

Using the behavioural perspective to explain the current state of horizontal collaborative purchasing the public sector in Uganda.

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Purpose of paper

The paper is part of the Doctoral research on horizontal collaborative purchasing in developing countries, and particularly in Uganda. The overall goals of the Doctoral research are to understand behavioural aspects in horizontal purchasing collaboration in developing countries (Uganda) and to know how to apply the understanding of the behavioural aspects to start and or enhance horizontal purchasing collaboration in developing countries (Uganda).

This paper specifically addresses the influences of four major behavioural factors to horizontal collaborative purchasing in Uganda; trust, commitment, reciprocity and dependence. It considers their importance to the Ugandan public procurement systems and their current state, with a view to laying foundation for subsequent related research undertakings. Apart from MBA thesis work of Kalinzi (2005), there is no published work done in the area of collaborative purchasing in Uganda. Because the nature of the current state of purchasing activities (which came into existence in 2003), the paper aims at getting knowledge on the current state of purchasing activities in Uganda

Literature addressed

Collaboration cuts across several disciplines. Therefore several literature sources will be considered to get an exhaustive view of the subject. These will include; social theory, networking theory, cooperative theory, alliance theory, transaction cost theory and resource based theory.

Main contribution

Theoretical

Not enough literature has been documented about purchasing. Yet purchasing has a big potential for saving costs for the organization. Most of the constructs used are borrowed from the other disciplines like sociology, marketing, finance, accounting, production etc. These concepts wouldn't be exactly used in the same way when transferred to a different discipline.

The study will show the place of behavioural dimension in explaining collaborations in the African perspective.

Managerial

Leaders of purchasing units will be able to appreciate that the behavioural issues could be more important in explaining the state of collaborative initiatives, given the African perspective. They will then direct their efforts to handling the behavioural issues properly.

Introduction

Horizontal purchasing collaboration is an arrangement where two or more independent organizations that join together, either formally or informally, or through an independent third party, for the purpose of combining their individual requirements for purchased materials, services and capital goods to leverage more value added pricing, service and technology from their external suppliers than could be obtained if each firm purchased goods and services alone (Hendrick, 1997).

If saving costs, elimination of barriers caused by distance and time, efficient use of scarce human resources in purchasing, increased reliability, and several others are the goals of collaboration, the developing countries and Africa in particular are qualified to be the home of collaboration. However, we continue to witness low levels of purchasing collaboration in African countries, and Uganda in particular.

In Uganda, public units which have carried out collaborative activities tend to remain individualistic, even within the perceived collaboration context. For example joint tasks are divided into individual subcomponent tasks, and added later on, thus forfeiting the power of synergy.

As part of the PhD on horizontal collaborative purchasing in developing countries, due to lack of published knowledge on purchasing in Uganda, we carried out an exploratory study to appreciate the current status of horizontal collaborative purchasing in Uganda. The findings are interesting: each entity is accountable on its own, even if it carries out a purchase transaction with others and the "ownership culture" can be noticed. We note that despite its importance, horizontal purchasing collaboration has not been practiced in all public procurement and disposal units. Where it has been practiced, it is in a few processes and tends to be the parasitic and piggy backing type (Schotanus and Telgen, 2007). We also note that the collaboration initiatives in Uganda now do not grow with the speed that would match the perceived benefits. We note that most collaborative activities are in the initial stages of the procurement cycle, which are mainly operational in nature, and are mostly as a result of urgency. The study clearly indicated that because accountability is required from individual public procuring entities, it hinders the collaboration initiatives.

Why the behavioural perspective?

We acknowledge various perspectives to explain the current state of horizontal collaborative purchasing in Uganda. However, due to the reasons below, we believe the behavioural dimension, could give a more valid explanation.

Collaboration operations are bound with contracts embodied by technological and social constructions, rather than by contracts that are imposed by legal authorities (Hadjikhani and Thilenius, 2005). Economic action is embedded within a social structure in which behavioural issues are vital. Reynolds (1996), in relation to this, noted that there is a mood of change that encourages the extension of more human activities into market contexts. The social constructs like trust, commitment, reciprocity and dependence hold the actors in the collaboration together. As the collaboration relationship goes on, trust substitutes formal control mechanism, which reduces individual behaviours. This is because when partners join a collaboration, they tend to compromise rather than optimise their individual strategies. Partners keep changing roles and adapt different ways of interacting with each other; creating a circular, not a linear relationship. Formality therefore reduces. They devote more time together, emotional intensity, mutual confiding and reciprocal services (Granovetter 1973). The parties in collaboration become inquisitive in knowing what is going on with the others. Therefore, the various dimensions of a relation interact and self organise into mutually consistent pattern of performance, perceptions and attitudes representing the 'personality' of a relationship.

In Uganda, importance of behavioural dimensions is clear. For example, even agreements for low value activities are written with the assistance of legal experts and several witnesses, because of perceived future betrayal and there is no commitment to contracts entered into. Reciprocating behaviour is low, with each unit watching the input of others to accordingly adjust its own, anticipating for quick returns.

Statement of the problem

Horizontal collaborative purchasing has been recognized and appreciated as one of the key strategies to ensure purchasing performance. From the exploratory study and Uganda government practices, emphasis has been put on economic, political, logistical and other perspectives. Little effort has been put on the behavioural perspectives that soften the other "hard" perspectives. A study to focus on understanding behavioural aspects of horizontal collaborative purchasing in Uganda is necessary.

Literature review

Introduction

The behavioural dimensions, rather than economic, legal or technical dimensions, are less understood and experience more problems in collaboration (Boddy et al., 2000; Lambert et al., 1998). Emphasis is increasingly being put on behavioural, rather than the economic aspects of the exchange relationship, probably reflecting the changing mentality among practitioners for viewing relationships from discrete financial transactions to continuous social interactions (Ford et al., 1998).

From literature, we note that trust, commitment, dependence and reciprocity cause more variability in horizontal collaborative purchasing than the other factors. We also note that other factors are reflected within these major four. We therefore consider these four factors.

Trust

Trust is one's belief that the other partner will act in a consistent manner and do what he or she says he or she will do. According to Swan and Trawick (1987), trust is operationalised in five dimensions: dependable/reliable, honest/candid, competent, partner orientation, and likeable/friendly.

Trust gives the confidence that the other party can be relied upon. It is both a precondition and an outcome of collaboration.

In a horizontal collaborative purchasing arrangement, trust is important because of the following reasons, among others:

Trust is conveyed through faith, reliance, or confidence in the collaborating partner and is viewed as a willingness to forego opportunistic behaviour.

Trust smoothens out the business relationship operations and makes partners view the short run benefits from an opportunistic defection as being outweighed by the long run benefits from continued cooperation (Montgomery, 1998). As Gambetta (1988) notes, trust is a fundamental ingredient or lubricant, and an unavoidable dimension of social interaction.

Through information sharing, trust provides cushion against uncertainty (Luhmann, 1995). This is further stressed by Monczka et al., (1998) that trust and collaboration are becoming more prevalent in relationships because of their ability to reduce uncertainty.

As Sherman (1992) put it, the biggest stumbling block to success of strategic alliance formation is the lack of trust. Trust is therefore a basis for collaboration.

We note that published articles tend to concentrate on the private sector. This could be because there is competition in the private sector, and therefore great need for trust for survival of collaborative initiatives. We therefore try to find out how is trust perceived in public organisations, where the threat of competition is not as strong as in private organisations. We also note from literature (Spekman et al., 1998) that for trust to really take place, previous experiences are recalled. This implies the time dimension in trust development. We note that horizontal purchasing collaboration in Uganda is recent, as the PPDA law came into force in 2003. (Previously, all the purchasing was centralised under the Central Tender Board, which would carry out the purchasing activities on behalf of the government units). It is therefore important to find out how trust can develop in recently established horizontal purchasing collaborations.

Commitment

Commitment is the belief that the trading partners are willing to devote energy to sustaining the relationship (Dion et al., 1992). Through commitment, partners dedicate resources to sustain and further the goals of the collaboration.

There are three major dimensions of operationalising commitment; instrumental commitment, where an actor is constrained by the costs and inconveniences of leaving the current collaboration (Gilliland and Bello, 2002); normative commitment, which is based on the partners' value in the collaboration (Brown et al., 1995); and affective commitment which relates to a partner's identification and involvement with the others (Brown et al., 1995; Porter et al., 1974; Allen and Meyer, 1990). When commitment level is high, partners in the collaboration want to continue, and this progressively reduces opportunism.

Commitment is important in a horizontal collaborative purchasing because of the following reasons, among others:

According to Brennan and Turnbull (1999) high levels of trust lead to adaptations to accommodate a partner (commitment), and that this commitment leads to increased collaboration.

We also note that once there is commitment, the partner; values the relationship (Brown et al., 1995), wants to identify with the collaboration (Brown et al., 1995; Porter et al., 1974; Allen and Meyer, 1990) and is constrained to leave (Gilliland and Bello, 2002). This partner therefore develops trust to create long term relationship quality.

According to Morgan and Hunt (1994) ‘..... when commitment and trust – not just one or the other – are present, they produce outcomes that promote efficiency, productivity and effectiveness’

We note from literature, that private firms are not under any obligations to follow procurement guidelines. They voluntarily enter into collaboration, which makes commitment flourish more. Public sector organisations work within limits imposed by legal rules and organisational procedures (Telgen, 2006). We also note that the benefits out of collaboration activities are enjoyed by the public. Though people working for a public organisation are also part of the ‘public’, and indirectly would also gain from horizontal collaborative purchasing, such benefits may not be perceived as personal. This may hamper commitment to horizontal collaborative purchasing. It is interesting to know whether commitment hampers horizontal collaborative purchasing between public entities and if so how commitment can be improved.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is a state of relationship where an organization gives to the other one in return for something. Each party gets something from the other. There is mutual action, giving and taking between the collaborating parties. We consider reciprocity as according to Sullivan et al., (2003), in three dimensions; equivalence, immediacy and interest.

Reciprocity is important in collaboration because of the following reasons:

Through a set of reciprocal expectations, partners perceive a low cost of negotiating and enforcing contracts and other operations, especially if the immediate benefit is not anticipated.

Absence of direct reciprocity can lead to problems such as free riding and opportunistic behavior.

While many authors stress the role of the legal structure in the collaboration, if it were only the legal structure, and not a stronger set of social relationships like reciprocity, enforcing the conditions of exchange and the market exchange process would grind to a halt (Reynolds, 1996).

Therefore reciprocity reduces opportunism that may emerge out of collaboration especially in the short run, when trust and commitment have not yet reached an adequate level.

Dependence

Dependence is the extent to which a partner provides important and critical resources for which there are few alternative sources of supply (Buchanan, 1992). Collaborative relationships are as a result of an organisation’s desire to reduce uncertainty and manage dependence through the establishment of semiformal or formal associations with other companies (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). This is because organisations may not be self sufficient with respect to critical resources.

Literature tends to show that dependence of a partner on another one comes from the ability of one partner having more power than the other. This may be more relevant in the vertical relationships where partners may have differing powers, though it could be the same with horizontal relationships. Because of our interest to know the state of dependence in horizontal purchasing collaboration, we investigate whether dependency can hamper horizontal collaborative purchasing between public entities.

Situational analysis on the status of behavioural factors to horizontal collaborative purchasing in Uganda

Trust

Although the meaning of trust is intuitively understood, researchers from different backgrounds ascribe divergent meanings to it. We therefore include a brief analysis of the Ugandan context of trust below:

Trust in developing countries like China is difficult to earn (Fukuyama, 1995). *If a question for example is asked, the typical response is “why do you want to know that?” In Uganda, a question like “what is the price of this shirt?” is met with “how much money do you have?” instead of mentioning the price e.g. Ushs 10,000 or Ushs 20,000. If the user department informs the procurement department that there is no ink cartridge for use, the reply is “why not?”, or “where did it go”. This is a response that reflects lack of trust among the various parties.* This analysis can be extended for public PDE’s.

China is a low trust society (Fukuyama, 1995). Trust arises within a community of regular, honest and cooperative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms. Such norms could be about professional standards and codes of behaviour. For example, we trust a doctor, because by his profession, we do not expect any deviation from those standards expected of medical personnel. In finance, accounting, and purchasing, officers are more often suspected not to do what they are expected of (Public Accounts Report, Uganda 2004). This is mistrust in the finance related disciplines, amongst which is procurement.

Trust manifests itself in terms of the form of concrete deeds and actions. Individuals are no better than their word. For example, in New York city, the Hasidic Jewish diamond traders complete million dollar business

transactions strictly on verbal agreements – in such cultures, a person’s word and reputation are highly valued (Scarnati, 1997). In Uganda on the other hand, even low value activities worth like 1000 Euro agreements are written with the assistance of expensive legal experts and several witnesses.

From the above discussions and from our exploratory findings, we summarize the facts:

- Purchasing collaboration initiatives are new in Uganda.
- Therefore, trust has not yet been able to fully mature amongst concerned public units. Moreover, much as the public sector also has to be efficient to meet strict budgets, there is no driving force for making parties involved to develop trust quickly, as any poor performance outcomes are taken care of by government.
- Unlike the private sector, in the public sector, the PDE’s are regulated and controlled by the PPDA Act (2003), these regulations and controls may reduce the need to have trust amongst the collaborating PDE’s.

Commitment

In the Ugandan case, the public sector organisations work within limits imposed by legal rules and organisational procedures (Telgen, 2006). Yet according to Choppin (1994), commitment will be best achieved when people involved in the collaboration believe in its mission and objectives, and when they are aware of their potential to contribute to them. They will then be willing to take considerable effort for the collaboration to achieve its objectives. This does not only make them act, but also feel the commitment.

In public service like public procurement, those involved are working towards achieving benefits, which will be shared by all members of the public. Much as each member benefits, the particular outcomes can not be easily traced and therefore appreciated by the individual procurement units.

We also note that the correlation between organisational commitment and dependent variables seems to vary considerably in strengths over various studies, and over geographical regions. We note that the Ugandan public purchasing law (PPDA Act, 2003) compels all the PDE’s to follow strict guidelines, with minimal room to act outside the legal provisions.

Reciprocity

We look at reciprocity in three ways (Sullivan et al., 2003):

Author/Factor	Contribution	Ugandan situational analysis
Equivalence (Graen and Scandura, 1987)	This is where parties in a relationship attach the same value to what they get as to what they receive. When there is trust, even if the difference existed, it would be ignored. This kind is common in the initial times of collaboration. This may be through unilateral commitments: specific actions undertaken by parties to foster a type of cooperation not specified in formal contracts.	PDE keep watching the input of others and accordingly adjusts. E.g. Ministry of energy is still mindful of equivalence.
Immediacy Sullivan et al., (2003),	This recognizes the time dimension in reciprocity. Partners are interested in knowing how soon the return will be, for the particular actions carried out now. According to Sullivan et al., (2003), as long as trust is built among the collaborating parties, the time span of reciprocation lengthens, and if the relationship reaches high quality, concern about when reciprocation occurs becomes less important.	Most collaboration initiatives are new. Organized and regulated procurement in Uganda is new; the PPDA Act (2003) is itself is only a few years back. And for the same reason, trust has not yet fully evolved. Therefore reciprocation time remains an important factor.

<p>Interest Sullivan et al., (2003),</p>	<p>This is about self interest as compared to the interests of the collaboration. As relationship quality increases, interest will move from a focus of self interest to a focus on mutual interest. Individual interests will be offset for group interests. There will be unselfish devotion and deep concern for the other partners in the collaboration.</p>	<p>Because of relatively a short time of existence of purchasing collaboration and the PPDA Act 2003, relationship quality has not been achieved in Uganda. Selfishness is still common. In our exploratory study, it was indicated as one of the possible causes for lack of appreciation of collaboration. There have been conflicts amongst ministries for resources. For example, public bodies like Post Uganda Ltd and National Water and Sewerage Corporation always deny each other services, instead of reciprocating behaviour.</p>
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From the above summary, we note that unlike private collaborations, in public organizations the benefits of collaboration go to the whole public. Therefore it may be difficult to judge when the partner gets the return and whether the return got is equivalent to input. Thus the factor of equivalence and interest factors may not be that strong. On the other hand, because of the relatively short time collaboration initiatives have been going on, immediacy becomes crucial, as partners would want to perceive immediate benefits out of their actions.

Dependence

Using existing literature (Hammarkvist et al., 1982; Mattsson, 1999), we show how dependence has been operationalised. We also give practical examples to put our argument into context.

Dimension	Contribution	Ugandan situation
Technical dependence	<p>This is when two organizations technically rely on each other because they have to use compatible equipment. This enables the participating members to mutually use the assets in a technical sense.</p>	<p>Road equipment in the ministry of works in Uganda is used by ministry of local government in grading of roads, there is no need to purchase similar equipment, when there exists some operating under capacity.</p>
Time dependence	<p>Here, two organizations have a time based need of their activities</p>	<p>To PDE's, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development has a great implication to the timing it releases respective funds. This makes time dimension very important</p>
Knowledge dependence	<p>This is where knowledge develops between different parties, as a result of interaction. Such is tacit knowledge and is unique to the very partners in the collaborative arrangement. This is applicable in horizontal collaboration because tacit knowledge is unique to a particular partner, and can not be copied. Therefore, a partner may need to rely on the other for such knowledge.</p>	<p>In Uganda, even where there are lawyers in every public unit, still the Ministry of Justice is referred to whenever there is need to draft a contract. Various units have to refer to staff of other ministries for knowledge on how to handle a certain purchase. For example, most of the ministries considered in our explorative study always referred to a Principal Procurement Officer in the Ministry of Education and Sports, including those officers at the same rank.</p>
Social dependence	<p>This is where the individuals within the relationship get</p>	<p>Interaction has been on for a short time, because these procurement and disposal</p>

	attracted to each other, they like to work together. The interaction creates bonds that are hard to break, and members feel more obliged to collaborate.	entities started in 2003 (PPDA Act, 2003). We therefore don't expect social dependence to be a major influence to horizontal collaborative purchasing in Uganda.
Economic /juridical	This is the formal dependence, especially in form of written contracts	With relatively new collaborations and low level of trust, PDE's tend to depend on others because of formal contracts
Market dependence	It refers to an organization's image and status that may positively influence another organizations image and status.	Apart from five key ministries that are classified as large, the issue of dependence as a result of image and status does not seem to be strong in Uganda
Information technology dependence	It refers to two organizations that may invest in a common IT standard, e.g. electronic data interchange.	Currently, all Ministry PDE's depend on the Integrated Financial Management System; with the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development.

Research method

The general research for the PhD project is a methodological pluralist approach using both quantitative and qualitative designs (Creswell, 1994); both advocates of both positivist and naturalist research methods should declare "...rhetorical cease-fire".

The case study method is appropriate for the study. This is because the method is intensive and is needed to capture all relevant collaboration features in sufficient detail (Henrikki, 1998).

Both in-depth and questionnaire designs will be applied. The comparative design is also used to enable the comparison between those units whose conditions encourage collaboration with those whose conditions don't. A main survey is also used to provide because it is best suited for such kind of study when we want to get a snapshot of the current state of affairs (Janes 2001). Surveys also tend to be better at soliciting attitudes as opposed to actions. Because of our behavioural orientation in this research, we take respondents feelings (who are staff or directly related to purchasing function) as very important if future horizontal collaborative purchasing initiatives are to be recommended.

In this specific paper, we use descriptive and analytical design, to explain the situational analysis of current horizontal collaborative purchasing in Uganda, with the use of the behavioural approach.

The study population includes all the PDEs in the public sector. A Procuring and Disposing Entity (PDE), which we refer to as "entity", will be our unit of analysis. The public sector procurement in Uganda consists of central government entities and local government entities.

Central government PDEs came into operation in the year 2003, compared to the recently (2007) operationalised local government PDEs, and have had some time to carry out horizontal collaborative purchasing activities. We therefore leave out the local government entities in our sample.

We show the population entities, the sample selected, the sampling method and rationale for such decision in the table below

Category	Number of entities	Sample	Sampling method/rationale
Central Government			
Commission	14	14	Census
Hospital	12	12	Census
Ministry	26	25	Convenience: One ministry (Defence) can not give information due to security reasons)
Parastatal	64	64	Census
Local Government			
Districts	76	0	Left out, as they are relatively new.
Urban areas	79	0	Left out, as they are relatively new.
TOTAL	271	115	

We use the PPDA website to get the population data. Most of the PDEs are located around Kampala, which will enhance the data collection process.

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