

Structure of public administration in ghana



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One of these problems is local participation in political decision making in the country's democratic process (Anti-Bosnia and Donna, 2009). Local accountability becomes effective where local leaders are elected by their own people hence the importance of decentralization. "Shania's decentralization policy from 1988 to date combines elements of political, administrative and fiscal decentralization," among other things that seek to promote effective governance at the local level (Aye, 2008: 234).

This paper provides an overview of theoretical decentralization followed by a brief history of Shania's political system. It then addresses the issues of effective public administrators (leaders) and decentralization. It concludes by making a case for local government elections in the various electoral constituencies: districts and regions, while recommendations are made for constitutional amendments to allow locals to elect their own public officials.

To understand the role of public officials in the Ghanaian political environment, an attempt is made here to define public administration. The Ghanaian political heads of state, from the first president, Shame Markham (1957) to John Evans Tat-Mills (2009) have different leadership skills that affirm the diverse administrative styles of public administrators. This non-surprisingly diverse tauter in public administration is normative in its definition focusing mainly on public interest (King and Clinton, 2009).

Each one of the leaders, including those not mentioned in this paper, has had his fair share of public criticisms of maladministration given their administrative styles, yet all of them are more likely to vow that their actions were in the interest of the public. Ghana, a country of only 54 years of

political freedom, gaining political independence from the British colonial rule, has had four different constitutions; however, 21 out of the 54 years of the country was ruled under military decrees leaving only 33 years of constitutional administration in Ghana.

The literature on public administration and its definition has different interpretations of the field (Stimulant, 2010; The first military administration in Ghana was from 1966-1969, second military administration 1972-1979, and the third and longest was from 1981-1992. Anti-Bosnia King and Clinton, 2009). Public administrators are engaged in technicalities but unfortunately, some Ghanaian, if not most of them, lack the knowledge to fully comprehend the role of public administrators.

Moreover, Ghanaian are not lone as “ empirical descriptions from an external perspective,” studies have shown that “ no one really sees the big picture” in its definition (King and Clinton, 2009: 29, 1). Lot of the citizens do not understand the details of the legal duties of their leaders operations. In addition to budgetary preparations and Job classifications, public administrators are equally concerned with the development of human resources and achieving the goals of the people. Public administration, like any other academic discipline, is not isolated but intertwined “ with the critical dilemmas confronting an entire society’.

Its diverse nature makes it difficult for ordinary Ghanaian who are not part of an administration to focus on the goals of that administration if those goals are not clearly defined. Many studies including, but not limited to, King and Clinton (2009), Grover starling (2001), Mesquite (2002), William (1995),

Robert (1995) and James and Donald (1996), for decades have offered different definitions of public administration (Stimulant, 2010: 2 – 4). Crop (2008: 8), citing Dwight Wald, also agrees “ no single, and authoritative definition of public administration is possible”.

For example, Grover (1998: 10) stated that public administration is the process by which resources are marshaled and then used to cope with the problems facing a political community, but David (1986: 6) sees it as “ the use of managerial, political and legal theories and processes to fulfill legislative, executive and Judicial governmental mandates for the provision of regulatory and service functions for the society as a whole or for some segments of it”. Leonard (1955: 3), considered as one of the pioneers in the field, has a broader definition.

He defines it as “ consisting of all those operations avian for their purpose the fulfillment or enforcement of public policy’. Given the complexities of leadership and public administration in Ghana, it becomes more confusing if the administration of local communities is laid only on the shoulders of the central government. The logical definition of public administration, the author argues, is derived from differing understanding of sagacity or different premises. To the Ghanaian, despite how ill-defined the field is, public administration must be seen in the areas including transparency, accountability and decentralization.

Public administration should be a collective effort to engage the human resources for effective implementation of public policies within the budgetary constraints of that community. It is, therefore, important that public

administrators are elected to serve the people within a Drawing from the literature, public administration is the management of the scarce resources, that is, financial, 167 human and material of a community by elected and unelected public officials to benefit the said community, region or district.

Public administration is an art, which strategically combines these resources to maximize their utilization in the interest of the citizens within a governed Jurisdiction. Contrary to the scientific argument for public administration, the field, some have argued, only provides a focus and not a locus (Henry, 1975). For public administrators to be seen as effective and productive, their area of administration must be politically and clearly defined hence the importance of decentralization.

One of the essential components of democratic societies, which has being adopted in emerging democracies is decentralization to make their administrative systems more efficient (Dillinger, 1994). In Ghana, as Aye (2008: 233) noted, since independence, succeeding governments in Ghana have preoccupied themselves tit decentralization because they regarded it as a necessary condition for not only the socio-economic development of the country, but also as a way of achieving their political objectives such as the rationalization of power and legitimacy'.

The large body of scholarly literature on decentralization provides conflicting analyses on effective public administration (Baguette, 2008; Kim et al. , 2005). In Ghana, politicians who advocate for decentralization are sometimes skeptical of giving or sharing power with their subordinates as the concept is either not well defined or understood in the Ghanaian context. As Gamma-

Bodied observed that even though local governments are given autonomy over finance, control from the central government had taken away that power from the local people.

He maintains that the districts do not have the capacity to manage their finance, and even the District Assembly Common Fund is controlled by the central government. Gamma-Boat noted that local government policy in Ghana had brought developments since its inception in 1988, but the situation was aggravated by the total hegemony exercised by the central government. In fact, the literature on decentralization, according to o legal models of government relations (Cohen and Peterson, 1999: I, 19). The authors define it along the principal distinction between unitary and federal based systems like federation, confederation, unions and leagues.

Decentralization, according to this 2 The author strongly argues that public administration is an art and not science. This argument is not the focus of the paper and hopes to discuss this extensively in another article but for now this argument is beyond the scope of this paper. To have an idea of the scientific argument for public administration see Nicholas Henry, 1975, public Administration Review. 5 (4) 378-386. 3 Professor Gamma-Boat discussed the conflicting gains of decentralization at a symposium in 2009 Ghana. See [http://www. Henbane. Com/Changeovers/Necessaries/article. PH? Old= 16 2875](http://www.Henbane.Com/Changeovers/Necessaries/article.PH?Old=162875) Retrieved on July 25, 2010. He also noted the lack of smooth implementation of decentralization policies. 168 J. Far. Stud. Deep. School of thought, is a community having legally specified sovereignty over the identified public sector tasks in a well-defined territorial Jurisdiction (Cohen and Peterson, 1999: 19- 22). Shania's political structure falls into the unitary <https://assignbuster.com/structure-of-public-administration-in-ghana/>

political category, where the executive holds the power of nominating district and regional leaders.

Hence, the governed in these units have no choice but to live with the selection of the executive. The practice of public administration comes in many shades as the literature struggles to identify a universal acceptable definition. Since the Fourth Republic of Ghana (1992 - present), despite the accusations of electoral frauds by the two leading political parties (New Patriotic Party [NAP] and National Democratic Congress [AND]) in the country, Ghana, as a country, has enjoyed five successful general elections.

This feat, undeniably, makes Ghana a more mom of its neighbors over the same period (Calamari, 2008). The irony of Ghana's political system is that notwithstanding the form of government of the country (military or democratic), the role of the executive remains the same regarding the appointments of the heads of local governments. This practice, arguably, provides little or no local power to the grassroots. It therefore, minimizes the otherwise political difference between a military and democratic regime.

This paper argues for a constitutional amendment to allow a stronger local government empowerment through local government elections. It maintains that by intuiting the current process where regional and district administrators are appointed by the central government, the locals are deprived of the opportunity to elect leaders of their choice. For example, the original intent of decentralization and the appointment of local public officials have given way to intense partisan politics. Gamma-Bodied recently

admitted that the non-partisan concept of decentralization has “burbled with party politics”.

He further explained that 30% of the government appointees to the District Assembly, according to the Local Government Act [of 1988], should be technocrats ND experts, but surveys conducted by CD-Ghana in 2005 and 2007, revealed that most of the appointees were political activists.

Additionally, this argument “stems largely from the idea that decentralization will promote better governance as local officials are supposedly more aware of, and more responsive to, local needs” (Ducal, 2007: 713).

Decentralization, as has been argued by proponents, is more likely to encourage and promote not only democracy, but also provides locals with the chance to have control 4 See an editorialist version of Professor Gamma-Bodies speech on “Reflection on Shania’s Decentralization Programmer: Progress, Stagnation or Retrogression” retrieved from [http://www. Ghanaian. Com/Changeovers/Necessaries/article. PH? ID= 16 2875](http://www.Ghanaian.Com/Changeovers/Necessaries/article.PH?ID=162875) on July 19, 2010.

Over their own governance. THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING AND AMBIGUITIES It is often easier to document and discuss the shortcomings of decentralization, public administration and governance in Ghana than in theory.

There is a complex notion of subaltern pertinent to any academic enterprise, which concerns itself with historically determined relationships (Shade, 1998: 2) of any one concept in abstraction and its implementation. The concept of decentralization and its interpretations have become a battleground for

variety of disciplines and theories. However, scholars of public administration including political analysts often discuss theoretical shortcomings and lack of development with very little incorporation of the effect of that theory or model (7 - 22).

Dublin (1969: 6) argues that developing a theory must have a human experience. He posits “ the need for theories lies in the human behavior of wanting to impose order on unordered experiences, which is not ordered by nature hence the experiences may be... Theorized about, in very different ways”. As a solution to ease regional conflicts (Alaskan and Depopulating, 2003; Permian, 2002), decentralization is a process where central government transfers political, fiscal and administrative powers to lower levels in an administrative and territorial hierarchy (Duncan, 2007: 713).

In theory, it holds regional leaders accountable to their constituents instead of the central government. Decentralization is defined in a variety of ways by the degree of delegation and autonomy of local actors (Seibel-Menses, 2000; Fester, 1965; weren't, 2003), which presents conflicts and dilemmas in the concept and TTS impact (Baguette, 1997; Homes, 1995). Empirical literature does not agree on the benefits of decentralization as different studies are poles apart in their conclusions.

For example, while Allow and Hunch (1990), Putnam (1993) and World Bank (1994) argue that decentralization makes governments more responsive, Baguette (2008), Tanzania (1995), Prudhoe (1995) and Samoan (1990) think otherwise. However, the 1992 constitutional recognition for decentralization has renewed interest in political decentralization in Ghana, as locals often

reject leaders appointed by the central government (Axis, 2008). While economists focus on efficiency and equity, public administration scholars are also interested in the distribution of power, responsiveness, transparency, and accountability (Clingier and Millenarian, 1998).

The literature affirms that macroeconomic function must governments must deal with program specificities for local demand. Dates (1993) analysis of over 50 countries confirmed a positive relationship between decentralization and economic growth. The theoretical argument for fiscal decentralization traces back to Madison and Rousseau, in the 17th and 18th centuries (Holman, 1990), though they had different reasons for supporting decentralization. For example, in the Federalist Papers No. 9 (IPPP), Madison argues that leaders must derive their powers “ directly... From the great body of the people,” which means that powerful locals and “ not inconsiderable... Handful of ... Nobles are exercising their oppression by a delegation of their powers” (Roister, 1961 : 241). Though decentralization is not specifically mentioned in IPPP, Madison believes that the people must be given the mandate to elect their leaders as a way of “ composing the distinct and independent regions, to which they respectively belong” Rosette, 1961 : 243).

Rousseau (176: 59 – 50) also favored small government. To him, “ rulers overburdened with business, see nothing for themselves: clerks govern” (1762,). Using the Poland political system, Rousseau, who advocated for a political reformation, instructed the poles to perfect and extend the authority of their provincial parliaments to avoid the dangers of larger state

bureaucracies (Rousseau, 1772: 183-184). By this assertion, Rousseau was insisting on the essentials of local rep-sensation (decentralization).

According to Holman (1990), small democratic (local) governments were the fund-mental popes of the people, as most of them distrusted the activities of the central government. The debate for political decentralization is inconclusive in the literature as both proponents and opponents provide different findings in their studies (for example, Putnam, 1993; Prudhoe, 1995). In discussing the politics of decentralization, therefore, it should be noted that the concept goes together with centralized government power.

Though decentralization is primarily a strategy for transferring authority and responsibility from the central government to sub-national regional and district) levels of government (Storm, 1989; Stone, 1997), many African leaders only adopt the districts and regions. Some studies maintain that the concept is not easily defined; therefore, it has several dimensions and wide variety types of institutional restructuring, which encompasses the term decentralization. Though some scholars see it as a simple term, they argue that its simplistic generalization is sometimes too broad.

According to Fester (1965: 536), decentralization is a term of rich conceptual and empirical meaning, " which can designate static fact and dynamic process ND it can refer to pure ideal-type and moderate incremental change" when the rational theory of decentralization is understood in all compartments. For the purpose of this paper, a brief three-stage (political 169 decentralization, devolution and delegation) definition of

decentralization is provided based on the degree of discretion and responsibility delegated by the central executive.

The literature shows that developing countries have addressed decentralization in different ways, often reflecting the national history, politics and culture for administrative and economic efficiency; but more importantly is the role of district and regional leaders in focusing on the needs of their constituencies. However, the concept of the decentralization/development dichotomy has not yielded the desired results in other parts of the world (Kettle, 2000), including Ghana.

This analysis defines decentralization as an electoral devolution to enable citizens at the grassroots (that is, locals) to elect their own leaders void of any direct input from the central government. Political decentralization, which is manifested in the agree and types of political autonomy and accountability, is of greater importance to this study. A fully developed system of political decentralization in Ghana is a situation where local people in the districts and regions elect their own legislative and executive personnel so that administrative personnel without reference to central authority.

Political decentralization gives citizens and their elected representatives the political power in the public policy process. This form of decentralization is associated with pluralistic politics and representative government, but it can also support demagnification by giving citizens or heir representatives, more influence in the formulation and implementation of policies (Furnish, 1974;

Harridan, 1994) in their areas. Political decentralization often requires constitutional or statutory reforms.

Such a reform may force elected officials in the constituencies to be more accountable to the electorates instead of satisfying the wishes of a distant executive. Administratively, political decentralization empowers citizens to “play a larger role in regional governance... [including] conflict resolution” (Duncan, 2007: 727). This empowerment, unfortunately, is lacking in the current political process here the executive has the exclusive power to appoint district and regional leaders.

The literature affirms that political appointees are subject to the whims (Clingier and Millenarian, 1998: 43) of the central government. Generally, empirical studies tend to favor political decentralization over centralization in terms of innovation, leadership accountability and responsiveness (Taylor, 2003: 231). This assertion, according to Taylor, has become a sort of accepted wisdom among social scientists. Nevertheless, given the theoretical support by social scientists, a general correlation between political centralization and innovation is yet to be firmly established.

Trainman (2007) argues that self-governing 170 is the core aspect of modern democratic nations where the people must elect their own leaders. To Trainman, political decentralization is good for its facilitating features. These features include, but are not limited to, administrative efficiency, checks on central government abuses and policy experimentation. While decentralization satisfies geographically concentrated ethnic groups.