

Analysis of the nature of economic policy making and management on community (local) economic development, A case of Masha sub county, Isingiro district-Uganda

Betrum Namanya ⁽¹⁾, Robert Mugabe ⁽²⁾

Bishop Stuart University

Department of Economics and Environmental Management

Email: betrumna@gmail.com

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Abstract

The study was about analysing the nature of economic policy making and management on community economic development. Masha Sub County, Isingiro District in Uganda was used as a case study. The study sought to contribute to the acceleration of community economic development as an everlasting engine for achieving overall economic development of the country. The study used both descriptive and case study research designs. The study used a sample size of 133 respondents. Data was collected using both questionnaire survey and the interview. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results were presented using frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation as well as Pearson product moment correlation index. Results were obtained using SPSS version 17. The findings revealed that the Community is not involved in economic policy making and management. The study concluded that there is a gap in economic policy making and management which has crippled community economic development. This therefore calls for community based planning, popular citizen participation in economic policy making, shared visions in decision making as well as strengthening the capacity of local government institutions to implement and monitor economic development policies.

Key words: Nature, economic policy making, economic policy management, and community economic development

1.0 Introduction

In every society, there exist several challenges that affect the wellbeing of the people. They arise in areas of politics, education, commerce, Agriculture, communication, housing, transportation and health to mention but a few. In order to solve these challenges as they might arise, governments are always seen formulating policies in response to them. Designing policies is necessary because if attempts are not made to combat such problems, they might end up bringing about un controllable societal problems (Okoli and Onah 2002)

A policy is a blue print approach designed to achieve the set goals and objectives either as an individual, organisation/company, community or as a nation (Betrum 2017). Ikelegbe, (2006) adds that several governments have designed public policies so as to achieve certain desired national goals and objectives.

As a result of the above fore mentioned challenges, many countries across the world have embarked on making strong policies so as to achieve their developmental goals. For instance, in Asia-Pacific nations, economic policy making is one of the critical responsibilities for governments. In fact, the way economic policies are being made is shifting as rapidly as the substance and agency of the policy itself. Many countries have then advocated for theories of pluralism in decision making processes. One of the most admirable paradigm is the one of decentralisation that has been done to allow and encourage more fundamentally alterations in societal attitudes towards political and economic participation (John w Langford and K Lorne Browsey, 1990)

Since the 1980s, decentralization has become the major topics in both European and in developing countries of the world (The World Bank Premnotes, 2001; BiZa, 1980). The term "decentralization" embraces a variety of concepts which must be carefully analyzed in any particular country before determining if programs should support reorganization of financial, administrative, or service delivery systems (The World Bank group, 2002). Decentralization, which denotes to a process or situation of transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to intermediate and local governments or quasi-independent government organizations and/or the private sector, is a complex multifaceted concept. Different types of decentralization should be distinguished because they have different characteristics, policy implications, and conditions for success (Uganda, 1997, The Local Governments Act).

As a result of the great need for community development, local governments in Africa have also grown increasingly; more important in recent years as decentralization has recently risen to the top of many African governments' political agendas Ndegwa (2002). Uganda provides an excellent case in which to explore the topic under study, given its adoption of a comprehensive decentralization policy in the 1990s (Ndegwa, 2002). District councils in Uganda are now responsible for decision making and policy implementation in several important policy areas in different sectors of the economy (Uganda, 1997a). Local councils (LCs) have also been given the responsibility to monitor and supervise the activities of civil society organizations (CSOs) in their areas, as well as different government programmes (Uganda, 1997a).

Although the local government authorities have been given some powers to manage some of the economic decisions, the main economic policies governing the economy are still managed centrally at the macro level. This shows that the nature of economic policy making and management has remained a top down approach of governance than being bottom up approach of governance. (Budget estimates 2016/17 financial year). This has left economic policy making and management decisions in hands of the Local councils (LCs) as the main participants in the decentralization campaign sidelining the would be real participants (community) who are the beneficiaries of the programme. As a result, community economic development (CED) has remained wanting characterized by income and wealth inequalities, poor quality of education, limited access to goods and services as well food insecurity in some communities as a result of failure to involve the direct beneficiaries (World Bank, 2006b, (Bird and Shinyekwa, 2005). The study therefore aimed at analyzing the nature of economic policy making and management on Community Economic Development (CED).

Economic policy refers to the actions that governments take in the economic fields. It covers the systems for setting levels of taxation, government budgets, the money supply and interest rates as well as Labor market, national ownership and many other government interventions in the economy. (Wikipedia)

1.2 Statement of the problem

The government of Uganda undertook decentralization program as one of the strategies for improving service delivery and promoting community development. This has improved service delivery by bringing services nearer to the people, which has enhanced social development but giving little attention to Community Economic Development (CED). Even when decentralization was seen as an appropriate pathway towards community development, most economic policies are centrally made and managed at the macro level (Budget estimates, 2015/16). As a result, planning and implementation has remained ineffective, and central government continues to dictate activities through conditional grants to districts (Mucunguzi, 2010). The centralized nature of economic policy making and management has made it difficult to commercialize the peasant agriculture economy that is made up of weak value chains due to lack of proper coordination at the grass root level. Peoples' livelihoods have not improved as many people in rural areas are still engulfed inside the circle of income and wealth inequalities, poor quality of education, limited access to goods and services, and poor transport systems. The study therefore aimed at analyzing the nature of economy policy making and management on community economic development.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study sought to contribute to the acceleration of community economic development as a long-lasting engine for achieving sustainable economic development of the country. It therefore spelt out the effect of the nature of economic policy making and management at local level.

1.4 Objective of the study.

The main objective of the study was to analyze the effect of the nature of economic policy making and management of Community (Local Economic development)

1.5 Hypothesis

H₀ *Economic policy making and management has no influence on community economic development.*

H₁ *Economic policy making and management has a significant influence on community economic development.*

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Nature of Economic Policy Making and Management on Community

Economic Development

According to Development Policy Review, 2014, the articles analyses the strength and weaknesses of the developmental state approach as compared to flexible development governance approach, in relation to economic transformation. In the same journal, there is increasingly an emphasis on contextually, softer model of governance, institutional pluralism, collective learning, and local political settlements (Development Policy Review, 2014). There is increasingly a growing recognition that the old governance mechanisms have failed to provide an adequate feasible and evidence based reform agenda, and that governance reform should shift from idealized best practices towards improving what already exists (World Bank, 2005; Booth, 2011, Grindle, 2007; 2011). This calls for a participatory economic policy making management that is driven by the beneficiaries of the policies/programmes. It has been found out that most development programmes fail to achieve the objectives because they lack a platform for popular participation of citizens. What remains unclear is whether the citizens participate in economic policy making and management.

According to Mucunguzi (2010), the framing of policy has to be understood in the wider context of national priority. The tendency in LDCs has been that the national priorities are conceived within a relatively narrow framework that is characterized by nepotism and corruption. The need to broaden the policy agenda reflects the broader forces for democratization and social inclusion. Involving the poor in policy making builds ownership and enhances transparency and accountability thereby improving the effectiveness of development policies and projects (Mucunguzi, 2010). A case should be made that the development of macro-economic policy is not an end in itself, but it is the service the state renders to its citizens. The governments should not only talk left and keep walking right (Bond, 2004). It is uncertain as to whether citizens have the capacity to hold those concerned accountable or if they have any light on the economic policy making agenda.

Whereas participatory economic policy making process that involves program beneficiaries is an important path for economic development, the way of managing such economic policies is equally important. Cindy Zoghi and Robert (2011), argues that participatory practices are closely related to decentralized decision making and policy management. As the term participation suggests, such systems can empower beneficiaries to influence or make certain decisions, and researchers may consider these practices as proxies for characteristics like decentralized 'responsibility' and autonomy (Handel and Levine, 2006).

According to Mucunguzi (2010), one of the most important pertinent dimensions of poverty eradication policies that needs consideration under the holistic approach is inclusive poverty eradication economic policy making process. This refers to the need to integrate different population categories that are mostly affected by poverty in rural communities (Akello, 2001, UPPAP 2000, Kasente et al, 2002; Mukasa et al, 2004) further argues that economic policy making should be inclusive in nature by involving different social classes of people. Under the inclusive economic policy making approach, the voices of the children, the elderly, the youth, women, the disabled, and rural dwelling citizens must be heard (Mucunguzi, 2010).

Citizen participation in public affairs 'seems to hold a sacrosanct role in any economy's development (Day, 1997). The enthusiasm for incorporating a role for citizens into democratic decision-making is not limited to the U.S., as many other countries have extensive initiatives in place that involve citizens in the governing process (Nylen, 2002; Trenam, 2000; Buchy and Race, 2001; OECD, 2001). A central tenet to the enthusiasm accorded to citizen participation is the belief that citizen involvement in economic policy making produces more public-preference on the part of the administrators and a better appreciation of one's larger community on the part of the public (Stivers, 1990; Oldfield, 1990; Box, 1998). King and Stivers (1998) suggest that improved citizen participation could stem the deterioration in public trust evidenced by widespread hostility toward government entities. Whereas democratic decision making is crucial for development, participatory economic policy making and management would strengthen the process (Grindle, 2007).

This study intended to establish whether there is inclusiveness in economic policy making and management at the local level, and whether there are democratic procedures that guides economic policy making and management at the lower/micro level; by looking at how this has impacted on community economic development (CED).

3.0 Methodology

The study used both descriptive and case study research designs, where both qualitative and quantitative approaches for data collection and analysis were used. The study targeted 133 respondents who included 14 officers from both the sub county and the two parishes, 35 members of civil society organizations leaders, 20 members from business associations and 64 household members. Both interview and questionnaire survey methods of data collection were used to collect data. Data from questionnaires was analyzed using the descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of data analysis software - Statistical Package for Social Sciences Package (SPSS). Analysis of qualitative data was done manually using content analysis, notes were written and scripts were analyzed by coding; where information of similar code categories was assembled together meaningfully.

4.0 Results and Analysis

4.1 Community Economic Development

The analysis was done using the percentages, mean and the standard deviation. Data was collected using a five point Likert scale, where SA denotes strongly agree, A denotes agree, UD denotes un decided, D stands for disagree while SD stands for strongly disagree. The mean above 3 indicates an agreement of respondents, a mean of 3 shows undecided and a mean of below 3 shows disagreement by respondents. The standard deviation (Std) of close to 1 show agreement, while the standard deviation of close to Zero show the disagreement of the respondents. The analysis grouped strongly agree and agree to mean agree; and strongly disagree and disagree to mean disagree. The elicited responses were presented in table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistical results on the Indicators of community economic development

| Items | SA (%) | A (%) | UD (%) | D (%) | SD (%) | Mean | Std. |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|----------|------|------|
| Community economic development is realized when there is increased access to goods and services | 44 (38.3%) | 62 (53.9%) | 9 (7.8%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 4.30 | .779 |
| Community economic development is achieved when there is equitable income distribution | 16 (13.9%) | 88 (76.5%) | 0 (0.0%) | 11 (9.6%) | 0 (0.0%) | 4.08 | .732 |
| Community economic development is accompanied by high Productivity levels | 21 (18.3%) | 82 (71.3%) | 12 (10.4%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 4.04 | .702 |
| Increased food security is an indicator of community economic development | 60 (52.2%) | 55 (47.8%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 0 (0.0%) | 4.52 | .805 |
| Community economic development is realized when there is Resilient communities and social protection of vulnerable groups | 15 (13%) | 77 (67%) | 11 (9.6%) | 12 (10.4%) | 0 (0.0%) | 3.88 | .595 |
| Community economic development is achieved when the household members participate in sustainable economic activities that generate income for their livelihoods. | 14 (12.2%) | 73 (63.5%) | 0 (0.0%) | 28 (24.3%) | 0 (0.0%) | 3.83 | .587 |
| Endogenous development is one of the characteristics of community economic development | 13 (11.3%) | 55 (47.8%) | 11 (9.6%) | 35 (30.4%) | 1 (0.9%) | 3.59 | .547 |

Source: Field data 2016

Table 1 shows that all respondents agreed with the statements put to them. This is explained by their mean which was above 3, and their standard deviations which was close to 1. The respondents' responses were as follows;

Community economic development is realized when there is increased access to goods and services (92.2%). This implies that in order to achieve community economic development, the citizens'/community members must be having easy and improved access to goods and services.

The findings also revealed that Community Economic Development is achieved when there is equitable income distribution (90.4%). This means that for community economic development to be realized, there should be equitable distribution of income and wealth among the community members, where the poor should also have access to goods and services.

Respondents (89.6%) further agreed that Community economic development is accompanied by high Productivity levels. This implies that for community economic development to be achieved, there should be general increase in productivity levels of both crop production and animal husbandry for all members in the community.

All respondents agreed that increased food security is one of the indicators for community economic development. This means that community economic development can only be realized when there is reduced cases of hunger, and generally when there is sustainable increase in food security in the area.

The findings further revealed that Community economic development is achieved when the household members participate in sustainable economic activities that generates income for their livelihoods (75.7%). This means that economic activities should be accompanied with better methods of production so that households can participate in those activities sustainably.

4.2 The Nature of Economic Policy making and Management at the Local Level

Respondents were asked to ascertain the nature of economic policy making and management at the local level, and the elicited responses were presented in table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive statistical results for nature of economic policy making and management

| Items | Response Category | | | | | Mean | Std |
|---|-------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|------|-----|
| | SA (%) | A (%) | UD (%) | D (%) | SD (%) | | |
| The central government involves the community in designing economic policies | 10 (8.3%) | 7 (6.1%) | 2 (1.7%) | 51 (44.3%) | 45 (39.1%) | 1.87 | .23 |
| The community is involved in economic policy implementation | 5 (4.3%) | 50 (43.5%) | 9 (7.8%) | 28 (24.3%) | 23 (20%) | 2.52 | .51 |
| The community is involved in monitoring the effectiveness of economic policies | 20 (17.4%) | 9 (7.8%) | 0 (0.0%) | 45 (39.1%) | 41 (35.7%) | 1.97 | .33 |
| The community is involved in economic policy evaluation | 24 (20.9%) | 7(6.1%) | 4 (3.5%) | 43 (37.4%) | 37 (32.2%) | 2.11 | .46 |
| The community is satisfied in the way economic policies are implemented | 20 (17.4%) | 8 (7%) | 3 (2.6%) | 48 (41.7%) | 36 (31.3%) | 2.07 | .43 |
| The community understands the way economic policies are designed, implemented and managed | 16 (13.9%) | 33 (28.7%) | 1 (0.9%) | 35 (30.4%) | 30 (26.1%) | 2.33 | .48 |

Table 2 shows that all respondents disagreed with the statements put to them. This is explained by the fact that the means of their responses were below 3, and their standard deviations were close to 0. The respondents' responses were as follows;

The central government does not involve the community in designing economic policies (83.4%). This implies that the community members do not give their input while the government officials are designing/making economic policies.

The findings also revealed that 47.8% of the respondents agreed that the community is involved in economic policy implementation. This clearly shows that the community is involved in economic policy implementation agenda even when they do not know how those policies are generated and designed.

Respondents (74.8%) disagreed that the community is involved in monitoring the effectiveness of economic policies. This implies that the community is not involved in monitoring the effectiveness of economic policies and this blacklists them from giving their point of view on how certain policies may be affecting them.

Also, 69.6% of the respondents disagreed that the community is involved in economic policy evaluation. This clearly shows that the community is completely out of economic policy evaluation process.

In relation to the nature of economic policy management, the key informants had different and varying views about the issue of community participation in economic policy management. However, they all point to the fact that community members are mainly not included in both the design and implementation of economic policies. Almost all key informants voiced that the community members are not involved in economic policy management process. In this regard one of the participants had this to say:

..... I have lived in Masha all my life but I had never seen any government official or agent calling meeting to ask community members issues that affect them so as to be considered during policy design and monitoring. We only here on radio that this and this programme is going to come and we should cooperate and give advice when they have already decided. Many programs have come and failed, I have feeling it's because failure to consult community members who are the primary beneficiaries of such programs. Programs like NAADS had little impact on our livelihood because they did not involve us. These leaders are very funny they seat in 'five star' hotels to discuss issues of Rukuuba-Masha where most of them have never been (Interview, June 2016).

This implies that community members only see programmes coming intended to address issues guessed by government officials who do not actually come to the ground to identify the real issues affecting the community. This clearly shows that community members are sidelined in policy design and implementation an issue that perhaps lead to collapse of most government programmes.

The researcher also thought to establish what could be done to improve economic policy making and management at the local level. The issue was discussed and on this matter various issues were raised by key informants. Issues to do with having a strong monitoring and evaluation system were raised, as well as the need for a citizen platform. On this issue one participant was quoted:

“.....in order to improve economic policy making and management the community members should be given a priority to decide on the issues that affect them. Under NAADS, there were “Farmers forum” where farmers could come together and discuss the challenges affecting them. But on the side of economic policy there is no such a plat form..... To be honest this methodology that sidelines beneficiaries will not yield any fruits. For any programme to succeed beneficiaries must own their programmes and decide what should be done and what should be left out.” (Interview, June 2016).

This clearly shows that there is a need for citizen led platform to help raise the most pressing issues affecting community members. This also encourages transparency and accountability since citizens can actually monitor every step taken policy and program implementation.

4.3 Hypotheses Testing

The study tested the hypothesis in order to either accept or reject the hypothesis, from which the conclusions were drawn. The tested hypothesis was:

H_0 : Economic policy making and management has no influence on community economic development.

H_1 : Economic policy making and management has a significant influence on community economic development.

The level was significance was 0.05

The analysis was done using Pearson’s product moment correlation coefficient. The elicited responses were presented in table 3.

Table 3: Correlation matrix for economic policy making and management has a significant influence on community economic development at the local level

| Correlations | | | |
|---|---------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| | | Economic policy making and management | community economic development at the local level |
| Economic policy making and management | Pearson Correlation | 1 | 0.086 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | 0.361 |
| | N | 115 | 115 |
| Community economic development at the local level | Pearson Correlation | 0.086 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.361 | |
| | N | 115 | 115 |

Table 3 shows that the Pearson correlation index obtained is $r = 0.086$ at P-value of 0.361. Since the P-value is greater than the level of significance 0.05, it implies that economic policy making and management has not influenced community economic development. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that Economic policy making and management has no influence on community economic development is upheld and confirmed.

5.0 Discussion of the findings

The study established that 83.4% of respondents disagreed that the central government involves the community in designing economic policies. This denotes that the central government doesn't involve community in designing economic policies and management. Therefore, most economic policies are centrally made by the national planning authority without considering the views of the entire public and yet community members are considered to be primary beneficiaries of such policies. This accounts for the irresponsiveness of the community to the policies made that do not address the needs of the local people and poor communities. Also, the failure to involve the citizens in policy making process reveals why most policies have been poorly implemented. This is because failure to involve citizens in policy design disregards the most pressing issues which are considered essential to the populace just in case they are given a chance to benefit from policy formulation and design. This finding is in agreement with prior findings of Cindy & Robert (2011), who argued that participatory practices are closely related to decentralized decision making and policy management. Failure to incorporate the citizens' economic policy making could stem the deterioration in public trust evidenced by widespread hostility toward government entities as Stivers (1990) put it in plain. This clearly postulates that in order to achieve community economic development, there is need to involve the community in designing the policies that concern them.

Results revealed that the community is not involved in economic policy implementation and was evidenced by 44.3% of the respondents who disagreed with the statement that the community is involved in economic policy implementation. This clearly demonstrates that the community is not involved in economic policy implementation. This finding contradicts earlier findings by Akello, 2001, UPPAP 2002, Kasente et al, 2002; Mukasa et al, (2004) who argued that economic policy making should be inclusive in nature by involving different social classes of people. In the same vain Mucunguzi (2010) reported that under the inclusive economic policy making approach, the voices of the children, the elderly, the youth, women, the disabled, and rural dwelling citizens must be heard. This proves a problem in economic policy management in Masha Sub County as people are sidelined in economic policy management.

It was also revealed that 74.8% of the respondents disagreed that the community is involved in monitoring the effectiveness of economic policies. This is an indicator that the community is not involved in monitoring the effectiveness of economic policies and this blacklists them from giving their point of view on how certain policies may be affecting them. Failure to include their most pressing issues leaves them in a state of disappointment thus crippling community economic development. This finding concur with earlier findings of King and Stivers (1998) who suggested that the absence of citizen participation could stem the deterioration in public trust evidenced by widespread hostility toward government entities. Whereas democratic decision making is crucial for development, participatory economic policy making and management would strengthen the process hence improved results.

5.1 Conclusions

The present study on the effect of the nature of economic policy making and management on community economic development found out that the community is not involved in economic policy design, policy implementation, policy management as well as economic policy evaluation. Findings stressed that community members are rendered helpless and have for long been watching things happen in their area not knowing how they begin and handled. This has greatly led to poor implementation of economic policies leading problems in community economic development in the long run.

5.2 Recommendations

Communities should be well informed about government programmes so as to enable them get involved at all levels of economic policy making and management. This will help to trace the origin of poverty, and also identify the real issues affecting the community. This therefore calls for a citizen led platform in economic policy making and management if community economic development is to be achieved.

Regular monitoring and evaluation. Systematic monitoring and evaluation of program processes and outcomes is critical for ensuring that programs continue to grow and adapt to changing conditions. This is particularly important where programs are being scaled up – monitoring systems supply the necessary information and feedback to ensure that processes are appropriately modified to the needs of different localities, and that potential bottlenecks or problems are identified and overcome early, before they become constraints to expansion. Programs should not just monitor physical and financial progress, but also consider quality of participatory processes, and indicators of effectiveness of local institutions and economic impact of activities. Participatory monitoring and evaluation is also a useful tool for evaluating how the activities are seen and valued locally.

5.3 Researchers' contribution to the body of knowledge.

The study unearthed the existing nature of economic policy making and management at local levels, by identifying the policy gaps in economic policy making process that have for long inhibited community economic development (CED). The study revealed the fact that decentralization is working more socio-politically leaving out the economic aspect which is essential for promoting community economic development which is fundamental if economic development is to be achieved. In a nut shell, the study brought into light the best practices in the economic policy making process that informs policy formulation and design, policy implementation and monitoring, policy evaluation as well as to the theory of economic management.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

The study was not exhaustive owing to constraints in terms of scope, time and finance. Further research is therefore needed in areas such as: the gender contribution on community economic development, as well as the effectiveness of the decentralization program in accelerating community economic development.

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Competing Interests

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