

Executive support and performance of selected local governments in Eastern Uganda

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Abstract

Change management practices such as executive support, effective communication and employee involvement have been successfully used by private sector entities in order to improve organisational performance. The purpose of this study objective was to establish the relationship between executive support and performance of selected Local Governments in Eastern Uganda. The constructs of executive support variable used in this study include; leadership, coaching and strategic planning. The study was guided by the hypothesis that; "there is no relationship between executive support and performance of selected Local Governments in Eastern Uganda". Three local governments included in the study were; Jinja, Tororo and Soroti. Using a cross-sectional design, a quantitative sample of 313 respondents comprising of both political and technical personnel were selected from sub-county and district levels. Quantitative data was collected using self administered questionnaire which yielded to a response rate of 85.6%. Similarly, a qualitative sample of 8 key informants was selected to collected qualitative data using key informant interview. Data analysis for quantitative data involved the use of descriptive statistics, correlation, regression and content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data. The findings indicated a statistically significant positive relationship between executive support and the performance of local governments ($r = 0.380$, $p < 0.01$), which led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The paper concludes that executive support as a change management practice plays a pivotal role in improving the performance of the local governments in Eastern Uganda, and executives in the public sector need to spearhead strategic planning, improve their leadership styles and be in a position to coach their subordinates to improve performance.

Key words: *Change Management, Executive Support, Performance, Local Governments, Eastern Uganda*

Introduction

Organisations that ignore the concept of change management do so at their own peril (Hassan & Janor, 2004). Change is a force that presses an individual, a community or an organisation to do things differently; it is the transition from how things are done currently to how things will be done in the future. Change is constant and necessary. While change management practices and objectives may differ from organisation to organisation, all face the same imperative (Mathews, 2009). Change management is not just an ancillary activity for the local governments or a phase within their projects but rather an activity that should be part of the system's operations and used in local government projects with effective transitional support (Waters, 2003). Change management is driving an increasing need for organisations to adapt quickly and adeptly to dynamic market conditions. For this to occur, appropriate change management practices need to be instituted within organisations. Most of the changes that occur in local governments in Uganda are driven by legislative action, which rarely occurs (Murthy & Shubha, 2010).

Successful change management requires a large commitment and support from executives and senior managers, whether the change is occurring in a department or in a complete organization (Heathfield, 2016). In this article, the concept of executive support refers to the technical assistance in form of; leadership, coaching and strategic planning provided by managers (Chief Administrative Officers, Departmental Heads, Sub-County Chiefs) to the personnel that they supervise. Drucker (2004) attributes the survival of organisations to active and effective executives who must first manage themselves successfully before making effective decisions. Drucker further advises that executives should set a good example by making themselves effective while carrying out their duties in the organisation. Meanwhile Williams, Belli and Morris (2013) add that executives in the organisation have three major roles in supporting employees as they carry out their duties, problem solving and strategic thinking. Mohammad and John (2012) agree by pointing out that one of the roles of the executive officers in an organisation is strategic planning in order to present the future direction of the company.

Historical Background

Management is a long-standing phenomenon that dates back to early Greek philosophers such as Socrates (399 BC), whose thoughts were documented by Plato and Aristotle. People have been managing work for hundreds of years. Some formal management ideas began to appear around the 1700s. Management theories emerged in the 20th century, and in 1909, Frederick Winslow Taylor published "The Principles of Scientific Management", which included his proposal that by optimising and simplifying jobs, productivity would increase.

At the global level, before the advent of British rule in India, there were no advanced traditions of local self-government as in the modern sense. However, a rudimentary local government system did exist in rural areas. The British later introduced local governments. The outbreak of World War I and agitation from nationalist parties demanding greater representation in provincial and central governments shifted focus away from local governments. This prompted the British government to make political concessions and provincial-level governments were granted autonomy. From 1979-1985, through the promulgation of local government ordinances (LGOs), decentralisation was achieved (Cheema, Khwaja and Qudir, 2006).

During the 1980s, countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, as well as the former Socialist countries of East-Central Europe and Eurasia, decentralised their governments by moving more decision-making functions to the local authorities, Meurs and Kochut (2013). In former Socialist economies, where governance had been extremely centralised, decentralisation had particularly resonated as a method of quickly improving the public sector's performance. Findings and conclusions from scholarly articles note that decentralisation may not provide a simple means of improving efficiency and service delivery to the local communities. Governments in developed countries and in sub-Saharan Africa have been undertaking structural reforms since the late 1980s, tackling both the political and socio-economic sectors (Kiggundu, 2002). Uganda has not been an exception to these management reforms (Saito, 2000). It is important to note that over the last few decades, the public sectors in African countries have undergone reforms, including decentralisation, in an attempt to align with global standards. It is a donor-driven agenda in an attempt to correct outdated policies left behind by the colonialists as implemented in a dispensation called New Public Management (NPM) in most developing countries (Karyeija, 2012).

Theoretical Background

Three theories used to underpin this study include Lewin's, Rogers' and Lippitt's phases of change. Lewin's theory, known as unfreezing-change-refreeze, states that behaviour is "a dynamic balance of forces working in opposing directions" and illustrates the effects of forces that either promote or inhibit change (Robins & Judge, 2003). The theory underpins the fact that driving practices facilitate change because they push the employees in the right direction, while restraining forces hinder change because they push the employees in the opposite direction (Lewin, 1951). The three steps in change management are unfreezing, movement and refreezing. The first step necessitates changing behaviour by unfreezing the existing situation, which is

considered as the equilibrium state. This enables the formation of groups and removes individual resistance. It also involves the reduction of restraining forces that are capable of curtailing movement from the existing equilibrium. To make this first step successful, a combination of unfreezing and restraining forces must be achieved. The second step in the movement of the target system is a new level of equilibrium, which can be helped by persuading employees to agree that the status quo is not beneficial to them and encouraging them to view the problem from a fresh perspective, work together, and connect to powerful leaders who also support the change (Robins & Judge, 2003). The third step is refreezing, which is usually done after the change has occurred to sustain it over time. Kurt Lewin's critics attacked his theory as being overly rational and goal and plan oriented, without taking into account personal factors that may affect change (Kritsonis, 2004). Barnard and Stoll (2010) added criticism to Lewin's theory as based on small-scale samples and assumptions that can be taken into account during the planning process.

Kurt Lewin's three-step change theory is relevant to this study for the following reasons: Lewin views behaviour as a dynamic balance of forces working in opposing directions; driving forces facilitate change because they push employees in the desired direction; and restraining forces hinder change because they push employees in the opposite direction. Therefore, these forces must be analysed. Lewin's three-step model can help shift the balance in the direction of the planned change (Kritsonis, 2004). This is what practically occurs if one is to explain change management practices and the performance of local governments in Uganda. Because Lewin's three-step change theory did not take into account personal factors that affect change, Lippitt's phases of change theory were developed to bridge the gap. Lippitt, Watson, and Westley (1958) extended Lewin's three-step change theory by creating a seven-step theory that focuses more on the role of change agents than the evolution of the change itself. When change becomes part of the organisation, the change agent gradually withdraws his/her role. Lippitt et al (1958) further note that changes are more likely to be stable if they spread to neighbouring systems or to subparts of the system immediately affected.

The combining lesson from these theories is that local governments are operating in order of chaos with systems which are ever changing and the only way to succeed is though application of competent planning and leadership.

Contextual Background

In the case of Uganda, decentralisation has been experienced both as a system and as a process of devolution of power from the centre to local authorities. According to Okidi and Goloba (2006 pp 3), decentralisation in Uganda has occurred in three phases. The first phase was from 1955 to 1964, where a strong administrative system was created around a weaker centre. The second phase was from 1964 to 1985, which involved the centralisation of power and a severe weakening of local administrations. The third phase is from 1987 to the present and is characterised by a full devolution of power from the centre to strengthen local authorities through government programmes.

According to Murthy and Shubha (2010), planned changes in local governments in Uganda are driven by legislative actions, but the implementation of these changes is not realised at the district levels. According to Mpanga (2009), it takes an extended amount of time to achieve fundamental reform of any public sector, and those involved in public sector reforms need to adopt long-term perspectives based on fundamental change demands, sustained effort and leadership over many generations.

There is confusion and/or conflict over how local governments are currently managed. Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) and District Councillors (LC Vs) all have believe they are the bosses in the district and that their word is final regarding the plans and activities of the district (Ayeko-Kümmeth, 2015). These disagreements in the district have always reduced the service delivery and performance of the local governments. Additionally, Oloka-Onyango (2007), noted that the role of RDCs, District Security Information Officers (DISOs) and other central government officers should be reconsidered so that they do not prevent effective operation of the local governments, as politics tends to overshadow technical decisions during service delivery. There is nothing more difficult to carry out, more doubtful of success, or more dangerous to handle than

initiating a new order, for those who would initiate change have enemies in all those who profit from the older order and only lukewarm defence from those who would profit from the new order (Raftery, 2009).

Literature Review

The literature review adopted in this paper first gives a global perspective, followed by one at a regional level and later pinned down by a national or Ugandan dimension. The constructs of executive support (leadership, coaching and strategic planning) are explained in this section.

Global Perspective

At a global level, some studies unspecific to change management practices and performance of local governments have been conducted whose findings still provide a guide to this study. Some of these studies include managing successful organisational change in the public sector (Melchor, 2008; Fernandez and Rainey, 2006) and human resource management in the public sector (Boyne, Poole & Jenkins, 1999; Basamh, Huq & Dahlan, 2013; Ridder, Bruns & Spier, 2005 and Kim, 2005). All of these studies portray a lag in adoption of new management practices by local governments, and in this case, public and private management may always appear to be significantly different even if they are both moving in the same direction.

Fernandez and Rainey (2006) undertook a study in managing successful change in public organisations. In their study, they summarised theories which provide insight into organisational change, causes of change and the role of managers in the change process. The major concern is with the governments in the United States (US) and overseas that have gone through reform initiatives several times from which there is news of efforts towards transforming and reforming government agencies. The underlying concern in their study was the assessment of the participation of managers in providing executive support during the change process. Activities to be undertaken by managers in change management include providing the need for change, providing the plan for change, building internal support, ensuring top management commitment and support, building external support, institutionalising change and providing adequate resources. The findings indicate that the US Postal Service failed to implement the participative culture due to inability on the side of top management to modify organisational subsystems.

Boyne, Poole & Jenkins (1999), studying human resource management in conservative governments in the United Kingdom (UK), did not compare poor management practices in the public sector to the way the managers in the private sector conducted business. They noted a need to commercialise the public sector through performance measurement and consumer choice. The evidence of their findings suggests that organisational policies and practices in the public sector are highly bureaucratic and hinder change compared to entrepreneurial managers in private organisations.

Basamh, Huq and Dahlan (2013), undertook a study in empirical research on project implementation success and change management practices in Malaysian government-linked companies (GLCs), with the purpose of addressing the practices of project change management in the context of GLCs in Malaysia. They focused on project managers (PMs), project team members (PTMs), change managers (CMs) and any other top managers involved in a project. The findings of this study indicate that top management support requires more concentration in order to be more compliant with best practices and to resolve certain project team expectations.

Kim (2005) studied individual-level factors and organisational performance in government organisations in the public sector of Korea. The study was based on 1,739 employees, focusing on the relationship between individual-level factors, such as effective commitment, employee involvement and effective government. Kim's findings indicate that individual-level factors (job satisfaction, affective commitment, public service motivation, and organisational citizenship behaviour) are important determinants of organisational performance in both the United States and Korea. It was recommended that managers need to treat public employees with respect and fair and equitable manners and that they need to use their employees' knowledge

and skills in looking for ways to become more efficient.

African/Regional Perspective

Similar to the global level, the regional level provides very little research dealing with change management practices and the performance of local governments. The studies (Wescott, 1996; Esu & Inyang, 2009) indicate a need for commitment from top management to achieve the desired performance. Wescott (1996) undertook a study on guiding principles in civil service reform (CSR) in Africa; an empirical review, it noted that because of the range of administrative problems, and the economic and political urgency of solving them, African governments need a strategic framework for civil service reform. This should be based on a vision of the role of the state, and take into account leadership, commitment, governance, economic reforms, sequencing, ministerial restructuring, decentralisation, downsizing, pay and incentives, capacity building, service delivery, aid mechanisms, and change management processes. The study concludes that for these reforms to occur in Africa, there must be commitment by the managers and all teams and players involved in the change management process.

Esu and Inyang (2009), in their study titled "A Case for Performance Management in the Public Sector in Nigeria." The study reveals that the public sector in Nigeria has faced challenges and setbacks which are believed to have occurred as a result of ineffective and inefficient management. The Nigerian government adopted a performance management tool with the main focus of managing the individual and the work environment in such a manner that an individual or team can achieve set organisational goals. This eventually leads to the achievement of the overall organisation. The emphasis here is to make individuals feel they are part of a larger team and make them involved in the decision making of the sectors in which they belong. This study concludes that the performance management system is one such tool to enhance the performance of public executing agencies.

Ugandan Perspective

In Uganda, organisations belong to either public or private sector. Public organisations are government-owned, while private are not government owned and private services outside government with the main aim of getting profits for the owners. Uganda embarked on privatisation of about 139 public owned enterprises in 1993 (Ddumba-Ssentamu, & Mugume, 2001) and among those remaining are National Water and Sewerage Corporation, National Enterprise Corporation, Uganda Air Cargo Corporation and Uganda Electricity Distribution Company Limited, others include Uganda Revenue Authority, Electricity Regulation Authority and National Environment Authority.

Berg and Muhairwe (2006) argue that leadership and benchmarking performance saved the collapsing National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC). Decentralization in Uganda was intended to improve governance and the delivery of services to citizens, the quality of public services such as health care, education, agricultural advisory services, and the service delivery coverage have continued to deteriorate (Tumushabe, Mushemeza, Tamale, Lukwago, & Ssemakula, 2010). This paper therefore examines executive support and performance of selected local governments, and the local governments selected include; Jinja, Tororo and Soroti. Executive support in this paper is defined as the as the assistance (leadership, coaching and planning) provided by the appointed technocrats to their subordinates to help them carry their duties well, while performance is defined as delivery of services and quality services.

Before decentralisation in Uganda, which was established in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995), there were only 36 districts. This increased to 112 districts, and 12 are currently proposed and being debated by parliament. This should result in the number of districts increasing to 124. When decentralisation was implemented in Uganda, the local governments were given the power to make and implement their own development plans; to make, approve and execute their own budgets; to raise and use resources according to their own priorities; to appoint statutory committees, boards and commissions; to make ordinances and bylaws that are consistent with the Constitution and other existing laws; to hire, manage and fire personnel;

to manage their own payroll; and to implement a broad range of decentralised services as previously handled by central government (Bitarabeho, 2008). There have been some changes in the management of resources in local governments following the Public Finance Management Act (2015), where all budget approvals are now the responsibility of the Parliament of Uganda (GoU, 2015). One of the objectives of decentralisation was to shift the responsibility for policy implementation to the local beneficiaries themselves so that, as a result, service delivery would be improved. This could also promote better governance by placing emphasis on transparency and accountability in public sector management, and by broadening and deepening political and administrative competence in the management of public affairs (Bitarabeho, 2008). Since the adoption of the decentralisation policy in Uganda in the early 1990s, attempts to improve the functionality and performance of local governments through systematic monitoring have not yet yielded results (Tumushabe, Mushemeza, Tamale, Lukwago & Ssemakula, 2010).

It was hoped that the creation of local governments (LGs) would ensure effective governance and an increased delivery of quality services. However, service delivery standards in some local governments are increasingly declining, especially in the sectors of education, health and public works (Muyomba-Tamale, Ssemakula, Luba, Ssempala & Jones, 2011). The local government system was initiated as a means through which service delivery could be improved, but little improvement is seen in terms of service delivery to the local government's communities (Manyak & Katono, 2010). The rationale of decentralisation cuts across all scholars. Okidi and Guloba (2006), agree that the focus of local government grants in the decentralised system is to promote service delivery, which they further agree as having improved, especially with respect to access to primary education, health care, and water and sanitation. Additionally, though access to service has improved significantly in rural areas, improvements in the quality of service have lagged in qualitative indicators, such as primary school dropout rates, which are still very high, as well as infant and mortality rates, which have not fallen. Public facilities are predominantly utilised by the poor as those who are well off opt for superior, privately provided services. Ojambo (2012), agrees with this observation, and criticises the decentralisation effort in Uganda, as initial promises have not been met.

The need to improve performance is increasingly driving organisations to adapt quickly and adeptly to dynamic market conditions (Mathews, 2009). Mathews further argued that performance can be improved through systematic and constant change management, and while change strategies and objectives may differ from one organisation to another, all face the same imperative. This argument was joined by Waters (2003), who agrees and further emphasises that change management is not just an accessory activity to a project or a phase within the project, but rather an activity which starts with the project and lives on after with effective transitional support. In the face of inexorable pressures and internal inertia, the strategies of change management in local government organisations have to be changed in order to have an impact on the clientele they serve. According to Mpanga (2009), it takes time to achieve fundamental reform in any public sector, and those involved in public sector reform need to adopt long-term perspectives based on fundamental change demands and sustained effort.

Performance in Uganda's local governments, in terms of service delivery, quality of service provided, efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability, is still wanting (Tumushabe, et al., 2010). Some local governments have excellent results in performance, but the majority have a long way to go to improve their performance. The sectors highly affected include health, education and public works.

Therkildsen and Tidemand (2007) who undertook a study titled, "staff management and organizational performance in Tanzania and Uganda: public servant perspectives" One of the major questions in the study was how a government in a poor country with a limited budget can increase its performance of in its public sector organisations. Among the conclusions derived from this study was that developing countries must take measures to improve personnel management in the day-to-day running of public organisations (through the improved capacity for improved communication between staff and management and employee involvement in decision making and the promotion of team work). This focus is important in organisational performance improvement as the current emphasis in the public sector reforms is on change management. According to

Nalule (2011), the lack of motivation of lower staff by top managers in public organisations reduces their commitment and leads to poor performance. It was also observed by Okidi and Globa (2006) that a lack of capacity by local government employees has reduced service delivery and quality because of the emphasis on recruiting indigenous residents in local government jurisdictions. The main role of the managers is to mobilise available resources, think, plan, organise, prepare, and make decisions, as the success or failure of any entity (public or private) depends on the managers (including top, middle and lower managers) (Ohairwe, 2015). Similarly, Mugisha and Berg (2008), in their study on State-Owned Enterprises and NWSC's Turnaround in Uganda, observed that dynamic utility management motivated by clear vision, mission, and objectives is fundamental to success.

The following subsections brings out the literature related to the constructs of executive support variable which include; leadership, coaching and strategic planning.

Leadership

Executive leadership behaviors can facilitate and encourage employees to work better improve their commitment and satisfaction, and this ultimately contributes to enhancing organizational performance (Jing & Avery, 2016). According to Watson (2012) noted that if successful change and improved performance is to happen, there is need to encourage effective leadership. Similarly, Caillier (2014) revealed that leadership is critical to improving employee performance. Forsyth, Davis, Mitchell and Fryer (2016) agreed that critical leadership in organisations not only create improved performance and employee job satisfaction, but it also relate to emotional intelligence skills in the workplace. Wang, Luthans, Wang and Wu (2014:9) add that leadership may be able to influence the development and maintenance of exchange relationships with followers and improve performance of organisation. Both the leadership styles such as transactional and transformational are significantly related to organizational performance and it also shows that in public sector organizations implementing these leadership styles realise improved performance. Zeb, Saeed, Ullah and Rabi (2015). Leadership positively influences organizational innovation and performance, and an accepted leader by employees creates high performamce in organisation (Noruzy, Dalfard, Azhdari, Nazari-Shirkouhi & Rezazadeh, 2013; Soane, Butler & Stanton; 2015)

Coaching

Executive support through coaching include a helping, collaborative and egalitarian rather than authoritarian relationship between coach and employees focusing on improving performance (Grant, 2005:2; Hamlin, Ellinger & Beattie, 2008) and it involves unlocking a person's potential, helping them to learn rather than teaching them (Whitmore, 2010).

Egan (2017) noted that executive coaching is an important and managers engaged in an executive coaching relationship experienced improved performance. Beattie, KimHagen, Egan, Ellinger and Hamlin (2014) agree that managerial or executive coaching has become increasingly popular as it improves organisation performance.

Bozer, Sarros & Santora, 2014) found that executive coaching was positively related to greater improvement in coachee self-awareness and job performance. Hahn (2016) revealed that employees who received coaching from their executives performed better at assigned tasks. The study findings by Jones, Woods and Guillaume (2016:37) rejected the null hypothesis that, "coaching did not result in a number of key positive effects for learning and performance outcomes". Additionally, Pousa and Mathieu (2015) found that the role of managerial coaching as an antecedent.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is one of the cornerstones of executive support in public and private organisations. Ridwan and Marti (2012) pointed out that one of the roles of the executive officers in the organisation is strategic

planning in order to present the big future of the future direction of the company. Ridwan (2015) observed that strategic planning has been used extensively by top executives both in the private as well as in the public sector to improve the performance. Mohammed, Gichunge and Were (2017) noted that strategic planning in today's competitive business sector leads to organizational performance. When organisations grow larger, they need a greater degree of planning and coordination from top executives Lewis and Slack (2008). Dibrell, Craig and Neubaum (2014) observed that strategic planning had a relationship with firm performance. Kylaheiko, Puumalainen, Sjögrén, Syrjä and Fellnhofer (2016) concluded that strategic planning as a resource/ capability that promotes the firms' performance and most organizations engage in strategic planning to secure their competitive advantage and performance. However, Mintzberg (1994) warns that, executives should not confuse strategies and plans as the most successful strategies are visions, not plans.

Methodology

A cross-sectional research design was used in this study in which exposures and outcomes are observed or measured simultaneously in a population (American Dietetic Association, 2011). Cross-sectional design is appropriate for collecting data from a sample of respondents at one point in time and it allows the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data (Graber, 2004).

The study was carried out in three districts in eastern Uganda (Jinja, Tororo and Soroti) and the respondents included technical staff at the district and sub-county level and the district councillors who represented the politicians. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collected data because they supplement each other as qualitative data corroborates quantitative data. Self administered questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data while key informant interview guide was used to collect qualitative data.

The quantitative data target population comprised of 360 members and a sample size of 313 was determined using the statistical tables by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), which yielded a response rate of 85.6%. Regarding qualitative, out of the 8 respondents selected, only 5 responses were interviewed which yielded saturation level of the responses. Analysis of quantitative data, which were collected using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, relied on descriptive statistics using percentages, standard deviation and the mean.

Factor analysis was used to test the measurement items and those that passed the test were arranged into a smaller set to facilitate and make interpretation easier. Using varimax rotation factor analysis, rotated factor loadings and rotated eigenvalues, interrelations and robustness within the constructs of executive support (leadership, coaching and strategic planning) was confirmed by principal component analysis. The factor loadings in the rotated matrix indicated that the conditions of discriminant and convergent validity were reasonably satisfied by the data; this was because different items loaded well in their respective contracts and discriminated well across other contracts (Habiyaremye, Ayebale & Wayama, 2016:8). During factor analysis, one measurement item was deleted during the factor analysis because they did not comply with the Guttman-Kiesier rule, which states that one should retain at most those factors associated with eiginvalues > 1 and that these factors should have factor loadings of at least 0.5 as rule of thumb (Guttman, 1954; Kaiser, 1960; Peeters, Dziura, & Wesel, 2014:4; Afthanorhan, 2013:200). The KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was used to test the appropriateness of the factor analysis. Lastly, inferential statistics; correlation analysis was used to test the hypothesis (Amin, 2005). Regression analysis was used to determine the influence of executive support on the performance of the selected local governments in Eastern Uganda. Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis and the findings were used in discussions to corroborate quantitative findings.

Results and Discussion

This study was purposely carried out to assess the relationship between executive support and the performance of selected local governments in Eastern Uganda. The quantitative information was generated using a self-administered questionnaire which adopted a 5-point Likert scale that included (1 = Strongly Disagree); (2 = Disagree); (3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree); (4 = Agree) and (5 = Strongly Agree) to represent ordinal responses (Sullivan, 2013:542). A 5-point Likert scale was put at interval level and distributed at scale ranges, which was then interpreted with the mean as 1.00-1.80 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 1.81-2.60 = Disagree (D),

2.61-3.40 = Neither Disagree nor Agree (NDA), 3.41-4.20 = Agree (A) and 4.21-5.00 = Strongly Agree (SA) (Jamieson, 2004:1218 and Okay & Semiz, 2010:2924). The qualitative data was analysed using content analysis.

Table 2 shows factor analysis as used to validate measurement items which were retained based on the Guttman-Kiesier rule of thumb (Guttman, 1954; Kaiser, 1960), which states that one should retain at most those factors associated with eigenvalues > 1 (Peeters, Dziura, & Wesel, 2014:4) and that these factors should have factor loadings of at least 0.5 (Afthanorhan, 2013:200). The results indicate three factors were exacted and these include leadership, coaching and strategic planning, where leadership was the most significant with eigenvalue of 2.90, contributing 24.13%; coaching follows with an eigenvalue of 2.18, taking 18.19%. The last significant factor was strategic planning with eigenvalue of 1.99, contributing 16.60%. It can be concluded that, the more measurement items in the factor, the larger the eigenvalue.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity values are used to confirm appropriateness of the factor analysis (Asomaning & Abdulai, 2015:74; Yildirim & Tezci, 2016:198; Hegedus, McDonough, Bleakley, Baxter, DePew, Bradbury, & Cook, 2016:3)

The study used correlation analysis to determine the nature of the relationship between the variables. The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was computed with the help of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22 to test the relationship between the variables. The correlation analysis showed the level of magnitude and the direction of the relationships among the variables.

To establish whether there is a relationship between executive support and the performance of selected local governments in eastern Uganda, the study was guided by the null hypothesis:

There is no relationship between executive support and the performance of selected local governments in Eastern Uganda.

The results in Table 3 show a significant relationship between active executive support and the performance of selected local governments in Eastern Uganda. This is explained by the positive relationship (Pearson Correlation Coefficient) at $r = 0.380$ that was statistically significant with a 99% level of confidence as $p = 0.000$ is $p < .01$. It is also worthy to note that all the constructs of the executive support, namely, leadership ($r = 0.306$, $p < 0.01$), coaching ($r = 0.333$, $p < 0.01$) and strategic planning ($r = 0.305$, $p < 0.01$) had a significant positive relationship with performance of selected local governments in eastern Uganda. This therefore leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternate hypothesis that "there is a relationship between executive support and the performance of selected local governments in eastern Uganda". This means that executive support has a positive influence on the performance of selected local governments in Eastern Uganda. This implies that the performance of selected local governments in Eastern Uganda depend on executive support. This also implies that if the executives increase their support through leadership, coaching and strategic planning there would be an improved performance in the selected local governments in eastern Uganda. If other factors remain constant, this could also imply that if more emphasis in put on executive support, there would be improved performance in the selected local governments in eastern Uganda.

In addition to testing the hypotheses using the correlation analysis, the responses were also analysed by regression to determine the extent to which executive support explains the variations in the performance of the selected local governments. The results in Table 4 show that the model indicated a positive coefficient (ß = 0.380) and p-value of 0.000, which is below $p < 0.05$; this means that increase in the performance of the selected local governments can be explained by an increase or decrease in executive support. Hence, it is a predictor of the performance of the selected local governments.

According to the analysis of variance (ANOVA) results, the model is significant ($p < 0.01$), which means that it is a good predictor. This implies that executive support has a positive and significant influence on the performance of the selected local governments. The analysis further shows that the F value (F = 15.085, P

= 0.000) is greater than the F-critical = 5.416, implying that the model is significant and therefore good for prediction. The significance of the F statistic reveals that the constructs of executive support significantly predict the performance in the selected local governments.

Leadership had 5 measurement items that met the factor analysis criterion, and these include coaching, with 4 measurement items, and strategic planning, with 3 measurement items. When one of the respondents was asked how the issue of executive support is related to the lower cadres as far as top management is concerned, the respondent said:

"*Oh… yes … we give executive support to the lower cadres. Actually … one of the roles of the executives is to ensure that staff at the lower levels are mentored so … and the mentoring takes place in various forms; there is mentoring by the senior officers or the heads of the departments that is in line sectors, but there is mentoring that we go and do specifically in the sub-counties. In most circumstances …, we normally have an organized form of mentoring where we go to the sub-county as a whole team from the district; the engineers go and look at the roads, the water people go and see what is happening there, the natural resource officer goes to see the farmers down there. So we go to support our staff entirely as a district to a given sub-county. And we do this deliberately … ; we move from sub-county to sub-county so that even the people down there can see the entire administrative structure of the district going their sub-county. You know the service grows by us grooming people and guiding them through. So that is what we do; we do guide people by giving them executive support*"

By implication, the local government executives believe that guiding the staff will improve performance of local governments. The study findings are in agreements with Hu, Wayne, Bauer, Erdogan, & Liden (2016:4) who observed that executives through guidance influence the lower carders in attaining performance. This was corroborated by one of the key informants when asked as to whether there any fruits of executive support in local governments, the respondent retorted:

"*... oh … yes. I have seen a lot of it. We were in one of the sub-counties we were there and we had a very wonderful experience sharing. Actually, we met political leaders, and we took them through entire budgeting process…. and what they should expect. So they should start to appreciate some of these things, and that is how they will start demanding for services knowing what is expected of them….*"

Similarly, the study findings are in line with the earlier findings by Dibrell, Craig, & Neubaum (2014:23) who observed that strategic planning is pivotal to the performance of any organisation. This was also affirmed by one of the respondents who emphasised what occurs in their technical planning meetings by stating that: "*… in planning … in technical planning meetings … in these meetings, we communicate a number of things, we communicate government positions, various issues, we communicate circulars, we also communicate issues which we have received from government and we share with them a number of things*"

From the findings indicated in Table, the value of R square (R^2) is a measure of how much of the variability in the outcome is accounted for by the predictor (executive support), which in this case (Model 1) is R^2 = 0.144, which means that executive support accounts for 14.4% of the variation in performance of selected local governments in Eastern Uganda. The ß = 0.380 shows that there is a relationship between the outcome and each predictor. This value indicates that as executive support increases by one unit, performance of selected local governments in Eastern Uganda increase by 0.380 units (ß = 0.380, $p < 0.01$). This implies that an improvement in executive support will most likely lead to a significant improvement in performance of selected local governments in Eastern Uganda

Conclusion and Recommendations

The literature reviewed proves that executive support is vital in improving the performance of local governments. For reforms to occur in local governments there must be commitment by the managers and all the teams and players involved in the change management process. Executives in the local governments have three major roles in supporting employees as they carry out their duties by problem solving and strategic planning so as present future direction. Executives and managers need to treat public employees with respect

and fair and equitable manners. They need to use their employees' knowledge and skills in looking for ways to become more efficient and improve performance. This is in line with the view that poor management practices in the public sector affect performance compared with the way managers in the private sector conduct business. Furthermore, developing countries such Uganda should not put the blame on the limited budgets of local governments as the reason for poor performance but rather put more emphasis on executive support and improvement of people management in the day-to-day running of local governments.

The study findings further reveal that there was a significant positive relationship between executive support and the performance of the selected local governments in Eastern Uganda. Among the constructs, coaching had a strong relationship with the dependent variable, followed by leadership and strategic planning. It is therefore important for local governments in eastern Uganda to emphasise that their executives should at all times deploy an appropriate style of leadership, carry out coaching for their subordinates and perform strategic planning in their districts. These findings point to the fact that there should be increased adherence to executive support if the selected local governments are to offer effective service delivery and quality services to their communities.

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that local governments integrate executive support into their management systems to enable all subordinates to obtain help from their executives, as this will improve their performance and eventually the performance of local governments. To achieve this, coaching needs to be emphasised at all levels.

The line ministry (Ministry of Local Government) should increase support to the local governments in terms of coaching so that they can acquire skills to boost the performance of the district.

There is a need to improve the leadership skills of executives in local governments, potentially through sponsoring them in leadership courses from government institutions such as the Uganda Management Institute. Tailored courses can also be organised to boost leadership skills and in the areas of monitoring and evaluation.

This work is part of my Dissertation (objective one) for PhD in Management in the study titled: Change Management Practices and Performance of Selected local governments in Eastern Uganda

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Table 1: Descriptive statistics

Measurement Items	N	SD	D	NDA	A	SA	Response range		Measure of Central Tendency		Interpretation of the Mean
		1.00-1.80	1.81-2.60	2.61-3.40	3.41-4.20	4.21-5.00					
		%	%	%	%	%	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev	
My supervisors focus on organisational future and its performance	268	1.1	8.2	14.6	56.7	19.4	1	5	3.85	.866	Agree
My top managers guides the team to achieve their individual goals	268	5.6	13.4	15.3	51.9	13.8	1	5	3.55	1.064	Agree
Our executive guides the team to achieve organisational goals	268	2.6	10.1	10.8	60.1	16.4	1	5	3.78	.929	Agree
Top management always remains open-minded and objective in their decision making process	268	3.4	15.7	15.7	52.6	12.7	1	5	3.56	1.010	Agree
Top management decisions are based on the district strategic plan	268	1.5	10.1	13.8	48.1	26.5	1	5	3.88	.964	Agree
My supervisors carry their duties effectively	268	2.2	9.7	12.3	56.7	19.0	1	5	3.81	.932	Agree
My supervisors carry their duties effectively	268	2.2	9.7	12.3	56.7	19.0	1	5	3.81	.932	Agree
My supervisors manage themselves effectively	268	4.1	15.3	15.7	48.5	16.4	1	5	3.58	1.062	Agree
My top management always strives for clarity	268	4.5	12.3	12.3	54.5	16.4	1	5	3.66	1.035	Agree
My top managers takes responsibility of their actions	268	2.2	12.7	13.1	54.9	17.2	1	5	3.72	.968	Agree
My top managers takes responsibility of what they communicate	268	2.6	11.2	13.4	57.1	15.7	1	5	3.72	.948	Agree
My top management have interest in developing employee capabilities	268	3.4	9.7	11.6	56.0	19.4	1	5	3.78	.978	Agree
Top management always encourages employee participation in decision making	268	5.6	13.8	11.2	51.1	18.3	1	5	3.63	1.103	Agree
Top management encourages team building	268	1.9	3.7	14.2	57.5	22.8	1	5	3.96	.829	Agree
General Mean and Standard Deviation Scores									3.73	.976	

Table 2: Rotated Component Matrix

Scale and Measurement Item	Component		
	1	2	3
Leadership			
My top management always strives for clarity	.722	.251	.163
My top management have interest in developing employee capabilities	.721	.329	
Top management always remains open-minded and objective in their decision making process	.708	.229	.240
Top management always encourages employee participation in decision making	.744		.243
Top management decisions are based on the district strategic plan	.607		.141
Coaching			
Our executive guides the team to achieve organisational goals		.679	.379
My top managers takes responsibility of their actions	.183	.757	
Top management encourages team building	.227	.741	.166
My top managers takes responsibility of what they communicate	.361	.526	.289
Strategic Planning			
My supervisors manage themselves effectively	.287	.117	.745
My supervisors carry their plans and duties effectively	.359	.121	.713
My top managers guides the team to achieve planned individual goals		.253	.714
Eigen Value	2.90	2.18	1.99
Percent of Variance Explained	24.13	18.19	16.60
Cumulative percent of Variance Explained	24.13	42.32	58.92

Note: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 5 iterations. High factor loadings for respective constructs are indicated in bold.

Source: Primary data (2017)

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	1	1.1	1.2	2	2.1	2.2	2.3
1. Performance	3.58	0.70	1						
1.1 Quality Services	3.65	0.84	.860**	1					
1.2 Service Delivery	3.52	0.80	.841**	.447**	1				
2. Executive Support	3.71	0.62	.380**	.326**	.321**	1			
2.1 Leadership	3.70	0.76	.306**	.310**	.208**	.829**	1		
2.2 Coaching	3.79	0.68	.333**	.221**	.349**	.808**	.526**	1	
2.3 Strategic Planning	3.64	0.81	.305**	.271**	.247**	.839**	.523**	.517**	1
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).									
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).									
N=268									

Source: Primary data (2017)

Table 4: Regression Analysis

		Model Summary						Coefficients				
Mode	Variables	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	R Square Change	F Change	Sig. F Change	Unstandardized Coefficients Beta	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
	Constant							1.986	.241		8.230	.000
	Executive Support	.380a	.144	.141	.144	44.885	.000	.430	.064	.380	6.700	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), ExecutiveSupport2												
b. Dependent Variable: Performance2												

Source: Primary data (2017)