push them down for observance and implementation by the lower echelon employees. Organizations that are structured this way have been widely criticized for their inability to involve people in decision-making. Scholars such as [Mishra et al. \(2019\)](#) argue that such structures reduce employee morale, advance internal organizational politics, mistrust between different layers, and encourage organizational cynicism, which eventually tears the organization's capacity to promote internal and external collaboration for societal benefit ([Hogan et al., 2002](#)). This was further proved by [Tata and Prasad \(2004\)](#), who found out that organizations that concentrated decision-making power at the top of the hierarchy were less effective in the achievement organizational objectives due to internal fights and power wrangle. [Craps et al. \(2007\)](#) argue that excluding lower echelons in making decisions denies the organization of the ability for its employees to collaborate to achieve organizational objectives. Due to collaboration inabilities, organizations are not able to survive in the

competitive environment just because they lack the creativity and innovativeness, which comes as a result of wider consultations from different stakeholders within or outside the organizations and at different levels. Whereas previous scholars recommend collaborative decision-making, it is not a “one size fits all” solution for all organizational challenges. The success of collaborative governance in most developed countries may be attributed to the early civilization coupled with massive education that has characterized the evolving societies of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, which has increased the interest to innovate and cocreate (Versteegen *et al.*, 2001). This has shaped their curiosity to collaborate with other organizations from which they have reaped enough benefits. African societies may show little or no interest in collaboration because civilization reached late in the nineteenth century, which delayed their abilities to find innovative solutions to their problems; besides, the African cultures were more pinged to individual mighty and not on collectivism. Through a divide and rule colonial legacy, these cultures were given more importance, which divided people further. By the end of nineteenth century after colonialism, the preceding governments accelerated the individual mighty cultures for selfish interests, which further broke down the interests of parties to collaborate with one another. There is more preference for parties to pursue individualistic interests than collective needs. Therefore, grounded in historical and cultural definitions, collaboration may not fit the environmental parameters of our people and organizations despite the urgent need for it (Engeström, 1999)

The results obtained in this study correlate well with previous scholars. The results confirm that the top-bottom decision-making approach is not amenable to interagency collaboration. It is therefore recommended that organizations responsible for graduate employment should be restructured to allow employees with freedoms to participate in organizational decision-making. The employee motivation that comes along with this employee involvement is likely to change the dynamics of public and private organizations’ performance from autonomous actions to interactive dynamism, which according to Oplatka and Arar (2016) is associated with organizational creativity, innovativeness, agility, and concern for societal needs than individual needs. Reducing hierarchical organizational structures and introducing flat and relational-based organizations requires individuals who collaborate effectively. This calls for adoption of collaborative decision-making that calls for inclusive and democratic decision-making.

High-power-distance organizations are associated with autocracy, negative organizational progress, less employee involvement, low employee motivation and empowerment as well as poor organizational health (Khatri *et al.*, 2009). According to Hofstede (2011), high-power-distance organizations’ employees cultivate a paternalistic culture that accepts that the decision-making powers belong their superiors and that the lower level employees have nothing to decide on. The employers also prefers it that way and take it upon themselves to take advantage of this to wield powers, command respect, and decide on organizational matters the way they want. Employees are normally instructed on what their actions should be of which they are mandated to follow passively. Communication between different layers of organization is vertical downward with no or little horizontal communication. This explicitly widens the gap between superiors and their subordinates since it makes it hard for the lower echelon employees to express their views to the upper echelons. According to Cockburn *et al.* (2019), organizations that are vertically organized in layers of varying power and influence offer no or little opportunity for institutional collaboration. With little or no collaboration opportunities for organizations that are hierarchically structured, we recommend that organizations should be restructured in a way that reduces the power distance and establishes more relational approaches between employers and employees. Leaner networked organizations based on interaction and networks should be adopted to shorten the power distance by allowing more cross-functional interactions, which will

develop trust and mutuality, hence collaboration. Whereas developed countries have a number of success stories due to collaboration between different organizations due to low power distance between leaders and subordinates, we are not certain whether low power distance may produce similar results in the developing country context such as Uganda given the varying levels of development, cultural and historical perspectives. In the absence of literature on whether low-power-distance organizations are able to collaborate with others for achievement of societal needs in Uganda, trying it out might be a worthwhile venture given the available literature and the success stories in the developed country context.

Formalization

This measures the extent to which organizations are formalized. Organizations may be formalized by the way they describe jobs of the incumbent and by the way rules and regulations are observed (Hage and Aiken, 1967). According to Baker *et al.* (2006), stringent job codification deters employees not only from performing their tasks effectively but also from relating with each other. Besides job ambiguity, stringent job codification promotes internal organizational conflicts, which create disharmony, further disabling any collaborative initiatives. This is in line with what Bryson (2018) found out that if individuals cannot relate well due to the way their jobs are specified, they may not perform their internal organizational matters well and thus cannot collaborate across organizations. Radin and Werhane (2003) reported a significant relationship between employees' freedoms at work and collaboration. The study resulted from 2500 school teachers in the United States of America in which teachers expressed resentment for the way their jobs were described. The jobs were described in a way that limited their internal and external association with other key stakeholders, which promoted worker's alienation, thus disallowing professional collaboration. We recommend that institutions in Uganda should codify employee responsibilities in a way that allows them to interact and work with each other within and across organizations. As put by Aktouf (1992), modern organizations should replace the traditional unitary work paradigms that are restrictive to employees' freedoms to pluralistic, humanistic, caring, and interactive work paradigms if they are to sail through the competitive challenges of modern society.

Conclusion

Organizations that are inclusive, democratic, and interactive are believed to provide an efficient means for governing our increasingly complex, fragmented, and multilayered societies (Sørensen and Torfing, 2005). This is because such organizations are structured in a way that deals with the shortcomings of the traditional hierarchical and bureaucratic structures (as confirmed by our study), which are characterized by exclusive decision-making, high power distance, stringent job codification, and stringent rule observation. This characterization is known for lack of people interaction, lower employee freedoms, and exclusive participation in organizational matters and stringent rule observance, which according to Lindsay *et al.* (2008) provides little chances of interagency collaboration. Therefore, to avoid these gaps and provide a strategic focus for collaboration of organizations, it is recommended that the hierarchical and bureaucratic organizations be restructured to create organizations that can be governed collaboratively, allowing for more flexible, empowering, interactive, relational, and collective-oriented organizations (Clegg *et al.*, 2002).

However, while we recommend the restructure of organizations to pursue collaborative governance structures based on literature and success stories from developed country

context, there is need to ascertain whether Uganda's contextual elements such as people, organizational cultures, histories, education levels, and other activity domains may support the relational and interactive development of organizations with the view of creating synergistic working relationship, a cogent hypothesis for creating employment opportunities in the country. Depending on the results of such studies, training of organizational employees on collaborative intelligence should be undertaken to build collaboration skills and competences among different organizational stakeholders. This kind of training is necessary to all organizational employees regardless of the positions they hold. It equips employees with practical knowledge on relational communication, negotiations, and emotional intelligence in a collaborative environment. These will cut down hierarchical organizational structures, reduce power distance while making organizations flatter, relational, and more inclusive. This will allow them the flexibility to negotiate among themselves, communicate within and cross-functionally, mobilize physical and cognitive resources, which create synergy that allow interagency collaboration. However, as proposed by [McCracken et al. \(2012\)](#), for such training to be effective in achieving the intended goals, efforts to minimize barriers that would hamper training and participation should be undertaken.

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Corresponding author

Peter Ntale can be contacted at: pntale@mubs.ac.ug