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# **PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS GAP IN PUBLIC WORKS CONTRACTS: A THEORETICAL REVIEW**

**Charles Kalinzi\*, Joseph Ntayi, Moses Muhwezi and Levi Kabagambe**

**Abstract.** Research addressing performance expectations gap in public procurement is sparse. The studies addressing expectation gaps are predominantly in auditing (see (Adams & Evans, 2004; Brennan, 2006; Humphrey, Moizer, & Turley, 1993)). Other studies have focused mainly on customer value (Ancarani, 2009) and service quality (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Cronin, Taylor, & Taylor, 1992; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996), using a marketing lens. We see certain aspects of expectations gap discussed in marketing and auditing discipline that resemble what is occurring in public procurement today. This study intends to borrow this concept and use it to investigate and document procurement performance expectations gap using a theoretical lens, that could explain the performance lapses in public works contracts with a conceptual model that will later be used to improve the public procurement performance expectation gaps in DLGs in Uganda.

**Key words:** Performance Expectations gap, procurement performance, roadworks contracts, stakeholder, Road user

## INTRODUCTION

Uganda has experienced an escalating increase in the cost of constructing both national and district road networks. The transport sector has been taking a lion's share of the budget partly because its one of the priority areas for development. The Background to the Budget Fiscal Year 2017/18 indicated that Works and Transport ministry was allocated Shs4.5 trillion to spend; up from Shs3.8 trillion (Wesonga, 2017). Whereas this is the case, the state of constructed road networks increase at a slow pace and those worked on continue to deteriorate and don't last long. At Local Government level, the procurement audit reports on works contracts conducted in recent years in Uganda reported inadequate planning, supervision challenges and general lack of transparent tendering in these mid-level administrative units as factors for deteriorating works standards. They further document an escalation in procurement systems deficiencies ranging from procurement staff being low, general inadequacy in procurement training, and the occurrence of emergency procurements. Government devised a plan of minimising the costs of roadworks at DLGs by buying road equipments and distributing them to each DLG in a bid to phase out the costly tendering process for road construction at DLGs. 1,151 pieces of road construction equipment were freshly imported from Japan for distribution to all the 118 districts, bought using a loan from the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation, meant for maintaining the roads under the care of district local governments(Monitor, 2017). The central research question being asked is: How can stakeholder perceptions, institutional pressures and path dependence explain the variations in the performance roadworks contracts in the newly created DLGs in Uganda?

### *The theoretical gap*

Many studies on the expectations gap have been undertaken in the audit and accounting field. Studies on closely related aspects have been carried out in marketing field but mainly focusing on

service quality (Cronin et al., 1992; Parasuraman et al., 1985; Zeithaml et al., 1996) in relation to internal customers' needs being part of the organisation. Earlier studies have focused mainly on customer value (Ancarani, 2009) and service quality (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Cronin et al., 1992; Parasuraman et al., 1985; Zeithaml et al., 1996), mainly using a marketing lens. Other scholars investigated purchasing performance measurements using a set of criteria (Chao, Scheuing, & Ruch, 1993; Dale & Powley, 1984; van Weele, 1984), and some authors focused on project performance measurements (Wisniewski & Stewart, 2004; Yuan, Zeng, Skibniewski, & Li, 2009) while focusing on the internal customer satisfaction levels. Second, scholars have mainly conducted studies from an audit perspective and focused on the expectations gap (Liggio, 1974; Monroe & Woodliff, 1993; Brennan, 2006; Porter, 1993; (Bostick & Luehlfiging, 2004), categorizing it in the form of a reasonableness gap and performance gap (Porter, 1993; Bostick & Luehlfiging, 2004), a "role-perception gap" (Pourheydari & Abousaiedi (2011) and a deficient performance gap and deficient standards gap (Porter, 1993). Other studies on closely related aspects have been carried out in the marketing field but mainly focused on service quality (Cronin et al., 1992; Parasuraman et al., 1985; Zeithaml et al., 1996) in relation to internal customers' needs being part of the organization. As shown, these did not focus on other fields of study outside audits and marketing. We see certain aspects covered in marketing and audits that resemble what is occurring in public procurement today. (Ancarani, 2009) clearly started on this journey when he proposed a model for Customer Value assessment while looking at the water sector, noting that the concept changes when applied to a different perspective to investigate performance expectation gaps. This research intends to borrow this concept of expectation gaps and expand its applicability to public procurement management in assessing performance expectations.

### *The practical gap*

In a bid to save road expenses incurred at local government level, the Government of Uganda purchased and distributed road construction equipment for their local road network upgrading and extension as opposed to contracting them out to private road contractors which had become too costly. The road users, while comparing the performance standards before (while being outsourced) and now (being worked on internally) are increasingly becoming dissatisfied with evidence based reports showing growing concerns of district engineers failing to meet road-users' performance expectations. The cause of this sudden decline in roadworks performance standards using newly acquired road equipment distributed to various district local governments (DLGs) and captured in numerous stakeholder reports cannot easily be ascertained. This study attempts to investigate the existence and nature of such performance expectations gap reported overtime through contextualizing public procurement performance expectations using a "a theory borrowing approach" where variables are drawn from literature, highlighting a multiplicity of variables that influence perceptions from a stakeholder's point of view. These variables are supported by the Cultural Historical Activity theory (CHAT), Stakeholder theory and Path Dependence theory, in trying to explain the current phenomena. An integrated model is then developed from a conceptual framework that will later be tested for applied robustness in the subsequent studies. It is expected that the model will be applied to construction contracts in the future in assessing performance expectations of stakeholders where such contracts are being implemented. Practically, the study intends to borrow this concept previously used in audit and accounting literature to apply it to enhance the success of holistic stakeholder embracement and management and change the way internal procurement contracts are executed in the future.

Whereas the acquisition of new machines excited stakeholders, contentious issues have been raised regarding the level of works procurement performance (performance efficiency), how the procurement officers perform their activities, and the effectiveness of works procurement engagements (performance standards and quality). Their ability to influence meaningful procurement decisions has led to the dissatisfaction of stakeholders (performance reasonableness). It is now evident that what the public/various stakeholders expected (perceived expectations) is not what is being achieved, and this has created a mismatch in works procurement performance expectations. As rightly stated, any performance short of this perceived expectation would be a substandard performance (Gbadago, 2015). There is widespread criticism of an increasing pattern of shoddy construction work being attributed to the PDEs' procurement performance in Uganda on most of the construction contracts being handled internally by the DLGs. These contracts, implemented using GOU procurement regulations (force account procedure), manifest in a series of complaints from various stakeholders, reported most frequently from various parts of Uganda and spanning both DLGs and Central Government Ministries. Construction contracts implemented using international donor funded procurement procedures, on the other hand, have received few complaints from the public with respect to performance expectations. One wonders why there is this difference in meeting performance expectations when these contracts are compared. The extent of this increasing trend in works contracts, although overwhelmingly high with government procedures construction contracts, cannot be exactly ascertained. This situation presents different expectations of stakeholders, leading to a performance expectation gap.

## LIERATURE REVIEW

### **Review of Theories that inform our study**

According to (Ntayi, Eyaa, & Ngoma, 2010), the violation of public procurement duties is motivated by the private interests of procurement officers in Uganda, yet rules and norms objectively defining their limit require a systematic inquiry. Poor stakeholder management is leading to high rates of failure of the procurement contracts. There are also instances where expectations deviate between/within the same categories of stakeholders, especially in the central Government and local Governments. This leads to the diversion of resources meant for one activity to be used for totally different activities, thus creating an expectations gap. The beneficiaries at local governments, during the construction of VIP latrines in various districts, wanted their community primary schools renovated first as opposed to the toilets (PPDA, 2013), and thus preference in choices creates expectations gap too. The information presented in the case above can be explained by the following theories:

### **Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984)**

The stakeholder theory is largely developed from the management discipline and concerns organisations meeting the expectations of their stakeholders. Freeman was quoted by (Zhang, Dawes, & Sarkis, 2005), having stressed that the theory evolved from the business ethics field to help managers and other stakeholders that may be influenced by managerial decisions made within the organisation. The theory came into the limelight after the publication of Freeman's book: *Strategic Management: a stakeholder Approach* (Berg, n.d.). Since then, the vocabulary has been adopted in not only business management but also in other fields of research. Freeman (1984) defines the term stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the

achievement of the firm's objectives". Friendman & Miles (2006) emphasize that the organisation (PDEs) should be thought of as a grouping of stakeholders, and the purpose of the organisation is to manage their interests, needs and viewpoints (expectations). The theory thus focuses more on the PDE rather than the actual activities of the procurement practitioners.

The concept requires that stakeholders are brought in through wide consultations in affairs that either directly or indirectly benefit the common people's interest. (Zhang et al., 2005) assert that the evaluation of stakeholder benefits and barriers may vary because of the differing levels of participation in decision making, changes that may occur to their organisations, and roles within an organization, among other factors.

### **Relevance of stakeholder theory to this study**

The theory is relevant to this study, as it embraces stakeholder analysis in procurement management, stakeholder management (in line with their varying expectations) and community activism (what the procurement practitioners contribute to procurement performance gap). A number of stakeholders are part and parcel of the procurement process as beneficiaries of the procurement outcome. There are two categories of stakeholders seen here: those with power that decide for others, and those without power that stand to directly or indirectly benefit from the procurement outcome. The theory thus does very well in addressing stakeholder engagement in the procurement process but does not address issues of organisational politics, influence and culture, and this leads us to the next theory.

## **The Cultural-Historical Activity theory (CHAT) by Engestrom (1987)**

CHAT originated primarily from the work of Karl Marx, Lev Vygotsky, and the classic Russian activity theorists (i.e., Leontiev and Luria), and provides a powerful tool for describing problems within cultural and historical contexts, with its fundamental unit of analysis as the activity system (in this case a procurement activity), which involves a holistic context of agents using tools as they work on materials (and problems) of all sorts to produce certain outcomes (Yanchar, 2011). Engeström's version of activity theory provides a strong account of an agency by featuring the dynamics of relations between individuals, collectives, objects, and language (Annalisa Sannino, Harry Daniels & Gutiérrez, 2009). CHAT provides a lens for understanding human cognition by examining the dialectical relationships among people, tools, and goals as they influence and are shaped by social structures, culture, and history within the context of a community ((Brown & Cole, 2002) Cole & Engeström, 1993; Engeström, 1987; Trust, 2017) and their changing work environment (Annalisa Sannino, Harry Daniels & Gutiérrez, 2009). CHAT creates an interaction between the subject (who is involved), the object(ive) i.e., why is the activity taking place; the tools used in performing an activity; the rules and regulations; the division of labour (who is responsible for what and how are the roles organised) and the community (the environment in which the activity is being carried out). The overall goal is to achieve a desired outcome at the end of the procurement activity (Mwanza & Engeström, 2003)

### **Relevance of CHAT to this study**

The theory will be used as the theoretical lens and analytical tool for examining the relations of subjects (procurement practitioners) and objects (procurement contract implementation) as mediated by the primary components that constitute an activity system (procurement outcome) and will be useful in explaining the social cultural elements that impact

the procurement performances that are responsible for causing varying performance expectations in different contracts in PDEs. It will be therefore necessary to analyse the procurement activity in connection with the PDU institutional objectives and against the historical background as a whole and how various procurement system components can mediate this procurement performance transformation.

### **The Path Dependence theory (David (1985); Arthur, (1990))**

The power of the Path Dependence theory lies predominantly in explaining the absence of major institutional reforms (Hering, 2003). A path-dependent process is said to be a 'self-reinforcing process with the potential for a lock-in' (W B Arthur, 1989; Kominek, n.d.; Schreyögg, 2010). Path Dependence theory is premised on the fact that organisations and actors are part of institutions that structure and channel their behavioural standards and activities along established paths (Trouvé, Couturier, Etheridge, Saint-Jean, & Somme, 2010). According to (Jörg Sydow & Koll, 2017), it is these positive feedback mechanisms that take over and make it increasingly difficult to leave the respective course of action or 'path'. According to the theory, once a path is chosen, it becomes increasingly attractive (Arthur, 1995) and is difficult to change because the processes become institutionalised and are reinforced over time (Trouvé et al., 2010). Path Dependence means that current and future states, actions, or decisions depend on the path of previous states, actions, or decisions (Page, 2006). Page (2006) suggests that understanding those paths can only be aided by a theory of what those paths might be, and not following the rules and standards established by the previous choices generates costs (investment, learning, coordination and anticipation. According to (There et al., 2017), public procurement activity is regarded as a self-reinforcing process, where all actors continuously use it without preferring the use of waivers as a potential alternative at the individual and systemic level, thus making it harder to correct

inefficient courses of action over time (J. Sydow & Schreyögg, 2013), regardless of their natural preference (W B Arthur, 1989) and thus locking-in the only use of the mandatory public procurement system.

### **Relevance of Path Dependence theory to this study**

In public procurement implementation, the path dependent activity does not seem to converge towards the intended goal but rather leads to several absorbing states (PDEs). The theory, however, fails to account for institutional path-departures, which became more common in the 2000s (Hering, 2003). According to scholars of Path Dependence, the theory may help explain why some procuring entities perpetually perform in more or less the same way as in the previous times with slight deviation and others do not, depending on the steps they take during the planning process. This may partly be attributed to the same people performing the same procurement activity over time, thus explaining their lack of institutional change. In particular, the theory explains, as Bebchuk and Roe 1999 say, why such inefficient institutions arise and why they persist (Pittroff, 2016) According to (Garud & Karnøe, 2001), the specific state that eventually emerges depends on the particular sequence of events that unfold, and thus it is not surprising that the nature of the procurement outcome depends on the historical activities handled during the planning phase of the same procurement process.

### **Institutional Theory, by Scott, (2004)**

The theory considers the processes by which structures, schemes, rules, norms, and routines become authoritative guidelines for social behaviour and norms created by actors involved and become a binding power over an actor. The theory offers powerful explanations for the ways in which institutional means generate cultural biases that drive policy ends. The theory captures the

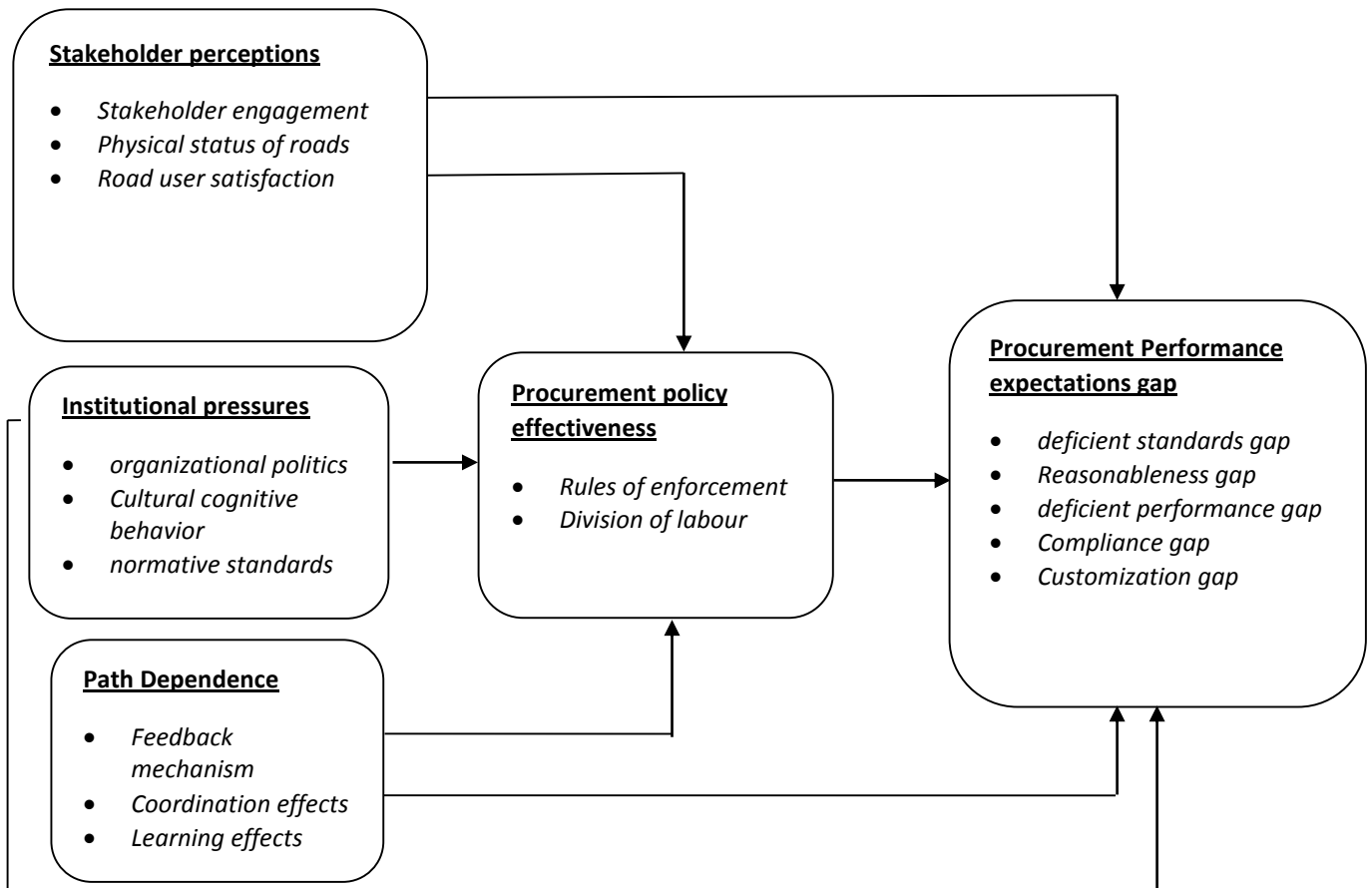
variety of possible ways of organizing government and public services, today and historically, that illuminates central analytic questions in public management, including reasons for collapse and failure.

### **Relevance of the Institutional theory to this study**

The theory can be comprehensively applied in controlling activities of individuals within an institution (PDE); it can be used to explain why Ugandan institutions fail to exhibit the principles enshrined in the institutional theory instead of being characterised by individuals who prove to be stronger than the institutions. The institutional theory can be a rewarding concept to an organization because its stakeholders, as a whole (society), play a vital role in determining the legitimacy of an organization directly and have much more power in the operations of an organization; this can be used as a basis for determining the level of power its stakeholders can use in setting the standards. Although not advantageous for every organization, the theory can be used to determine the “best fit approach” for all PDEs. When theories are combined give us a conceptual model illustrated below:

### **The Conceptual Model :**

Our aim is to investigate the direct effect of institutional pressures, stakeholder perceptions and Path Dependence variables on procurement performance expectations gap being mediated by procurement policy effectiveness. The conceptual framework is drawn from the literature illustrating the relationship between the various independent variables and procurement performance expectations gap in investigating whether the DLG roadworks meet road users’ performance expectations. The conceptualisation of performance expectations is based on road users’ perception of the process and outcomes of DLG road works.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework; Source: Researchers’ conceptualisation framework**

The above conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between institutional pressures, stakeholder interests, Path Dependence and procurement performance expectations, mediated by the procurement policy effectiveness. It has been conceptualised in the diagram that indicators that form the procurement performance expectations (operationalised by Performance efficiency (cost, Accuracy, quality & standards); Performance effectiveness (timeliness, reasonableness) and Procurement systems productivity) constitute the dependent variable, while institutional pressures, stakeholder interests and Path Dependence constitute the independent variables. Stakeholder interests have been conceptualised to include stakeholder power (to influence the outcome); stakeholder legitimacy (stakeholder relationship with the PDE) and urgency (of stakeholder

needs). Institutional pressures, on the other hand have been conceptualised to include political pressures, cultural pressures and institutional (goal) changes. Path Dependence has been conceptualised to have parameters of positive feedback, coordination effects and learning effects.

## **Review of Empirical works**

### **Expectations gap**

The history of the expectations gap is significantly grounded in auditing literature with significant contributions from studies on expectations gap mostly on developed world (Muhammad, n.d.). In 1974, Liggio was the first to define the expectation gap as the difference between the actual and the expected performance. This definition was extended by the Cohen Commission on auditors' responsibilities in 1978, where the expectation gap is represented by the gap between the public expectations and needs and the expected accomplishment of the auditors, according to the Financial Times as quoted at <http://lexicon.ft.com/Term?term=audit-expectation-gap>. According to other scholars like Monroe & Woodliff (1993) and Degan and Rankin (1999), as quoted by Brennan (2006), an expectations gap is defined as “the result of the difference in opinion or perceptions between two or more groups”. Porter (1993) emphasizes that an expectations gap has two elements: a reasonableness gap (i.e., the gap between what is expected and what can reasonably be expected); and a performance gap (i.e., the gap between what can reasonably be expected and perceived actual achievements). According to (Pourheydari & Abousaiedi, 2011), the expectation gap relates directly to the uncertainty associated with the purpose, value, nature, and effect of the (procurement) project being undertaken. On the other hand, (Bryson & Humphrey, n.d.) define an expectations gap as a representation of the feeling that the procurement actors are performing in a manner at variance with the beliefs and desires of those for whose benefit the procurement project is carried out. Pourheydari & Abousaiedi (2011) note

that it can as well be defined as a “role-perception gap” in which procurement users’ expectations are compared with a pre-determined notion of what is reasonable for procurement actors to perform/provide. It therefore accommodates the adequacy of procurement standards deployed as well as quality delivery standards. Therefore, when the public beliefs differ from those of procurement actors’ performance standards in the context of duties and responsibilities and delivery quality standards, an expectations gap is said to exist.

An expectations gap is said to exist when there are concerns not matching the intended performance standard measurements of quality, cost, delivery, cycle time and vendor rating. According to (Rozemeijer, 2000), performance can also be benchmarked against other best-in-class suppliers, especially in assessing the quality of the procurement performance by delivering purchasing savings in short term, against low costs. Various stakeholders have come out vividly to attack procurement practitioners because of unfair blame for poor performance (Rozemeijer, 2000) when they do not have full control over shared activities by various user departments.

The concept of an expectations gap has not been well studied in procurement literature, and a review of the literature in this area has been mainly borrowed from auditing literature-the audit expectations gap (Liggio, 1974; Monroe & Woodliff, 1993; Brennan, 2006; Porter, 1993; (Bostick & Luehlfing, 2004). Several scholars have categorised the audit expectations gap in the following way:

*Performance gap:* (Bostick & Luehlfing, 2004) define a performance gap from the context of auditing, as a gap between what the society can reasonably expect auditors to accomplish and what they are perceived to achieve. In the context of procurement performance, what the society can expect the procurement actors to accomplish and what the society expects them to achieve do not match. Porter, in his 1993 study titled “An empirical study of the audit expectation-performance

gap”, published in *Accounting and Business Research*, further categorised/classified performance gap into two parts: a deficient performance gap and a deficient standards gap. A deficient performance gap is the gap between the expected standards of performance of auditors’ existing duties and the perceived performance, as expected and perceived by the society. A deficient standards gap, on the other hand, is defined as a gap between the duties that can be reasonably expected of auditors and auditors’ existing duties as defined by the law and professional promulgations, according to Porter.

*Reasonableness gap (unreasonable public expectations)* (Porter, 1993; Bostick & Luehlfing, 2004). From an auditing perspective, this is defined as a gap between what society expects auditors to achieve and what they can reasonably be expected to accomplish, according to Porter 1993 as cited in (Bostick & Luehlfing, 2004). In the context of procurement, the stakeholders’ expectations do not match the procurement actors’ accomplishments. The expectation gap manifests in many forms. (McEnroe & Martens, 2001) notes, among other factors, that it can be managed with full disclosures, public watchdogs, effective internal controls, and managing fraud and illegal acts.

### **Institutional pressures and procurement performance of construction contracts**

One of the variables we intend to use while assessing procurement performance is the Institutional pressure, operationalised under the parameters of Political pressures, Cultural pressures and Institutional (goal) changes. The leading question here is how the institutional pressures are associated with procurement performance expectations and whether such institutional pressures can be associated with the performance of construction contracts in these PDEs.

*Organisational politics*

Public procurement is a business process within a political system (Wittig, 2002). The political environment influence on procurement performance entails influence on budget authorisation, alteration of procurement statutes, political pressures, compromising of different interest groups and involvement in all aspects of the public procurement system (Musau, 2015). A number of political reforms have been undertaken, but while reforms have increased and the emphasis on capacity building, fiscal and legal stability, and improved quality of public services has been delivered, it has failed to address the more complex stakeholder needs (Ancarani, 2009) and usually covert influence of politics on the key sectors of public service such as public procurement (Kimani, 2012). According to (Oluka & Ssenoga, 2008), politicians usually put pressure on the evaluation team members as to who should be selected for contract awards. According to (Thai, 2005), public procurement practitioners do face various political pressures as well as economic decisions during the execution of procurement contracts.

Thornhill, while looking at “The executive mayor/municipal manager interface”, is quoted by (Mudzamba & Sibanda, n.d.), stressing the point that politics in the context of local government and municipal administration concern the allocation of values as weighted by the ruling political party to the available facts and determination of the relative importance of requests, in relation to the availability of resources, by a community or a particular segment of the municipal community for a particular service, among other attributes. In this study, organisational politics will look at where the road works are apportioned depending on the degree of influence and support with the structures responsible for apportioning the DLG budget at local level and who monitors to ensure that the road works are achieved as planned. The study will further investigate whether DLG pass bylaws and determine road work levels applicable within their localities.

*Cultural cognitive (pressures)*

The issue of culture is becoming increasingly significant, especially where multi-national organisations are involved in the procurement process (Ogunlana, 1999). According to *The National Integrity Survey Report* (2006) and (Ntayi et al., 2010), public procurement related deviant behaviours are a custom deeply rooted in culture. The culture determines the work climate that influences public procurement processes, it contributes to the procedures of implementation of procurement plans, and culture promotes policies and harmony as well as accountability in the procurement systems (Kibet & Metto, 2016). They further stress that conducted research on culture in the public sector in Uganda showed culture as a barrier to reforms. According to (Interligi, 2010), organisational culture can be defined as the pattern of values, norms, beliefs, attitudes and issues that may not have been expressed but dictate the ways in which individuals behave and get things done. Organisational Culture can be operationalised in the forms of organisational attitudes; rules and policies, and ethical issues.

#### *Normative Standards*

Delivery of public services is a process based on broadly accepted normative and ethical values and guidelines, emanating from the body politic, community and social values (Mudzamba & Sibanda, n.d.). Public procurement is implemented in clearly laid down institutional mechanisms for all procuring and disposing entities. Meyer & Rowan, and Meyer & Scott, as quoted by (Flynn & Davis, 2014), emphasise that institutional theory explains how organisations come to resemble one another in their structural and behavioural characteristics by reference to the impact of institutional forces and predict the conditions under which this is more or less likely to happen. Whereas the structural characteristics for all PDEs is ideally the same, the behavioural and institutional goals may differ depending on the prevailing environment under which a given procurement contract is being executed. The institutional theory will be used to explain the

institutional forces that can cause deviation/changes from the principally agreed standards that may eventually influence procurement performance. Various scholars have argued that institutional theory has potential to inform public procurement research by explaining and predicting structural and behavioural isomorphism among organisations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) and organisational avoidance of regulatory and policy pressures (Oliver, 1992). Institutional theory is premised on the idea of the cultural persistence and endurance of institutionalised organisational behaviours (Oliver, 1992) that make PDEs vulnerable to poor procurement performance of construction contracts.

### **Stakeholder perceptions and procurement performance of construction contracts**

According to (Rajablu, Marthandan, & Yusoff, 2014), stakeholder influential attributes, and more importantly, their perceived value, engagement, and management are identified as the key to project success. Public perception is complex and idiosyncratic, rendering simple analysis or generalisation problematic (Scott, 2010). Stakeholder satisfaction is a function of product or service attributes as listed above. It is increasingly becoming hard to offer effective service delivery without the users'/stakeholders' engagement. Here, priority areas of selected DLGs will be the area of focus to determine how stakeholder perceptions and interests/engagement can improve the quality of road works, thus narrowing the expectations gap. Other supplementary information that might be relevant to interpret their satisfaction, e.g., geographical location, size, etc. might be used. Similarly, an assessment of what matters to these stakeholders in the different areas will be used to assess the relative importance of key roadworks attributes. Knowledge of current priorities for improvement of performance expectations to meet stakeholder interests will also be examined. It is very important for procurement managers to be sensitive to local cultures, customs and values (Fontes, Rodrigues, & Craig, 2016) from the stakeholders' perspective in order

to understand and meet their demands, and aiming at continuous improvement of efficiency of these DLGs, the following shall be used as indicators: Stakeholder perceived value; Stakeholder engagement; and the urgency of addressing roadworks required to match stakeholder needs (Ancarani, 2009). To operationalise stakeholder perceptions, the following constructs of Stakeholder engagement roles, evaluation of PDU's works performance and Relative importance of designed roads from the stakeholders' perspective will be used.

### **Path Dependence and procurement performance of construction contracts**

The Path Dependence concept can be originally traced to David's (1985) study of QWERTY's description of the evolution of the letters on a typewriter keyboard where he employed the QWERTY layout to avoid jamming (Garud & Karnøe, 2001); this was later developed by economists to explain technology adoption processes and industry evolution (Nelson & Winter, 1982). In economics, economic processes do not progress steadily towards some pre-determined and unique equilibrium, but rather, the nature of any equilibrium achieved depends partly on the process of getting there. In public procurement implementation, the path-dependent activity does not seem to converge towards the intended goal but rather leads to several absorbing states. The theory, however, fails to account for institutional path-departures, which became more common in the 2000s (Hering, 2003)

According to Path Dependence theory, "history matters" in determining the outcome at time  $t$ : a small initial advantage or a few minor random shocks along the way could alter the course of history (David 1985; Crouch and Farrell 2004, Pierson 2004). Humans join organisations and pursue procurement careers in which historically specific actions and conduct prevail (Ntayi et al., 2010). The theory may help explain why some procuring entities perpetually perform in more or less the same way as in the previous times, with slight deviation in success, and others do not,

depending on the steps they take during the planning process. This may partly be attributed to the same people performing the same procurement activity over time, thus explaining their lack of institutional change. In particular, the theory explains, as Bebchuk and Roe 1999 say, why such inefficient institutions arise and why they persist (Pittroff, 2016) According to (Garud & Karnøe, 2001), the specific state that eventually emerges depends on the particular sequence of events that unfold, and thus it is not surprising that the nature of procurement outcomes depends on the historical activities handled during the planning phase of the same procurement process.

Garud & Karnøe, 2001 emphasise that future expectations about the performance of a new technological trajectory rarely have the power to unlock anything, and if the procurement law is reviewed in the future, can it reverse the trend, but unlocking the widening public procurement performance expectations gap will be based on indicators of feedback mechanisms, coordination effects and learning effects.

### **Procurement policy effectiveness and procurement performance of construction contracts**

The study will be mediated by the following indicators drawn from the second generation of Engeström's (1987) version of Cultural Historical Activity Theory. Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) provides a lens for understanding human cognition by examining the dialectical relationships among people, tools, and goals as they influence and are shaped by social structures, culture, and history within the context of a community ((Brown & Cole, 2002) Cole & Engeström, 1993; Engeström, 1987; Trust, 2017) and their changing work environment (A. Annalisa Sannino, Harry Daniels & Gutiérrez, 2009). It is an interaction between the subject (who is involved), the object(ive) i.e., why is the activity taking place; the tools used in performing an activity; the rules and regulations; the division of labour (who is responsible for what and how are the roles organised) and the community (the environment in which the activity is being carried out). The

overall goal is to achieve a desired outcome at the end of the procurement activity (Mwanza & Engeström, 2003).

## **DISCUSSION**

### **The current state of research**

In his study examining service provision in the public sector, (Ancarani, 2009) stressed the point that stakeholders can influence purchasing strategies by public bodies, especially in a standardized world. However, he never specified whether these stakeholders are basically internal or external. It is widely known the internal users directly influence and play a major role in the purchasing efficiency and effectiveness to meet stakeholder expectations and minimising on performance gaps. Since they participate in evaluations of contracts, they are the very users who write specifications and monitor contract implementation. The external stakeholders/community, on the other hand, impatiently wait for the contract to be completed so they can start using the procured goods or services, with minimal influence.

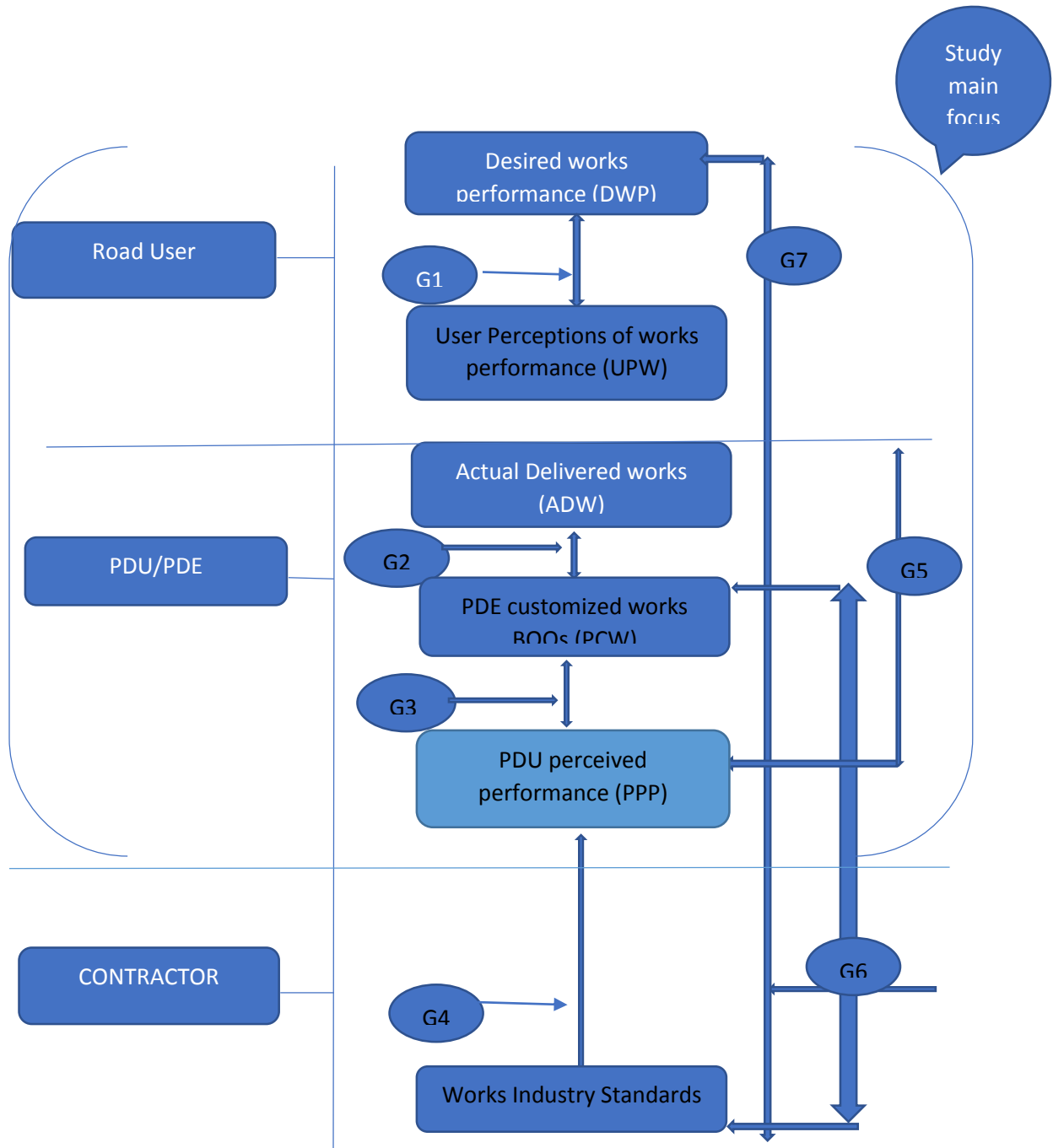
As earlier mentioned and echoed by Degan and Rankin, (1999) as quoted by (Brennan, 2006), an expectation gap is defined as “the result of the difference in opinion or perceptions between two or more groups”. (Bryson & Humphrey, n.d.) bring out the description in a more general way by calling it a “representation of the feeling that auditors are performing in a manner at variance with the beliefs and desires of those for whose benefits the audit is carried out”. The best classifications of the expectations gap were presented by Porter (1993), who emphasizes that the expectations gap is attributable to both unreasonable public expectations (the reasonableness gap) and inadequate auditor performance (the performance gap), whether due to deficient auditing standards (deficient standards gap) or substandard auditor performance (deficient performance

gap) as explained from an accounting point of view (Manatunga, 2003). Despite the importance of performance expectations, the concept is not well developed in the public procurement sector, as has been the case with marketing literature (closely associated with service quality) and auditing literature (closely associated with audit expectations).

### **Stakeholder & procurement performance Gap Analysis**

This section involves conducting gap analysis in trying to understand how much of the perceptions of the current state of procurement contracts among different stakeholders differ in the DLGs both in assessment and importance. The key assumption is that DLGs produce a product or service that is intended to satisfy the needs of users, with quality being the totality of features and characteristics of a product (roadworks) that bears its ability to satisfy the implied needs (Mudzamba & Sibanda, n.d.). As seen from the illustration below, such gaps help identify potential opportunities for improvement (Madnick, Siegel, & Jalali, 2017) of the procurement performance of construction contracts. From this perspective, the gaps associated with procurement contracts in DLGs have been identified as the following (see illustration figure 2: procurement performance gap analysis). The measurement of the procurement performance gap will be comprised of the assessment of how much the perception of the current state of the road differ from the perception of its importance. It is hypothesised that the difference in performance gaps among these two sets of stakeholders may be attributed to the different levels of understanding of the expected levels of procurement performance and might be attributed to the different work environments with varying stakeholder needs in different PDE localities. In trying to quantify perceptions of stakeholders in this study, the gap is systematically defined as the perceived level of importance minus the perceived level of assessment. Conceptually, a procurement performance expectations gap is perceived as a function of accepted performance standards, works delivery plan outcomes, and

works delivery targets associated with a particular sphere of interest and appropriateness to purpose, through the ability to consistently meet or exceed perceived road user needs. Gap = Perceived ratings of importance – perceived ratings of assessment



**Figure 2: The different performance expectations gaps between the contractor, PDE and Roaduser**

*Source: author's own elaboration based on the analysis in this study*

***From the illustration, the following hypothetical gaps are explained:***

G 1= works reasonableness gap. This is the difference between what the road users expect PDE to achieve and what can reasonably be expected, i.e., not delivering to user satisfaction/knowledge deficiency gap arising due to failure to identify and match user expectations (both internal and external users).

G 2 = works deficient standards gap. This is the difference in user expectations and the PDE/management's perception of user expectations; not doing what they should do. This could be caused by deficiencies in human resource capabilities, insufficient financial resources, unnecessary delays of works contracts, and incompetent contractors with limited resources like machinery.

G 3 = works deficient performance gap (not delivering to user expectations). This is how well the works design specifications match up to the PDE/management's perception of user expectations. The deficient performance arises when customizations fall short of user expectations.

G 4 = works compliance gap originating from failure to adhere to technical and functional specifications (SOW/BOM/BOQs).

G 5 = The works performance gap. This is the difference in perception between what the users can reasonably expect PDE to accomplish and what they are perceived to achieve. It is the variation in expectations between the implementers (PDU) and the final users, mainly attributed to

organizational politics, influence peddling, poor contractor selection, and bribery among other factors. The performance gap occurs when public expectations are reasonable but the PDE's performance does not fulfil them, i.e., there is a shortfall in the PDE's performance.

G 6 = customization gap. This often arises as PDEs adjust standard specifications to PDE-specific customised ones to suit their short-term budgetary resources.

G 7 = the overall performance expectations gap. This is the difference between what is promised to road users, either explicitly or implicitly, and what is delivered at the end of the contract. The Government regularly promises road networks using budgetary allocations, presidential manifestos, engineering designs, and campaign manifestos to inform, persuade, and remind potential users about its intended road works, but they take years to materialize, and even when they do, the outcome is completely different from what was promised. The illustration gives important formulations for the identified gaps relevant to improving the performance of procurement contracts in DLGs, as stated:

- a)  $G2 + G3 = G5$ .....(i)
- b)  $G3 + G4 = G6$  .....(ii)
- c)  $G1 + G4 + G5 = G7$ .....(iii)

**Towards a hypothetical model for the performance expectations gap in public procurement**

Borrowing from the works of (Ghobadian & Jones, 1993) while dealing with service quality, and from figure 2 above, it can be deduced that both the road users and the PDU are faced with two scenarios:

- i) For the road users, they have the desired roadworks, which later is based on the actual completed roadworks using their roadworks performance expectations, and

- ii) For the PDE/PDU, having the prior PDE perceived performance (prior image of the road works to be delivered to user) + the actual process designs (real road works to be provided) + the actual outcome. Based on these two scenarios, it can therefore be deduced that *the prior PDE perceived performance (prior image of the road works to be delivered to user) + the actual process designs (real road works to be provided) + the actual outcome = The perceived works performance expectation.*  
 The performance of the road is therefore assessed by the user perceptions rather than the perceptions of the PDE. The perceived works performance is the user's feel for the performance of the actual road works (which determines the extent of the users' satisfaction with the road works).

Thus,  $PPP + PCW + ADW = UPW$  or simply

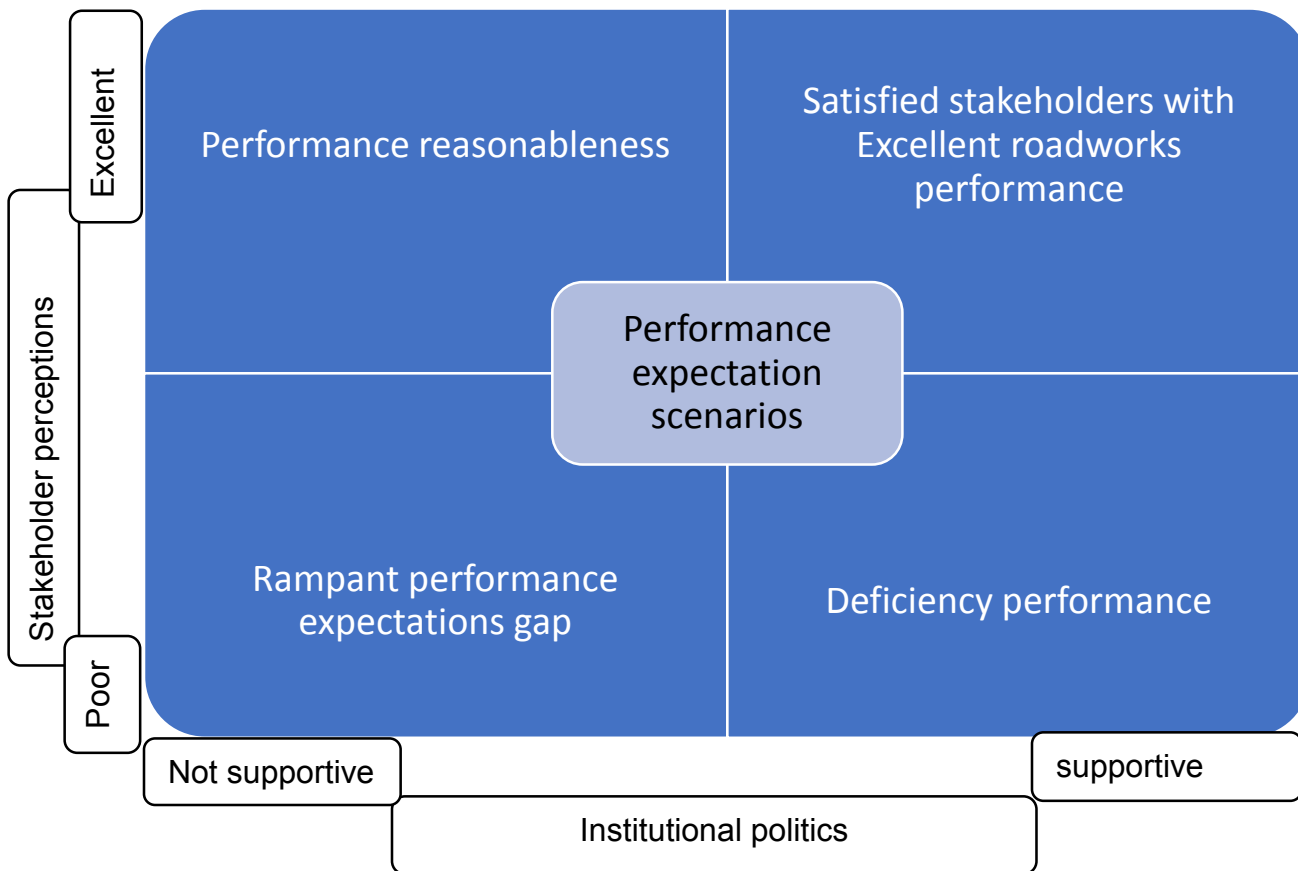
$$PPP + PCW = ADW + UPW \text{-----(iV)}$$

- d) Drawing from (Ghobadian & Jones, 1993), three possible scenarios can be depicted in trying to match the road user and PDE performance expectations and actual works: If the users expectations are exactly met, then  $UPW = PPP \text{.....(v)}$
- e) The ideal performance where the PDU's perceived quality (PPP) is higher than the user's expectations (UPW) thus  $PPP > UPW \text{.....(vi)}$

Unacceptable performance is where the PDU's perceived quality (PPP) is lower than the user's expectations (UPW), thus  $PPP < UPW \text{ .....(vii)}$

**Roadworks Stakeholder analysis**

The main study area will comprise of the external (road) user (external stakeholder) and internal/organisational users (from the PDE/PDU). The justification for this is to have all concerned informed on a regular basis about the construction projects being implemented in their communities during the execution phase. The mapping is based on the consideration of the need to cater for perceived stakeholder perceptions for the constructed road measured on a scale of weak to excellent performance; and institutional pressures being favourable and unfavourable. The categorisation of stakeholders will look at those with power (capable of using power to change the state of the roadworks) and their relative interest in changing performance trends overtime as per the illustration below



**Figure 3: The typology of stakeholder perception Vs institutional pressures matrix**

Figure 3 above shows a typology of stakeholder perceptions and institutional pressures with the perceptions being poor on one hand (Performance is consistently unacceptable), and excellent (is consistently superior) on the extreme end. Institutional politics is being judged as being supportive and not being supportive on a supportive continuum. A typology produces four quadrants in which its hypothesized that rampant expectations occur at all stages and the difference is the nature of the expectations. For instance, with poor stakeholder perceptions and lack of supportive institutional politics, it produces performance gaps. When both the perceptions are high and with stable politics and close working in the PDEs, this creates a stable working environment to produce excellent roadworks performance. When one is either low or high, deficiency standards performance occurs. The various stakeholders are now mapped on to the alignment and interest and influence matrix in positioning where they currently lie and where the ideal positioning would be.

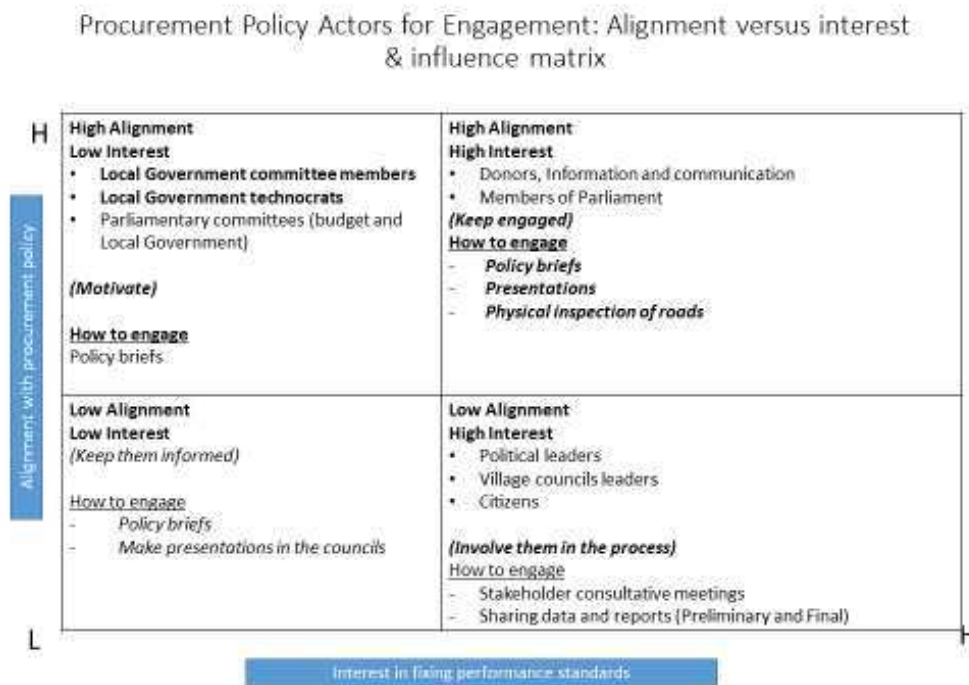


Figure 4: Stakeholder alignment versus interest and influence matrix

## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE MODEL FOR PUBLIC PROCUREMENT STAKEHOLDERS**

In the following section, we will attempt to identify some important areas for future research. Briefly, these recommendations involve the following areas: (a) conceptual/theoretical issues; (b) the consequences of performance expectation gaps at both the stakeholder and PDU levels; (c) performance gaps in a cross-cultural context; and (d) methodological concerns

### **Conceptual/Theoretical Issues**

The study will make an empirical contribution by providing empirical findings on procurement performance expectations gap in Uganda and will therefore shed more light on internationally applicable criteria for procurement performance assessment and how gaps can be minimised to achieve efficiency and effectiveness.

### **Policy implications**

Given that developing countries face several challenges that hinder their procurement performance, this study will make its contribution by providing policy frameworks that are relevant for addressing one of the functional challenges impeding efficiency effectiveness in this case:

- a) This particular research will be useful to the procurement stakeholders as well as policy makers that design procurement policies for the public sector, specifically the Government, PPDA and District Local Governments, by assisting regulators in the development of a universal model/framework for measuring and meeting procurement performance expectations of citizens.

- b) It will also be instrumental in streamlining the various roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders involved in procurement performance to minimise ambiguities involved in assessing procurement performance.
- c) The findings will be instrumental in shaping the nature of training given to future procurement practitioners, with a mind-set of meeting stakeholder expectations and minimising the gap problem.
- d) The study of stakeholder expectations gap can be used to minimise procurement performance service delivery gaps and reach consensus among stakeholders to restore confidence among the donors and other stakeholders in the public procurement field for increased funding of construction contracts.

### **Study Limitations**

The study limited itself to theoretical review in understanding the concept of performance expectations. The empirical study might encounter a number of limitations ranging from the fact that

- a) Stakeholder perceptions of performance expectations are not static, either within the same individual or between individuals, and might depend on the locational environment where the DLG is based.
- b) Some DLGs are located in hard-to-reach areas like the islands of Buvuma and Kalangala with a number of disadvantaged or disempowered groups in their community. These almost always have the greatest expectations/needs yet receive the poorest service delivery due to the nature of their location

- c) Some DLGs are relatively new, and thus their priority needs may greatly differ from the traditional parent DLGs and thus are at different levels of prioritisation and resources, and some completely lack machinery. For this study therefore, emphasis shall be based on the DLGs that are at relatively the same level of existence within the same range of priority needs for road users with similar machinery.
- d) The study will be based on data gathered at a single point in time in the DLGs, but the perceptions keep changing depending on circumstances. Longitudinal data would in extended research enable changes in road users' perceptions in various DLGs delivering roadworks using their own equipment and those delivering from competitively contracted contractors.
- e) Government service delivery is inherently more complex than business services, with a need to cover all citizens, not just segments of geo-demographically suitable "customers". Both individual and universal expectations need to be addressed to improve satisfaction.

### **Directions for future research**

The more the practitioners recognise the users' knowledge and expectations, the more the procurement contracts will be more successful and require a fine understanding of the users' expectations of their respective PDEs, and which particular projects are best suited for them. The following questions are being posed for future inquiry in the ongoing PhD study:

- a) What explains the nature of expectation gaps that hamper procurement performance in DLGs: How can they be classified and be measured?
- b) How does institutional pressures influence the nature of procurement performance expectations gap?

- c) How does stakeholder influence impact on performance expectations?
- d) How does Path Dependence influence the procurement performance expectations gap?
- e) How can we develop a performance management model for minimising the procurement performance expectations gap?

## **Conclusion**

This paper has offered a theoretical model of understanding performance expectations using a theory borrowing approach to explain the current state of public roadworks performance in DLGs. This model will be used to review and test key variable and attributes that can explain the occurrence of the performance expectations gap in the subsequent studies. We acknowledge that this concept is predominantly housed in the auditing and marketing literature and the trend in public procurement exhibits similar characteristics which calls for investigation both theoretically and empirically. Emphasis is put on Stakeholders theory as a grand theory that will be subsequently used during the empirical examination in trying to understand its impact on stakeholder perceptions, organisational politics and path dependence towards roadworks performance while focusing on the affected citizens; and later a model shall be developed aimed at addressing such variations on performance expectations in future.

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