

Towards a Framework for Anti-corruption and Improved Procurement Governance in Uganda

The Role of Administrative Efficiency

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ABSTRACT

Public procurement has been and remains a core function of the public sector. When it is managed effectively and efficiently, it can contribute immensely towards attaining good governance within the now-complex public sector systems. This is due to a number of reasons. First, public procurement is a large contributor to government resource expenditure. When such resources are put to good use, it is expected to render a positive impact. Second, public procurement facilitates the attainment of broader government goals through its acquisition functions. Third, in most countries, public procurement as a key of corruption has been perpetuated, which has led to a leakage of public resources that would otherwise be devoted to service delivery. This article argues that promoting administrative efficiency, which will be a function of implemented governance structures, processes, values and mechanisms, is a likely panacea to procurement governance challenges. To this end, the article develops a framework to address public procurement-related corruption through improved governance. The framework is based on the underlying philosophy that the challenges relating to corruption in public procurement are built on a broader system of corruption within the entire administrative system of government. As such, any

efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public procurement function ultimately needs to be anchored on a broader government-wide administrative systems improvement strategy.

INTRODUCTION

In most developing countries, especially within the African context, public procurement reforms have been undertaken as part of broader public sector reforms driven by the New Public Management (NPM) ideologies of the 1980s. The reforms were based on the broad ideology of the state's role in service delivery *vis-a-vis* the role of the private sector (Basheka 2018:1). Specifically, the aim of instituting public procurement reform programmes was to establish a strong and well-functioning public procurement system. Such a system needed to be corruption-free because of the well-known dangers of this practice within the public procurement function. Corruption takes many forms. In the *Bible*, Exodus 23:8 states that a bribe can corrupt the conscience of mankind. Moreover, the *Bible* also warns that bribes bring chaos (Amos 5:12) and they thus merit punishment (Amos 2:6).

In a democratic-led government, citizens and inhabitants of every country deserve quality public services. When corruption takes place, governments fall short of citizens' service delivery expectations. When procurement reforms were being undertaken in most countries, it became evident that the anticipated system needed to be governed by a clear legal framework and established rules and procedures that promoted transparency, efficiency and related enforcement mechanisms, as well as value for money, accountability and non-discrimination. Improved administrative efficiency is promoted through governance systems, processes, values and structures. It was argued that once this was promoted, public procurement corruption would be addressed. The procurement system needed to have an institutional arrangement that ensured consistency in overall policy formulation and implementation (Hunja 2003; Arrowsmith 2010). Public reforms were also seen as an important feature in anti-corruption efforts to help promote good governance (Thai 2008; Basheka 2014). Unfortunately, these expectations have not been met as procurement-related corruption and poor procurement governance have remained a key feature of most African public procurement systems. Corruption has become a major obstacle in the quest for good governance and public service delivery. As key components in a governance framework, public procurement laws and policies are aimed at addressing public procurement corruption.

Governments have always acquired goods, works and services to perform many functions. Trionfetti (2000) and Brulhart and Trionfetti (2004) have documented the historical role of public procurement in facilitating the running of governments in both developed and developing countries. In this regard, Errigde and McIlroy (2002) highlight that governments use public procurement to undertake public works, build roads, provide healthcare, and provide education and public order. As public procurement supports all government functions (Coe 1989; McCue & Gianakis 2001), it is an important area of Public Administration scholarship.

To undertake empirical studies in public procurement within the Public Administration discipline is not out of context. In *Principles of Public Administration*, WF Willoughby (1927) argued that the teaching of Public Administration needed to be divided into the following five areas of specialisation: general administration, organisational theory, personnel, finance and supply. Procurement, as part of the supply chain, was conceived as an important specialty area within Public Administration. While noticeable scholarly progress has been made on the first four specialisations, the supply field in Public Administration research has been neglected. Studies have assessed the role of rules and institutions and the scope for privatising public sector activities (Persson & Tabellini 2001; Rodrik 2000; Strauch & Von Hagen 2000) to improve performance within the public sector. However, there is limited information on the development of frameworks on the likely benefits of improved procurement governance and corruption-reduced systems. The limited research on this key topic is regrettable, as policymakers require sound information and empirical evidence to design performance improvement-oriented procurement policies.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Throughout the ages, numerous governmental reforms have largely focused on efficiency, or the lack thereof (Peters 2004). Despite these governmental reforms, there continues to be a deficit in the functioning of administrative systems (Anitha 2007). Within this context, corruption is now regarded as a key contributor to governments' poor performance. In Africa, the public sector has failed to ensure efficient, effective service delivery (Ngowi 2007) and, as a result, its inhabitants often bear the brunt (Nabatchi, Goerdel, & Peffer 2011). Mukandala (2000) argues that African governments suffer from several well-known bureaucratic pathologies, such as inefficiency, centralisation, fragmentation, poor leadership, lack of capacity, patrimonialism, rent seeking, corruption, as well as poor accountability and legitimacy. In this regard, Mukandala (2000) cautions that reversing the trend demands a confrontation-based approach within institutions. Indeed, many

would agree with Mukandala's diagnosis on the institutional crisis in most public sectors.

In Uganda, the crisis within institutions manifests itself in rampant corruption, poor public services, unresponsive systems and wasteful public expenditure that disregard the urgent needs of poor citizens. Smith and Street (2004) state that variations in efficiency may lead to unequal service quality. This leads to a perception of unfairness, which, in turn, undermines the public's support for the tax funding of public services. Uganda's five-year National Development Plan (NDP) (2010) acknowledges this 'crisis'. As such, public procurement-related improvements were proposed as some of the urgent strategies to address inefficiency (National Development Plan (NDP) 2010). While scholars are yet to agree on clear and conclusive ways to define and assess efficiency and effectiveness (Rainey 2003), authors like Misztal (1999) favour trust in institutions and systems as a critical variable. Governance has also been viewed as useful in reversing the crisis. However, a lack of frameworks for improved public procurement remains a major issue.

A potential limitation of existing public procurement literature has been the tendency to focus on traditional private-sector procurement aspects, as opposed to fully exploring the uniqueness of public procurement (Murray 2008). Within public procurement research, political scientists are interested in the political forces that come into play during these processes. As such, there is a focus on who gets what, when and how. Furthermore, political scientists attempt to understand the process-related issues of government procurement policymaking, as opposed to the output – a contract. Political scientists therefore focus on the internal and external political forces that may influence a procurement decision to award a contract to a particular bidder. Here, politics is used in the context that every decision is a political decision that involves the influence of power from its various dimensions.

An important objective of governance research should be to identify the determinants of government performance to inform administrative improvements. While procurement is a well-known central function in the running of government, little empirical research has been conducted on this subject. This article aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on public procurement within public administration research. To this end, it addresses the central problem of the lack of empirical research on applying public administration theories to establish any causal association between procurement governance and administrative efficiency within the context of the changing character of the state. The article examines how and why improved government acquisition has been proposed as a solution to the administrative inefficiencies within Uganda's public sector. More specifically, the article investigates how and why procurement governance structures, mechanisms, values and processes influence administrative efficiency within the Ugandan public sector. In addition, it focuses on devising strategies on how this function can be used to promote efficiency.

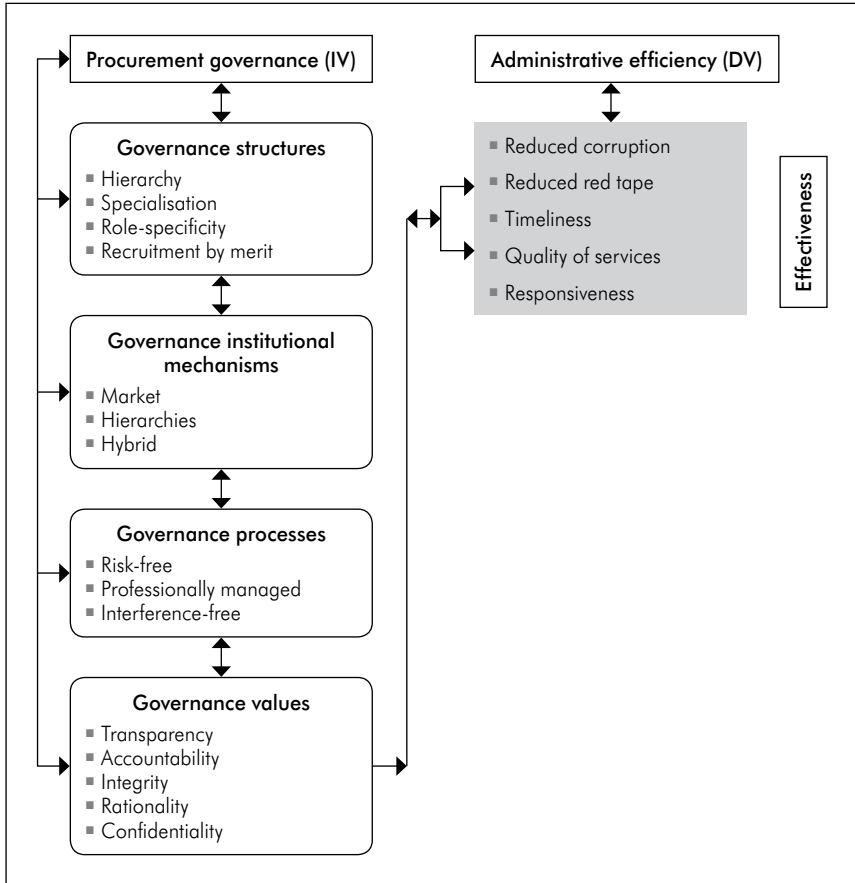
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Public procurement takes place within the law. Since the 1990s, most African countries have passed new public procurement laws and new institutional arrangements to manage public procurement that have emerged. In some countries like South Africa, public procurement has been granted constitutional status and is used as a policy instrument to address past discriminatory policies and practices (Bolton 2006:193). In Uganda, most of the public procurement reforms have focused on decentralising public procurement management to so-called Procuring and Disposing Entities (PDEs) in different ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). The same approach was followed with local governments, since the government runs a decentralised structure of governance. Corruption appears to have correspondingly been decentralised.

Good governance is based on respect for the rule of law and public procurement is viewed as a highly regulated function of government (Basheka & Sabbiti 2019; Thai 2008). In this regard, Sementeli (2011) argues that public procurement tends to rely heavily, but not exclusively, on the professions of law, economics and, in some cases, operations management – particularly at a micro-level. Schubert (2012:6) suggests that the rule of law exists to resolve disputes and to control government officials. New institutions such as public procurement authorities and procurement appeals and complaints-handling panels, which have been set up to formalise and improve procurement performance (Honkaniemi 2010), need to comply with the procurement laws and the general principles of fairness and justice. Cooper (1997:118), a notable leading public administration scholar, argues that public administration's grounding in law is a "simple truth" and that "the law provides the tools that are used to make the most important, and often the most challenging public decisions".

Purchasing entities are created to purchase goods, works or services for other public administrations (Caranta 2015), while having to comply with the public procurement rules (Cavallo Perin & Casalini 2009; Comba & Treumer 2010). It is also believed that the more professional the procurement, the more funds can be saved. Public procurement officials who manage the technical processes of government acquisition are expected to undertake their professional mandates by following the provisions of public procurement laws and broader laws that guide conduct of public management. In countries like Kenya and South Africa, public procurement has been elevated to be a constitutional matter. As such, public officials who manage public procurement have more leverage to operate within the ambit of the law and have constitutional protection. Kakwezi and Nyeko (2010) state that, due to the poor performance of the procurement function, it has attracted considerable attention from practitioners, academics and researchers. Every government utility and agency at any level must procure according to

Figure 1: Conceptual model



international and national rules, depending on the case (Arrowsmith 2005). Such entities must carry out procurement and ensure that the necessary professional skills sets are available to carry out related process (Burgi 2010). Based on the aforementioned, the following conceptual framework serves as a guideline for the current research.

Conceptually, transaction cost economics theory reasoning enabled the researchers to identify four dimensions of procurement governance which were subjected to empirical examination. These include: (1) 'governance structures', (2) 'governance mechanisms', (3) 'governance processes' and (4) 'governance values'. The study hypothesised that, if there are appropriate well-functioning procurement governance structures, mechanisms, processes and values in place, public

sector organisations are likely to be administratively efficient, given that all government activities rely on some acquired form of goods, services and works.

The conceptual model depicts a perceived relationship between public procurement governance and administrative efficiency, with possible implications on effectiveness. The model shows procurement governance as a predictor variable, administrative efficiency as the dependent variable, while effectiveness is regarded as an outcome variable. Procurement governance is studied under four dimensions of governance (structures, mechanisms, processes and values) that have specific indicators, as shown in Figure 1. Effectiveness has long been one of the most pervasive yet least delineated organisational constructs (Goodman & Pennings 1977). One of the 'big questions' in public management has always been how public managers measure achievement (Behn 1995). However, some scholars suggest few questions have challenged what constitutes organisational performance or effectiveness (Selden & Sowa 2004).

There is a distinctive gap in public administration research on the "outcome measures of institutional performance at the jurisdictional level" within organisations (Kirlin 2001) at a national, state and local government level (Yang & Holzer 2006). As such, little consensus has been reached on what constitutes organisational effectiveness and how to assess it (Cameron & Whetten 1983). Procurement has three key components. First, it is a legal matter because it is governed by specific rules and regulations. Second, as an economic matter, it involves efficient financial spending that follows government-set rules. In this regard, government ideology determines the areas where finances must be spent. Third, procurement is also an organisational matter because the institutions that are mandated by law to manage financial spending are guided by a clear set of rigid processes. Within this context, value systems emerge as a critical dimension.

Hughes (2010) reminds us that governance has recently re-emerged as a prominent research area in Political Science/Public Administration literature. As such, it offers scholars an opportunity to adopt such a concept in different contexts. Because governance is a power word and a dominant descriptor within academic research, it has also been applied to other discourses such as public procurement and public procurement governance (Frederickson 2005). Governance operates at household, village, municipal, national, regional or global levels and each of these elements has its own contexts and complexities. Moreover, governance also operates on a ministerial and departmental level. Within the context of this study, governance was investigated on a ministerial, departmental and agency level.

The term 'governance' has several meanings (Rhodes 1997). According to Peters (2004:31), 'governance' implies changes in the public sector to minimise the role of formal governmental actors. In turn, Williamson (1979) defines governance as "alternative institutional modes for organising transactions" and "the institutional matrix within which transactions are negotiated and executed". Given the

character of government, a public procurement system cannot function without a formal government actor being involved in procurement-related decisions. As such, governments have traditional roles of establishing and implementing laws that also apply to public procurement.

The institutional arrangements or frameworks through which governmental procurement activity in Uganda is undertaken constitute the nomenclature advanced by the authors. In line with this, Kooiman (1993) suggests that a description of the governance phenomenon should include the pattern or structure that emerges within a socio-political system as a common outcome of the interaction involving different actors. This indirectly suggests that governance requires an appropriate structure. Brinkerhoff (2006:270) recommends that a framework on government analysis should include accountability as a critical element. In addition, the author highlights that such an effort would not be complete without focus on transparency and responsiveness (Brinkerhoff 2006:270). To gain a holistic picture of governance values, the study will focus on the fourth dimension of procurement governance values.

Governments work on the logic of input-process-output and an outcomes-based framework. Inputs constitute three elements namely labour, the procurement of goods and services and capital consumption (Atkinson 2005). When positively implemented inputs produce outputs, which, in turn, generate outcomes. Within this context, public procurement is viewed as an input, which, if well managed, results in improved, more effective administrative processes. In practice, measuring each of these elements may pose challenges. While there are many approaches to defining efficiency and effectiveness, researchers and practitioners have concurred that the two concepts share some common attributes as far as performance improvement is concerned. Economic approaches to the study and analysis of organisations, including transaction cost analysis, generally focus on efficiency (Williamson 1985). Oliver (1992) likens this approach to “institutional theorists who place particular emphasis on legitimating processes and the tendency for institutionalised organisational structures and procedures to be taken for granted”. In this regard, Roberts and Greenwood (1997) argue that both transactional cost and institutional perspectives complement each other.

The term ‘efficiency’ is usually defined as the quality of doing something well with no wastage of time or money (Hoerr 1999), while ‘effectiveness’ is defined as producing a required or intended result (Ngowi 2007). ‘Efficiency’, which is often found in the economic terminology, has two distinct meanings. First, it pertains to performance (the positive outcomes of an activity) and second, it pertains to the maximum effects of an activity related to the allocated or consumed resources (Ani & Carmen 2009). The former meaning of efficiency was applied to this study, since it has a direct relevance to public administration. As such, ‘administrative efficiency’ was used to imply the performance of administrative

functions that render outcomes. The public sector is considered as efficient when it makes maximum provision of public goods and services, within the limits of available resources. Performance indicators, which focus on specific aspects, are readily measured and validated. They are easy to interpret and might be useful from a local managerial perspective. However, from a more strategic regulatory perspective, performance indicators provide only an indirect or partial indication of efficiency (Smith & Street 2004).

Based on the nature of the phenomenon under study, it is challenging to identify a straightforward process to measure efficiency. Smith and Street (2004) argue that inefficiency is inherently unobservable. Estimates of inefficiency must therefore be derived indirectly after taking account of the observable phenomena. In its most basic form, inefficiency measurement involves the following process:

- Measuring observable phenomena (outputs, inputs, costs and prices);
- specifying some form of relationship between these phenomena;
- defining 'efficient' behaviour;
- calculating the difference between each organisation's observed data and the maximum achievable outcome, as defined by the specified relationship; and
- judging to which extent the difference is attributable to inefficiency.

METHODOLOGY

The current research used both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data collection method for the study was through a questionnaire survey, which was designed to elicit responses on items that measured the governance dimensions and administrative efficiency. Secondary sources included existing procurement data collected by regulatory bodies like the Public Procurement and Disposal Authority (PPDA), governmental funding agencies, Auditor-General's Office and Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee, as well as civil society organisations (CSOs) like Transparency International (Uganda Chapter). These were examined to provide a state of procurement performance and the magnitude of procurement-based corruption.

The researchers reviewed reports such as procurement audit and assessment reports by the PPDA, parliamentary sector reports, and donor assessment reports on the procurement sector to gain insight into the perceived positions on the state of corruption and procurement governance. Other documents reviewed included integrity survey study reports by the Inspectorate of Government (IG). Locating these sources and retrieving the information was a sound starting point for the primary data collection process. While reviewing the documents, key governance issues and cases of administrative inefficiency linked to procurement were identified. The study used some in-depth interviews

with key informants to gain deeper insights on procurement governance and administrative efficiency aspects.

For the questionnaire survey, the study respondents were from different organisations that operated at different levels of organisational hierarchy and they had various academic backgrounds. This shaped the researcher's understanding of the respondents' perceptions of the likely influence of procurement governance on administrative efficiency and on strategies to address procurement corruption in Uganda. Using a sample of 175 out of the 270 expected respondents (a response rate of 65%), findings demonstrate a strong basis for better procurement governance in terms of structures, mechanisms, values and processes to address administrative inefficiencies. In the researchers' view, this homogenous group of respondents presented a sound picture on the dynamics involved in the study variables. Table 1 outlines the distribution of respondents:

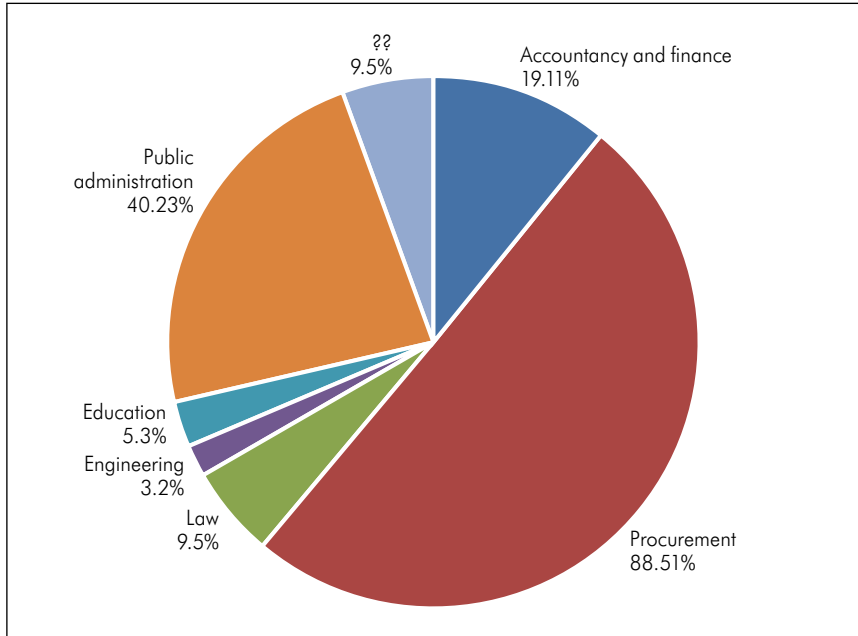
Table 1: Summary distribution of the respondent's classification

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Accounting officers | 6 | 3.4% |
| Members of the contracts committees | 52 | 29.7% |
| Staff of the Procurement and Disposal Units | 84 | 48.0% |
| User departments | 9 | 5.2% |
| Members of parliament | 5 | 2.9% |
| Development partners | 3 | 1.7% |
| Staff of PPDA | 13 | 7.4% |
| Ministry of Finance (policymakers) | 2 | 1.1% |

Source: (Authors' own construction)

Most of the respondents (48.0%) were procurement staff who managed procurement processes and were presumed to be knowledgeable about the current state of the public procurement functional governance issues. Of the respondents 29.7% were members of the Contracts Committees, a key public procurement-related governance organ in Uganda. The staff of the PPDA, the country's procurement regulatory body, constituted 7.4%, while user departments constituted 5.2% of the respondents. Accounting officers, who are another key governance organ, constituted only 3.4% of the study respondents. From a technical perspective, most of the procurement decisions, as provided for in the country's procurement legal framework, are managed by the procurement and disposal units manned by procurement professionals and the contracts committees, while the accounting officers approve lower-level recommendations.

Figure 2: The disciplines of the study respondents



Source: (Authors' own construction)

Members of the Contracts Committee and procurement staff, who constituted most of the respondents, were all senior staff in their respective ministries and understood the public procurement operations in their areas of jurisdiction. However, Snider (2006:275) points out that a significant amount of procurement literature reflects concern over the perceptions that the field is merely a clerical or tactical function. Undeniably, this conclusion ignores extensive literature which highlights that procurement has now moved to a strategic level. In this regard, Snider (2006:275) argues that related literature is generally introspective, as it is produced by members of the procurement community in procurement-related publications, where target readers belong to the same community.

Similarly, Murray (2008:7) argues that, to improve the validity of public procurement strategy and management research, procurement managers must take on a more critical stance when reviewing procurement managers' potential responses of other actors, particularly those of respective politicians. The current research triangulates the findings, as a significant number of contract committee members, who are technically not considered as procurement professionals, emerged among the major respondents in the study. Responses from other categories, as represented in Table 1, equally offer useful insights for generating

views on the current study subject, instead of relying solely on procurement professionals' views.

This article addresses a potential limitation within existing public sector research, with specific reference to public procurement. In this regard, related research has focused on traditional, private sector procurement aspects, as opposed to fully exploring the uniqueness of public procurement (Murray 2008:6). In a further attempt to address specific limitations caused by a reliance on procurement professionals, the authors included a background variable of respondents' academic fields of specialisation, as reflected in Figure 2.

In the study, the researchers' views in the study represent the major professional areas within the public sector. Public procurement is an interdisciplinary field of practice. Even the academic study of Public Procurement relies on insights from well-established disciplines. In this study, 88 (50.3%) of the respondents were procurement professionals; 40 (22.9%) were from public administration; 19 (10.9%) were professionals in accountancy and finance; nine (5.1%) had a legal background; five (2.9%) were from education; three (1.7%) were from the engineering profession; and other specialisation areas constituted 10 (5.3%).

Moser and Kalton, (1971) contend that reliability and validity are two attributes that are needed in a scale. Here, validity refers to the scale's ability to measure what it sets out to measure. This is to ensure that differences between individual scores can be taken as representing true differences in the characteristics under study. Reliability is the consistency of a measurement, or the degree to which an instrument has the same measurement outcomes each time it is used under the same conditions with the same subjects (Trochim 2002). Crocker and Algina (1986) argue that the term 'reliability' refers to the degree to which individuals' standard scores remain relatively consistent when the same test or alternate forms

Table 2: Variables, measures and reliability coefficient for the study variables

| Variable | Items | Cronbach's alpha |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Biographic variables | Questions from 1 to 7 (8 items) | - |
| Governance structures | Questions from 8 to 23(16 items) | 0.80 |
| Governance mechanisms | Questions from 24 to 32 (9 items) | 0.72 |
| Governance processes | Questions from 33 to 49 (17 items) | 0.79 |
| Governance values | Questions from 50 to 74 (25 items) | 0.83 |
| Administrative efficiency | Questions from 75 to 109 (35 items) | 0.92 |

Source: (Authors' own construction)

of the test are administered repeatedly. According to Trochim (2002), there are two ways that reliability is normally estimated – through the test/retest method and the demonstration of internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha measures how well a set of items (or variables) measures a single unidimensional latent construct. When data has a multidimensional structure, the Cronbach's alpha will usually be low.

Correlation analysis studies the joint variation of two or more variables to determine the degree of correlation between them. The Pearson product moment correlation technique (r), which is the type of correlation used when both variables are measured at ratio or interval scales and are continuous variables (Mugenda & Mugenda 1999), was used in this study. The correlation helped highlight the direction of the relationship among the variables. Where the correlation coefficient was positive (+), it pointed to a positive relationship between the two variables. A positive relationship meant that when variable X increases, variable Y increases in equal proportion, or when variable X decreases, variable Y decreases in equal proportion. On the other hand, a negative (-) relationship means that as variable X decreases, variable Y increases, and vice versa. As such, there is an inverse correlation between such variables.

FINDINGS

Governance and administrative efficiency: Relationship analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to establish the relationships between procurement governance measures and administrative efficiency, and the perceived contribution towards improved administrative efficiency. A Pearson product moment correlation was used to determine the relationship among the various measures of administrative efficiency within public procurement governance. This style of correlation is used when both variables that the researcher wishes to study are measured at continuous ratio or interval scales (Mugenda & Mugenda 1999:32). The authors suggest that if the obtained correlation coefficient has a positive sign, it implies that there is a positive relationship between the two variables (Mugenda & Mugenda 1999:32). This also implies that as variable X increases, variable Y increases in equal proportion, and vice versa. It confirms that a correlation is very low if the coefficient has a value under 0.20, low if the correlation value is between 0.21 and 0.40, moderate if the coefficient has a value between 0.41 and 0.70, high if the coefficient has a value between 0.71 and 0.91 and is very high if the correlation is over 0.91.

The results present overall positive relationships among all the measures of procurement governance and administrative efficiency. For the first independent

Table 3: Governance dimensions and administrative efficiency (N=175)

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | R ² |
|--|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Governance structures | 1 | .242** .001 | .576** .000 | .512** .000 | .333** .000 | 0.110 |
| Governance mechanisms | | 1 | .316** .000 | .258** .001 | .206** .006 | 0.042 |
| Governance values | | | 1 | .542** .000 | .391** .000 | 0.152 |
| Governance processes | | | | 1 | .387** .000 | 0.149 |
| Administrative efficiency | | | | | 1 | |
| ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) | | | | | | |

Source: (Authors' own construction)

variable (governance structures), the correlation between public procurement governance structures and administrative efficiency is $r=.333^{**}$ (sig, 0.000), at a 99% confidence level. This implies that any improvements in the governance structures of public procurement in Uganda are likely to have a similar positive contribution towards improved administrative efficiency. Table 3 also points to a positive association between governance mechanisms and administrative efficiency ($r=.206^{**}$, sig=0.006) at a 95% confidence level. The link between governance values and administrative efficiency is also confirmed to be positive ($r=.391^{**}$, sig.0.000), at 99% confidence level. Finally, the results also support a positive link between public procurement governance structures and administrative efficiency ($r=.387^{**}$, sig=0.000), at a 99% confidence level. The existence of relationships among procurement governance and administrative efficiency measures does not imply causation. The coefficient of determination is therefore used to assess the likely impact of each of the independent variables on administrative efficiency.

The coefficient of determination, which describes the common variance (the degree of variability shared by two variables), is the square of the coefficient of correlation (r^2) and offers an index of predictability (Sarantakos 2005:381). It is useful because it provides the proportion of the variance (fluctuation) of one variable that is predictable from the other variable. Moreover, it is a measure that helps determine the level of certainty when making predictions from a certain model/graph. For example, if r for procurement governance structure = 0.333, then $r^2=0.110$. This implies that 11% of the total variation in y (administrative efficiency) can be explained by the governance indicators. Using the same logic, governance mechanisms would account for a variation of only 4.2%, governance

values would account for 15.3%, while governance processes would account for 15% of the variations in administrative efficiency.

By combining all the independent variables, they accounted for a total variance of 45.5%. This implies that 54.5% of efficiency-related variations could not be explained by public procurement governance alone, but by other factors. This calls for broadening the governance framework to address corruption, as proposed in this article. However, the findings still portray the significance of better public procurement governance in improving administrative efficiency in Uganda, as a 45% explanation from one government function, as perceived by study respondents, is no small feat. The Auditor-General's reports, as well as regulatory bodies' compliance assessment reports point to a need to improve this critical governmental function. It therefore becomes a matter of urgent policy attention to address the impairments in the public procurement governance regimes if improvements in public services are to be expected. Indeed, within this context, other factors must also be addressed. The research findings also confirm that the most important public procurement governance measure relates to governance values, followed by the governance processes. Undeniably, these key elements are at the heart of any fight against procurement-related corruption. The environmental influences, as depicted in the proposed conceptual framework, offers a possible guideline on the contribution of other factors.

Measuring administrative efficiency in Uganda's public sector

The term 'efficiency' is widely used within the public and private sectors. From a bureaucratic perspective, it refers to the ability to fulfil the given objectives with the optimum use of resources (Anitha 2007). This study measured administrative efficiency using the following dimensions:

As indicated above, 35 items were used to seek stakeholders' views on the appropriate measures of administrative efficiency in Uganda's public sector context to which an improved public procurement governance regime would contribute. All the variables as seen from the Table, received a high degree of rating by the respondents. A comparative analysis of the item scores reveals useful information on what respondents perceived as critical benchmarks on which they judged the efficiency of the public sector as well as areas that ought to receive adequate attention by policymakers. Moreover, the highest-rated measures of administrative efficiency based on the mean score, namely the need for government to encourage professionalism and ethics in its activities; limited interference from politicians in decision-making; need to have serious monitoring of government activities; and good coordination of all government functions, play a central role for the efficient functioning of any contemporary administrative system. However, to develop a conceptual categorisation for administrative efficiency measures, 35 items were subjected to exploratory factor analysis.

Table 4: Measures of administrative efficiency in Uganda

| Items | M | SD | %A |
|---|------|-------|-------|
| Length of procurement complaints in courts | 3.30 | 1.175 | 46.3% |
| The functionality of the technology used in procurements | 3.90 | .833 | 74.8% |
| The lead time for service delivery related to procurements | 4.26 | .773 | 88.6% |
| The amount of time a customer spends in need of a service | 4.13 | .891 | 83.5% |
| Well-functioning administrative review procedures | 4.28 | .718 | 90.3% |
| Adequate policies for all government functions | 4.21 | .787 | 88.0% |
| Responsive systems to customer needs | 4.34 | .632 | 94.8% |
| Fully functional government systems of operations | 4.32 | .645 | 93.8% |
| Public servants being competent in their work | 4.53 | .555 | 97.2% |
| Government finances being released on time for procurement | 4.61 | .556 | 97.1% |
| Decision-making in government being based on careful analysis | 4.44 | .666 | 94.9% |
| Involvement of stakeholders in decisions | 4.26 | .758 | 89.1% |
| Limited interference from politicians in decision-making | 4.55 | .667 | 96.6% |
| Good coordination of all government functions | 4.52 | .596 | 95.4% |
| Innovative systems of government administration | 4.42 | .571 | 96.5% |
| Efficient management of policymaking in government | 4.47 | .605 | 96.0% |
| Decentralised systems of management | 4.20 | .840 | 84.0% |
| The public sector appreciating the potential of its human resources | 4.25 | .731 | 90.8% |
| Communication in government being well coordinated | 4.48 | .596 | 96.5% |
| There being rationalised payroll management | 4.31 | .694 | 92.0% |
| Public administration expenditure being under control | 4.42 | .709 | 92.0% |
| Government building capacity in all areas | 4.44 | .631 | 94.3% |
| Civil service leadership being encouraged in government | 4.35 | .617 | 92.6% |
| Process improvement initiatives being mandatory | 4.31 | .668 | 88.5% |
| There being serious monitoring of government activities | 4.53 | .534 | 97.7% |
| There being alignment of sectoral policies with government strategy | 4.37 | .582 | 93.1% |
| Inter-ministerial consultations being highly encouraged | 4.29 | .715 | 87.4% |
| There being good capacity for negotiating government contracts | 4.40 | .646 | 93.2% |
| Government has effective systems of handling conflicts | 4.41 | .705 | 93.2% |
| Civil servants access their performance appraisal | 4.35 | .774 | 92.0% |
| Equal training opportunities to all employees | 4.46 | .677 | 94.2% |
| Government using applied research in making decisions | 4.32 | .713 | 88.5% |
| Government encouraging professionalism and ethics in its activities | 4.61 | .489 | 99.4% |
| Government believing in harnessing diversity in workforce | 4.40 | .646 | 91.4% |
| Government departments encourage inter-collaboration | 4.40 | .608 | 93.7% |

Source: (Authors' own construction)

A FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC PROCUREMENT GOVERNANCE

Public procurement governance requires the application of well-known best practices and principles within the public procurement domain. These aspects must be implemented alongside the governance benchmarks of a broader public administration structure. Public procurement continues to evolve both conceptually and organisationally (Thai 2007:1) and, at times, it tends to be more complex than ever before. This implies that officials must now deal with a broad range of issues to fulfil procurement-related government objectives and to meet the professional expectations of the field. As such, an agreed framework to guide both the academic study and professional practice is necessary. It is appreciated that public procurement is a lucrative academic field and area of practice which has increased debate among policymakers (Basheka 2013:290).

Corruption in public procurement undoubtedly affects every governmental function and its corrosive effects can be felt beyond the ambit of the procurement process. Corruption stands in the way of every effort to ensure effective service delivery. Society at the broader level thus suffers from the activities of a few individuals who engaged in corrupt public procurement processes.

The proposed framework to address corruption in public procurement needs to adopt a network-based system that includes laws, policies as well as the various role-players. To ensure that every member of society has a shared understanding of the dangers of corruption, the framework needs to be grounded in cultural beliefs, value-based attitudes and practices. As such, communities would need to play a key role in ensuring this cultural mindset. Furthermore, the framework must acknowledge that government, through its agencies, remains the legitimate institution to manage societal affairs. Government, working through its three arms (the legislature, judiciary and the executive), establishes the rules and processes through which public procurement policies are implemented. An effective governance framework requires fair rules that are subject to public scrutiny and that encourage competition, value for money, participation and transparency. The government, as the primary agent of the people, must create systems and structures to serve the greater common good.

Most public procurement systems in Africa were conceived and implemented based on the models that had presumably worked or were experimented with in the developed world and now needed to be benchmarked to Africa. While public procurement systems in different countries share some common knowledge and practices (Thai 2007:12), the environment in Africa presents a unique set of circumstances due to the absence of strong systems and political interference. Development partners have always played a supportive role in most public procurement reforms in Africa. In developing a public procurement governance

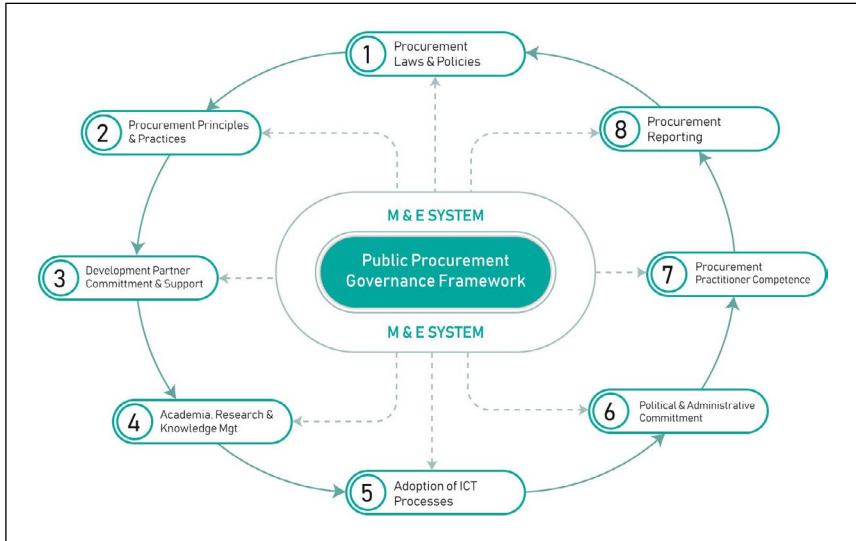
framework to address the gaps that create a fertile ground for public procurement corruption, these development partners will need to nurture and develop procurement systems that consider the African context. Most governance projects have failed to attain the intended goals because the 'one-size-fits-all' approach that has been applied to Africa failed to consider unique contextual factors. Development partners can help build transparent procedures to attract more investment by lowering risks. The resulting transparent procurement system should allow competing private enterprises to judge the risk of doing business with the government. In addition, they need local partners who understand the unique and country-specific challenges and opportunities that could promote or inhibit procurement efficiency.

To address public procurement corruption, government actors must have a strategic view of the public procurement function. Despite its potential to help attain government goals (McCue & Gianiks 2001), very few governments have used public procurement as a tool to unleash the vast economic potential to a number of actors, including women entrepreneurs (International Trade Centre 2014). To harness the potential of women-owned businesses, procurement policies must be gender sensitive (Basheka 2017). To achieve various policy objectives, governments must carefully structure the rules that govern procurement processes (Anderson 2013). Thus, an increased emphasis on legislation that encourages the participation of women entrepreneurs in public procurement is a key policy agenda. The argument is that, while public procurement's main goal is to buy goods and services for governments, it should also be used to promote socio-economic objectives (Quinot 2013).

Public procurement laws and policies play a key role in a governance framework to address public procurement corruption. Importantly, procurement law will need to be imbedded in the teaching of public procurement courses and in professional workshops. Furthermore, procurement policies and laws should aspire to create institutions, processes and systems that are driven by the need to meet governmental goals, as well as the professional standing of the public procurement profession. Such institutions, processes and systems should be based on public service values that champion the greater common good and harmony of society. The public procurement governance framework presented in Figure 3 should be based on sound monitoring and evaluation systems and should rely on information and communication technology (ICT).

Procurement practitioners should play a central role in creating confidence among the different role-players. Furthermore, they should ensure that the rules of public procurement are fair. This is to help ensure that every provider who competes for a government tender is assured of competitively participating and that market-based systems work best with less pressure and fewer instances of corrupt tendencies. The state and its subsidiary organs need to adhere to domestic public

Figure 3: Public procurement governance framework



Source: (Basheka 2013:292)

procurement laws and various international agreements to transact procurement in a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory manner. The role of procurement associations and capacity building interventions will play a central role in creating a cultural shift of thinking among the professionals.

Academics and think-tanks will play a fundamental role by conducting regular research and managing the knowledge systems created from such research findings. Public procurement needs to be divided into the academic study and the area of practice (Basheka 2013:292) and the two should reinforce each other. The academic study should advance knowledge and impart the skills necessary to improve public procurement functions. This academic component prepares people from academia to work in public procurement. The practice component, which translates theory into practice, implements the policies of government regarding public procurement.

Addressing public procurement corruption requires that all actors be accountable and a sound procurement-based framework should be based on adequate procurement reporting that promotes information sharing. Progress reports should be prepared and disseminated to various stakeholders. To help counter corruption and fraud, progress reports should focus on government agencies' application of public procurement to achieve government's economic objectives. Furthermore, the reports should capture the extent to which public procurement has been used to involve the participation of marginalised groups like women.

The procurement-related governance framework will need champions from both the academic and practice areas. The politicians, good service providers, procurement professionals, bureaucrats and development partners will play a key role in creating such a public procurement system. Moreover, the private sector, CSOs, religious and cultural institutions will all need to work towards this collective goal. Ultimately, this will help realise the true goal of governance – a shift from reliance on government to all other role-players.

As reflected in Figure 3, there are eight mutually reinforcing elements proposed for the governance framework; the ninth element – monitoring and evaluation – should be imbedded in each of the other elements. There is a need for appropriate procurement laws and policies which are driven by the desire to address corruption in public procurement. The laws and policies need to be supported by internationally recognised procurement principles and practices. The system will need champions and committed political and administrative actors, as well as the support of academics, development partners and communities. Notably, competent procurement professionals should have the needed skills, knowledge and attitudes to drive the process. Furthermore, the system should adopt an ICT-based approach and sound procurement reporting systems will be critical.

The framework is based on the underlying philosophy that the corruption in public procurement forms part of a broader problem within the government administrative system. Given the critical role of public procurement in government performance, efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of this function has potential to generate broader dividends. Furthermore, the framework is grounded in an understanding and use of cultural societal norms, which when applied effectively, could help produce quality public procurement process actors.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

To implement the framework to address public procurement corruption and ensure better governance, the following critical success factors (CSFs) are necessary:

- Encouraging professionalism and values
- Efficiency in policymaking
- Communicated coordination
- Effective monitoring
- Innovative systems
- Good coordination
- Competent public servants
- Government financing of procurement

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Throughout the development of the modern state, scholars have been concerned with structures and institutions. This was the primary concern of the classical authorities. Second, administrative efficiency has been argued to be determined by certain values. The earliest scholars, especially those who supported the governance paradigm, have emphasised these values. Third, certain efficiency-based processes are promoted as key contributing factors in a successful government. Lastly, there are mechanisms to apply these processes. It has been debated whether the public sector, the private sector, partnerships, networks, centralised and decentralised systems, and agencies can better promote efficiency and effectiveness.

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