

Decentralization and Local Governance: A Conceptual and Theoretical Discourse

Abstract:

This article is a contribution to the debate on the concepts of decentralization and local governance. It discusses some of the major theoretical and conceptual issues that may impact on the practice of decentralization and local governance in Africa. The discussion begins with a conceptualisation of decentralization and local governance and the linkages between the two, by critically examining some of the assumed linkages between the two concepts. In particular the article questions the assumption that decentralization will necessarily lead to good governance at the local level. This is followed by a discussion of some of the factors that account for the weak support that governments in Sub-Saharan Africa give to decentralization and local governance. In this regard the article identifies some of the challenges to decentralization and local governance that have to be addressed in order to make the process more efficient. The bulk of the discussion takes a more theoretical perspective.