

Should they be Side-Lined Completely? Analysing the Role of Traditional Leaders (Chiefs) under the 4th Republic of Ghana's Local Government Administration

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine the roles of traditional leaders (Chiefs) in Ghana under the fourth republic in local government administration using Nhyiaeso Metropolitan Assembly as a case study. Qualitative research approach together with descriptive qualitative design was employed to for the study. The population included traditional rulers and staffs of the Nhyiaeso Metropolitan Assembly. A total of 20 participants were conveniently and purposively sampled to participate in the study. Semi-structured interview guide and focus group discussion were used for data collection. The collected data were analysed thematically. The study found that there exist a good relationship, respect and coordination between the Nhyiaeso Traditional Council and the Nhyiaeso Metropolitan Assemblies, factors impeding traditional leaders participating in decision making process in local government system include low level of knowledge regarding pertinent issues, cumbersomeness of the local government administration, political neutrality of the traditional rulers, the Nhyiaeso Metropolitan Assembly supports traditional rulers in implementation and executive of projects in their communities, planning of development programmes in their respective communities and also wider consultation where necessary. Based on the findings, it is recommended among others that to increase the legitimacy of the projects and programs to the local population, traditional authorities must be fully involved. In order to ensure peace, cohabitation, and complementary efficacy, traditional values, traditional ruling systems, and traditional laws must interact with the formal government system's institutions.

Keywords: Traditional leaders, 4th Republic of Ghana, Local Government, Administration

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the arrival of colonization on the continent, Africa had a traditional form of governance. To name a few, traditional kingdoms were those of Buganda and Toro in Uganda, Moshi in Burkina Faso, Yoruba and Hausa in Nigeria, and Asante and Dagbon in Ghana. These kingdoms' leadership creates ties of harmony and political stability. For instance, the Asantes in Ghana had an administrative-military organization that demonstrated the chain of command, the hierarchy of power within the Kingdom, and the routes of communication inside the system (Obeng, 1986). Through local investment and taxation, the Kingdom mobilized resources and earned income for system growth and maintenance (Arhin et al., 1992).

Traditional authorities have been involved in local level development since colonial times by taking part in governance in a variety of capacities, from the "indirect rule" strategy adopted by the British colonial government to the current situation where they take part in the District Assemblies (DAs) as appointed members. In many aspects, the chieftaincy institution has persisted in Ghanaian culture and continues to be a vital force that is essential for local level participation in decision-making in local government and sustainable development (Ayee, 2007). Decentralization became Ghana's primary approach to public administration throughout the last decades of the 20th century. In Ghana, decentralization emerged as a prominent policy goal

in the 1980s and 1990s. Decentralization aims to improve local government's effectiveness, accessibility, participation, and individual benefits. It is a system that makes governance more accessible to the general public at the local level of society, allowing them to take part in local government (Ayivor & Ekpe, 2012).

Ghana has been working for a long time to promote participatory government at the local level, much like many other developing nations. Decentralization is becoming more popular across the world due to its association advantages such as growth, public engagement, accountability, responsiveness, effectiveness, equity, and stability (Ayee, 2007). Since Ghana's independence, attempts to implement a local government system have not yielded the anticipated results. Conflicts in the decentralization implementation system are caused by a variety of factors, including a lack of competent staff, negative attitudes, poor coordination, a central government unwillingness to devolve power to the districts, and the inability of local government law to define the roles and functions of the various actors (Zanu, 1996; Ayee, 2007; Crawford, 2004).

Chiefs in Ghana have had a little, if any, functional role in local government administration since the country's 1957 declaration of independence. In spite of the fact that the history of local government cannot be fully understood without the institution of chieftaincy, the link between chiefs and local government units has not been well established (Thopa, 2020). Chiefs participated in local government activities including local development during the colonial era as part of the Native Authority System. The importance of chieftaincy to local administration and development has also not been questioned throughout the post-colonial era (Ayee, 2007).

A study by the African Peer Review Mechanism (2005) suggested the following as reasons why traditional authorities should be fused in the local government structure. They postulated that their participation will help improve management of infrastructure, monitoring, and evaluation, peace-building, security, and conflict prevention, management of natural resources, internal revenue mobilization, respect for human rights, reduction of harmful sociocultural practices, and Capacity-Building. Therefore, to gain the potential advantages of effective collaboration for planning, accountability to the people, effective community mobilization and optimum use of local resources, the relationship between local government and traditional authorities needs to be streamlined and harmonized.

Even while the necessity to include chiefs in local government administration is becoming more widely acknowledged in Ghana, it is unclear how much involvement they should have and how it should be done in order to maximize their advantages. It is against this backdrop that the researchers intended to investigate the role of traditional leaders (chiefs) in Ghana under the fourth republic in the local government administration using Nhyiaeso Metropolitan Assembly as a case study.

Rationale of the Study

This study sought to examine the roles of traditional leaders (Chiefs) in Ghana under the fourth republic in local government administration using Nhyiaeso Metropolitan Assembly as a case study.

Research Questions

1. How does the metropolitan assembly structure allow traditional leaders interact within the current local government system in Nhyiaeso Metropolis?
2. What are the factors impeding traditional leaders participating in decision making process with regard to local government system in Nhyiaeso Metropolis?
3. How does the current local government system support traditional leaders in their local level development in Nhyiaeso Metropolis?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Local Government and Local Governance Dichotomy

Local government can be defined as a group of elected officials who have executive, legislative, and

administrative powers over the areas under their authority. It is described as a body that chooses or establishes certain policies within a specific region. Local government is a branch of a nation's government that primarily handles concerns or problems pertaining to a specific population inside a certain territory. This is primarily based on the duties that a nation's parliament decides to assign to local government through its legislation.

Aijaz (2007) is of the view that the concept local government includes two crucial components: the presence of locally elected officials and local financial stability, which serve as the building blocks of any local government. It means governance or management of local affairs by the residents of that community. Local Government according to Hasluck (2010) is the sphere of government where local authorities are allowed by law to issue acts or decisions to adjust the way of governance. In his book "Elements of Politics", Sidgwick (2014) considers local government as government of some sub-organs that have special powers to issue regulations or rules within the area which they manage. So Sidgwick connects this government with its legislative character.

The main characteristics of local government from the analysis of all the definitions made to local government by different authors, emerge the following main features:

1. First, this government has statutory status, therefore it is defined, recognized and functions on the basis of the laws of a country (in our country, in Albania, local government bodies are constitutional bodies),
2. Secondly, these bodies have the right to decide about their own local taxes on the territory where extend jurisdiction,
3. Thirdly, they are characterized by the right of local community participation in decision making process or management of local affairs,
4. Fourth, it is known the capacity to act independently from central government bodies, within the limits set by law, through the decentralization process or the principle of local autonomy,
5. fifth, these bodies serve the general interest of the citizens, i.e. common interest

Local governance on the other hand is a broader concept that denotes the formulation and execution of collective action at the local level (Shah & Shah, 2006). Thus, it encompasses the direct and indirect roles of formal institutions of local government and government hierarchies as well as the roles of informal norms, networks, community organizations, and neighbourhood associations in pursuing collective actions.

Structure of Ghana's Local Government System

It is important to note that since the local government structure of Ghana is in several tiers/phases/levels, co-ordination will be a key facilitating measure in the whole structure to ensure its practicality and effectiveness in terms of implementation. The presidency, cabinet and civil service are at the centre and connected to the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies through the sixteen (16) Regional Coordinating Councils popularly called the 'RCCs' located in the sixteen (16) administrative regions of Ghana. Beneath the level of the Metropolitan Assemblies are the Sub-Metropolitan District Councils as well as the Town Councils. Under the Municipal and District Assemblies are the Zonal Councils and Urban/Town/Area Councils respectively. The very lowest level to the bottom is the Unit Committees which represent the last stage in the structure. It is generally called a four-tier system, even though that depends on the way one looks at it (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2016). Below is the structure for administrative local government of Ghana.

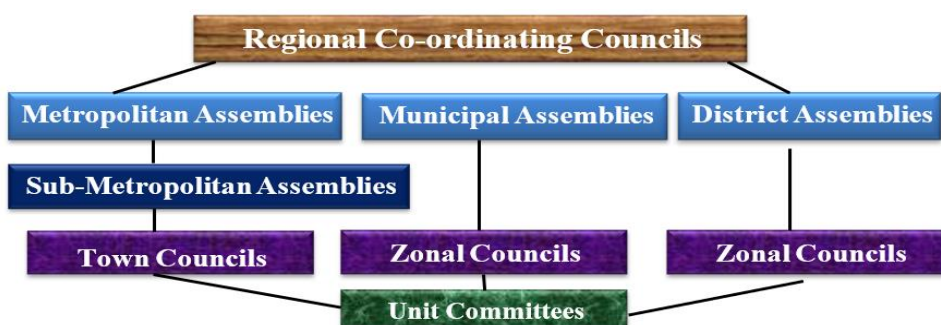


Figure 1: Structure of Ghana local government

Source: Adopted from Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (2016)

Modern Role of Traditional Authorities in Ghana

The Chief and the Elders make up a traditional authority. The top of the hierarchy is occupied by the chief. The Chief Priest and the "Magazia" are examples of elders (Ayee, 2006). Due to the diversity of local cultures and customs, the hierarchy of traditional authorities is not uniform in any one place. This means that the chief, who must be a man and who must come from a royal lineage, must be duly chosen and have the proper en-skinned. A chief is specifically expected to "assist in fulfilling the ambitions and aspirations of the community" (Dankwa III, 2004). Development, to put it simply, is the goal of the community that a person serves as chief over, and it has been discovered that a chief's success is determined by how well they perform in terms of the level of development they are able to bring to their region (Dunn & Robertson, 1975; Pomen, 2005). To be the agent of growth that his community expects, the chief must therefore possess wisdom, authority, dynamism, and respect. Chiefs work to mobilize community labour at the local level in order to implement comprehensive change in their communities (Campion & Acheampong, 2014).

Chiefs work to mobilize community labour at the local level in order to implement comprehensive change in their communities. The responsibilities of the government and the governed in the traditional society were therefore well defined, and maintain tight accountability to ensure sound government, in order to foster the desired growth in communities without allowing the TAs to misuse their powers (Dankwa III, 2004). Hence, the TA (whether in northern or southern Ghana) is required to carry out the following functions and obligations (among others) for and on behalf of its subjects:

1. Exercise the people's mandate (those on whose behalf the chief rules) to settle disputes of all kinds, and most particularly land disputes among his subjects
2. Make and enforce customary by-laws and punish offenders of the laws
3. Preside over the stool lands and permit settlers and other investment partners including the Assembly to acquire land (Dawda & Dapilah, 2013).

Every traditional authority is concerned with the "qualitative and quantitative development of their communities" because to the aforementioned roles and many more (Ayee, 2006). In order to profit from partnerships, every chief is motivated by this concern to work with other local and regional development partners. The MMDAs are one such accomplice.

According to Mahama (2009), certain traditional leaders continue to be agents of development in their villages and regions under the decentralized system of governance by enlisting the aid of people and resources for development initiatives. Also, they make sure that their spheres of influence are peaceful and quiet. The absence of social order and harmony prevents progress. One approach to achieve this is to prevent and rapidly resolve any chieftaincy issues that have a tendency to cause division among the populace (Dawda & Dapilah, 2013). The majority of traditional leaders in today's society are development-focused, and as a result, they are quite active in encouraging their people to start and carry out self-help initiatives and in assisting the implementation of projects coming from the District Assemblies (Edu-Afful, 2010). They sometimes start development projects on their own initiative and lead fund-raising efforts to put them into action.

One good example is the Okyehene's environmental project that has led to the establishment of a university college. Thus, traditional authorities continue to form important links between the government and the people, acting as channels of communication and disseminating government policy and decisions. In this way, they participate in local government and thereby help to bring government closer to the people. Moreover, in recent times quite a number of TAs have been able to mobilize their citizens living away or abroad to contribute in cash and in kind to development projects at home. Some communities have fairly active associations of non-resident citizens (Mahama, 2009).

The Relationship between Local Governments and Traditional Authorities in Ghana

At the local level of government, there is some kind of dualistic authority. One type of authority is made up of

individuals who view the populace as a group of distinct individuals, each with their own set of rights, and who get their legitimacy to rule from the fact that they were chosen. The second category consists of those who believe that people are part of cultural unit with collective rights and who get their authority from ancestry and tradition (Makiika, 1998). The latter category includes traditional authorities, who continue to be crucial in fields including political leadership, community identification, natural resource management, and cultural leadership.

The ability of traditional rulers to mobilize support for local level development projects has been used to make the case for institutional representation of traditional rulers in the local government system. They have the ability to promote grassroots participation as well (Campion & Acheampong, 2014). Also their democratic credentials demonstrate this, since people go to them as a final choice after the national government and district assemblies have failed (Ayee, 2006). The potential to revive the traditional rulers' interest in the activities of the district assemblies and the sub-district structures rests in bridging the gap between the district assemblies and the sub-district structures on the one hand and the traditional authorities on the other. The moment one talks about grassroots governance one is already making overtures to chieftaincy, as stated directly by Ayee (2006), since in Ghana, implementing a good program without the assistance of the traditional authority is almost difficult.

Ferrazzi (2016) suggest that as it was previously mentioned, a review of the Constitution and local government statutes reveals that traditional leaders were intended to be included in the local government system, but their current function is unclear. The National House of Traditional Leaders shall advise any person or authority tasked with any responsibility under this constitution or any other law for any matter relating to or affecting chieftaincy, according to Article 272(a) of the Constitution. A DA must consist of "other persons not exceeding 30% of the total membership of the Assembly nominated by the President in conjunction with the traditional authorities and other interested groups in the district," according to Section 5(1)(d) of the Local Government Act (Ferrazzi, 2016).

A brief examination of the duties and obligations of TAs and MMDAs reveals that they are distinct parts of the same program for local community development and poverty alleviation. However neither the Local Government Act nor the Constitution of Ghana have specified institutional representation for chiefs in the District Assembly or sub-district structures, nor have they specified the nature of the relationship that should exist between the MMDAs and the TAs (Mahama, 2009).

Not only does the 1992 Constitution fail to not provide for any formal partnership, or even institutional representation of TAs within the DA structure, but also Article 276(1) prevents chiefs from playing an active role in politics. Also, legislative Instrument 1589 of 1994 makes no provision for the inclusion of TAs in sub-district structures (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2017). It is in light of this that Ayee (2006) argues that lack of institutional representation of chiefs in the District Assemblies and the sub-district structures has led to not only misgivings by most chiefs on the operations and performance of the District Assemblies but also a position of non-cooperation adopted by either some chiefs or some officials of the District Assemblies.

Nonetheless, Seini (2006) claims that certain TAs and MMDAs do have informal alliances that signify a friendly relationship. For instance, chiefs arrange for community labor or financial resources to be used for project implementation and allow DAs' access to land for project-related activities. The chief or the TA is always included in discussions about grassroots democracy in Ghana since it would be impossible to successfully conduct an empowerment program without their participation (Dawda & Dapilah, 2013). From these angles, every growth course is facilitated by the chief who serves as the TA's leader. According to these ideas, the chieftaincy is a crucial institution for Ghana's growth (Ayee, 2006).

Factors Impeding Traditional Leaders in Local Governance Administration in Ghana

In reference to the institutional representation of chiefs in local government, Coussey's Constitutional Commission said unequivocally in 1949 that chiefs are inextricably linked to community life and that their extinction would be catastrophic for the nation. Despite this warning, some have asserted that chiefs' representation in the DAs system would violate the constitutional provision prohibiting chiefs, particularly

from engaging in active political politics, despite the fact that DAs are generally thought to be non-partisan (Aye, 2006). However according to Kendie et al. (2008), the failure to include concepts from traditional sources may be to blame for the undervaluation of traditional indigenous knowledge systems that are crucial for sustainable development.

The traditional chiefs were concerned that the new local councils would usurp their authority, according to Van der Waldt, Venter, Van der Walt, Phutiagae, Khalo, Van Niekerk, and Nealer (2007, p. 16). They were especially furious since the new council's boundaries crossed the old tribal government's jurisdiction, and they were concerned that their authority would be questioned. Traditional leaders may acknowledge the power of the council, but they are hostile toward ward councillors and do not recognize them, according to Atkinson and Reitzes (1998, p. 108). Traditional leaders see it as a threat to their authority when infrastructure or services are provided without their input. People frequently believe that councillors only consult them when they are having issues and need the help of the traditional leaders. Conflict also results from traditional authorities allocating land in some locations without consulting ward council members (Atkinson & Reitzes, 1998, p.109). According to Bekke, Toonen, and Perry (1996, p. 125), the degree of representation, with regard to societal attitudes and the degree of interest representation, is what causes unsatisfactory ties between traditional leaders and city councils.

On the other hand, Botes, Brynard, Fourie, and Roux (1996) argue that tribal authorities do play a crucial role in the political, social, and traditional activities in clearly defined communities. The issue arises from institutions competing for recognition within the same communities while claiming various levels of legitimacy and performing overlapping tasks. If the legitimacy issue cannot be resolved, then the roles must be clearly defined (Atkinson & Reitzes, 1998, p.109). According to the Independent Project Trust (IPT) (2000, p. 1), civic organizations, political parties, and others have questioned the legitimacy of traditional leaders, claiming that any system of inherited rule by traditional leaders is unjust, undemocratic, feudal, and unnecessary.

On the other hand, some others have argued that the exclusion of traditional leaders is in the right direction as it ensures that they remain politically neutral and able to command the respect of all irrespective of their political persuasion. Being repositories of knowledge, and revered by their subjects as such, traditional leaders are also expected in the name of democracy, local development, democratic consolidation etc., to be bold and forthright in championing the rights of individuals. This necessarily includes the ability to speak out against local government excesses capable of derailing fragile democratic dispensation and thereby undermining national development (Mahama, 2009).

According to Kanyane (2007, p. 318), traditional leaders claim stewardship powers over municipalities as custodians of African traditions in some areas. This paradox of power relations is a potential cause for concern because, at times, the developmental focus of local government is obstructed as municipal and tribal councils do not always agree, whilst service delivery is desperately expected by the communities they serve. The author further states that traditional leaders are solely concerned about the way in which municipal councils conduct themselves in the approach to community development. To the traditional leaders, municipal councils encroach on their traditional affairs by implementing developmental plans in their areas, without their consultation. The two often view each other with distrust (Kanyane, 2007, p. 319). However, the main role of traditional leadership should be to serve as the building blocks of the local government, for effective local economic development. Thus traditional leaders need to work in partnership with municipal councils in as far as governance and economic development in local municipalities is concerned.

Western-style democracy and traditional institutions of chieftaincy co-exist for long periods in relative peace and calm, but occasionally, conflicts arise either between or within the two institutions. Ghana has been confronting this challenge since it started its decentralization process in 1987. To further exacerbate the dual system of governance in Ghana, conflicts also exist within the decentralization process itself (Adjepong et al, 2003). These tensions can compromise peace both at the macro and micro levels, such as between the political elites of the dominant parties (Frempong, 2017). Subsequently, we need strategic conflict resolution mechanisms to pre-empt these debilitating strains. Some African countries have been able to blend formal and informal rules to benefit them.

In Burkina Faso, traditional leaders have appropriated the decentralization process to combine the legal status previously denied them with their customary legitimacy (Ouedraogo, 2003). The immediate problem arising is how to delimit customary functions of chiefs from state functions of elected officials; a recurring issue that always accompanies involvement of chiefs in partisan politics as witnessed in recent events in Burkina Faso in local natural resource management. As Ouedraogo (2003) points out, implementers of decentralization should be wary of attempting to replace or undermine pre-existing institutions familiar to the local population with government reforms based on a legal and institutional framework. This is especially important when the traditional institutions themselves are in a state of flux, as is happening in both Burkina Faso and Ghana.

The relevance of the interplay of formal and informal rules becomes more revealing when we juxtapose meanings of decentralization by English speaking countries and French speaking countries. In the former, decentralization connotes 'devolution of resources and powers of the central state to local or private decision-making bodies' (Ouedraogo, 2003). Ouedraogo directs us to the French tradition of a more legalistic understanding of decentralization as indicated by Kiemde (2001) state recognition of the existence of autonomous local governments endowed with specific competencies and managed by autonomous bodies. Decentralization here means "reorganizing the state and only involves governmental players at the local level (local government, public enterprises, etc)" (Ouedraogo, 2003, 98).

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Design

This investigation employed the qualitative research approach. This approach was employed in order to understand and interpret the views of traditional authorities in Nhyiaeso traditional area about their neglect in local governance and various measure that need to put in place to ensure the collaboration of traditional authorities and local government in harnessing development. The descriptive qualitative design was utilized to explore the perception of traditional authorities and local government authorities about the role of traditional leaders (chiefs) in Ghana under the fourth republic in the local government administration using Nhyiaeso Metropolitan Assembly as a case study. The use of this design is appropriate in achieving the objectives of the study.

Population and Sample

For the purpose of this study, the target population comprised all the staff of the Nhyiaseo Metropolitan Assembly (local government authorities) and traditional authorities in the Nhyiaseo Traditional Council. Fifteen (15) traditional authorities (chief and elders-in-council) and 5 local government authorities of Nhyiaeso Metropolitan Assembly were conveniently and purposively sampled for the investigation. The study employed non-probability sampling techniques in selecting the respondents. In selecting the traditional authorities and local government authorities, convenient sampling technique was employed to the 15 traditional leaders whereas purposive sampling technique was employed to select 5 local government authorities. Therefore the sample size for this study is 20 participants.

Instrument

In collecting data from the participants, a semi-structured interview guide and focus group discussions were employed to obtain in-depth information on the role of traditional leaders (chiefs) in Ghana under the fourth republic in the local government administration.

Data Analysis Procedure

Thematic analysis was employed in analysing data that was gathered from the interviewees after interview information has been transcribed. In the thematic analysis, major issues as raised during the interview were put in main themes so that the analysis of such data would be relatively easier for discussion. Core principles of the thematic approach to qualitative data analysis by (Braun & Clarke, 2006) were adapted for use in this study.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results from the analysis of the data collected during the field work. It focuses on presentation and discussion of the findings from data gathered from the interviews conducted.

Demographic Data of Participants

The demographic data of participants are grouped into sex, age, educational level, position in Nhyiaeso Traditional Council and Number of years as staff of Nhyiaeso Traditional Council. Results from the study indicated that, out of the total of 20 participants, 14(70%) were males whilst 6 (30%) were females. With the age bracket, majority of the respondents were in the age bracket of 40-60years. With the level of education, all the sampled respondents had formal education. With the number of years served as member of the Nhyiaeso Traditional Council, all the respondents had served at least 5years as a member of the Nhyiaeso Traditional Council.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One: How does the metropolitan assembly structure allow traditional leaders interact within the current local government system in Nhyiaeso Metropolis?

The first research question sought to find out from the study participants how the metropolitan assembly structure allow traditional leaders to interact within the current local government system in Nhyiaeso Metropolis? The theme discussed below assisted to find answers to this question.

It was discovered through the respondents' comments that, there exist a good relationship, respect and coordination between the Nhyiaeso Traditional Council and the Nhyiaeso Metropolitan Assembly.

For instance one traditional leader had this to say:

"In fact, the traditional council in Nhyiaeso here has a good relationship with the metropolitan assembly when it comes to local government administration. There has also been respect, let me say, mutual understanding when it comes to development project in the Assembly". (R-1)

Another traditional leader share the view that:

"Structure.....structure.....ok you mean the administrative setup of the metropolitan assembly. Officially chieftaincy intuitions are not represented in the administrative structured of the Assembly, but tradition and customs has created some sort of respect or relationship that has served as avenue for Nananom to have a say in the administration of Nhyiaeso" (R-7).

In light of this, a member of the assembly also revealed that:

"Although the traditional authorities are not represented legally on the administrative structure of the local government but we always collaborate with Nananom as part of tradition and culture when we want to undertake any major project in the assembly especially those sensitive once such as situation of new school, hospital, market to mention but few. Due to rich in knowledge of the Nhyiaeso Traditional Council, we always get advice from them and it's really making progress in local governance" (R-4).

It can be concluded that, though traditional authorities are not lawfully represented on the local government administrative structure, they weigh some sort of experience which when well utilized, will go a long way in local governance especially the Nhyiaeso Metropolis.

Ayee's (2006) study is in support of these findings. He opined that the ability of traditional rulers to mobilize support for local level development projects has been used to make the case for institutional representation of traditional rulers in the local government system. They have the ability to promote grassroots participation as

well. Their democratic credentials demonstrate this, since people go to them as a final choice after the national government and district assemblies have failed.

A member of the assembly shared a different opinion

“We tried this thing some time ago but it did not work because most of the chiefs were not educated and therefore did not know how to handle the business of the assembly. Instead of giving them representation at the assembly, I suggest we create a second chamber or an upper house at the local level to be made up of traditional authorities serving as co-opted members with the primary role of advising the municipal assembly on critical issues”. (R-2)

This view is supported by Sklar (2003) that in Africa today, it is normal for traditional political jurisdiction to occupy a second dimension of political space; a dimension that lies behind the sovereign state. Contrary to the views expressed above, one of the queenmothers agreed to the view that chiefs should represent their people at the Municipal Assembly. According to the queenmother, normally the Assembly members, especially the elected ones, do not interact with the people as much as they should but the chiefs, on the average, interact with the people daily and so will be better placed to represent their people. It became clear during the focus group discussion held for opinion leaders and elders that all the respondents in the focus group agreed that the representation of chiefs at the Municipal Assembly level would increase their involvement in the decision making process and ensure good governance at the local level.

Another official of the assembly made this assertion:

“Lawfully, there exist no structure between the traditional authorities and local government but we have always respected and sought for the views of our traditional rulers here. It’s even makes developmental project run smooth when everyone rally his supports especially that of Nananom”. (R-8)

Another traditional authority revealed that:

I can tell you on authority that no local assembly can develop in Ghana if they sidelined the traditional authorities. Because Nananom have the interest of the development of the land at heart though those powers do not rest on their soldiers constitutionally. As a member of the Nhyiaeso Traditional Council, I have been part and parcel of every major project undertaken by the Metropolitan Assembly in my 19years as Gyasehene. It’s rather unfortunate the constitution has taken the sole mandate from us but traditional council have always have the interest of local development” (R-1).

It can therefore be concluded from the above extract that there exists a structure of government for the traditional leaders, but which is not supported by law in the Nhyiaeso Metropolis, thus making it difficult for traditional leaders to effectively participate in decision making process of the assembly.

The results indicate that if there is interaction between Traditional leaders and the Metro Assembly structures, then it is not supported by law but there has always be a negotiation on the part of the Metro Assembly to have the traditional leaders participate in the management of the metropolis. This is supported by Kasangbata (2006) who argue that governance must be seen as a system of values, policies and institutions by which a society organizes collective decision-making and actions related to political, economic, social, cultural and environmental affairs through the interaction of the state, civil society and traditional authorities. It must also encompass both the modern and the traditional institutions and mechanisms that ensure development.

Research Question Two: What are the factors impeding traditional leaders participating in decision making process with regard to local government system in Nhyiaeso Metropolis?

The objective of this research question was to establish the factors impeding traditional leaders participating in decision making process with regard to local government system in Nhyiaeso Metropolis. In quest of the findings, views of participants were solicited. It emerged that lack of education, cumbersomeness of the administration, political neutrality among others.

In light of this, a traditional chief had this to say:

“We are not educated and it's for those who are educated. I cannot read and write and even talk more of understanding the language they use there” (R-8).

A traditional ruler supported this by saying:

“Educated people like cheating and going there to take part in their meeting they will end up by cheating me either through my land or any development in my area. One of the chiefs even use me as example that this research that I am conducting will at the end come with money but I will call on them even to let them know that I have been rewarded with money after I have interview them” (R-3).

This information confirms the traditional leaders' lack of faith in the system and demonstrates why they sell their property without consulting the local assembly. The traditional authorities hold the view that they should be granted the authority to regulate the sale and development of real estate since they are the guardians of the land.

Another chief shared that:

“The assembly is for government workers who pay to do work for the state. They are specially trained for that but the development of Nyiaeso is paramount to us as traditional rulers. We can do it if given the mandate but what can we say, those powers are no longer with us” (R-2).

Another chief supported that:

“There is too much process in the way they carry out their business in the assembly and I don't have time for that” (R-9).

A staff of the assembly responded that:

“A major factor for the lack of participation of traditional leaders in issues regarding local government has to do with the principle of neutrality. Per the constitution (1992) of the Republic of Ghana, Traditional leaders (Chiefs) are supposed to act neutral, hence, the reason why I think they should not meddle with issues of politics because they may lose the trust of their subjects” (R-4).

Another member of the assembly opined that:

“Constitutionally, traditional rulers are not mandated to meddle with issues of politics but for local governance, some are able to share their views on pertinent issues where necessary. When it comes to meetings of the local assembly, they are not invited but indirectly take part in decision making through their assembly members in that regard” (R-1).

From the various extracts, it can be confirmed that Traditional leaders (chiefs) in Nyiaeso Traditional Council are officially part of decision making regarding local government as a results of their low level of knowledge in pertinent issues such as administrative work and also the principle of neutrality has constitutionally served as a barrier to traditional leaders taking part in decision making in local government.

The findings corroborates Mahama (2009) who postulated that the exclusion of traditional leaders is in the right direction as it ensures that they remain politically neutral and able to command the respect of all irrespective of their political persuasion. Being repositories of knowledge, and revered by their subjects as such, traditional leaders are also expected in the name of democracy, local development, democratic consolidation etc., to be bold and forthright in championing the rights of individuals.

But the findings juxtapose Kendie et al. (2008) who strongly agreed that the failure to include concepts from traditional sources may be to blame for the undervaluation of traditional indigenous knowledge systems that

are crucial for sustainable development.

Research Question Three: How does the current local government system support traditional leaders in their local level development in Nhyiaeso Metropolis?

The final research question aimed to find out how the current local government system supports traditional leaders in their local level development in Nhyiaeso Metropolis. Interview with the participants suggest that the Nhyiaeso Metropolitan Assembly supports traditional leaders in implementation and executive of projects in their communities, planning of development programmes in their respective communities and also wider consultation where necessary.

In light of this, a member of the assembly suggested that:

“Traditional leaders (Chiefs) have not been totally sidelined when it comes of local development of Nhyiaeso Municipal Assembly development. Sometimes they are been consulted by the assembly to discuss where to build projects such as markets, schools, chip-compounds because they are still regarded as the custodians of the land” (R-1).

Another member of the assembly opined that

“With the rich in wisdom of our chiefs, I think they should be integrated into the assembly for the betterment of our local government system. Our chiefs weight array of respects which cannot be taken from them. For example, the assembly embarked on a community-community sanitation exercise in 2022 and I must tell, it was successful when Nananom supported this agenda. The people obey and respects them a lot” (R-7).

A chief revealed that:

“The assembly has over the years brought us on board on couple of issues regarding development of Nhyiaeso which I can't lie about it”. (R-1)

Another traditional ruler said:

“The assembly have supported some projected we suggested to them and I think they should be commended for that. They sometimes consult us on issues they fumble about and I love that as a chief” (R-4).

A member of the Nhyiaeso traditional council shared that

“To me what the assembly is doing is not enough, there should be a creation of upper house of chiefs to run alongside the district assembly. This will help better Nhyiaeso because we the traditional rulers are the custodians of the land. For those (Assembly workers) are not doing enough to help development the area. When it comes to collection of tax levies, we can do better they do” (R-5).

From the various extracts, it can be concluded that the Nhyiaeso Traditional Council have not been left when it comes to local governance since the Municipal assembly occasionally consult them when necessary, incorporate their ideas in development of the area and supports them in implementation executive of projects such as build of pipe-borne waters, Chip-compounds, schools and even feeder roads and above all wider consultation where necessary.

The finding is in line with Kendie et al. (2008) who suggested that traditional leaders should be consulted or incorporated in local government because quantum of resources available to traditional authorities and the utilisation of these resources could help to solve basic community problems and enhance the developmental process.

KEY FINDINGS

The study revealed that there exist a good relationship, respect and coordination between the Nhyiaeso

Traditional Council and the Nhyiaeso Metropolitan Assembly.

Regarding the factors impeding traditional leaders participating in decision making process in local government system in Nhyiaeso Metropolis include low level of knowledge regarding pertinent issues, cumbersomeness of the local government administration, political neutrality of the traditional rulers.

On issues of how the current local government system support traditional leaders in their local level development in Nhyiaeso Metropolis, it revealed that the Nhyiaeso Metropolitan Assembly supports traditional rulers in implementation and executive of projects in their communities, planning of development programmes in their respective communities and also wider consultation where necessary.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that there exist a good relationship, respect and coordination between the Nhyiaeso Traditional Council and the Nhyiaeso Metropolitan Assembly. Factors impeding traditional leaders participating in decision making process with regard to local government system in Nhyiaeso Metropolis include low level of knowledge regarding pertinent issues, cumbersomeness of the local government administration, political neutrality of the traditional rulers. The Nhyiaeso Metropolitan Assembly supports traditional rulers in implementation and executive of projects in their communities, planning of development programmes in their respective communities and also wider consultation where necessary. Projects supported or collaborated between the traditional rulers and the assembly ranges from building of pipe-borne waters, Chip-compounds, schools and even feeder roads and above all wider consultation where necessary.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To increase the legitimacy of the projects and programs to the local population, traditional authorities must be fully involved in their area's execution of projects and programs. To guarantee some degree of accountability and openness in the governance process, there should be regular workshops and forums to inform traditional leaders on the condition of the municipal area.
2. Local government philosophy calls for a working relationship between the government institutions and the local stakeholders. Therefore, opportunity must be given to all to participate in the programme especially the traditional authorities. Traditional leaders should be included in all phases of decision-making to force them to empathize with those choices and aid their people in understanding them.
3. In order to ensure peace, cohabitation, and complementary efficacy, traditional values, traditional ruling systems, and traditional laws must interact with the formal government system's institutions. Traditional rulers must be provided the necessary ability as well as personal and financial resources to enable them to perform successfully and efficiently because the resources are clearly skewed in favor of the assembly.
4. Chiefs must be transparent in the way they run their territories, particularly when it comes to matters involving resource management, the collecting of royalties, the adoption of bylaws, and the administration of customary justice. The state should give chiefs the authority to enforce certain bylaws, but they must also take refresher courses and stay up to date on contemporary trends in arbitration and negotiation.

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