

District Creation and Primary Education Service Delivery in Uganda

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ABSTRACT— *This article aimed at analyzing the effect of district creation on public service delivery at primary education level in Uganda. There has been little or no focus on the creation of new sub-national administrative units on service delivery. To investigate the assertion that new created districts were previously marginalized areas, comparisons were made between the parent and new districts in terms of performance in primary leaving examinations a year after the split of a district. To analyze whether there is an improvement in delivery of public services after a new district was created, we examined the trend in performance in primary leaving examinations by comparing new and parent districts performance. Our results show that four out of the six newly created districts in 1997 performed significantly worse than the parent districts and the gap in terms of performance between the new created and parent districts narrowed in all districts overtime. Another surprising finding is that five out of six or 83% of the poor performing districts immediately after the split, were performing better than districts that were performing better immediately after the split, after a period of only nine years. District creation may be bringing public services closer to citizens. This new evidence may provide a strong case for district creation since it is seen to improve service delivery in previously marginalized areas.*

Keywords— decentralization, district creation, service delivery, marginalized areas

1. INTRODUCTION

This article aim at analyzing the effect of district creation on public service delivery at primary education level in Uganda. Within decentralization literature, there has been little to no focus on one important aspect of decentralization, namely the creation of new sub-national administrative units on service delivery. This has been an especially prominent trend in the developing world, where the governments of such countries as Benin, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Vietnam, among many others, have created a slew of new units since the 1990s(Green,2006). Yet there have been very few attempts to analyze their impact on service delivery.

Most discussions of decentralization in Uganda have largely failed to discuss district creation (Devas and Grant 2003; Francis and James 2003; Onyach-Olaa 2003; Wunsch and Ottemoeller 2004; Dauda 2006), while those that do (Golola 2001; Goetz, 2002; Crook, 2003; Hickey 2003; Green, 2006) have only discussed district creation in passing and largely fail to examine the impact of district creation on service delivery. This study fills this knowledge gap by analyzing the impact of district creation on public service delivery outcomes in the primary education sub sector. One obvious approach to managing the politics of decentralization is to try to show early results on service delivery outcomes.

One source of evidence on the effect of district creation on public service delivery comes from the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG)'s annual assessments of district government performance, which monitors local governments according to the guidelines set forth in the 1997 Local Government Act. Specifically, if a district does not meet a certain minimum set of requirements in such areas as accounting, auditing, capacity building, monitoring and gender mainstreaming, it will fail to access various types of grants. In its evaluations the MoLG has shown that older districts invariably outperform newer ones in meeting its minimum conditions of governance. For instance, in 2004, compared to a Ugandan average of 58.9%, only 50% (8/16) of districts created since 1997 passed these minimum standards, with an even lower score of 45.5% (5/11) for those created since 2000 (Uganda, 2004). Despite an overall improvement, in 2007, 81.5% (38/44) of older district governments were able to meet minimum conditions while only 66.7% (22/33) of the districts created since 2000 were able to do the same (Uganda, 2007).

According to the Annual Health Sector Performance Report (2006/07), of the 15 bottom performers, 6 of them are among districts created in the recent past, namely: Kaabong, Oyam, Budaka, Bukwo, Terego-Maracha and Amuria. Conversely there is no new district among the top 15 performers. The explanation given was that new districts were previously marginalized parts of the more established districts. The marginalization often translates into gaps in health inputs like infrastructure and human resources. In addition, the management in the new districts is still facing challenges, for example, many new districts have District Health Officers(DHOs) in acting capacity and lack most of the members of

the District Health Team(DHT), and infrastructure and logistics- e.g. transport. This may explain the many gaps in information from these districts and poor performance on indicators like proportion of funds spent on medicines and supplies. This article intends to establish whether the newly created districts were marginalized areas and also examine the impact of district creation on public service delivery by focusing on primary leaving examination pass rates in split districts in Uganda to fill the existing literature gap. Our results show that four out of six newly created districts in 1997, performed worse than the parent districts and the gap in terms of performance between the new created and parent districts narrowed in all districts overtime. The rest of the paper is organized as follows. The next section provides an overview of district creation in Uganda. The third section describes the methodology. The fourth section discusses the results and the last section concludes.

2. OVERVIEW OF DISTRICT CREATION IN UGANDA

Under British colonial rule, Uganda was divided into four provinces, namely Northern, Eastern, Western and the Kingdom of Buganda. These provinces were further divided into sixteen districts, which were overseen by British District Commissioners. Other than in Buganda, most of these districts were created along 'tribal' lines, whereby each district was supposedly ethnically homogenous and was ruled through 'traditional' leadership. These districts were thus important in the subsequent formation of ethnic identity, for instance in the case of the Acholi and the Karamojong in the north and the Iteso in the east (Apter, 1959). However, the British conception of African tribes as eternal and unchanging meant that new districts were very rarely created, and then only for explicit administrative purposes.

Upon independence in 1962 Uganda's provincial divisions were dropped with one exception, Buganda, which subsequently became a federal state. Buganda, Bunyoro, Tooro and Ankole became kingdoms. Areas with district status were Acholi, Lango, East Mengo, Bugisu, Bukedi, Busoga, Karamoja, Kigezi, Madi, Masaka, West Mengo, Mubende, Sebei, Teso and West Nile. In 1966, the kingdoms were abolished after Obote abrogated the Independence Constitution and came up with another Constitution the following year. Under a new Constitution, the status of kingdoms changed to districts and Buganda was abolished as a governmental unit. Mbale territory merged with Bugisu district. The capital of Bukedi moved to Tororo. The status of Busoga changed from territory to district. Buganda Kingdom split into four districts: Bombo, Masaka, Mpigi, and Mubende. The name of East Mengo changed to Bombo and west Mengo changed to Mpigi.

In 1971, Acholi district was split into East Acholi and West Acholi, and Karamoja was divided into North Karamoja and South Karamoja. The changes brought the number of districts to 19. Idi Amin, however, subsequently reintroduced ten provincial governments in 1974, this time under the rule of military Governors, while also almost doubling the number of districts to 37. The provincial governments included; Central, Busoga, Eastern, Karamoja, Nile, North Buganda, South Buganda, Northern, Southern and Western. Eastern comprised Bugisu, Bukedi, Sebei and Teso. The Northern Province was composed of East Lango and West Lango, East Acholi and some parts of West Acholi. The Nile was composed of Madi, West Nile and some parts of West Acholi. The Southern was made up of Ankole and Kigezi, while Western was made up of Bunyoro and Toro. The provincial capitals were Jinja, Kampala, Mbale, Moroto, Arua, Bombo, Gulu, Masaka, Mbarara and Fort Portal. As Jorgensen (1981) notes, the reintroduction of the provincial level as well as new districts provided patronage posts for Amin's more ambitious soldiers, thereby relieving pressure on national politics. These new districts included the division in two of the former ethnically demarcated districts Acholi, Ankole, Bunyoro, Busoga, Kigezi, Lango, Karamoja, Teso and Toro.

In 1979, after Idi Amin was overthrown, the government of Uganda reorganized from 10 provinces into 33 districts, named after the major towns. In response to Amin's policies, President Museveni-appointed a Commission of Inquiry in 1987 into the Local Government system to deliberate about the creation of new districts. It was, by implication, very critical of the proliferation of districts under Amin, arguing that, 'quite often, the response of governments to popular demands for a more responsive administration (e.g., better services) has been to create new and smaller units...there is no doubt that the multiplication of administrative units is a costly affair' (Government of Uganda 1987: 117). In principle, the Commission, noted, that they were hesitant to recommend the creation of new and additional administrative units, bearing in mind that these would increase unproductive costs of administration, both in terms of creating an administrative infrastructure and payment of personnel. Given their strong view that the exercise in creating new districts over the past decade and a half has been arbitrary, haphazard and hardly defensible, they would have recommended a review of the status of all existing districts with a view to de-grading those which do not meet minimum criteria. Should such a review be undertaken in the present circumstances, it would undoubtedly result in a large number of the newly created districts losing their existing status (Government of Uganda 1987: 121-123).

However, no such review took place, and the Government continued to add districts up to today. In 1990, Kalangala district was split from Masaka. In 1991, four further districts were created. Kibaale was split from Hoima, Kiboga from Mubende, Kisoro from Kabale and Pallisa from Tororo. In 1994, Ntungamo district was carved out of parts of Mbarara

and Bushenyi districts. In 1997, six new districts were created, raising the number from 39 to 45. The new ones were: Bugiri split from Iganga, Busia from Tororo, Katakwi from Soroti, Adjumani from Moyo district Nakasongola from Luweero and Sembabule from Masaka. In 2000, the Government announced the creation of 11 new districts, adding up to 55 and one city. Kamwenge was split from Kabarole, Kayunga from Mukono; Pader from Kitgum, Kyenjojo from Kabarole, Mayuge from Iganga, Sironko from Mbale, Wakiso from Mpigi; Yumbe from Arua, Kaberamaido from Soroti, Kanungu from Rukungiri and Nakapiripirit from Moroto.

In 2005, the Government announces creation of 22 new districts, the largest ever increase in Uganda's history, adding up to 78 districts. Many of the new districts were made of single counties. Ibanda was split from Mbarara, Isingiro from Mbarara, Kiruhura from Mbarara, Kaabong from Kotido, Kaliro from Kamuli, Koboko from Arua, Butaleja from Tororo, Nakaseke from Luweero, Budaka District, consisting of Budaka from Pallisa. Amuria from Soroti, Mityana from Mubende, Manafwa from Mbale, Amolatar from Lira, Bukwa from Kapchorwa, Oyam from Apac, Dokolo from Lira, Busiki from Iganga. Abim from Kotido, Bulisa from Masindi, Bududa from Manafawa, Maracha from Arua. Thereafter the number was steadily increased to 80 in 2006, 97 in 2009 and 113 by August 2010.

The standard reason for creating new sub-national units in developing countries is to improve service delivery and developmental outcomes, as seen in the rhetoric from Nigeria and Vietnam, among others (Akinyele, 1996; Malesky, 2005). In Uganda Article 179 of the 1995 constitution allows for the creation of new districts based on 'effective administration and the need to bring services closer to the people.' Indeed, local councilors have often praised the creation of new districts as effective in promoting service delivery, even among those districts that have only been recently created. For instance, Amuru district leaders in northern Uganda claimed that, only a year after Amuru district had been created, the advantages of a new district has been obvious in more boreholes, schools and roads and better coordination and easier monitoring among government officials (Green, 2008).

Arguments for decentralization and the creation of new sub-national units are often based on the management of ethno-linguistic conflict (Treisman, 2007), as seen for instance in the example of India (Mawdsley, 2002). In Uganda, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government, Vincent Ssekono, similarly claimed that the creation of new districts has enabled ethnic minorities who were formerly marginalized to obtain their own district. As an example Ssekono gave the Aringa ethnic group of northwest Uganda, who had formerly shared Arua district with their Lugbara neighbors. This resulting 'problem of communication' was alleviated by the creation of Yumbe district in 2000, which allowed the Aringa to speak their own language at council meetings and articulate their specific development priorities (Green, 2008). Ethnicity could potentially explain a good number of districts in Uganda, whose constitution officially recognizes 65 indigenous ethnic groups and which in one recent data set was declared the world's most ethnically diverse state (Alesina, et al, 2003).

New districts are examples of what are called 'club goods' in the field of political economy, and their creation is an example of what (Lowi, 1964) calls 'distributive policies,' in that their benefits go to a small group of people but their costs are spread out across the entire population. As spelled out by (Olson, 1982) in his analysis of special-interest organizations, such a policy is likely to encounter little opposition since its cost per capita is so low that those who pay for it have little incentive to organize collectively to combat it.

A majority of those scholars who have discussed district creation in Uganda ascribe it to the central government's inability to resist local demands; (Rubongoya, 2007), for instance, claims that Museveni has been prone to giving in to popular demands for the creation of more districts. Indeed, these pressures often take bizarre forms of protest, as seen when residents of Nakaseke district paraded with the skulls of those who had been killed and buried in the district during the civil war of the early 1980s, as well as with residents of Tororo district who publicly ate rats in full view of President Museveni to demonstrate the seriousness of their claim (Buwembo, 2005).

Green (2008) argues that district creation has been primarily a source of patronage in the ongoing need for President Museveni to win elections. He says the trend is likely to continue as President Museveni attempts to seek for a fourth term. He says that district creation has been more successful than other types of patronage like new cabinet posts and new parliamentary constituencies in maintaining Museveni's support. Whereas cabinet ministers and MPs can siphon off their salaries for personal reasons, the creation of a district necessarily brings money to the countryside and thereby benefits locals at least to some degree.

Uganda's Constitution lays down the manner in which Parliament may create new districts. Before 2002 the process of district creation was largely governed by the requirements laid down in the Constitution: feasibility studies were done by the ministry to assess the 'viability' of proposed districts; district resolutions were passed, indicating local support and laying out reasons for their creation; and these were sent to the Minister and then to a special committee to assess

sustainability and make recommendations to the Cabinet. For instance, in Lira district, people told researchers that the creation of Amolatar district was ‘technically justified as it was very expensive and cumbersome to administer that part of the district due to the long distances and poor roads. They further asserted that Amolatar district has a high population, viable revenue sources, and basic physical infrastructure in place’ and would therefore meet the sustainability requirement, an assessment with which government officials agreed (DEGE, NCG and Mentor, 2007). This is similar to the argument given in the new district of Nakaseke, which used to be part of Luwero. ‘It used to take a year to move throughout the whole district’ because of its size, a senior official said (Cammack et al, 2007). Now, access to the community is easier and administration is ‘more flexible’ as people find it easier to approach the district officials and council. Furthermore, development of infrastructure is more ‘equitable’ and easier to ‘balance’ across the district, for instance, road rehabilitation. While the ministry still emphasizes the need for districts to be ‘sustainable’, it admits it is now unable to use this ‘criteria so empirically’ as before (Cammack et al, 2007). In other words, the reason now for creating new districts is largely political and so the ministry finds it is working outside the law and reacting to a range of interconnected initiatives emerging from above and below, only a few of which are ‘technical’ in nature.

However, the creation of new districts creates as many logistical and administrative problems as it solves. While the creation of a district does not entail any new sub-district positions, it nonetheless leads to a significant number of new posts at the district level which have financial implications. First, a whole new set of technical and administrative staff must be hired, including a Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Resident District Commissioner (RDC), deputy CAO, deputy RDC, and a District Auditor, Clerk (and Assistant Clerk), Community Based Services Manager, Education Officer, Engineer, Extension Coordinator, Finance Officer, Director of Health Services, Information Officer, Inspector of Schools, Land Officer, National Agricultural Advisory Services Officer, Personnel Officer and Planner, among others. Estimates show that this raises the wage bill by over 40% (Ocwich, 2005).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts the core indicators model (Alfred et al, 2007). The core indicator model describes 16 core indicators that community colleges can use to develop an assessment tool using quantitative data for measuring their effectiveness and performance. The core indicators include pass rates, completion rates among others. To establish whether new created districts (or districts that were carved out of the old or parent districts) were previously marginalized areas, comparisons are made between the parent and new districts in terms of pass rates in primary leaving examinations a year after the split of a district and overtime. This study uses primary leaving examination pass rate as one of the performance indicators that measure concepts of quality of education in numeric ways (Alfred et al, 2007 and Dochy et al., 1990). Examination pass rates is used as a point of reference or goal for education institutions to compare performance (Alfred et al, 2007 and Cave et al, 1997). This study seeks to answer the following research questions; Do newly created districts (marginalized districts) perform worse than the parent district? Does the performance gap between new districts (marginalized districts) and parent districts narrow overtime? To analyze whether there is an improvement in delivery of public services after a new district is created, we examine the trend in performance in primary leaving examinations by comparing new and parent districts performance. To answer the research questions, we use data for six new districts and six parent districts that were split in 1997, a period when there was full implementation of decentralization program in Uganda. The choice of the period is also based on the fact that it gives more observations compared to other more recent periods when new districts were created. The data we use in our analysis was obtained from Ministry of Education and Sports for 1996 to 2006 period.

4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Table 1 shows the performance trends in primary leaving examinations. We considered the percentage of students who obtained first and second grade out of the total students who sat for primary leaving examinations. Students in the Ugandan education system are graded into first, second, third and failure grades. Data from Table 1 show that out of the newly created districts in 1997, four (Bugiri, Sembabule, Katakwi and Busia districts) out of six districts or 67 percent performed worse than the parent districts, partially supporting the assertion that created districts were previously marginalized areas.

What do 'parent' and 'new' districts mean?

Table1: Pass rates in first and second grade in Primary Leaving Examinations as a percentage of total										
Parent district	New districts	1998	1999	2000	2004	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Iganga		40	40	37	22	25	28	27	27	34
	Bugiri	17	25	28	29	40	27	38	39	48
Luwero		38	35	39	44	42	47	40	42	51
	Nakasongora	44	41	29	27	26	43	38	40	49
Masaka		38	49	53	48	35	42	38	37	48
	Sembabule	17	31	38	38	15	24	33	34	41
Moyo		16	28	29	40	60	28	11	31	34
	Adjumani	20	11	27	29	40	33	26	24	31
Soroti		21	31	26	36	43	33	33	19	33
	Katakwi	17	18	20	51	60	27	40	38	44
Tororo		34	35	25	28	31	37	30	26	37
	Busia	31	42	40	54	59	41	67	63	73

Data from Table 1 also show that the gap in terms of performance between the new created and parent districts narrowed in all districts, e.g.Luwero and Nakasongora, Masaka and Sembabule,Moyo and Adjumani. This interesting result supports our hypothesis that for the marginalized areas to be seen as improving service delivery,the gap between newly created district and the parent district in terms of performance should narrow overtime. Another surprising finding is that five out of six or 83% of the poor performing districts immediately after the split, were performing better than districts that were performing better immediately after the split, after a period of only nine years, e.g.,Tororo and Busia,Soroti and Katakwi, Iganga and Bugiri. This new evidence may provide a strong case for district creation since it is seen to improve service delivery in previously marginalized areas. District creation may be creating opportunities to take services nearer to the people and hence enhancing better decision-making, planning, budgeting, implementation, supervision and monitoring of services. The end result is improved service delivery including primary education in the previously marginalized areas. However , it is possible that other extraneous variables may have contributed to the better performance of previously marginalized areas. In addition, there is need to understand why some parent districts could not improve their performance. These issues need to be investigated in future studies .

5. CONCLUSION

This article aimed at analyzing the effect of district creation on public service delivery at primary education level in Uganda. Since independence, Uganda has been creating new districts and currently, has 113 compared to 17districts after independence. To investigate the assertion that new created districts were previously marginalized areas, comparisons were made between the parent and new districts in terms of performance in primary leaving examinations a year after the split of a district. To analyze whether there is an improvement in delivery of public services after a new district is created, we examined the trend in performance in primary leaving examinations by comparing new and parent districts performance. Data obtained from the Ministry of Education and Sports show that out of the newly created districts in 1997, four out of six or 67 percent performed worse than the parent districts, partially supporting the assertion that created districts were previously marginalized areas. Data also show that the gap in terms of performance between the new created and parent districts narrowed in all districts overtime. Another surprising finding is that five out of six or 83% of the poor performing districts immediately after the split, were performing better than districts that were performing better immediately after the split, after a period of only nine years. District creation may be bringing public services closer to citizens. This new evidence may provide a strong case for district creation since it is seen to improve service delivery in previously marginalized areas.

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