



## INSTITUTIONAL POLITICS AND PERFORMANCE OF PROCUREMENT IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN WEST NILE SUB-REGION OF UGANDA

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### Abstract:

This study aimed to establish how institutional politics affect performance in public procurement in tertiary institutions in West Nile sub-region of Uganda. A cross-sectional study design was used. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were adopted in the study. The study targeted a sample of 122 respondents. Simple random sampling technique was used to select amongst the user department staff. Purposive sampling was used to select the Accounting Officers and Contracts Committee members. Quantitative data analysis mainly consisted of descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistics (Spearman Rank Order correlation). Findings revealed a very weak negative correlation ( $r^{ho} = -.292$ ) between institutional politics and performance of procurement. Thus, it was concluded that institutional politics, measured in terms of relationship between principals and agents and pursuit of individual agendas/self-interest, significantly affected performance of procurement in tertiary institutions in West Nile sub-region of Uganda. It is recommended that tertiary institutions in West Nile sub-region of Uganda should focus on institutional politics to improve their performance in public procurement.

**Keywords:** institutional politics, public procurement and performance

### 1. Introduction

This study was about institutional politics and performance of procurement in tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda. Institutional politics, measured in terms of relationship between principals and agents and pursuit of individual

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agendas/self-interest, was the independent variable while performance of procurement was the dependent variable.

### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Public procurement has a long history. Written on a red clay tablet, found in Syria; the earliest procurement order dates from between 2800 and 2400 B.C. The order was for *"50 jars of fragrant smooth oil for 600 small weight in grain"* (Coe, 1989, p. 87). Other evidence of historical procurement includes the development of the silk trade between China and a Greek colony in 800 BC.

In the United States, according to Page (1980), as cited in Scott (2008), government procurement at the municipal level predates that of state and federal governments. In the settlements and colonies, printing was one of a few services contracted out by government. There was, however, no professional procurement officials, the practice of procurement being older than the discipline; goods and services needed by government were supplied by commissioners or commissaries, who received a commission on what they bought for the militia or other administrative units. It was not until the late 1800s that state legislatures began to create boards or bureaus responsible for purchasing, but central purchasing was hardly a practice at that time. In 1810, Oklahoma was the first state government to create a board to procure centrally for all state departments and agencies (Page, 1980). Many local governments soon followed Oklahoma's example, according to Arthur Thomas (1919) as cited in Scott (2008).

Since then, centralized purchasing has gradually become common in state and local governments. The centralization trend has, however, been challenged in recent years. Many practitioners and researchers have contended that purchasing authority, especially in government, must be decentralized in order to provide support that is more responsive to end users, eliminate bureaucratic obstacles to programme accomplishment, improve inter-departmental coordination, and empower service delivery managers to procure what they need without impediment by a centralized organization.

In addition to centralized purchasing, there was a movement toward adopting a uniform government procurement code. The American Law Institute and the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws, with the endorsement of the American Bar Association, promulgated the "Uniform Commercial Code" (UCC) and completed it in the fall of 1951. Pennsylvania was the first state to enact the UCC; and by 1980, all states except Louisiana had adopted most provisions of the Uniform Code (Page, 1980). In 1979, the American Bar Association (ABA) issued The Model Procurement Code after five years of intensive effort directed by a Coordinating

Committee on a Model Procurement Code (American Bar Association, 2000, p. 101). In 2000, the ABA updated this publication and issued The 2000 Model Procurement Code for States and Local Governments.

At the federal level, the first purchasing action occurred in 1778 when the Continental Congress approved the appointment of purchasing commissionaires, whose purchasing work was compensated by two per cent of the value of their disbursements in support of the Continental army. By the end of the year, as this arrangement led to excessive costs and possibilities of fraud, the purchasing officers were placed on salary. In 1792, the US Congress passed a purchasing-related Act that authorized the departments of War and Treasury to make purchases in the name of the United States. The first significant procurement, made in 1794, was for a group of six large frigates for the new US. Navy. Bad early experiences with this procurement procedure, however, led to the 1795 passage of the first comprehensive procurement legislation, the Purveyor of Public Supplies Act, which became the basis for military procurement. Misconduct and abuses in federal procurement again led to an Act Concerning Public Contracts of 1808, prohibiting members of Congress from benefiting from government contracts, and the Procurement Act of 1809, requiring competition in government procurement. Since then, a series of legislations and executive orders were passed or issued.

Currently, there are 50 states and over 83,000 local procurement entities and as each governmental unit enjoys its autonomy, space limitations do not allow us to document various procurement laws and regulations in this expose. In 1975, in a pioneering effort, the Council of State Governments published a report tabulating purchasing statutes and regulations of all states, major counties and cities.

Despite many government procurement reform efforts, it seems that all the public procurement problems prevalent over eighty years ago are still witnessed today, and will persist. Managing procurements in the public sector has emerged as one of the most daunting challenges facing public managers today. Given the importance of public sector procurement, more rigorous application of theoretical perspectives and empirical research of organizations at the operational level is greatly needed (Brown, Potowski & Van Slyke, 2006). This study takes a step in that direction by examining the politics of public procurement through the lens of institutional theory. Specifically, it applies the institutional frameworks of Scott (2005) to explore institutional causes of inter-organizational conflict and barriers to collaboration that may contribute to the public institutions' 'smart buyer' problem (Kettl, 1993).

As cited by Defee et al (2010), good research should be grounded in theory (Mentzer et al, 2008). This study was guided by the institutional theory to explain how

institutional politics affect the performance of procurement in public tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region in Uganda. Institutional theory attempts to describe the deeper and more resilient aspects of how institutions are created, maintained, changed and dissolved (Scott, 2005; Scott, 2008), and deals with the pervasive influence of institutions on human behaviour including the processes by which structures such as rules, routines and norms guide social behaviour.

The institutional theory is the traditional approach that is used to examine elements of public procurement (Obanda, 2010). There is no single and universally agreed definition of “institution” or “institutional theory”. According to Scott (2004), institutions are composed of cultural-cognitive and regulative elements that, together with associated activities and resources, give meaning to life. The author explains the three pillars of institutions as regulatory, normative and cultural-cognitive. The regulatory pillar emphasizes the use of rules, laws and sanctions as enforcement mechanisms, with expedience as basis for compliance. The normative pillar refers to norms (how things should be done) and values (the preferred or desirable) which are the social obligations, being the basis of compliance. The cultural-cognitive pillar rests on shared understanding (common beliefs, symbols, shared understanding).

Institutional theory highlights the importance of the wider institutional environment as the ground in which organizations are rooted (Scott, 2005). The key idea behind institutionalization is that much organizational action reflects a pattern of doing things that evolves over time and becomes legitimated within an organization and an environment (Pfeffer, as cited in Eyaa & Oluka, 2011). Institutional theory (Scott, 2001) can be used to explain the problem of managing government procurement, conceptualized as the “smart buyer problem” by Kettl (1993). Kettl argued that, while embracing the market-based promises of procurement, governments have failed to develop the capacity to address even the most fundamental procurement questions such as what to buy, who to buy from and what has to be bought. He suggests that the problem is partly attributable to institutional barriers in government agencies that prevent them from becoming learning organizations. This study explores the proposition that institutional dynamics within procuring organizations may contribute to this problem. Government institutions do not behave as a single buyer with clearly defined buying objectives. Multiple organizations, each shaped by institutional factors, lay claim to processes relating to Kettl’s ‘smart buyer’ questions. As key organizational participants become aligned with their own regulative, normative, and socio-cognitive institutional “pillars”, smart buying behaviour may become confounded by institutional factors and constraining organizational structures.

Conceptually, public procurement is the acquisition of goods, services and works by a procuring entity using public funds (World Bank, 1995). It is the process by which government departments or agencies purchase goods and services from the private sector. Public procurement as a function of government includes decisions about the services that will be delivered to local authorities and the communities they serve (Hughes, 2005). It is utilized not only to secure goods and services required by public sector organizations for their missions and to support services provided to taxpayers, but also used to implement national policies and to achieve social and other objectives (Thai, 2005). Depending on local laws, the relevant government officials will have to follow a set system for procurement. This system could cover the way they advertise for suppliers, the grounds on which they choose a supplier, and the way in which they measure and enforce the requirements they put on the supplier. The usual aims of such a system will be to take advantage of competition between suppliers and to reduce the risk of corruption.

Institutional politics are the processes through which people represent different interests, agendas, and perspectives and compete, thereby coming into conflict and/or collaboration in order to interpret and evaluate information and make decisions, allocate or claim scarce resources and rewards and structure or restructure the organization (Aronow, 2004). In other words, institution politics refer to the social influence attempts directed at those who can provide rewards that will help promote or protect the self-interests of the actor. It refers to behaviours *“that occur on an informal basis within an organization and involve intentional acts of influence that are designed to protect or enhance individuals’ interests when conflicting courses of action are possible”* (Drory, 1993). Politics is a specific quality of the organizational dynamic which impacts all aspects of business life. In this study, institutional politics will be taken to refer to the relationship between principles and agents including pursuit of individual agendas/self-interest.

According to Van Weele (2006), procurement performance is considered the result of two elements: procurement effectiveness and procurement efficiency. Performance provides the basis for an organization to assess how well it is progressing towards its predetermined objectives, identifies areas of strengths and weaknesses and decides on future initiatives with the goal of how to initiate performance improvements. This means that procurement performance is not an end in itself but a means to effective and efficient control and monitoring of the procurement function (Lardenoije, Van Raaij & Van Weele, 2005). Procurement efficiency and procurement effectiveness represent different competences and capabilities for the procurement function. CIPS Australia (2005) presents the differences between efficiency and

effectiveness. Efficiency reflects that the organization is “doing things right” whereas effectiveness relates to the organization “doing the right thing”. This means an organization can be effective and fail to be efficient, the challenge being to balance between the two. In this study, procurement performance was measured using Van Weele (2006) definitions of procurement efficiency and procurement effectiveness.

Contextually, public procurement has always been a big part of the developing countries economy accounting for an estimated 9-13% of the developing nations’ Gross Domestic Product (GDP); and it is therefore an area that needs attention in the face of increasing non-compliance (Odhiambo & Kamau, 2003). Procurement managers and stakeholders in the Public Service serve institutions created and governed by a complex array of statutes, regulations, policies, and directives. They operate in an environment of increasingly intense scrutiny and accelerated changes driven by technology, programme reviews, and public and political expectations for service improvements. Combined, these result into growing institutional complexity and risks. Ntayi (2009), however, observes that millions of dollars get wasted due to inefficient and ineffective procurement structures, policies and procedures as well as failure to impose sanctions for violation of procurement rules, thus resulting in poor service delivery. The level of compliance to procurement regulations can determine whether a public institution meets its goals and objectives or not.

In order to improve the management of public procurement, many countries have come up with procurement reforms. According to Arrowsmith and Trybus (2003), the last decade of the twentieth century has witnessed the start of the global evolution in public procurement. Nonetheless, Thai (2005) asserts that challenges in public procurement go beyond procurement regulations to include procurement process, methods, organizational structure and work force.

This assertion is supported by the African Peer Review Mechanism Country Review (APRM) Report on Uganda (2009), which asserts that non-compliance with the regulations is so high in Uganda. The same report estimates that more than UGX 30 Billion (US Dollars 184) is lost every year due to non-compliance. De Boer and Telgen (1998), as cited by Gelderman et al (2006), explain that compliance is a problem not only in the third world countries but also evident in the countries in the European Union. Gelderman et al (2006) further advance reasons for non-compliance as explained by tendency to avoid red tape involved in the procurement process.

In Uganda, the need for procurement reforms became urgent because of internal and external pressure given the fact that the Government was losing huge sums of money in poorly managed procurement processes. The procurement reforms that were recommended in 2001 in Uganda in the Country Procurement Assessment Report are:

the abolition of the Central Tender Board; enactment of a Procurement Law (Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets Act); establishment of a policy regulation body, the Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets Authority; establishment of Contract Committees and Procurement Units in procuring entities; harmonization of central and local government regulations; incorporation of procurement plans in sector investment programmes; preparation of standard bidding documents, establishment of a procurement cadre in the civil service; and, restoration of professionalism in the procurement function. All procurements and disposals handled by public procuring and disposing entities (PDEs) are governed by the regulations in the PPDA Act (2003). These regulations specify procurement and disposal procedures that have to be followed by all persons involved in procurement and disposal processes in order to ensure fairness, transparency, competitiveness and non-discrimination to all potential providers of goods, services and works (PPDA Act, 2003). Local authorities and other government entities, such as parastatals, schools and tertiary institutions, are by definition public entities. Currently, all procurements are undertaken by the public entities themselves, which has in turn created an extensive demand for high procurement performance in each public entity (Agaba & Shipman, 2006).

In these institutions, Accounting Officers are responsible for the procurement of goods, works and services. In a tertiary institution, the Principal is the Accounting Officer responsible for the entity. Other players are the Contract Committee, the Evaluation Committee (ad-hoc), Negotiation Committees (ad-hoc), Procurements and Disposal Units (PDUs) and the User Departments. All these play their independent roles to see to it that whatever is required, as planned, is procured in accordance with the PPDA Act to ensure value for money.

Concerns have, however, been raised relating to procurement performance in public universities. For example, according to the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Authority, the procurement performance of Kyambogo University (KYU) for FY 2013/2014 declined. Of the 40 procurement files reviewed by value, 68.2% were rated as High Risk, 30.4% were Medium Risk, 1.4% Low Risk and 0% Satisfactory. In comparison with the performance observed in the previous audit of 2012/13, the value of the high and medium risk cases increased from 91% in the previous audit to 98.6% in the current audit. A decrease was also registered in the low and satisfactory cases from 8.2% in the previous audit to 1.4% in the current audit. Furthermore, procurement is characterized by repeat purchases which hinder the Entity's bargaining power, ultimately leading to loss of value for money. It was noted that in eleven cases worth UGX 410,041,185, there were delays between initiation and confirmation of funding by the Accounting Officer. The audit also noted that, in fourteen sampled procurements

worth UGX 2,152,830,959, the Accounting Officer would confirm funding with only a signature but no name and the same applied to the approval to procurement made by the University Bursar. It was therefore not possible to tell whether the signatures were those of the authorized officers. The audit noted that in six cases worth UGX 197,942,422, some firms that had not been pre-qualified by KYU under some of the categories of services/goods/works had been invited by the Entity to bid while leaving out other prequalified suppliers contrary to Regulation 142 of the PPDA Regulations 2003. The audit noted that in twelve cases worth UGX 611,882,659, bidders were shortlisted but there was no evidence to prove that they received the invitation to bid. Furthermore, the audit noted instances where three or four service providers were shortlisted and only one or two responded. Without proof of receipt of invitation, the audit could not ascertain whether all bidders had been invited.

Despite the all efforts by Uganda government to improve performance of the procurement, public procurement in government institutions is still marred with poor procurement performance as seen in the case of UCC Pakwach and NTC Muni, as reported by the Auditor General for the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014 (Auditor General, 2014) - hence, the reason for the study.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

The procurement function has become increasingly important over the past decades since purchasing and supply has become a major determinant of corporate success. Significant business pressure, because of cost pressure and regulatory compliance, has forced the procurement function to focus on cost reduction and attainment of value for money. According to Victor (2012), procurement expenditure could be minimized through implementation of effective procurement practices. The enactment of the Public Procurement and Disposal Act PPDA and the Regulations as well as the establishment of public procurement oversight authority were some of the reforms meant to promote efficiency, effectiveness, good performance, and accountability in public procurement.

The Procurement function usually takes large amounts of organizations' revenue; hence, it is becoming an expensive undertaking for many organizations (Chan & Lee, 2003); and if not properly done it can lead to significant regret. Cognizance is taken of the fact that despite all the efforts by the Uganda government to improve procurement performance, procurement in government tertiary institutions is still marred by poor and unethical practices (Auditor General, 2015).

Failure to implement the recommended performance standards has resulted in unnecessarily high operation costs and uncoordinated business activities, thus affecting the function's performance (PPDA, 2007). Hence, this study sought to establish how institutional politics affect public procurement performance in tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda.

### **2.1 Objective and hypothesis of the Study**

The objective of the study was to examine the effect of institutional politics on the performance of procurement in tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda. It was also hypothesized that there is a significant effect of institutional politics on the performance of procurement in tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda.

### **2.2 Justification for the study**

Poor procurement performance at tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region results into loss of taxpayers' money, inefficiency, lack of value for money in procured goods/services/works, and unreliability of goods and services and works. Yet no study had been conducted in tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region to address the problem. Thus, this study was important in that it aimed to throw more light on the extent to which institutional politics affect the performance of procurement tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region, which might be useful in rectifying problems that were identified and improve on procurement performance.

### **2.3 Scope of the Study**

The study was carried out in tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda, which includes Uganda College of Commerce Pakwach and National Teachers' College, Muni, in Arua. These were selected because of complaints related to their procurement performance. The study concentrated on inter-institutional dynamics and their effect on procurement performance. Inter-institutional dynamics were restricted to aspects of institutional legal environment, institutional human capacity, institutional culture, institutional politics and institutional ethical values. Procurement performance was restricted to public procurement efficiency and effectiveness. The research focused on a period of five years, 2010 to 2015, to obtain information about inter-institutional dynamics and procurement performance. This was because it is recommended that any research should obtain information covering a period of not less than five years to be authentic (Amin, 2005).

### **3. Literature review**

#### **3.1 Theoretical review**

Institutional theory focuses on the deeper and more buoyant aspects of the social structure. It considers the processes by which structures; including schemes, rules, norms, and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behaviour (Scott, as cited in Kenyakisa & Kiruja, 2015). Different components of institutional theory explain how these elements are created, diffused, adopted, and adapted over space and time; and how they fall into decline and disuse. Institutional theory states that organizations exist in an institutional environment, which defines and delimits its social reality (Scott, as cited in Kenyakisa & Kiruja, 2015). In the current study, therefore, institutional theory points out the need to focus on the institutional factors that could influence the performance of public procurement.

Institutional theory describes the effects of external institutional pressures on organizations and defines institutions as regulatory structures, government agencies, laws, courts, and professions, as well as interest groups and public opinion (Lowell as cited in Makabira, 2014). The rules and norms set out by the institutions in an environment are endorsed by various actors. When speaking of actors and institutional environment in this expose, reference is made to the norms represented by the actors in the environment and the pressure that these norms exert on other actors in the environment. A strength attributed to institutional theory is its ability to explain non-choice behaviour of organizations, how they conform to norms without questioning them and undertaking public function (Lowell, as cited in Makabira, 2014).

Institutional theory adopts a sociological perspective to explain organizational structures and behaviour (Dunn & Jones, 2010). It draws attention to the social and cultural factors that influence organizational decision-making and, in particular, how rationalized activities are adopted by organizations (Scott, 2001). Institutional theory is the traditional approach that is used to examine elements of public procurement (Obanda, 2010). Scott (2004) identifies three pillars of institutions as regulatory, normative and cultural-cognitive. The regulatory pillar emphasizes the use of rules, laws and sanctions as enforcement mechanisms, with expedience as the basis for compliance. The normative pillar refers to norms and values with social obligation as the basis of compliance. The cultural-cognitive pillar rests on shared understanding on common beliefs, symbols and shared understanding.

### **3.2 Institutional politics and public procurement performance**

All organizations are subject to conflict and competition between the desires and interests of different departments, teams and individuals. Organizational politics refers to the processes through which these rival interests are played out and eventually reconciled. While in an ideal organization it may be hoped that decisions are made on a rational basis, politics is inherently non-rational and subject to power interactions between diverse interests. Members of an organization are at the same time cooperating to achieve a common goal and competing for rewards, and at times their personal interests may be at odds with the organization's objectives. This foregone is a common phenomenon in most organizations. If the tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region form an exception was a matter of proof to be unveiled by the study.

It is through the political system of an organization that rival interests are resolved. This system represents how power is applied and distributed in the organization. Understanding the political system of an organization is necessary for leaders to operate effectively and reach their goals. Leaders, exercising power, are able to have strong influence on the political climate of an organization through their decisions, their way of handling conflict and providing recognition, support and inspiration to their teams. What is uncertain is whether the leadership of these tertiary institutions has effectively been able to manage their institutional politics in such a way that it does not throw the procurement processes in these institutions to jeopardy.

Negative organizational politics may be very destructive for an organization. This has been identified as one of the major sources of stress within modern businesses. Negative politics include the use of subversive methods to promote a personal agenda which may undermine organizational objectives, distract energy away from organizational goals and compromise the interests, cooperation and fulfilment of other employees. Such tactics may include filtering or distortion of information, non-cooperation, allocating blame, reprisals, dishonesty, obstructionism and threats. It was hoped that such negative organizational politics are not affecting the tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda.

Implementation of organizational activities depends on the relationships between and within organizations. One way to explain these relationships and their effects on the implementation of organizational activities is the principal-agency theory, which holds that shirking is likely to occur when there is some disagreement between policy makers and the bureaucracy. Leaders (the principals), through powers of appointment and the purse are in position to influence bureaucratic outputs. Guy (as cited in Eyaa & Oluka, 2011) found that politicians wield considerable power in affecting bureaucratic outputs via the power of appointment. Calvert et al (1999),

posited that the chief executive's power of appointment and the threat of legislative sanctions influence bureaucratic output. Moreover, they assert that there is a boundary in which agents are allowed to exercise various amounts of discretion. The amount of discretion allowed to agents is determined by the importance of a policy -- the more important a policy, the lesser the amount of discretion that will be allowed to agents and, conversely, the less important a policy to a principal, the more discretion that will be accorded to the agent.

Politicians and government employees are driven by self-interest resulting in under-provision of good government policies. While they are supposed to work in public interest, putting into practice policies of government as efficiently and effectively as possible, public choice theorists see bureaucrats as self-interested utility maximizers, motivated by such factors as salary, public reputation, patronage and ease of managing the bureau (Niskanen, 1973). It is doubtful if politics is not at play and affects procurements in the tertiary institutions; hence, the need to find out if inefficiencies in procurements in the universities are explainable by other trepidations. It is doubtful if the principals do not, in the circumstances, influence the procurement processes in such a way as to champion their personal interests.

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1 Research design**

A cross-sectional study design was used. This design was used because it enabled the researcher to target a large group of respondents to obtain information without making a follow up of the respondents once information from them is obtained (Amin, 2005; Sekaran, 2003). Therefore, this design helped to save on time and resources during data collection. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were adopted in the study. This was because the quantitative approach allowed the researcher to solicit information that was quantified while the qualitative approach allowed the researcher to solicit information that was in textual format (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). Combining numerical and textual information helped the researcher enrich the interpretation of findings of the study as well as benefiting from triangulation.

### **4.2 Study population**

Basing on Human Resource departments' records in the tertiary institutions in West Nile sub-region of Uganda, this study's population included The Accounting Officer, The Contracts Committee, The Procurement and Disposal Unit (PDU), and User departments. Thus, the population from which the sample was selected was 165.

### 4.3 Sample size and selection

Using Krejcie and Morgan sample size table, the following sample size (Table 1) was used.

**Table 1: Sample size and techniques for collection**

Categories	UCC Pakwach	NTC	Target Pop	Sample size	Sample Technique
The Accounting Officer	1	1	2	2	Purposive sampling
The Contracts Committee	5	5	10	10	Purposive sampling
User department staff	59	94	153	110	Simple random sampling
<b>Total</b>	65	100	165	122	

**Source:** Adopted Human Resource Department (2015) and guided by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Sampling Method as cited in Amin (2005)

The selected sample size covered three categories of respondents who participated in the study. These categories include the Accounting Officers, the Contracts Committee and User department staff respectively. This study targeted a sample of 122 respondents as computed in Table 1 above.

### 4.4 Sampling techniques and procedure

A combination of sampling techniques - probabilistic and non-probabilistic - was used. Probability sampling techniques involved selecting respondents from the user population by chance and non-probability sampling techniques involved selecting respondents, the Accounting Officers and Contracts Committee members with intention that they had to participate. The probability sampling technique that was used was simple random sampling and the non-probability sampling technique that was used was purposive sampling. Simple random sampling technique was used to select amongst the User department staff to give every user department staff an equal chance to participate in the study when drawing a sample from a large population of the users and helped avoid bias in the selection. It also minimized the time and cost involved in selecting. Purposive sampling was used to select the Accounting Officers. This method was used on this category of respondents because they were expected to be more knowledgeable about procurement issues in the tertiary institutions as they superintend over the entire procurement process.

#### **4.5 Data collection methods**

A questionnaire survey was used to collect information from a selected group of user department staff members using standardized questionnaires (Amin, 2005). This method involved collecting information from the user department staff in a systematic way. Questionnaire survey was used for these category of respondents to save on time because their number was too big to interview on individual basis.

Interviews were used to collect data from Accounting Officers and Contracts Committee members because, according to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), the researcher was able to establish rapport with this category of respondents and therefore gained their cooperation. Besides, they were few in number and yet most knowledgeable on procurement issues in the institutions. They also allowed the researcher to clarify ambiguous answers and obtained in-depth information. Structured interviews were designed to collect data for this study.

#### **4.6 Data collection instruments**

Two types of data collection instruments were used in the study. These included questionnaires and interview guides. Self-administered questionnaires (SAQs) were used to collect quantitative data from the user department staff. Basing on Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), SAQs were used for this category of respondents to save on time because their number was too big to interview individually and because they could read and write in English and thus filled in the questionnaires by themselves without any assistance.

Interview guides were used to collect qualitative data (Amin, 2005) from Accounting Officer and Contracts Committee members who were in position to provide in-depth information through probing during the face-to-face interview (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). In this study, the probing interviewing tactic was used extensively to obtain a deeper explanation of the issue at hand from the respondents. This was largely due to the fact that the respondents often needed stimuli to expand or clarify their own answers and ideas more broadly, so that broader understanding was more easily reached later on in the findings of the study. The researcher presented questions to the interviewees and he wrote down their views. Data obtained during the interview supplemented those obtained through the questionnaire.

#### **4.7 Validity**

For the instruments to yield relevant and correct data, they were given to two research experts conversant with the study area to comment on the ambiguity, difficulty and

relevance of questions to ensure construct, content and face validity. To establish the content validity index (CVI), the following formula was used:

$$CVI = \frac{\text{Number of items declared valid}}{\text{Total number of judges}}$$

Findings are presented in Table 2:

**Table 2: Validity of Questionnaire**

Raters	Items rated relevant	Items rated not relevant	Total
Rater 1	43	9	52
Rater 2	46	6	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>104</b>

Thus, applying the formula,  $CVI = \frac{89}{104} \approx .856$

The CVI was greater than the recommended .70 (Amin, 2005). Thus, the questionnaire was valid for data collection.

#### 4.8 Reliability

In order to ensure the degree to which questionnaires would produce consistent results if used under the same conditions, they were pilot-tested on similar respondents in public tertiary institutions since they were similar in nature and the results subjected to Cronbach alpha reliability. Data collected from the pilot test was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Reliability of questionnaire**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Reliability for institutional politics	.805	6
Reliability for procurement performance	.745	10

The Cronbach alpha coefficients for the variables in the questionnaire were above 0.7 which is recommended by Nunnally, as cited by Kent (2001). The questionnaire was hence considered reliable for collecting data.

#### 4.8 Data analysis

Quantitative data analysis mainly consisted of descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistics (Spearman Rank Order Correlation).The

frequencies and percentages were used to determine the respondents' views on institutional legal environment and procurement performance. Spearman correlation was used to test the hypotheses. The correlation coefficient (r) was used to determine the strength of the relationship between the variables. The sign of the correlation coefficient (+ or -) was used to determine the nature of relationship. The significance of the correlation coefficient (p) was used to determine the confidence in the findings. The coefficient of determination, which is a square of the correlation coefficient ( $r^2$ ), was computed and expressed as a percentage to determine the variance in procurement performance due to institutional politics.

This involved content analysis, which was used to edit qualitative data and re-organize it into meaningful shorter sentences. A thematic approach was used to analyze qualitative data where themes, categories and patterns were identified. The recurrent themes, which emerged in relation to each guiding question from the interviews, were presented in the results, with selected direct quotations from participants presented as illustrations.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Response Rate

Response rate (also known as completion rate or return rate) in survey research refers to the number of people who answered the survey divided by the number of people in the sample (Johnson & Owens, 2003). It is usually expressed in the form of a percentage. A low response rate can give rise to sampling bias if the non-response is unequal among the participants regarding exposure and/or outcome. In this study, the sample was 280 respondents but the study managed to get 74% of the respondents. The breakdown is shown in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Response rate

Category of population	Target Population	Sampled size	Response Rate	Percentage (%)
The Accounting Officer	2	2	2	100
The Contracts Committee	10	10	10	100
User department staff	153	110	81	74
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>76</b>

Source: Data from the field

Table 4 shows response rate of 76%, which was above the recommended 67% response rate (Amin, 2005; Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). Therefore, the results were considered representative of what would have been obtained from the population.

Before establishing any link between institutional politics and procurement performance, there was need to first find out results using descriptive statistics, which in the study were frequencies and percentages, given that type of data used was ordinal. Therefore, the following subsections present findings about institutional politics and procurement performance.

## 5.2 Descriptive results on institutional politics

User department staff members were requested to respond to six items about institutional politics by indicating their agreement using a five-point Likert scale as shown in Table 5. The analysis and interpretation of the findings about institutional politics follows the presentation of findings in the Table 5.

**Table 5: Institutional politics descriptive statistics**

Institutional Politics	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Total
<b>1 In our institute is, there is a lot of conflict and competition between the desires and interests of different departments, teams and individuals</b>	10 (12%)	17 (21%)	18 (22%)	23 (28%)	13 (16%)	81 (100%)
<b>2 Negative organizational politics is very destructive for our organization</b>	9 (11%)	15 (19%)	13 (16%)	24 (30%)	20 (25%)	81 (100%)
<b>3 There are negative politics which includes the use of subversive methods to promote a personal agenda which often undermine organizational objectives, distract energy away from organizational goals and compromise the interests, cooperation and fulfillment of other user department staff and contract committee members</b>	11 (14%)	17 (21%)	17 (21%)	22 (27%)	14 (17%)	81 (100%)
<b>4 In our institution, there are such tactics which include filtering or distortion of information, non-cooperation, allocating blame, reprisals, dishonesty, obstructionism and threats</b>	8 (10%)	18 (22%)	22 (27%)	21 (26%)	12 (15%)	81 (100%)
<b>5 User department staff members are driven by self-interest resulting in under provision of good internal government policies.</b>	13 (16%)	11 (14%)	22 (27%)	25 (31%)	10 (12%)	81 (100%)
<b>6 In our institution, there is work in public interest, putting into practice policies of government as efficiently and effectively as possible</b>	20 (25%)	12 (15%)	21 (26%)	23 (28%)	5 (6%)	81 (100%)

Source: Data from the field

Findings in Table 5 show that most user department staff members opposed one item about institutional politics (that is item 6) compared to those who concurred or were not

sure. A comparison on this item shows that the percentage of user department staff members that opposed was 40% while the percentage of those that were not sure was 26% and the percentage of those that concurred was 34%. From these comparisons, it can be seen that the percentage that opposed this item was higher compared to the percentage for those who were not sure and the percentage that concurred. From this analysis, the following is the interpretation. Findings show most user department staff members were of the view that there was lack of work in public interest, putting into practice policies of government as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Findings, however, show that most user department staff members concurred with five items about institutional politics (that is item 1 to 5) compared to those who opposed or were not sure. A comparison on these items shows that those that opposed ranged from 30% to 35% while those that were not sure ranged from 16% to 27% and those that concurred ranged from 41% to 55%. From these comparisons, it can be seen that the percentages that concurred with the items were higher compared to those who were not sure and those that opposed. From this analysis, the following is the interpretation. Findings show most user department staff members were of the view that there was a lot of conflict and competition between the desires and interests of different departments, teams and individuals; negative organizational politics were very destructive for the organizations; and, there were negative politics which includes the use of subversive methods to promote a personal agenda which often undermine organizational objectives, distract energy away from organizational goals and compromise the interests, cooperation and fulfilment of other user department staff and contract committee members. Most user department staff members were of the view that there were such tactics which included filtering or distortion of information, non-cooperation, allocating blame, reprisals, dishonesty, obstructionism and threats; and that user department staff members were driven by self-interest resulting in under-provision of good internal government policies.

In addition to the findings in the previous paragraph, interviews with key informants were conducted to have an in-depth understanding of the institutional politics in the tertiary institutions. During the interview, the UCC Key Informant A revealed the following, *“Resources are always scarce and this therefore brings in competition and conflict of interest for one to succeed. Politics of divide and rule is unhealthy”* (Interview with UCC Key Informant A, 8<sup>th</sup> May 2017). The NTC Key Informant W opined, *“Many of these conflicts are based on tribal basis and friendship. Negative organizational politics has led to a lot of divisions among the staff (Interview with NTC Key Informant W, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2017)”*. The UCC Key Informant B responded thus, *“Conflict of interest between management and procurement department has undermined the work ethics. For bigger procurement, distortion*

and filtering of information's are used" (Interview with UCC Key Informant B, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2017). There was difference in the response from UTC Key Informant X as shown in the following:

*"Negative politics results into competent individual sitting back due to the fact that their ideas are not considered. Some individuals are the only ones considered as performers. Distortion of information, non-cooperation, allocating blame, reprisals, dishonesty, obstructionism and threats originate from top fueled by the top leaving out many competent people due to dishonesty and ending into threats to the disadvantaged ones."*

(Interview with NTC Key Informant X, 11<sup>th</sup>May 2017)

A UCC Key Informant C explained the issue of self-interest as shown in the following, *"Procurement personnel think of the personal benefit before government policies. Policies are changed for personal gains and minutes doctored* (Interview with UCC Key Informant C, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017). Echoing almost the same, NTC Key Informant Y revealed, *"There is no work in public interest because all employees at the same level are not considered in the same way, this in one way or the other demotivates some people* (Interview with NTC Key Informant Y, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2017). Thus, these findings show that there is negative institutional politics in tertiary institutions under the procurement processes.

### 5.3 Descriptive results on procurement performance

User department staff members responded to 10 items about procurement performance in tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda by indicating their agreement using a five-point Likert scale as shown in Table 6. The analysis and interpretation of the findings follows the presentation.

**Table 5:** Procurement performance descriptive statistics

Procurement Performance	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Total
1. Competitive prices are not paid for focus products.	5 (6%)	11 (14%)	31 (38%)	27 (33%)	7 (9%)	81 (100%)
2. Inefficient procurement mechanisms are being used.	8 (10%)	13 (16%)	18 (22%)	35 (43%)	7 (9%)	81 (100%)
3. Suppliers do not deliver the right goods at the right time.	6 (7%)	20 (25%)	17 (21%)	29 (36%)	9 (11%)	81 (100%)
4. There are delays in the procurement cycle.	1 (1%)	11 (14%)	21 (26%)	33 (41%)	15 (19%)	81 (100%)
5. There are delays in processing payments.	5 (6%)	6 (7%)	24 (30%)	28 (35%)	18 (22%)	81 (100%)
6. There are emergency orders frequently	5	11	35	23	7	81

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<b>used to prevent stock-outs.</b>	(6%)	(14%)	(43%)	(28%)	(9%)	(100%)
<b>7. The procurement unit is operating inefficiently.</b>	6 (7%)	19 (23%)	19 (23%)	28 (35%)	9 (11%)	81 (100%)
<b>8. Funded operational training program is not in place to provide staff with appropriate training to maintain or upgrade their procurement skills.</b>	11 (14%)	18 (22%)	18 (22%)	29 (36%)	5 (6%)	81 (100%)
<b>9. Procurement prices are not available to the public.</b>	10 (12%)	16 (20%)	31 (38%)	20 (25%)	4 (5%)	81 (100%)
<b>10. Procurement methods being used do not promote competition.</b>	8 (10%)	10 (12%)	17 (21%)	36 (44%)	10 (12%)	81 (100%)

Source: Data from the field

Findings in Table 6 show that most of the user department staff members concurred with eight items about procurement performance (that is items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 10) compared to those who opposed or were not sure. A comparison on these items shows that those that opposed ranged from 13% to 36%, while those that were not sure ranged from 21% to 38%, and those that concurred ranged from 42% to 60%. From these comparisons, it can be seen that the percentages that concurred with the items were higher compared to those who were not sure and those that opposed. From this analysis, the following is the interpretation. Findings show most user department staff members were of the view that competitive prices were not paid for focus products, inefficient procurement mechanisms were used, suppliers did not deliver the right goods at the right time and there were delays in the procurement cycle and in processing payments. Furthermore, most user department staff members were of the view that the procurement unit was operating inefficiently; funded operational training programme was not in place to provide staff with appropriate training to maintain or upgrade their procurement skills; and procurement methods used did not promote competition.

On the other hand, findings show that most of the user department staff members were not sure regarding two items about procurement performance (that is items 6 and 9) compared to those who concurred and those who opposed. A comparison on these items shows that those that opposed ranged from 20% to 32%, while those that were not sure ranged from 38% to 43% and those that concurred ranged from 30% to 37%. From these comparisons, it can be seen that the percentages that were not sure with the items were higher compared to those who were opposed and those who concurred. From this analysis, the following is the interpretation. Findings show most user department staff members were of the view that they were

not sure whether emergency orders were frequently used to prevent stock-outs or procurement prices were not available to the public.

Therefore, these findings show poor procurement performance in tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda. Having established the views of user department staff members on procurement performance, the following subsection presents findings linking institutional legal framework and procurement performance.

#### 5.4 Inferential statistical results on institutional politics and procurement performance

The following third hypothesis was tested, “*There is a significant effect of effect institutional politics on the performance of procurement in different tertiary institutions in West Nile Sub-Region of Uganda*”. Table 7 presents the test results.

**Table 7:** Correlation and coefficient of determination on institutional politics and procurement performance

	Institutional politics
<b>Procurement performance</b>	$rho = -.292$ $rho^2 = .085$ $p = .008$ $n = 81$

Source: Data from the field

Findings in Table 7 show that there was a very weak negative correlation ( $rho = -.292$ ) between institutional politics and procurement performance in tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda. The coefficient of determination ( $rho^2 = .085$ ) shows that institutional politics accounted for 8.5% variance in procurement performance. These findings were subjected to a test of significance (p) and it is shown that the significance of the correlation ( $p = .008$ ) is less than the recommended critical significance at .05. Because of this, the hypothesis, “*There is a significant effect of effect institutional politics on the performance of procurement in different tertiary institutions in West Nile Sub-Region of Uganda*” was accepted.

The implication of the findings was that the very weak effect implied that a change in institutional politics contributed to a very small change in procurement performance in tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda. The negative nature of the effect implied that the change in institutional politics and procurement performance in tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda was in the opposite direction, whereby more institutional politics contributed to poor procurement performance in tertiary institutions in West Nile sub-region of Uganda

and less institutional politics contributed to better procurement performance in public universities.

## 6. Discussion

Findings revealed a very weak negative correlation between institutional politics and procurement performance in tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda. In a tertiary institutions, many individuals, groups and organizations in the private sector, including professional associations and business firms or companies (commonly known as interest groups), are actively involved in all aspects of their procurement system. Having various interests, objectives and beliefs, interest groups are involved in the tertiary institutions' procurement system in several ways, such as lobbying various stakeholders to pass or alter procurement procedures, and influencing budget authorization and appropriation processes. Normally, a tertiary institution programme that is eventually adopted is a compromise among views of different interest groups, policy makers and management. In such environment, there are cases of a strong coalition of policy makers, bureaucrats and interest groups in their effort to get their programmes adopted. This coalition leads to the concept of the conflict of interests; thus, politicking. Accordingly, procurement practitioners have choices as they face various political pressures as well as sound economic decisions (Thai, 2001).

Findings of this study established that conflict and competition between the desires and interests of different institution stakeholders and negative organizational politics compromised procurement performance in tertiary institutions, which concurs with Schapper, Malta and Gilbert (2006) who observe that procurement in various institutions is considered an inherently politically-sensitive activity. Meanwhile, Pillary (2004) argues that senior tertiary institutional officials and leaders use institutional office for private gain and this has weakened the motivation to remain honest. Raymond (2008) also opines that tertiary institutional officers receive clandestine payments in procurement. This ultimately interferes with the procurement process and constrains compliance. This is also re-echoed by Lodhia and Burritt (2004) who recognize that social and political influences have an important bearing on procurement performance. In developing countries, one of the major obstacles to the procurement system is individual interference with the tender process, especially influence of tender awards. The threat of being suspended or fired has in many cases intimidated tertiary institutional Procurement Officers into obeying illegal Senior Officers' different directives leading to non-compliance (Akech, 2005). In support of this, Hui et al (2011) assert that interference from the politicians, businesspersons and very influential top

management individuals has interrupted the procurement processes and deterred transparency. Findings show most user department staff members were of the view that there was a lot of conflict and competition between the desires and interests of different departments, teams and individuals; negative organizational politics was very destructive for the organization; and, there were negative politics which includes the use of subversive methods to promote personal agenda which often undermine organizational objectives, distract energy away from organizational goals and compromise the interests, cooperation and fulfilment of other user department staff and contract committee members. Most user department staff members were of the view that there were such tactics which included filtering or distortion of information, non-cooperation, allocating blame, reprisals, dishonesty, obstructionism and threats; and that user department staff members were driven by self-interest resulting in under-provision of good internal government policies. In the circumstances, the low procurement performance finds its explanation partly in the institutional politics in the tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda.

Similarly, the qualitative findings revealed that, *“Negative organizational politics has led to a lot of divisions among the staff”* (Interview with NTC Key Informant W, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2017). The UCC Key Informant B responded thus, *“Conflict of interest between management and procurement department has undermined the work ethics. For bigger procurement, distortion and filtering of information are used”* (Interview with UCC Key Informant B, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2017).

Institutional politics arises where there are differences in stakeholders’ interests and this was the case in tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda. According to Donaldson and Preston (1995), stakeholder theory has become an indispensable part of management literature. They classify stakeholders into internal, external, key and secondary ones with each carrying a different level of influence to the enterprise. When analyzing from the social network perspective, a firm does not deal with one stakeholder at a time, but multiple stakeholders simultaneously, with interdependent relationships among these stakeholders. Consequently, the relationship between firms and their stakeholders are as complex as the ways to manage them. The premise of stakeholder theory is that firms are bound to have conflicts with their multiple stakeholders. The central issue of stakeholder research is thus how to minimize these conflicts within the stream of stakeholder research. Frooman (1999) took the approach of deciphering stakeholder actions and developed his stakeholder influence strategy theory from a resource dependence perspective.

As Frooman theorized, the type of resource relationship between the firm and its stakeholder determines where the power lies in the exchange. The level of “resource

dependence” depends on the attributes of a resource, such as the relative magnitude of exchange in a resource relationship and the criticality of that resource. For example, if the firm depends on the stakeholder for a critical resource for survival, the stakeholder will have absolute power over the firm, and vice versa. Furthermore, the balance of power will determine the stakeholder’s choice of influence strategy. Two important features marked Frooman’s discussion of stakeholder influence strategies: the way the stakeholders control resources, and the path the stakeholders take to manipulate the supply of resources. If a stakeholder owns resources that a firm needs, the stakeholder can control the firm by determining whether the firm gets the resources and whether the firm can use the resources in the way it wants. Frooman called these “resource control strategies”, and differentiated between two types of resource control strategies: withholding and usage. Withholding strategies are defined as those where the stakeholder discontinues the supply of a resource to a firm with the intention of making the firm change its action. Usage strategies, on the other hand, are those in which the stakeholder continues to supply a resource, but with strings attached. Because these two strategies carry different costs to the stakeholder, cost consideration sometimes becomes the key determinant in the choice of influence strategy.

## **7. Conclusion**

It was established that institutional politics had a weak effect on procurement performance in tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda. Poor procurement performance was due to lack of work in public interest; a lot of conflict and competition between the desires and interests of different stakeholders; negative organizational politics; filtering or distortion of information; non-cooperation; allocating blame, reprisals, dishonesty, obstructionism and threats. Thus, the findings of this study, like other studies, highlight the importance of having conducive institutional politics for better procurement performance in tertiary institutions, and other organizations, in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda.

### **7.1 Recommendation**

This study recommends that for procurement performance to improve, the following relating institutional politics should be done. Procurement work in tertiary institutions should be done in public interest. There is need for constructive organizational politics to enhance procurement performance. Thus, stakeholder engagement is critical at all levels. It can be used primarily to gain knowledge, understanding and ideas from key individuals within the organization.

## 7.2 Areas for Further Study

This study sought to assess how intra-institutional dynamics affect performance in public procurement in tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda. However, due to demographic and economic differences the findings of this study (conducted in tertiary institutions in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda) cannot be generalized to other tertiary institutions in Uganda. This study therefore recommends further studies on intra-institutional dynamics affecting procurement performance in all tertiary institutions, especially public universities, in Uganda.

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