Decentralised Local Governance and Community Development: Empirical Perspectives from Northern Ghana

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

2013

FRANCIS NANGBEVIEL SANYARE

Institute for Development Policy and Management (IDPM)
School of Environment and Development
## CONTENTS

| LIST OF TABLES                      | .......................................................... | 5 |
| LIST OF FIGURES                    | .......................................................... | 5 |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS              | .......................................................... | 6 |
| ABSTRACT                           | .......................................................... | 7 |
| DECLARATION                        | .......................................................... | 9 |
| COPYRIGHT STATEMENT                | .......................................................... | 10 |
| DEDICATION                         | .......................................................... | 11 |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT                    | .......................................................... | 12 |

**CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH BACKGROUND** ............................................. 13

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................ 13
   1.1 Background to the Research ............................................................................. 13
   1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Research .................................................................. 16
   1.3 Problem Statement ............................................................................................. 16
   1.4 Significance of the Study .................................................................................. 19
   1.5 Organisation of the Thesis ............................................................................... 22
   1.6 Chapter Summary ............................................................................................... 24

**CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE FOUNDATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT OF DECENTRALISATION** .......................................................... 25

2.0 Introduction ......................................................................................................... 25
   2.1 Nature and Development of Decentralised Reforms .......................................... 25
   2.2 Drivers of Decentralised Reforms ...................................................................... 26
   2.3 New Public Management and Decentralised Reform ........................................... 27
   2.4 Challenges to NPM Type Local Administration .................................................. 30
   2.5 A History of Decentralised Local Governance in Africa ..................................... 32
   2.6 Definitions of Decentralised Local Governance ............................................... 36
      2.6.1 Categorization of Decentralisation ................................................................. 38
   2.7 Tenets and Proclamations of Decentralised Local Governance ............................ 42
   2.8 Chapter Summary ............................................................................................... 44

**CHAPTER THREE: GOVERNANCE, PARTICIPATION, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW** .......................................................... 46

3.0 Introduction ......................................................................................................... 46
   3.1 Good Democratic Governance ............................................................................ 46
   3.2 Community Participation ..................................................................................... 52
       3.2.1 Dimensions of Participation ......................................................................... 53
   3.3 Rurality and Community Development ................................................................ 57
       3.3.1 Rural Community Development ................................................................... 58
   3.4 Models of Community Development .................................................................. 59
   3.5 Implications of Decentralisation to Rural Community Development ................. 64
   3.6 Chapter Summary ............................................................................................... 67

**CHAPTER FOUR: EXPLORING THE HISTORICAL NATURE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN GHANA** .......................................................... 69

4.0 Introduction ......................................................................................................... 69
   4.1 The Political and Administrative Context .......................................................... 69
       4.1.1 The Executive, Legislature and Judiciary ......................................................... 70
   4.2 Sub-national Government ................................................................................... 71
       4.2.1 The Regional Level ......................................................................................... 71
       4.2.2 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies ......................................... 72
CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY ........................................89
5.0 Introduction ......................................................................................................89
5.1 Research Questions ..........................................................................................89
5.2 Theoretical Perspectives ..................................................................................90
5.3 The Research Approach ..................................................................................91
  5.3.1 Importance of this Research Approach .........................................................93
  5.3.2 The Mixed Method Approach ......................................................................95
5.4 Research Methods ..........................................................................................97
  5.4.1 Sampling Procedures ....................................................................................97
  5.4.3 Sampling Procedure for In-depth Interviews ................................................97
  5.4.4 Sampling procedure for Survey Interviews ..................................................98
  5.4.5 Characteristics of Survey Interview Participants .........................................100
  5.4.6 Reason for Selection of local governments ..................................................101
5.5 Data Collection Instruments and Process .......................................................102
  5.5.1 Interviews ....................................................................................................102
  5.5.2 In-depth Individual Interviews .....................................................................102
  5.5.3 Semi-Structured Interviews .........................................................................104
5.6 Secondary Data Collection .............................................................................106
5.7 Data Capture, Analysis and Presentation .......................................................108
5.8 Limitations of the Study ..................................................................................113
5.9 Chapter Summary ............................................................................................114

CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES ....115
6.0 Introduction ......................................................................................................115
6.1 A Historical Experience with Development Strategies ....................................115
  6.1.1 Immediate Post-Independence Strategies .....................................................116
  6.1.2 One Decade of Economic Recovery and Structural Adjustment ...............117
  6.1.3 The Ghana Vision 2020 Development Strategy .............................................118
  6.1.4 The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (I & II) ............................119
6.2 Local Government Development Strategies ..................................................124
  6.2.1 Planning District Wide Development Strategies .........................................125
6.3 Drivers of Local Government Development Strategies ..................................129
6.4 Contextualising Development Strategies to Community Needs ......................132
  6.4.1 Local Community Development Expectations ............................................133
  6.4.2 Do District Medium Term Development Plans Reflect Community Expectations? .................................................................137
6.5 Are Local Governments Viable Development Actors? ....................................139
6.6 Chapter Summary ............................................................................................144
CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS ON CITIZEN’S PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

7.0 Introduction..................................................................................................................147
7.1 National Governance and Administrative Structure ....................................................148
7.2 Community Engagement with Local Government Structures .......................................150
  7.2.1 Community Development Decision Making Processes............................................151
  7.2.2 Local Community Perception of Decision Making Process ........................................155
7.2.2 Community Engagements with District Assembly Representative(s) .......................159
7.3 Involvement in Local Government Decision Making Process ......................................167
7.4 Promoting Effective Citizens Involvement ..................................................................172
7.5 Mechanisms for Effective Citizen Participation ..........................................................178
7.6 Chapter Summary........................................................................................................181

CHAPTER EIGHT: FINDINGS ON INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ..................................183
8.0 Introduction................................................................................................................183
8.1 The Enabling Environment for Effective Local Government Performance ..................184
  8.1.1 National Level Legal and Regulatory Frameworks ..................................................185
  8.1.2 Local Level legal and regulatory framework? ..........................................................188
8.2 Financial Resource Capability .....................................................................................192
8.3 Local Government’s Autonomy to Function ................................................................197
8.4 Hindrance to Effective Local Government Performance? .........................................199
8.5 Institutional and Personnel Capacities and Competencies ............................................202
8.6 Chapter Summary........................................................................................................206

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS ..................................................208
9.0 Introduction................................................................................................................208
9.1 General Overview of Study ..........................................................................................209
9.2 Summary of Major Findings .......................................................................................211
  9.2.1 The Nature of Local Governance in Ghana ...............................................................211
  9.2.2 Local Government’s Community Development Strategies ......................................212
  9.2.3 Citizen Participation ...............................................................................................214
  9.2.4 Institutional Capacities for Community Development ..............................................216
9.4 Contributions to Knowledge .......................................................................................222
  9.4.1 Summary of Theoretical Contributions ..................................................................222
  9.4.2 Summary of Empirical Implications ......................................................................223
9.5 Directions for Future Research ....................................................................................223
9.7 Final Remarks .............................................................................................................224
Appendix 1: In-depth Interview Guide ..............................................................................225
Appendix 2: Semi-Structured Interview Guide .................................................................227
List of References .............................................................................................................233
LIST OF TABLES
Table 1: Summary of Types and Description of Decentralisation ........................................... 41
Table 2: Dimensions of Participation ......................................................................................... 54
Table 3: Types and Intensity of Participation .......................................................................... 55
Table 4: Weaknesses of Participation ...................................................................................... 56
Table 5: Sex of Respondent by District ................................................................................. 100
Table 6: Age structure of Respondent .................................................................................... 100
Table 7: Education Characteristics of Respondents ............................................................... 101
Table 8: Categories of Interviewees ......................................................................................... 104
Table 9: Summary of Research Questions linked to Research Methods ............................. 111
Table 10: Is the local assembly beneficial to community development? .............................. 141
Table 11: Cross-tabulation: Local district beneficial by District ............................................ 141
Table 12: Extent to which district is an effective development partner ................................ 143
Table 13: District Assembly Representative present in your community? ............................. 159
Table 14: Access to District Representative ............................................................................ 160
Table 15: Which Meetings attended in the last 12 Months? ................................................ 164
Table 16: Summary of Key Findings ...................................................................................... 219

LIST OF FIGURES
Figure 1: A Conceptual diagram .............................................................................................. 66
Figure 2: Local Government Structure in Ghana .................................................................. 73
Figure 3: Ghana’s Historical Development Plans .................................................................... 116
Figure 4: How is Local Assembly beneficial to development ............................................. 142
Figure 5: Extent to which district is an effective development partner ............................... 143
Figure 6: Effectiveness of Local Government compared to other agencies ....................... 144
Figure 7: Perceptions on development decision making process ....................................... 155
Figure 8: Local Decision Making Process ............................................................................. 157
Figure 9: Is this the best decision making process? ............................................................... 157
Figure 10: Meet community before Assembly meetings? ...................................................... 161
Figure 11: Attend meetings organised by Assembly Member? ............................................. 164
Figure 12: knowledge of role of Assembly Representative .................................................. 165
Figure 13: Community knowledge of the role of District Assembly .................................... 166
Figure 14: Whose Involvement matters ................................................................................ 170
Figure 15: Local Government policies and Regulatory framework in Ghana ...................... 187
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CWSA  Community Water and Sanitation Agency
DA   District Assembly
DACF  District Assemblies Common Fund
DCE  District Chief Executive
DFID Department for International Development
DFO  District Finance Officer
DPO  District Planning Officer
ERP  Economic Recovery Program
GPRS  Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
GPRS Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy
HIPC  Highly Indebted Poor Country
IFAD  International Fund for Agricultural Development
IGF  Internally Generated Funds
IIED  International Institute for Environment and Development
IMF  International Monetary Fund
MDGs  Millennium Development Goals
MMDAs  Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
NCCE  National Commission on Civic Education
NDC  National Democratic Congress
NDPC  National Development Planning Commission
NGOs  Non Governmental Organisations
NPM  New Public Management
ODI  Overseas Development Institute
PRSP  Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RCCs  Regional Coordinating Councils
SAP  Structural Adjustment Program
SNV  The Netherlands Development Agency
VIP  Village Infrastructure Project
WB  World Bank
ABSTRACT

The efficacy of decentralised local governance to transform rural communities into vibrant modern communities has often been highlighted. The Constitution of Ghana lends a strong hand to decentralised local governance as key to achieving rural development and poverty reduction. Achieving the above is however premised on the basis that local authorities would function effectively; promote effective community participation; and are functionally autonomous. However, some conceptual and practical challenges appear to limit the achievement of the stated benefits of local governance in Ghana.

This thesis seeks to examine the nature of local governance and how its function translates into rural community development. It responds to pertinent questions central to Ghana’s decentralisation. It questions the local community development initiatives implemented by local government institutions, by exploring perspectives on the usefulness of these initiatives to local communities. Further it explores how the participation of local communities is engaged in executing these initiatives; and thirdly, it investigates institutional capacities to effectively carry out the decentralised community development initiatives. The thesis sought answers by conducting in-depth and semi-structured interviews with 134 participants drawn from 32 local communities within three District Assemblies, and a variety of stakeholders including key local government actors, individuals, and groups from three Districts in Northern Ghana.

The thesis argues that political, administrative and systemic deficits challenge effective local government function in Ghana. For instance, recent evidence points to the fact that regimes since December 2000 dwell on political gerrymandering to bolster their political fortunes, which further weaken existing local governments rather than facilitate their effective and efficient function. Further that, local governments are observed to work within a chaotic community development environment where initial development strategies were overly influenced by exogenous forces, which made them unrealistic to rural community development.

Again, the findings suggests a history of decentralised local governance full of a continual tinkering and halfhearted implementation of the decentralisation process since colonial times. This is mostly to achieve well orchestrated political goals. This historical legacy stifles local governments’ capacities over time and also leaves mostly ineffective structures replete with opportunities for political favour and rent seeking behaviours. Evidently however, this has tendered to percolate present day systems and processes where local political elites seek to, and prosecute the political agenda of the national government instead of dealing with local needs.

On the development strategies implemented by local governments, a penchant tendency to transplant national development plans as local development strategies on central governments’ insistence was discovered. Though a contradiction to the laid down local government development planning and implementation process, local governments follow through with this practice. Further, a historical legacy of powerful external multi-lateral stakeholders’ grips or influence of the local development agenda appears a paramount reason for the above, and this in real terms leads to a de-emphasises of home grown local development strategies. The implication is that unrealistic rural community development strategies perpetuate. This further leads to noted planning incongruence at the local level. Aside this, there is also an overbearing local political and administrative interferences, and manipulations which leads further to a ‘filtering’ of development strategies to meet national politically motivated strategies or interests. This notwithstanding, local
communities have strong faith in local governments as viable community development agents.

The findings further suggest local governments’ acknowledgement of the critical roles of active community participation in the local community development agenda. Yet again they struggle to apply the national development planning Act 1994, (Act 480), which holds the greatest promise to directly translate to effective participation. In the least, local governments preferred to consult and inform local community members. In the same vain, central governments some times implement community development initiatives within local government jurisdictions without consulting them. A chief factor which appears to work against direct local level influence of the development planning process is the existence of penurious institutions at the local level. Consequently an exercise of tokenism is thus promoted to satisfy requirements for effective local community participation. In most cases ultimate development decisions are taken by the management and political leadership and not in direct consultation with local communities.

Notwithstanding the above, it appears that local governments’ institutional capacities to effectively deliver on their mandate appear potentiated when viewed from the extent of supporting legal and institutional frameworks which gives credence to local governance. Local governments possess a powerful list of constitutionally sanctioned guiding frameworks which should necessarily inure to their smooth operation. Ironically there are noted deliberate systemic and political processes which tend to constraint this smooth function. In the least central government deliberately keeps a functionally dependent relationship with local governments. One direct result of the subjection of local government within this perpetual highly dependent functional relationship is a continual blurring of roles. Local governments appear to be perpetually subjugated to functional obscurity by central governments through incomplete decentralisation, strained internal relationships, and unhealthy ‘politicking’ between District Assembly members and administrative staff to say the least. Although most decentralised departments appear to have competent technical staff, their function is limited because of numerical insufficiency as well as limited material and logistical support.
DECLARATION

I, FRANCIS NANGBEVIEL SANYARE, hereby declare that no portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

FRANCIS NANGBEVIEL SANYARE

Date: 28th January 2013

Degree: PhD, the Faculty of Humanities, the University of Manchester
COPYRIGHT STATEMENT

i. The author of this thesis (including any appendices and/or schedules to this thesis) owns certain copyright or related rights in it (the “Copyright”) and he has given The University of Manchester certain rights to use such Copyright, including for administrative, promotional and/or teaching purposes.

ii. Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts and whether in hard or electronic copy, may be made only in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended) and regulations issued under it or, where appropriate, in accordance with licensing agreements which the University has from time to time. This page must form part of any such copies made.

iii. The ownership of certain Copyright, patents, designs, trademarks and other intellectual property (the “Intellectual Property”) and any reproductions of copyright works in the thesis, for example graphs and tables (“Reproductions”), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions.

iv. Further information on the conditions under which disclosure, publication and commercialisation of this thesis, the Copyright and any Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions described in it may take place is available in the University IP Policy (see http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/medialibrary/policies/intellectual-property.pdf), in any relevant Thesis restriction declarations deposited in the University Library, The University Library’s regulations (see http://www.manchester.ac.uk/library/aboutus/regulations) and in the University’s policy on presentation of Theses.
DEDICATION

To Grace Aloko, Jessey Nuoire Sanyare and Jeremy Sanyare, you were the reason I stayed strong and focused
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The journey of carrying out this research towards a PhD has been truly eventful and immensely interesting. This was because of my encounters with many people. Sometimes during this process I have had occasion to question my ability to reach the end. Yet I was inspired to persevere by the people around me. For this reason I am deeply indebted.

Foremost, I am grateful for the constant help and guidance I received from my Supervisory team. I am particular inspired by their theoretical insights, challenge, and great inspiration offered during the process. My relationship with Dr Farhad Hossain has been long and inspirational. I am grateful to you for the enthusiasm, encouragement and kind guidance during this process. I benefited immensely from the generous insights and prompts of Dr. Christopher Rees during very critical times of this process. I have looked up to and indeed drawn courage and inspiration from the entire staff and study fellows of IDPM.

To The Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFUND), I appreciate the kind scholarship offered at the time I needed it most. I appreciate the individual sacrifice of Mr Akordam Kojo D. Karbo, who not only sponsored part of my study, but generously took care of my family while I was away studying.

I appreciate the help offered by Ernest Aayel, Stephen Naab, Jonas, Bunudong Ruth Ekekpi, Naawaakuo Naataawulo Francis Xavier and Vanantius Kuudigr who generously helped during the data gathering stage of the study. My appreciation also goes to the various Ministries, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies who not only granted the opportunity to conduct interviews, but also generously allowed me to review various documents and reports.

To my Manchester family who walked with me all the way through thick and thin. Justice Nyigmah Bawole; Dr Divine N Banyubala and Lamisi Mbillah; Hamza Zakaria Bukari; Mona Iddrisu; Uncle Tetteh Abroso and Family and my very special thai sister Dr Piyawadee Rohitarachoon
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH BACKGROUND

1.0 Introduction

This chapter covers the general introduction to this thesis, which examines the link between decentralised local governance and rural community development in Ghana with a particular focus on three poor rural Districts in Northern Ghana. The chapter covers the research background, aim and objectives as well as the problem statement. It also briefly outlines the study rationale, and the chapterisation of the thesis. It ends with a summary of the entire chapter.

1.1 Background to the Research

The process of decentralisation has become one of the most enduring reformation processes within the African context with a noted reputation as a highly endearing initiative within governments across the continent (Therkildsen 2000:86). It is not surprising therefore that many African nations have, over the last three decades, adopted and implemented decentralisation with a vision that it would help address prominent national development challenges (social, political and economic), and above all ensure general economic and national stability.

This move to achieve social and economic development within this context firmly re-established the need among nations to dismantle the mostly colossal role of the state and to emphasise decentralised governance (Sakyi 2008). An additional compelling reason to decentralised is perhaps, because of the structure of these economies, which had been highly dependent on development aid, and therefore, were subject to pressures from donors to decentralise in exchange for aid; which process also enabled the donor agencies to prosecute their international developmental portfolios (See: Blair 2002; Manor 2004; Lange 2008). As a consequence, Crawford(2009) writes that, over 80% of all countries in the developing world engaged in one form of decentralisation or another in order to derive some benefits (also see: Gaventa and Valderrama 1999; The World Bank 1995).
In the least, most of these developing countries which implemented decentralisation expected that it would help to reduce the central function of the state; redistribute political and administrative responsibilities; ensure an emphasises on efficiency; strengthen accountability and change values and attitudes, or even lead to the exploitation of new technologies among other glorious benefits (Therkildsen, 2000).

In addition to the above, the motivation to implement decentralisation programmes is partly to achieve a structural revolution which not only helps to revamp structures and institutions, but also to retune public services and to realign them with demands for greater effectiveness, responsiveness and performance (Curristine et al. 2007). Crawford and Hartmann, (2008) writes that, this would ensure that decentralised initiatives achieve both development and democratic advantages; and further that governance would become locally relevant by allowing greater influence of public affairs by local people.

These views support the general aims of public sector reforms; that is, to improve the people’s quality of life and create new government machineries and management systems that are both efficient and effective. For example, Wunsch and Olowu (1990), intimate that decentralisation has not only become a means of dealing with an ever increasing desire for efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of public services, but that it is also central to many national and international development agenda due to many previously problematic centralised state activities.

The case for decentralisation in Ghana is not very different from the above. Inkoom (2011:393), suggests that decentralisation was aimed in the least, to bring governance closer to the people and thereby enable them to take decisions and to respond to people’s needs more effectively. Others suggest that in Ghana, it was a consequence of lessons learnt from structural adjustment and economic recovery programs as well as a response to prevailing aid conditionalities (Sakyi, 2008). Consistent with this view, Olowu (1999) had earlier drawn attention to the fact that Ghana, like most African countries, was over burdened with outmoded public institutions which, at best were incapable of delivering services that are directly beneficial to their citizenry and therefore bore accusations of poor performance, inefficiency, and wide spred corruption.

Furthermore, Ayee (2005) adds that the political and administrative systems had long failed to be self-supporting. As a consequence, the political branch, bureaucracies, and state owned enterprises at the time in Ghana experienced phenomenally rapid growth
beyond the ability of the system to sustain. For instance, he points out a mismatch between
the expansion of the civil service(which grew at a rate of 7% per annum) and the national
economic growth rate which was reported to have dropped to 0.2% per annum from
approximately 1.3% per annum from 1965 through to 1984 (ibid, 2005). As a result of
which all government expenditure was allocated to pay salaries by early 1980s.

Nevertheless, after nearly three decades of implementing decentralisation, which has
generated rather elaborate structures and processes, Ghana still struggles to realise the
expected developmental progress, or achieve the envisioned structural and procedural
effectiveness and efficiency (Inkoom 2011). Ghana’s ability to develop and transform its
society to comparable standards of its developed country counterparts through
decentralised local governance has proved elusive (Robinson 2007; Conyers 2007).

Thus far, a major challenge to Ghana’s problematic attempts to achieve the anticipated
phenomenal social transformation through decentralised activities, rest in part on how the
policy or programs goals; implementation design; and resource availability may have impacted on the achievement of stated goals. As Sakyi (2008) suggests, this policy
implementation failure remains a defining feature of the general African development
experience, which is further compounded by a deficiency in political and bureaucratic
commitment; limited local ownership; poor or compromised coordination; and a failure to
link the policy to broader political, economic, governance and institutional development
(See: Conyers 2006; Kiggundu 1998; Caiden 1991; Sakyi 2008 ; Sakyi 2008). Therefore,
efforts appear largely ineffective in achieving the desired socio-economic development and
in recent times, probable poverty reduction tasks.

In summary, Ghana like many other African countries experienced both endogenous and
exogenous compelling reasons to decentralise. It believed that localising service delivery
would help address appropriately its social and economic development challenges.
However, after nearly 30 years of implementation, decentralisation has done little to bring
about the desired improvements in the public service delivery and therefore has translated
to limited socio-economic transformation at the local level (Conyers 2007). These modest
gains of the decentralisation program in Ghana therefore calls for an empirical contextual
examination of the underlying factors that condition the current situation (Inkoom 2011),
and thus forms the basis for this thesis.
1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Research

This research aims to examine the nature of decentralised local governance and how its function translates into rural community development in Ghana. It will specifically focus on the following objectives:

1. To examine rural community development strategies implemented by decentralised local governments
2. To investigate local community participation in determining community development initiatives
3. To analyse institutional capacities for effective decentralised local development

1.3 Problem Statement

What decentralisation lacks, even those with relatively clearly defined and well-coordinated systems backed by reasonably strong political will, is a pragmatic implementation strategy (Smoke 2003:14)

As noted in the quote above, after almost three decades of implementing a local government decentralisation program, Ghana, and specifically rural Northern Ghana, still faces intense development crisis. In spite of specific decentralisation programs (such as the district capacity building programs) designed to help improve local government functioning and capacities to deliver high impact needs based community services remains a distant reality (Work 2002; Devas 2001). It has been suggested that the decentralised local governance programs in Ghana, may have been implemented without adequately addressing the inherent conceptual and practical challenges as to how best to structure or even adopt it locally to maximise probable benefits or minimize potential problems (Ahwoi 2010b; Smoke 2003).

The programs and packages that have accompanied this development policy appear to have largely been implemented wholesale with little or no regard to the differing contextual realities either for political expediency or a quest to satisfy donor conditions (Ahwoi 2010b; Ayee and Dickovick 2010; Ayee 2008). The result is a constrained ability of the local institutions to effectively design and implement pro-poor policies that bring gains in the form of social protection and livelihoods enhancement to the vulnerable in society. Bangura and Larbi (2006) caution that the above situation is a major concern because decentralisation appears to be implemented in countries that have the least capacity to effectively carry it forward, and that even where there is a modicum of capacity, too much
is expected and local governments are hence forced to undertake too many reforms in harmony with donor preference to the detriment of building strong institutions and practices, or even to customise the decentralisation process to favour local realities.

In view of this dilemma, it is not surprising that the implementation of decentralisation thus far in Ghana appears not to have achieved the goal of enhancing the livelihoods of rural communities (Olowu 2003). It would appear that the very challenges which led to the launch of the decentralisation reforms are still prevalent, and in many cases the beneficiary Districts or communities seems worse off than before the official introduction of the reform (Sakyi 2008).

The Ghanaian case, as literature suggests, is not entirely unique. It has often been suggested that, other than the decisive case in West Bangal and Kerala in India, all other developing countries’ experience of decentralisation as a strategy for community development or rural poverty reduction is problematic (Crawford 2008a; Crook and Sverrisson 2001). Further, because two thirds of all cases of decentralisation have had a negative impact on poverty indicators, Crook and Sverrisson (2001), concludes that decentralisation as a development policy may have failed to help the poor. In essence the impact of decentralisation as Crawford (2008) puts it is rather meagre and unconvincing.

Ayee (2005) writes that, the role of effective participation in governance, particularly of local governance, is crucial in the development processes. In today’s development discourse, popular community participation is one dimension of decentralisation which, when allowed to flourish, holds enormous potential not only to enhance good governance but also to essentially benefit local people. Through participation, people become empowered and therefore would no longer rely solely on the state, but would take responsibility for their own wellbeing. Like decentralisation, evidence is limited as to whether the benefits of participation has been realised in rural Ghanaian communities. Even where participation is ensured, the level and quality of participation allowed for rural communities to influence their own development process remains questionable (Kumi-Kyereme 2008).

Notwithstanding the above, commentators point out that where participation has been realised, local development decisions are inevitably enhanced; greater accountability to the local population is ensured; there is better mobilisation and utilisation of local resources; and greater public sector efficiency is achieved (See: Crawford 2003; Crawford 2008a;
Crook and Sverrisson 2001; Jütting et al. 2005). However, in the context of Ghana’s decentralisation, it is not clear what level of participation is variously referred to or reached (Kumi-Kyereme 2008). As existing research elsewhere has cautioned, decentralisation reforms do not necessarily lead to increased participation (Ishii et al, 2007), and its concomitant responsiveness to poverty reduction and hence, does not guarantee automatic pro-poor outcomes.

To this end, Crawford (2003) suggests that decentralisation has not succeeded in entrusting downwardly accountable representative actors with significant domains of discretionary power. Participation has brought little change largely due to failure to engage with issues of power and politics. We might agree therefore that participation generally work better in wealthy countries than in poor ones, which is worrying as it is exactly in poor countries that participation is much more a required solution.

The Fourth Republican Constitution of Ghana lends a strong hand to decentralisation as key to achieving rural development and poverty reduction (Republic of Ghana 1992). Since the turn of the century, poverty reduction has become more than a stated goal for local governments in Ghana because the district development planning process, by law should be integrated into the broader Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) framework in which specific poverty reduction objectives are emphasised (Republic of Ghana 2003).

One current goal of decentralisation in Ghana is to strengthen the local government authorities with the overall objective of improving political participation and engagement from below to make a difference in local community development and poverty reduction. Paradoxically, even though Ghana’s decentralisation process is greatly hailed as a success (Awortwi 2010), its ability to deal with local community developmental needs continue to lie in a balance owing to great apathy, lack of support, weak institutional and human capacity, lack of ownership and commitment and hence limited participation, and inter-agency conflict among others (See: Ahwoi 2010b; Ahwoi 2010a; Kumi-Kyereme 2008; Sakyi et al. 2011).

After three decades of the decentralisation process in Ghana, the challenges to community development and poverty reduction are still eminent and the reasons for which decentralisation was implemented looms on (Inkoom 2011). Presently, there exist persistent poverty; striking inequalities in the distribution of developmental benefits, and
wide scale social exclusion as well as visible disparities between the rich and the poor in most regions of Ghana. Presently in Ghana, poverty appears to be on a downward trend (Republic of Ghana 2003). This leads the World Bank to suggest that Ghana may be among the first African countries to meet the millennium development goal of halving poverty by 2015 (Crawford 2008a). Ironically however, the same Ghana poverty reduction strategy paper (GPRS I), also cautions that the current trend may indeed mask incidents of growing and deepening poverty and evidence of the intensification of vulnerability and exclusion among some groups and in some areas, especially in the northern and Central regions of the country (Republic of Ghana 2003).

This tends to re-echo previous assessments that Ghana is probably an example of a failure of the decentralisation program to help the poor (Crook and Sverrisson 2001; Nkrumah 2000). At best, there is persistent gross inequality, uneven distribution of wealth in particular relating to rural-urban dichotomy; and above all limited benefit to the vulnerable and excluded with the face of poverty probably remaining mostly feminine. Where there is a decline in poverty or rural community transformation, how much is attributable to decentralisation when recent studies of the impact of decentralisation on poverty levels in Ghana can only be said to be limited at best (Crawford 2008a)? There appears to be a wide difference between the rhetoric of decentralised local governance, and the reality. The expectation that decentralisation would lead to local community transformation is still very much a contested issue.

1.4 Significance of the Study

In spite of great doubts discussed above, there are believes that decentralised local governance remains one of the best global strategies to rid developing countries like Ghana of poverty and its concomitant debilitating misery and hopelessness (Dijk 2008; Crawford and Hartman 2008; Crawford 2008a; Crawford 2004). With the emergence of globalization and good governance as major paradigms driving government policy and development agenda since the early 1980s, it has been speculated that through the process of decentralised local governance, rural poverty stricken communities could partner local government authorities to achieve the goals of rural community transformation and poverty reduction (See: Inkoom 2011; Conyers 2007; Robinson 2007; Robinson 2004). This agenda becomes even more prominent when poverty reduction and growth, became mandatory requirement by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) of its poorest member countries after the September 1999 annual meetings.
Since then, a number of programmes and policies targeted at poverty reduction have been implemented aimed at addressing the needs of specific vulnerable groups.

Regardless of the above and many related previous development policies, Ghana’s socio-economic development agenda appears to have suffered a systemic collapse which has rendered any attempt to help the community development and poverty project a lifeless endeavour (Aryeetey et al. 2009). In this light, there is the need for empirical research to help understand the contextual challenges that limit the benefits of the decentralised local governance program in Ghana. Notwithstanding this, some empirical research which directly explored the links between decentralisation, rural community development and poverty reduction in Africa and for that matter Ghana exist (See: Crawford 2008a; Nkrumah 2000).

These however have tended to draw macro or national level conclusions while obviously neglecting the micro or rural realities. This thesis thus refocuses attention on the particular case of historically poor rural districts in Northern Ghana. This thesis does however draw on earlier cases as a basis to investigate local capacities that constrain or enable effective decentralisation in northern Ghana, since earlier studies have already pointed to the intricately indeclinable relationship between effective decentralisation and enhanced livelihoods. This relationship, instead of bringing greater relief, proper management and committed leadership, leaves rather protruding questions about the real relevance of local governance to local people’s lives.

In addition, it is incomplete to conclude any discussion of decentralised local governance and poverty reduction without a comprehensive analysis of a people’s ability to influence the design and implementation of development programs that affect them via effective participation. As Osmani (2001) notes, participation appears to be the bedrock on which effective community development and poverty reduction programs can evolve. Consequently, if decentralised local governance in poverty stricken districts of Northern Ghana is to achieve the primary gains of efficiency and equity, then it should provide scope for developing genuine local governance based on popular community participation.

After all the time and resources that Ghana has invested into the implementation of enhanced local governance, there remain identifiable gaps between policy statements associated with decentralised local governance and the reality on the ground. For instance many of the fears pointed out three decades ago such as elite appropriation and gender
imbalance have resurfaced (Ofei-Aboagye 2000). Nationally, there appears to be an overall decrease in poverty levels, however, rural Ghanaians are unable to benefit and are thus, debt, hunger, poverty, disease, and ignorance plagued (Republic of Ghana 2003). This allows the key question to be posed: to what extent has decentralised local governance contributed to community development?

In the light of the above, this study could not be more justified. After nearly three decades of practical experimentation with decentralisation in Ghana, it is important to understand why democratic decentralisation and its benefits appear far from being realised in poor rural communities.

Apusigah (2005) studied the relationship between decentralisation and poverty reduction in Northern Ghana but focused on poor people’s conceptualisation of poverty verses the institutional conceptualisation. She posits that the reality of the poor as they conceive it is usually missing in pro-poor decentralised programming. Though this draws attention to a missed opportunity for appropriate pro-poor decentralised programming, its focus on conceptual definitions further restricts the potential to understand the role of local implementation organisations such as the local government authorities. This study therefore refocuses the debate on the local governance and other development stakeholders at the local level. In particular, the study seeks not only an understanding of decentralisation influenced development but also to examine local government capacities to appropriately incorporate local communities and their aspirations into development processes at the local level.

Many studies in the last few decades have been carried out about various aspects of decentralisation in Africa (Olowu and Wunsch 2004). However, large majority of these however tend to describe characteristics and itemise processes (Steiner 2005; Steiner 2008). Very few have explored the effects of decentralised initiatives to rural development (Crawford 2004; Crawford 2008a). Moreover, very few studies have explored the developmental consequences of decentralisation in particular reference to rural communities in Northern Ghana. This study intends to fill this research gap, and help in the interpretation of what local governance means to rural development.

It is believed that the outcome would contribute a different perspective of the nexus of decentralised development in general, and rural community development in particular, as well as to bring the poor into centre stage in the practical conceptualisation of and
implementation of development strategies that may in the long run not only be relevant to their livelihoods but useful as examples in dealing with a good many problems that face poor people today.

Local government and decentralised systems have received enormous scholarly attention of late, according to Francis and James (2003) however, little academic research currently exist which examines the actual function of local governance in rural Ghana. The existing studies do not link decentralised local governance to community development in Ghana (Crawford 2009; Domfeh and Bawole 2009; Ohemeng 2008; Hoffman and Metzroth 2010; Inkoom 2011). This thesis thus addresses the degree to which the original objectives of decentralised local governance in Ghana has been achieved, and how local community engagement is furthered.

1.5 Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into nine chapters. It is structured based on four interrelated research questions, which are translated into one historical descriptive chapter based on secondary data, and three empirical chapters drawn from field data. In chapter nine, a general summary and conclusions of the thesis are presented.

Chapter one presents a background to the thesis, the aim and objectives. It also captures a description of the central research problems and concludes by stating the importance of the thesis.

Chapter two covers the broad theoretical discussions on decentralised local governance. It begins with an overview of the nature and development of the reforms which occasioned the adoption of decentralisation and its coterminous local governance. It centres on New Public Management (NPM) theory as the major driver for this reformation process and thus reviews NPM’s contribution to the reformation drive, its tenents and potential limitations. Next, the chapter traces the history of decentralised local governance in Africa and how it has been theoretically conceptualised over time.

In chapter three the thesis continues with the theoretical overview. It is however, focused on clarifying the key concepts directly related to the study objectives. It begins with a discussion of good democratic governance, to locate how it could contribute to local governance and therefore lead to community development. Furthermore, it discusses
community participation in local governance and highlights the various dimensions of participation linked to community development. Moreover, the chapter discusses the concepts of rurality and rural community development, and then summarises the various models to community development. It concludes by outlining the implications of local governance to rural community development. The chapter ends with a summary of the main arguments and their linkages in a form of a conceptual diagram.

Chapter four draws extensively on available literature and government of Ghana sources to discuss the context of decentralised local governance in Ghana. The aim of the chapter is to provide a historical as well as contextual underpinning of the thesis. It puts into perspective the political and administrative structure of the country and how it stretches down to the local government. The objective is to provide the systemic and structural linkages of local governance, and how these work to either facilitate or constrain the local development process. It also covers the historical antecedents of decentralization in Ghana. It concludes with a summary of the politics that has occasioned the decentralisation efforts of Ghana.

Chapter five covers a detailed discussion of the research design, research questions, the methodology and related methods employed in the thesis. It presents the data management processes utilised to respond to the research questions and overall objectives spelt out earlier. Specifically, the chapter briefly discusses the various philosophical and theoretical perspectives that underpin the thesis. It concludes with a discussion of the data capture, analysis, and presentation procedure.

Chapter six begins the empirical findings of the thesis. It highlights and discusses the local development strategies implemented by the selected local governments across the study sites. The chapter examines the historical experiences of Ghana and its local government system to development and implementation of development strategies. It then moves on to examine the case of selected local governments. It shows that, local governments have development strategies but that these are mostly transplanted from the centre. It suggests that in spite of structural and political constraints, local government are still perceived as viable development partners by their constituencies.

In chapter seven, the thesis examines the role of local communities within the decentralised development agenda. It begins by locating citizen’s participation within the governance structures; national and lower level structures. Next, it discusses local
community engagement with local government structures; specifically in the areas of local community development decision making; and the community's opportunities to interact with their local representatives. This is followed by a discussion of whose involvement in the local development decision making actually matter to the local governments; upon which it explore how local governments promote effective citizens engagement in the local decision making process. It concludes with an examination of the mechanisms for promoting effective citizen participation at the local level.

Chapter eight discusses the local institutional capacities within local governments to enhance community development. The chapter explores the availability of legal and institutional frameworks that foster the implementation of an effective decentralized local government. It then moves on to cover the nature of specific capacity challenges within the local government functioning in Ghana. It touches on financial and systemic capacity issues and concludes by pointing out the personnel and institutional constraint to local government.

In chapter nine, which is the final chapter of the thesis, the study recounts and presents the overall summary and conclusions of the thesis. It pulls together the main findings of the thesis and their potential implications in a table and presents both theoretical and empirical contributions of the study.

1.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a general background and problem statement to the study. The chapter has also identified existent disconnect between stated aims and objectives of decentralisation in Ghana, and the realities of local community development or poverty reduction. The chapter highlighted that decentralised local governance has not translated into the noble aims of ensuring rural community development in Ghana, and that there is limited empirical studies which motivated this thesis to explore the local governance and community development nexus in rural Northern Ghana. The next chapter covers a detailed discussion both of theoretical and empirical literature as a precursor to understanding the case of Ghana.
CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE FOUNDATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT OF DECENTRALISATION

2.0 Introduction

This chapter explores contemporary theoretical debates and controversies as well as perspectives on decentralised local governance and community development. It starts with an overview of the nature and striking influences of general public sector reformation process in Africa. It debates the promise and challenges of implementing New Public Management (NPM) type local government reforms in Africa. It presents a historical debate of the nature of local government in Africa as a precursor to a discussion on recent theoretical perspectives on tenets and expected outcomes to decentralised local governance. The last section summarizes the chapter.

2.1 Nature and Development of Decentralised Reforms

The processes of decentralised local government reform is not new to Africa (Olowu 2002b). Theory suggests that by the turn of the 21st century, it became increasingly fashionable for developing countries to strive for efficiency and effectiveness of their public sector institutions in ways that optimises opportunities for the citizenry (Ohemeng 2008). This, the review reveals, happened under the prompting, mostly of international development organisations. In response, many countries initiated new programs and policies, including decentralised local governance to coincide with the present wave of liberal political and economic governance reforms characteristic of the late 1980s (Olowu and Wunsch 2004).

Public administration and development literature agree that the 1980s was a significant historical epoch for the redefinition of the role and function of the public sector to meet the changing needs and trends of globalisation and good governance. Prior to this historical epoch, Bangura and Larbi, (2006) suggests that states increasingly assumed central roles, economies expanded and governments were encouraged to play central roles in response to citizen’s needs. This according to them was due to growing suspicion of the capacity of the private sector to respond to incentives to invest in preferred sectors. This preoccupation however was short lived because of fundamental challenges. For instance, the public sector is said to have become largely ineffective in spearheading socio-economic development as well as leading to poverty reduction efforts.
The state had become excessively politicised, lacked basic accountability and representation, and consequently was incapable of promoting the public interest (Ayee 2005). Faced with these challenges, the state ignored important issues of efficiency, representation, participation and accountability which resulted, according to the literature, in the need to seek out alternative models which emphasise “a market friendly, more outward-looking, efficient, decentralised, customer-orientated, managerial and democratic states” (Bangura and Larbi 2006:1).

2.2 Drivers of Decentralised Reforms

The literature identifies four prevailing conditions that drove the reformation process in developing countries: financial globalisation; fiscal deficits of 1970s and 1980s; structural adjustment, and democratisation (Bangura and Larbi 2006). Added to this was the emergence of ‘good governance’ as a condition for development. A greater interaction between world financial organisations across nations has implications for public sectors and the behaviour of those entrusted to run them. Concerns about fraud, and poor management drew greater anxiety for public sector transparency, protection of property rights, sound finance and deregulation (Ibid, 2006).

Second, the literature suggests that almost all countries, between 1960 and 1980, had experienced a form of financial or budget deficit due to the economic down turn which crisis occasioned a rethinking of state led development. Third, the end of the cold war, occasioned an ideological shift to a push for the adoption of market approaches via the process of structural adjustments As a consequence, the nature, scope, and functioning of the public sector in most developing countries witnessed at least three generations of reforms which changes in turn invoked the need for a revolutionized management, control and performance (Hope and Chikulo 2000; Hope 2000). This notwithstanding, the review shows that across the developing country context, in spite of the existence of largely different governance systems; economic strengths; overall management and institutional environments; and above all socio-political make up; the same wave of new management techniques and practices were applied with the aim of effecting desired changes to the public sector.
2.3 New Public Management and Decentralised Reform

Assumptions that rationality directs people’s action in public policy and politics has already been dispelled by earlier public management theorist (Downs 1957; Leif 1991). The literature reviewed suggests therefore that often times public officers’ actions are directed towards attaining their own selfish ends as opposed to assumptions that they act rationally. Therefore, Lewin (1991) argues against assumptions that governments would attempt to maximise the welfare of their citizens rather than consolidate their power.

In the light of the above, Ostrom and Ostrom, (1971) call for a radical distinction between politics and administration when they introduced Public choice approach as the basic theoretical tradition in public administration. It is their belief that, governments may differ, but that the principles of good administration remain the same irrespective of the type or system of government. Coming from this perspective, good administration, meritocracy, hierarchy and due process may take precedence over political and individual interests in governance and administration. From this school of thought, the appointment of the civil servants is a centrally controlled process. The civil servant, in order to adequately serve the system will be prepared by a special schooling and drilled into a perfected organisation, with an appropriate hierarchy and characteristic discipline. According to them, efficiency is a function of the hierarchical ordering of a professionally trained public service. With dominance of this school of thought, the goal of public administration became the management of men and material in the accomplishment of the purpose of state (Ostrom 1990; Ostrom and Ostrom 1971).

The above typifies traditional administrative approaches to reforms. Contrary to the above, however, the reformation drive which inundated African countries aimed to help their struggling economies regenerate and work in the best service of the needs of its citizenry. These were therefore a significantly different form of reforms to the earlier ones described above (Therkildsen 2000). These are, much more radically aimed at reducing the core function of the state; and to redraw the boundaries between political and administrative responsibility as referred to by Lewin(1991).
They emphasise efficiency; redefining relations between public and private sector; strengthening accountability; reduction of corruption; recognising organisations and staff; changing values and attitudes; and exploitation of new technologies. Many of these kinds of reforms he argues are inspired by the New Public Management paradigm and as the literature suggest, central to contemporary NPM type reform is decentralised local governance.

Decentralisation has doubtlessly become a necessary fact in every modern African state. This is particularly clear with the growing importance of local government since the 1990s (OlOWU and Wunsch 2004:54). This growing importance is reflective of the bigger policy push for reform of the public sector worldwide especially in the public sector of OECD countries and later spread to developing countries, which was occasioned through the influences of the New Public Management (NPM) according to Hope and Chikulo (2000).

New Public Management, according to champions of International development, such as the World Bank, is central to international development thinking given the renewed central role of the state and its apparatus in national development. This is a crucial paradigm so much that in its 2000/2001 world development report, the World Bank underscores its potential in good governance, growth, national wealth and development, social achievement, as well as poverty reduction (World Bank 2000).

Essentially NPM is a set of broadly similar administrative doctrines which dominated the bureaucratic reform agenda in many of the OECD group of countries from the late 1970s (Auccoin 1990; Pollitt 1990; Hood 1991); for others, it is a body of managerial thought (Ferlie et al. 1996), or as an ideological thought system based on ideas generated in the private sector and imported into the public sector (Hood 1991). NPM captures the process of the structural, organisational and managerial changes that have taken place in the public service of countries. It has been noted that, this theoretical or ideological thought system has bequeathed to the world at least four succinct types of reforms, which has greatly influenced the African reformation process (See: Ferlie et al. 1996 cited in; Olowu 2002a):

**Efficiency drive model:** - to make the public sector more business-like;

**The downsizing and decentralisation model:** focuses on disaggregation, organisational flexibility and downsizing;

**The management change model:** which aims at integrating top-down and bottom-up approaches to change; and
The public service orientation to change model: with greater focus on service quality.

In spite of the above noted succinct contributions, Larbi (2006) suggests that we cannot be too sure of the constituent composition of the theoretical propositions or measure its impact. These notwithstanding some definite advantages of such market orientation are: efficiency and effectiveness benefits; service to public purpose and opportunities for governments to learn from the private sector despite contextual differences. In the least, as some proponents have argued, the process leads to an espousal of a desirable future away from old unwanted modes of the past (Ayeni 2002).

Ultimately, the policy framework that led to the emergence and subsequent development of NPM is based on growing reality of government failure in the efficient delivery of public service and the enhancement of an environment conducive for sustainable economic prosperity (Hope and Chikulo 2000). Government failures lead in turn to economic stagnation, fiscal crisis, and deteriorating public services consistent with what occurred in many African countries since the 1980s.

The literature thus suggest that it was not an accident that many African governments embraced the NPM as the preferred reform framework as a means to modernised governments and re-engineer the public sector (Hope 2001). Applied to the process of local governance, the potential advantage lies in the improvement of management systems, organisational structures and the injection of mostly market orientated services delivery process to the local level (Pollitt et al. 2007; Pollitt 1990). Others points to institutional aspects which are derived from the assumptions of public choice theory, principal agent theory, and transaction cost economics (Kaboolian 1998). On the whole the application of NPM principles is grounded in the economic market as a model for political and administrative relationships. In the view of this thesis, applying NPM principles to local government would mean the acceptance of distinct activity management as applied in the private sector to take centre stage in service management and delivery.

An anticipated offshoot of which would be the realisation of efficiency. Further, there would be a graduation towards outputs measures and an insistence on performance targets based on competitive service provision and an emphasis on the devolution of management control from central government to the local level, which is believed to bring about improvement in accountability due to a better mechanism for monitoring (Aucoin 1990;
Hope 2001). The literature further suggests that, a key importance of the application of the NPM principles to local governance lies in the fact that there is no distinction created in NPM between policy-making and service delivery. Its emphasis on using managerial traditions relocates the citizens as customers, fundamentally bringing about the desired effects of accountability for results (Manning 2001).

Local governance under NPM, as has been suggested would aim to promote a management culture of performance orientation where highly centralised, hierarchical structures gives way to a more localised, decentralised management atmosphere in which decisions on resource allocation and services delivery are made closer to the point of delivery, and which provide scope for feedback from clients and other interested groups, such as the civil society (Hope 2001; Hope and Chikulo 2000). This takes away the pressure on central government, ideally supporting capacities at the centre for policy guidance as well as allowing the state to respond to the myriad of interests in flexible and cost effective ways. The epitome of this framework lies in making fundamental changes to the basic structure of public organisations, their culture, management systems, and other aspects in support of new initiatives.

Additionally, it encompasses a new client orientation, mission driven, quality enhancement and participatory management bearing in addition to the utilisation of resources in ways that heighten efficiency and effectiveness. With the characteristics of African public services, applying this framework would suggest an emphasis on problem solving and good governance, given that the state bureaucracies in Africa have underperformed and continue to do so. The literature however cautions that, the challenge to adopting this framework lies in the existence of a set of complex institutional [governance and political] mechanisms that constraint the implementation of the various policies in a timely and effective manner in Africa (Hope 2001; Hope and Chikulo 2000; Hope 2000).

2.4 Challenges to NPM Type Local Administration

In spite of the high praise accorded NPM reforms, critics maintain that the process has produced some unpleasant consequences and therefore could not be considered a panacea for the problems of the African public sector (Larbi 2006). First, they attack its theoretical roots, pointing to existent fundamental flaws; because it appears to put \textit{private management} in a superior position to \textit{public management}. It is argued that by its very nature, public sector management does not lend itself to private sector management
practices because public management rests in a world of *settled institutions* designed to allow imperfect people to use flawed processes to cope with insoluble problems (See: Goodsell 2006; Hope and Chikulo 2000)

Others dispute its methodological positions, noting that the solution to public sector management problems rest in the proper understanding and use of the administrative management paradigms in the context of the political institutions and public law through which the public sector functions, and not in NPM. Following from this, Kelly (1998), questions the empirical validity of NPM. She points out that, even most private sector organisations scarcely operate in the manner presented in NPM, and that, *customers* and *citizens* are not, and could not be the same¹.

Further to the above, the long standing question as to whose interest public managers represent remain largely unanswered and thus further contradicts the approach of NPM. This is particularly the case as managers are rational economic beings, and therefore may harbour the potential to be self-seeking to say the least. In addition, welfarist theorists are of the view that, this kind of reforms would harm the poor and vulnerable groups who are in need of state safety nets (Mackintosh 1997 cited in ; Larbi 1999). Within this self-seeking frame, it is feared that democratic values of justice, representation, and fairness would be compromised. Even strong advocates, such as the World Bank, sometimes doubt the efficacy of NPM inspired public sector reforms. They argue that, on the average, only a third of such reforms achieved satisfactory outcomes. These and other context specific cases are blamed for the lack of progress in the implementation of NPM led reforms in developing countries.

The review makes it clear that contrary to the requirements for success in public management type reforms in developing countries; democratic tenets are mostly lacking where citizens are capable of, and demanding accountability from public officials. Further, the absence of the basics of old public administration discipline makes the introduction of new elements of informal structures and practices difficult to sell.

¹ Emphasis added
2.5 A History of Decentralised Local Governance in Africa

Africa’s encounter with various forms of local governance as has been argued, pre-dates colonialism (Olowu and Wunsch 2004). Commentators point out that Africa’s encounter with modes of social formations and indigenous governance systems which are associated with modern day decentralised governance such as markets, self-help community organisation, farmers unions, and local interest groups has always been part of African societies.

Notwithstanding the above, formal attempts to institutionalise decentralised local governance in African only became perceptible with colonialist efforts. According to Crook and Manor (1998), historically, experimentations with decentralisation in African dates back to the colonial reforms of the 1950s; however, it must be noted that this experience differs from country to country, with the occurrence of local government in some countries stretching beyond colonial days.

It is obvious from the discussion on NPM reforms above that different factors occasioned a growing interest in the adoption of varying forms of decentralised local governance across the continent. For instance, discussants suggest that globalisation; internal economic crisis; structural adjustment; and democratisation; as well as local domestic forces including urbanisation, and the quest to strengthen pre-existing ethnic identities may have influenced the emergence of decentralisation (Olowu 2006). These developments appear to coincide with key historical epochs in Africa’s development. As will be discussed later, decentralisation reforms in Africa takes many forms, but scholars belief the experience in many African countries has not been a glowing one (Olowu and Wunsch 2004:19); or that it is mostly a negative experience (Crook 1998). Historically, decentralisation reforms in Africa have progressed in five distinct phases, each representing a development epoch and influenced by different political, economic, and social motivations. The next few sections highlight the periods of decentralisation or local governance in Africa and, when possible present their characteristics.

Faced with mostly vast and difficult to traverse terrain, with fewer than is necessary colonial administrators, Africa’s colonisers are believed to have initiated and implemented a form of decentralised local governance. The coloniser’s primary tactic was helped by existing traditional rulers who became a preferred way to reach the hinterland. To achieve this mode of local governance therefore, colonisers are said to have created traditional
chiefdoms where there were none, and empowered them to carry out what can best be described in today’s terms as a de-concentrated system mostly by way of implementing directives from central colonial governors (Olowu et al. 2004). The literature also confirm that, this form of local governance, often referred to as ‘indirect rule’ first appeared in Asian states, particularly in India in the early 1950s, and reached Africa by the 1960s (See: Mamdani 1996; Olowu and Wunsch 2004). Comparatively, however, the objective of indirect rule differed completely from present day decentralised local governance. Although the administrative principle it adopted provided the impetus for decentralisation as it is today.

At independence many African states, probably for their hatred of the colonial system quickly abolished any form of indirect rule. Further, it might have been realised that, indirect rule merely served colonial interest to expand a cheap coverage of the territory, rather than to provide an opportunity neither for popular political participation and expression nor serve as a structure of accountability to the public as envisaged in tenets of modern decentralisation and especially serve the interest of a growing numbers of educated elite. In addition, it did little to spearhead political, social, and economic development. As the literature has it, the traditional rulers favoured by indirect rule, were mostly illiterate, change averse, and variously appropriated the power and authority to acquire personal wealth to the chagrin of the growing educated elite (Firmin-Sellers and Sellers 1999)

Probably the most prominent time for local governance in Africa arrived with the discontinuation of the Second World War and the period leading to independence in most countries. A time variously described by researchers as the golden age of local government in Africa (Hicks 1961; Olowu 1999; Olowu and Wunsch 2004; Olowu et al. 2004). The change was occasioned by the prevailing political, economic, as well as humanitarian circumstances on the ground. First, the colonisers perceived that the colonies had become a source of economic drain given that war had to be fought to keep them, and that the colonisers had become economically exhausted from the war. According to Olowu et al.(2004), economically, keeping colonies under such condition brought great monetary and human costs which were uneconomic to bear.

Next, the outcomes of war ignited a realisation of ‘self-determination for all people of the world’ (ibid, 2004), and finally, political pressure escalated owing to strong liberation movements and growing number of militant intelligentsia who through education and exposure had felt the benefits of self-determination. Further, Hicks, (1961) points out, that,
this earlier radical policy shift towards decentralised local governance was influenced by exogenous colonial development policy shift in West Africa contained in a popular 1947 lord Creech Jones’ dispatch, in which it was argued that success in African administration was contingent on an efficient and democratic system of local government.

He concluded therefore that for local governance to be of benefit, it had to be local so that it was closer to the people and their problems; It had to be efficient in that it was capable of managing local services in ways that can increase people’s standard of living; and finally it had to be democratic as it had to not only find a place for the growing class of educated elite, but at the same time command the respect and support of the mass of the people. With this, the seed for change and the way for local government councils to become democratised had been planned.

In spite of these opportunities, a different agenda, which is contrary to the above perceived decentralised local governance approach, appears to have been prosecuted by African governments. This has led researchers to conclude that: African leaders sought to dismantle rather than to build on the strengths and gains of the historically prevailing legacy (Olowu et al. 2004; Dele 2006). An interrogation of the literature further highlights African leaders’ preoccupation with so called ‘africanisation’ and the ‘nation building’ effort and the consequent adoption of centralised planning driven by socialist ideology as the course for the missed opportunity.

Which approach may have been adopted to drive home African leaders’ quest to demonstrate that rapid socio-economic development was the way to express the political reality of independence. This thinking required that the central state takes a lead in the planning and implementation of development projects, leaving little room for the implementation by local government administration.

It is obvious therefore, that wherever decentralised local governance was implemented, it was merely for political expediency, to reach out to the local, grassroots constituency to build political masses as opposed to achieving local development. Often times, a form of local governance characterised by central control, and the implementation of centrally determined development plans become the rule of thumb, and remain largely so in present day decentralised local governance. Following from this, Olowu et al (2004), rightly opine that when leaders alluded to local governance, they actually implied a consultative assembly with limited real power over the officials in charge of the local governments.
Given this perfunctory attitude of African leadership to inclusion of local communities in local government implementation process, and their romance with a swing away from local autonomy in favour of central planning and greater control over public resources, a de-concentrated administration, which is probably weaker than the colonial one, was to be an expected outcome at the locality. As is the case today, this type of de-concentrated local government are aided by committees that hardly play any role beyond rubber stamping centrally evolved development plans and giving help in their implementation.

A third factor for local governance in Africa, is mostly externally driven and donor influence. Prominent among whom are the International monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank (WB) who consistently pressured African nations into adopting Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in response to balance of payment deficits and continuing increases in economic decay. Within the SAP, decentralised local government was hailed as a means of reducing the mounting central government expenditure, or as a strategy to cope with mounting economic crisis. African governments in addition to meeting the requirement of donors also jumped at implementing local governance as Olowu and Wunsch (2004) put it, to rid itself of the development responsibilities in order to respond to declining resources among other challenges (Crook 1998; OLOWU and Wunsch 2004). It was concluded hence that the resultant local governments would also be empowered to identify and make relevant decisions regarding investment within their locales.

As is the case with African states, Central governments only devolved responsibilities and not resources – human, financial and material- to the local units. At best, decentralisation thus became mere extensions of the central government as local governments depended heavily on central state for everything including budgets, personnel, and policies guidance (Domfeh and Bawole 2009). According to the literature, this kind of decentralisation contains design and operational challenges. Governments implemented them to satisfy donor conditions, second donors themselves did not pay attention to the nature and type of decentralised structures they were promoting, as a clear distinction was not made between de-concentration and devolution, de-concentration tended to be emphasised much to the neglect of addressing governance challenges inherent in irresponsible use of power, corruption among others.
A fourth and more comprehensive model is based on the democratisation and good governance reforms which took place around the 1990s decentralisation. This type of decentralisation reform is accordingly an integral part of the democratisation process began in and involved the creation of large numbers of new, elective local government authorities in the 1980s (Crook 2003; Crook and Manor 1998). This approach became prominent as a sequel of the failures of the 1980s Structural Adjustment Programs and Economic Recovery Program influenced decentralisation.

This model is linked to political liberalisation and democratisation, and has its main focus on local government institutions that are truly participatory, responsive and responsible to their locales and is consistent with the kind envisaged in lord Creech Jones’ dispatch and contrary to old forms which mostly transferred responsibilities to other levels of the same administrative system (OlOWU and Wunsch 2004). The history of decentralised local governance represents various attempts by governments to bring government closer to people and to tap the creativity and resources of local communities through their participation in development (Crook and Manor 1998).

To conclude, with a chequered historical basis, what represents the aim and rationale of decentralised local government in Africa apart from the fact that it is an answer to exogenous pressures for reform from development partners and donors led by the World Bank and other international institutions of power remains a matter of considerable disagreement among promoters, practitioners, and researchers alike. In the next section we explore various conceptualisations to decentralisation.

### 2.6 Definitions of Decentralised Local Governance

Probably one of the most popular local development concept yet, decentralisation since the 1980s has become a buzz word in the development agenda of many developing countries. Any discussion of Local government reforms therefore would be incomplete without properly locating and conceptualising what decentralisation truly stands for. Many conceive decentralised local government differently. As the literature would suggest, the concept is complex and somewhat elusive (Smoke 2003; OLOWU and Wunsch 2004). It is a multi-dimensional process which defies clarity regarding a precise importance. It is difficult therefore to pin it down in one particular comprehensive definition (Steiner 2008; Olowu 2006; Bangura and Larbi 2006).
The relative confusion as Crawford and Hartman (2008) informs us, is probably influenced by the tendency for scholars of different epistemological positions to ‘compartmentalise’ the measurement of its constituents thus rendering it difficult to measure holistically. For instance, traditional economists, according to Smoke (2003), focus on fiscal and economic development, the processes and procedures of political interaction and intergovernmental relations which could include relationships between national and sub-national, sectoral, and international relations. Political economists influenced by neo-liberal ideals hail decentralisation for shifting power away from the discredited, rent seeking and generally abused centralised state.

On their part, political scientist and their pluralist compatriots concern themselves with issues of local accountability mechanisms, local election as well as representation. They regard decentralisation as a device for opening up otherwise closed systems, to give interest groups space in which to organise, compete and assert themselves. On the other hand, politicians of democratic persuasion believe decentralisation is a means to make government more responsive to local needs and preferences. On the extreme end, autocratic regimes, while not wholly in support of decentralisation, observe it as a substitute for democratisation at the national level, a mean to legitimise their regimes and gain grass root support (Smoke 2003).

Public choice theoretist perceive decentralisation to include the process through which public goods and services are provided, primarily, through the revealed preferences of individuals by Market mechanisms (Hope and Chikulo 2000; Rondinelli et al. 1983). Public administration connoisseurs, according to Smoke (2003), concern themselves with the institutional structures, functions, process, and procedures at the local level. While, community development advocates, see decentralisation as a means to the end itself. On their own however, none of these viewpoints adequately capture the concept in total as they are rather limited conceptualisation (Smoke, 2003). All suggest a potent gravitation towards a partnership of those interested to engineer change.

For Olowu (2006), decentralisation involves the process of a planned transfer of resources away from the central state institutions. Crawford and Hartmann (2008), adds that this transfer is not only of resources but power, responsibility, and financial roles and responsibility from government; usually central government to sub-national levels of government at provincial or local levels. Away from this, Prud'homme (2003), puts forward a system and process approach to conceptualising decentralisation. As a system,
he suggests decentralisation means a decentralised system of government; one in which a substantial share of power is granted to local, provincial, or regional governments. On the other hand, as a process, decentralisation means the procedure by which one moves from centralised to a decentralised system of government. That is, all the processes, the legal acts and administrative instruments aimed at sending responsibility, resources, accountability and rules to the local level.

Defined from which ever perspective, for decentralisation to be complete and useful, it must involve a transfer of some kind, of authority or responsibility for decision making, planning, management, or resource allocation from one level of government to its field units, district administration units, other levels of government regional, or functional authorities, semi-autonomous public authorities, parastatal organisations, private entities, and non-governmental private or voluntary organisations (Rondinelli et al. 1983; Hope 1997).

### 2.6.1 Categorization of Decentralisation

Scholars argue that the relative unease to finding an agreed upon definition is further complicated by a controversy within practitioners and scholars as to which category counts most as decentralisation. In their authoritative book of 1983, Decentralisation in developing countries: a review of recent experience, Rondinelli and colleagues, proposed the first most comprehensive typology ever of decentralisation. They propose two dimensions of decentralisation; thus, horizontal and vertical. Accordingly, horizontal decentralisation disperse power among institutions at the same level while vertical decentralisation, allows for some of the powers of government to be delegated downwards to lower tiers of authority (Hope and Chikulo 2000; Hope 2000).

However, a decade and half later, Crawford and Hartmann (2008), discount this categorization arguing that it is at best analytically weak, too broad, and probably politically motivated. Instead, Francis and James (2003), offer a common categorisation of decentralisation as political or democratic decentralisation, known popularly in the literature as devolution (Crawford, 2008); Administrative decentralisation or de-concentration, which is defined as political devolution of authority to lay persons or special purpose authorities (Olowu 2006); or the administrative delegation of responsibility and authority to field units of the same department or level of government; and Fiscal decentralisation (Manor 1999; Crawford 2008a; Crawford 2008b).
Earlier categories include privatization and deregulation (Rondinelli 1981); there is also a mention of territorial and functional decentralisation; Hybrid or partial decentralisation where responsibility and personnel are decentralised but not financing; and Market decentralisation – referring to decentralisation from governments to market, quasi-market and non-governmental organisations (Olowu 2006). Elsewhere, doubts remain as to whether fiscal decentralisation, is actually a form of, or simply an appendage to one of the forms of decentralisation (Ribot 2002; Crawford and Hartman 2008). Ribot suggests that fiscal decentralisation is realised in contexts of de-concentration and devolution hence it is best considered a cross-cutting element, instead of a separate category.

Thus far, two main forms of decentralisation stand out, that is de-concentration and devolution, each of which, according to the literature has a significantly different logic (Crawford and Hartman 2008; Crawford 2008a; Steiner 2008; Crook 1998). The literature suggest that, de-concentration tends to mark an extension in the scope of central government; usually a conduit through which the centre strengthens its authority by moving controlled executive agencies down to lower levels in the political and administrative spectrum. Viewed this way, de-concentration is simply a relocation of officers at different levels or points in the national territory to the lower level, rather than a case where central government gives up part of its authority to the lower level.

Devolution on the other hand presents a completely opposite logic, one in which central government gives up control and resources without restrictions to agencies, actors and institutions at lower levels. A form of power sharing, as Crook and Manor (1998) suggest, between central government and sub-national authorities. A devolved authority also has legal personality and legally defined areas of competence within which it has autonomy to tax, spend, and may even have limited or minor legislative competence. However, same cannot be said when a central government in an effort to decentralised, advertently pass only responsibility or authority, but not resources or local accountability.

Contemporary theorists, writing on Africa’s decentralisation process, submits that, at any point where responsibility, authority, and resources are transferred while accountability still rest with the central government, there is delegation and that, where there is transfer, by law and other formal actions, of responsibility, resources both material and human, and importantly local accountability, that is equivalent to devolution. They continue that this by far, represents the most comprehensive as it is the one that “can bring about local governance” (OLOWU and Wunsch 2004:5).
While drawing attention to important support roles to fiscal decentralisation, Smoke (2003) suggests that fiscal decentralisation should not be mistaken to be related only to financial decentralisation. According to him economist call for a much broader view which includes but not limited to the assignment of responsibilities and sectoral functions, as well as the assignment of own resource revenues to sub-nation government.

He further warns that without properly defined fiscal decentralisation, other forms of decentralisation would remain dilapidated with very little or no impact. For him, poorly defined roles and resource deficiencies can cripple local governments and undermine incentives for local officials and elective representatives to perform effectively.

We again learn from the forgoing literature that institutional or administrative forms of decentralisation, often christened administrative bodies, systems and mechanism, both local and intergovernmental, are there to help manage and support the proper functioning of other forms of decentralisation. These administrative arrangements represent the ‘sub-structure’, which Smoke (2003) calls the institutional architecture; the fulcrum on which an effective decentralisation rotates. This is because, it provides the mechanisms or represents the links to the chain which runs between formal government bodies to other key local actors – traditional local authorities, non-governmental organisations, and private sector partners.

This thesis supports the view that these organisational structures and procedures, where properly constituted and functional, in the least would facilitate local government staff to meet their obligations including the development of good working relationship with elected representative councils. Smoke, (2003), concludes that without appropriately designed and implemented structures, processes, as well as adequate local capacity to manage the political and fiscal functions of sub-national governments, decentralisation will fail.
Table 1: Summary of Types and Description of Decentralisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of decentralisation</th>
<th>Key features/Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>De-concentration</td>
<td>Most common form of decentralisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Least extensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passing down of selected administrative functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decisions made with reference to the top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation</td>
<td>Transfer of specific authority and decision making powers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government retains right to overturn decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uses managerial accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Offers services through a business like organisational structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devolution</td>
<td>Granting of decision making power and full responsibility to local agents without reference to the top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Include financial power, design, and execution of local development programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Essence is discretion, government retain policy guidelines role, it is the strongest form of decentralisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privatization</td>
<td>Transfer of operational control and responsibility to private sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourages private sector participation in service delivery, derived from economic case of privatisation,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top-down principal agency</td>
<td>Local authority work on behalf of higher level government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local authority work as agent under the control and supervision of higher level agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom up principal agency</td>
<td>Government and parastatals act as agents of lower level government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors construct; extracted from Hope and Chikulo (2000)

Although there has been a lot of good faith, almost to the level of certainty, within the donor community especially the World Bank that good and accountable local governance is a necessary condition for growth and sustained poverty reduction, which translates into local community development; the evidence from the literature reviewed, is inconclusive and demonstrates greater doubts than optimism that this is a straight forward relationship. With greater concerns that this is hardly the case, particularly in developing country contexts (See: Crook and Manor 1998; Moore and Putzel 1999; Crawford 2003) it is difficult to conclude therefore that there are real chances that decentralised local governance would succeed in improving development performance at the local level (Adamolekum 1999; Paul and Robert 2003).

Within the above acknowledged confusion of what decentralisation actually represents and equally mixed faith on its potential to translate into desirable local community development and poverty alleviation. Decentralisation also appears to have posed many problems for the public sector as it is sometimes perceived as an invariable destructive force that frustrates rather than facilitate effective government operations. This challenge apparently lies in operationalizing, in good faith, the true tenets of decentralisation and local governance. In this light, it would be interesting to explore what the tenets of
decentralisation are, be they perceived or real, that would facilitate long term and sustained rural community development. The next section briefly summaries current proposals of the tenets of decentralised local government.

2.7 Tenets and Proclamations of Decentralised Local Governance

Since coming into the limelight, decentralisation has been promoted as a solution to many problems of administration and governance concerning both local and national development. It has also been put forward among others as a guaranteed root to improving the performance of poverty reduction programs.

Francis and James (2003) summarize the potential benefits to include improved efficiency of public service provision; more appropriate services; better governance, and empowerment of local citizens. In particular, they emphasise that attention be paid to devolved decision making mechanisms, within the local governance infrastructure as it smoothens the active participation of communities, and thus help communities to articulate local priorities and ensures that programs are appropriate to local needs.

Though a desirable tenet, this thesis posits on the basis of prevailing literature, that there remains an obvious gulf between the rhetoric and reality of citizen participation. The dominant reasons within recent literature regards the disappointing performance of decentralised local governance includes; inadequate capacity; insufficient fiscal decentralisation; and the lack of accountability to citizens (Paul and Robert 2003). The potential advantages of decentralisation are conflicting, to say the least, (Smoke 2003). Notwithstanding this, four potential advantages stand out within recent literature, which are briefly highlighted and discussed below:

**Improved Efficiency:** Local governments face a principally complex situation in their services provision agenda. This is because the communities they serve are varied. However, this is alleviated with believes that the sub-national governments are closer to the people, have good access to critical local information, and understand the local context well (Smoke 2003). This gives local governments an added ability to better identify the appropriate mixture, and level of services that their constituents need than can the higher level government; thus improving allocative efficiency. Suffice to say however that some services, by their nature, are best provided by a higher level government with a greater
overall capacity. There are those however, that affect local jurisdictions and should be left to local governments.

**Improved Governance:** local governance is believed to ensure greater interaction with elected local government. This leads directly to decisions that are more consistent with the wishes of local communities than those made and imposed by central governments from above. Not only are local communities said to feel better connected to local governments but also this connection allows them, - either directly or indirectly (through their representatives) - to influence public affairs in some modest ways that directly affect them, empowers people, and gives them a new sense of control and autonomy.

**Improved Equity:** Armed with a greater knowledge of the local area, and critically an in-depth understanding of local cultures, needs and aspirations of which local governments are deeply immersed, Smoke (2003) writes that local governments are in the best position to equitably distribute public resources and thus better target community development and poverty reduction strategies within their own jurisdiction. Though local governments may be well intended at catalysing community development; Smoke (2003) cautions that, their efforts often are constrained by limited internal resource availability. In addition, local government will not necessarily choose to pursue redistribution in their jurisdiction unless forced to do so by broadly inclusive local political processes or interventionist central governments.

**Improved Development and Poverty Reduction:** In recent times arguments abound which suggests - and rightly so - that the local government is expected to contribute and in most cases spearhead local economic development in the following ways:

1. provide services that serve the production and distribution of inputs for local firms and entrepreneurs
2. contribute to a legal institutional environment that is conducive for development
3. help coordinate key local public, private and community actors in creating partnerships that promote development

Mention is not made in the contemporary literature of the role of local government not only to coordinate the activities of local partners, but also critically work conscientiously to determine that appropriate and direct relevant community development needs are addressed. A sustained local development is required for sustainable poverty reduction but not a sufficient condition for it.
2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter is a sequel to the general introduction and problem statement of the study. It briefly reviewed existing literature within the field of decentralisation and local governance. The review suggests that Africa has had a long and circuitous history with processes that approximate decentralisation during the colonial times, whose structure has permeated into present day’s decentralisation, albeit with different objectives. Central to colonial decentralised governance was the need to achieve political, administrative, and cost expediency while the drivers of present day decentralised reformation are many and interrelated.

Prominent among these are the theoretical and philosophical influences of New Public Management and its offshoots. Others include international donors, and supranational organisations that pushed for decentralisation at the point where Africa faced its greatest social, political and financial crisis, which implied that African countries had limited options but to adopt and implement decentralisation hook-line-and-sinker. Even though the review has revealed that, in some cases this was not the right trajectory to deal with the prevalent development and economic challenges.

Notwithstanding the above, the review revealed that some desirable administrative and political benefits that could accrue from appropriately adopting and faithfully implementing the NPM influenced decentralisation reforms in Africa. In the least, the review suggests meritocratic forms of public administration could evolve and that the local administrations could benefit for adopting private sector management processes. Furthermore, NPM type reforms would eventually result in efficiency; strengthen accountability; reduce corruption; recognise organisations and staff; change values and attitudes; and exploit new technologies. These appear desirable in today’s local government administration. However, the literature cautions that public sector and private sector management processes are radically different and cannot or should not be mixed.

It is further apparent that institutional, political and governance mechanisms existent in Africa are far complex than the literature suggests. These complexities eventually serve as brakes to the smooth implementation of the various policies in a timely and effective manner. The literature extols both democratic and developmental tenets of implementing decentralisation and local governance across the sub-region. Probably, there is more controversy within the literature than there is convergence on the above developmental and
democratic assertion. Again, the review revealed conceptual difficulties among scholars and professionals alike in reaching a generally accepted and unambiguous theoretical conceptualisation of the process or practice of decentralisation. Indeed as the literature would suggest, the concept of decentralisation is a complex and somewhat elusive phenomenon (Smoke 2003; OIOWU and Wunsch 2004), and for this reason, countries appear to conveniently adopt it in ways that is best suitable in the eyes of the political and administrative elite.

Consequently, it was realised that there is huge challenge for governments and administrative machinery to operationalize, in good faith, the true tenets of decentralisation. The thesis therefore supports views that decentralised local governance holds some developmental credence, at least for the people of a given locale, and that this is exclusively possible where central governments implemented a truly devolved system that has the needed capacity to effectively carry out its responsibilities to the local constituencies. This thesis thus contends that within the above noted conceptual confusion, achieving this appears a far cry. Before exploring the contextual and empirical functioning of local governments in Ghana, the next chapter presents further conceptual discussions, to enhance our analytical framework for decentralised local governance and community development in Ghana.
CHAPTER THREE: GOVERNANCE, PARTICIPATION, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

3.0 Introduction

A conceptual framework is neither a model nor a comprehensive theory. This is because models describe how things work, whereas theories explain phenomena. Conceptual frameworks do neither. Rather they help us think clearly about a given phenomena, to order material, and to reveal patterns which may eventually lead to models and theories (Cuthill and Warburton 2005). The thesis adopts a conceptual framework based on the thinking that, it would help us to understand clearly how decentralised local governance leads to local community development, and how this could be applied to the case of Ghana. The section begins by engaging the concepts of governance and good democratic governance where it proposes that good democratic governance lays the foundations for local community development. It opens up opportunities for mutual interactions between the local government and local communities which generates relevant development projects as well as gain support for successful implementation.

Next the section examines community participation in local governance and how that translates to local community development. It explores the dimensions of participation in order to point out the potential mix of participation that can best promote the interest of rural communities in the development enterprise. With community development as a goal, it is important that local governments adopt participation that empowers people and, contributes to poverty reduction.

3.1 Good Democratic Governance

The literature identifies an unbreakable link between good local democratic governance, institutional reforms, and local community development. However, it is not easy to discover links that succinctly establish this relationship particularly within rural local government in Ghana. As has been posited elsewhere, this relationship among governance; development and institutional reforms; and public policy processes remains ambiguous (See: Olowu 2002a; Olowu 2002b).
This thesis argues that there must exist institutional capacities within and outside the state machinery, and a consistent locally evolved development strategy that is devoid of political arm-twisting, if governance it to impact on rural poverty and community development. As already discussed, spirited supporters of local governance, believe in its efficacy where properly implemented, to provide ample opportunity - both structural and institutional - for local community development to flourish.

To this end, one could conclude that local community development will be meaningful as an outcome of effective and efficient good local governance that recognises the crucial roles of individual and collective community members in a participatory system. This provides a probable explanation to the apparent struggles in the quest for good democratic governance and in particular good local governance among many African countries currently. In spite of this generally accepted struggle for good governance, Kauzya (2003), cautions that what constitute good governance is fairly illusive as is the case of realising its effectiveness.

To reach a conclusive comprehension of the impact of good local governance on community development therefore, a clear working understanding of the concept is paramount. As is consistent with social development literature, there are different positions to the concept. Firstly, Dwivedi (2002), believes governance is a new paradigm than government, and replaces the traditional meaning of the term government. It is a representation of the values, policies and instruments by which society manages its economic, political, and social affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society and the private sector (Dwivedi, 2002). Others conceive governance as the processes which leads to the development and operation of regimes or the fundamental (constitutive) rules that structure and regulate the relationships among the populace in the management of their public affairs (Ostrom 1990; OIOWU and Wunsch 2004).

Metaphorically speaking, Kauzya(2003:3) presents an interesting analogy of governance as a ship and its captain, she points out that, the interest is not only in knowing the direction and ensuring the ship reaches that destination, but also:

As an act of steering a people's development, governance is a multifaceted compound situation of institutions, systems, structures, processes, procedures, practices, relationships, and leadership behaviour in the exercise of social, political, economic, and managerial / administrative authority in the running of public or private affairs. Good governance is the exercise of this authority with the participation, interest, and livelihood of the governed as the driving force
From the growing literature on governance, two major definitions appear to have gained
ground over time. The most popular is the one proposed by the World Bank (1994; UNDP
1997) which emphasises the role of leadership or the manner in which political (state) leaders
manage, use, or misuse power to promote social and economic development or to pursue
agendas that undermine such goals. On the other hand, the second approach focuses on
sharing authority for public management between the state and non-state organisations.
What is variously described as socio-political forms of governing (Kooiman 1993). This
occurs when the public or private actors act in conjunction, variously described as co-
arrangement. Crucially this thesis understands that governance is a multiple organisational
action rather than exclusive state actions. Notwithstanding, attention is drawn to a midway
stand or a partnerships approach which draws on the difference between the first and
second approaches mentioned above.

The third view of governance as adopted by Olowu and Sako, (2002), which appears to
exempt itself from labelling of governance as “good or bad”. It suggests that a process only
approach seem to equate democratic change to good governance. As they points out,
governance as is known might actually decline in some important aspects under
democratisation – especially if the crucial institutions supposed to perform specific
functions are weak or lacking. Therefore, this thesis posits that in order to realise good
governance, it would be essential that public institutions work in conjunction with other
organisations in society to formulate public policies and programs which are implemented
to improve the people’s welfare, reduce poverty, and realise other public and societal
goals.

Managerial perspectives, particularly of new public management, perceive what became
termed as new governance paradigm, which stress a minimal state within which
governance is achieved through privatisation of government operations where possible,
and ensuring de-bureaucratisation; treating citizens as clients; and using private sector
techniques in achieving desired public management results (Dwivedi 2002). From this new
public management perspective, governance mostly has been equated to the achievement
of liberal democratic tents found in the political milieu of so-called western societies.
However, current views diverge as a careful scrutiny reveals that there are difficulties with
such an association of liberal democratic values as the basis for better governance.

---

2 Emphasis added
A distinction is made in the literature between governance and good governance. Hyden and Court (2002) posit that by ensuring good governance, public policies that are both technically efficient and effective and also responsive to the needs of large sections of the citizenry are created and implemented. This re-emphasises the intimate relationship earlier referred to, between good quality governance and the promotion of local development. For this reason, the often referenced 1989 World Bank report on sub-Saharan Africa, equated the current development crisis to a governance crisis (World Bank 1989). Others regard governance as the ‘big lessons’ of the period of rapid growth (See: Hyden and Court 2002). Whatever the case maybe, the thesis agree with Narayan et al, (2000)’s conclusion that powerlessness and voicelessness are crucial elements of poverty and it could only be logical therefore, to state that poverty reduction and for that matter community development can only be realised when governance is good and responsive. Cognisant of this view, rural community dwellers’ critical roles in determining the desired outcomes of local governance process could not be more emphatic.

The above considered, classical political economy’s conceptions to development are replaced by alternative questions of who sets what rules, when and how. At the local level, this is reflective of the nature, composition, and quality of the governance machinery. These views notwithstanding, the relationships between governance and local community development as well as institutional reforms and public policy processes still remain ambiguous (Olowu, 2002). The review thus far shows that local governance does not automatically guarantee empowerment and development.

This is probably because the proposed process of governance produces radically different outcomes in any two given different locations owing to capacity differentials within systems for policy formulation or implementation. Strong institutional capacities within and outside the state machinery is critical if local governance is to positively impact on rural poverty and community development. Logically therefore, good quality democratic governance will only positively impact on development if the critical institutions that impact on public policy process are built and sustained. The review further reveals that such a situation requires effective development strategies, policies and above all, institutions that can make policies that are transparent, accountable, predictable and exceedingly participative.
Reflecting on the above, scholars have advised that, governance and for that matter local
government should invite and promote the fundamental human rights of citizens at the
local level to lead to local community development (Crawford 2010; Hyden and Court
2002). This approach would rightly relocate the attention of government to the citizens;
after all good governance is a public good to which all citizens should be entitled. As
proponents of this approach, Hyden and Court (2002) argue that two important direct
community benefits are recognisable:

First, by focusing on entitlements, this approach recognises that poverty is not just a matter
of being economically deprived but is defined and sustained by a sense on the part of the
poor of hopelessness, dependence, lack of opportunities, and lack of self–confidence and
self-respect. The idea behind the entitlement approach is that the poor are entitled to a
decent standard of living and rights are the vehicle for their participation in the political
process- rather than as subject to charity and benevolence by governments or the rich (ibid,
2002). Second, the approach draws attention to the importance of norms and rules. How
the society is governed and how it achieves its development is as important as what these
processes achieve.

What then are the basic defining principles of the type of governance that can best
constitute good governance? Dwivedi (2002) identifies six basic principles as those that
reflect the emerging global consensus of good governance. That is participation; fairness;
transparency; decency; accountability; and efficiency. He posits that, to be able to serve
society rightly, a moral standard in governance should direct governmental conduct;
morality, for him, provides the foundation for the governing process. He thus calls for
individual moral responsibility and obligation, sacrifice, compassion, justice and an honest
effort to achieve the highest good. It would appear therefore that gaining the public
confidence and trust becomes inevitable to achieving good governance locally. However,
this does not appear to be an easy task. Dwivedi, (2002:43) has therefore proposed a ten
point criteria which must exist in order for the given polity to approximate this, thus:

1. **Democratic pluralism:** equality, empathy, tolerance for cultural diversity and
draws on three basic ideals: fundamental freedom for all, equality of all, and
universal participation in the governing process

2. **Legitimacy:** of the governing process allows those who govern to derive authority
and power from legitimate constitutional instruments of governance
3. **Consensus:** among different and differing interests in society and equity assures all individuals the opportunity to improve their wellbeing
4. **Public participation:** in decision making
5. **Rule of law:** that is impartially enforced
6. **Responsiveness:** of institutions to the needs of all stakeholders
7. **Effective and efficient responsibility and accountability:** of institutions and state craft that meet basic needs of all by using state controlled resources to their optimum accountability
8. **A strategic vision:** of the leaders for broad–range, long term perspectives on sustainable human development
9. **Transparency:** for access to governing institutions and state information sources and
10. **Moral governance:** that reflects such values of common good, cultural diversity, public service ethics controlling corruption, seeking spiritual guidance, and dedication.

He concludes that in the current development, “humane governance” is equivalent to good governance, through moral governance the system should foster an enabling environment and equitably distribute resources in dealing with poverty and inequality. While the criteria offered by Dwivedi (2002) above may appear persuasive and may even offer a real opportunity for a truly people centred governance, there are challenges to his position within the literature about the usefulness of good governance. The review show that the concept of good governance has received so much critique overtime to be completely useful (Minogue 2002).

As has been noted above, major international development agencies including the World Bank (WB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and its British counterpart the Department for International Development (DFID), while insisting on certain key aspects such as political legitimacy, institutional and financial accountability, and widespread participation; they have all tendered to stressed different approaches to ensuring good governance happen. Further, given existent historical, cultural, and structural influences to the governance agenda within the African context, the proposals of a morally driven local governance thought desirous, stands enormously difficult to realise. This notwithstanding, in order to ensure that good governance results in effective local community development within the African context, this thesis welcomes the extension of the criterion to include moral governance as Dwivedi, (2002) has suggested.
3.2 Community Participation

As indicated above, where good responsive governance is lacking, all aspects of development is compromised. One sure mechanism to improve the quality of governance and therefore guarantee overall development is to ensure effective strong participation and above all accountability, particularly to the local constituencies. The following section discusses participation in the perspective of decentralised local governance as a requirement for sustained and desirable community development.

Participation, as Crook and Manor (1998) point out, bothers on the citizens’ active engagement with public institutions. That is by voting, election campaigning, and contacting or pressuring either individually or through group activity. Although they caution that their conceptualisation is limited to political participation, which is but a fraction of what participation represents, this thesis considers political participation rather too limited in scope and cannot represent the breath and dynamics of communities and their development needs. Participation in decentralised community development goes beyond just political representation to include critically, the direct involvement of rural community members in all aspects of community development. This thesis would argue that even though political engagement is a crucial component in the community development agenda, it is not sufficient.

It is exclusionary and does not give room for a deeper or real community involvement. Since the focus of the thesis is community development, we adopt the concept of participation that is central to contemporary social development debates, one that is coterminous with empowerment, contributes to poverty reduction, and gives local people or communities central roles in the control of services delivery, resources management and most importantly significant influence over decision making process.

Béné and Arthur, (2006) point out that participatory approach hinges on the various paradigm shifts that have introduced governance shifts as alternatives to traditional top down management schemes. Which, according to the prevailing development literature are mostly perceived to be complete with inducing inertia, rent seeking behaviours and corruption among public officials. Current scholarships on participation agree, though, that where effective participation is guaranteed and religiously implemented, there is unusually an irresistible positive impact on development.
This could be at the individual level, within entire communities, or even nationally. For instance, Narayan (1994) writing for the World Bank, argues that participation is, without exception, a decisive component of overall project effectiveness and to the empowerment of community members especially. In his earlier thesis, Ostrom, (1990), alluded to the fact that efficiency and distributional dimensions of participatory processes generates more efficient and equitable results than either the state or the market could ever achieve. Be as it may, the state in most developing countries such as Ghana, is locked into national and international political and relational challenges, in addition to which it often seeks political expediency; and the market is imperfect as it deals with fundamental economic interest. In the developing country contexts therefore, it is difficult to appreciate the broader applicability of these concepts.

Other researchers, such as Chambers, (1995 ) and Béné and Arthur, (2006), identify the need for a participatory process to invite and engage potential users or beneficiaries in decision making, and feedback through monitoring and evaluation processes. They show that through participation, local people come to understand the social and political conditions under which they live and possess relevant [indigenous] technical knowledge critical for the solution of the myriad of local problems.

On the other hand, involving local communities in development projects allows the agencies to acquire a better understanding of local needs than traditional surveys thereby contribute to the reduction on the dependence for outside experts as local people are empowered.

### 3.2.1 Dimensions of Participation

Different reviewers have tended to classify participation into two distinct categories: good and bad, or weak and strong participations. However, further reviews reveal that as a process, participation is best perceived as a continuum involving many levels and many potential categorizations. Potential explanation for this kind of difference in typology as Béné and Arthur (2006), point out remains an issue with definitional differences which, in turn affect the way observers perceive the benefits of participation.

Michener (1998), approaches it from the professional planner and ordinary people categorization. The former, he estimates occurs through administrative and financial efficiency. The impetus to participate is derived from the fact that beneficiary involvement
increases likelihood of project success and achievement of objectives. In project environments, participation is said to lead to local commitment to the success of the project as *participation highlights potential benefits to community members*. Again, Michener (1998) adds two more critical dimensions; first, that participation makes the potential for local people’s acceptance of new policies easier; and second, that indigenous knowledge can be tapped into and optimised while financial as well as in-kind contributions may be guaranteed.

A people centred participation, in the view of this thesis, appear most desirable and can lead to local community development. This can be attributed to the ability of the people centred participation to help identity and meet locally felt needs; has value to empower the poor by providing them with increased management capacities; and in particular offers local people opportunity to enhance their confidence and collective consciousness. This thesis supports this kind of participation because, it is in line with Chambers (1983)’s view, which is equivalent to deep participation, through which process emancipation is fostered and the deprived and excluded are empowered to lift themselves up to greater social and economic developmental heights; and in the process take control and gain confidence in making their own decisive decisions in processes that affect their lives.

**Table 2: Dimensions of Participation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of participation</th>
<th>Detail classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Participation</td>
<td>Participation by decision Making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation in implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation in benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation in evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Participates</td>
<td>Local residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreign personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is participation occurring</td>
<td>Basis of participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Form of participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extend of participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effect of participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Author's construct: (Adapted from Cohen and Uphoff 1980 as cited in; Béné and Arthur 2006)

Cohen and Uphoff describe the “Who” dimension as delineating the actors engaged in the participatory community development enterprise while the “How” dimension isolates the various mechanisms by which people engage in the participatory process. In addition to these, further reviews of the literature also identifies power, and extend of control as distinguishing factors in participation, on which basis, scholars (Béné and Arthur 2006; Bhatnagar and Williams 1992); agree that participation could range from:
1. **Pseudo participation:** occurring where professionals consistently and intentionally manipulate beneficiaries to meet donor or elite needs

2. **Genuine participation:** where participation leads to empowerment and/or where communities have control over program policy and management

3. **Weak participation:** where participation is via consultation or receiving information and

4. **Strong participation:** This is replete with partnerships where control is ceded to ordinary community members or beneficiaries.

**Table 3: Types and Intensity of Participation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Participation</th>
<th>Description of type of participation</th>
<th>Level of participation</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information sharing</td>
<td>Operations managers and designers and managers share information with beneficiaries in order to facilitate individual and collective action</td>
<td>lowest level of participation useful at managerial or administrative level activities</td>
<td>Minimal not suitable for or intended for community level participatory development task oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>People are not only informed but are consulted on key issues Level of popular participation increases</td>
<td>Agency retains control of design and implementation</td>
<td>Opportunity for disadvantaged people to interact and provide feedback Upstream and downstream issues accounted for in process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>People especially disadvantaged groups have decision making roles in matters of policy, design and implementation</td>
<td>Community or the poor hold extensive decision making abilities and can decide on their own projects</td>
<td>Popular participation ensured to the extent of decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiating action</td>
<td>The poor are able to take initiatives in terms of actions and decision making</td>
<td>People centred, community based Different from capacity to act or decide on issues or task proposed or assigned by external development organisations</td>
<td>Popular participation peaks Proactive capacity and confidence to get going own projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from: Bhatnagar and Williams (1992)

At face value, some forms of participation, for instance strong participation appear to offer a greater chance of ensuring success and gaining confidence, trust and complete support from the beneficiaries or communities. This thesis is of the view however that, no one single form is wholly useful in all cases. An appropriate choice of type of participation based on the prevailing needs and importantly the kind of activities to be executed is
advocated. As Béné, and Arthur, (2006) put it, both strong and weak participation come with strengths and weaknesses.

Table 4: Weaknesses of Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBLEMS WITH STRONG PARTICIPATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Only useful in a limited range of activities and can succeed only where a range of demanding and social conditions are met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wide range of critical large scale projects and programs on which everybody depend, for instance roads, tertiary education, national and global research and other essential goods and services provided by national and global companies do not lend themselves to participation. These require complex technology and decisions are taken at national levels. Hierarchy, expertise, and professional autonomy in governing is essential and real participation is impossible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Control of technical systems is possible only to a very limited degree by persons who are not technical specialists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Operational and managerial constraints – efficiency in governance may require some degree of autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Small influential groups with rather personal interests which may not coincide with those of society as a whole may subvert democratic processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Capacity to cooperate depends on the level of social capture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participation can be costly and socially disruptive to those involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participation requires skills and knowledge especially in areas of resource management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBLEMS WITH WEAK PARTICIPATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of true participation – systems do not allow transfer of real power, may have limited accountability mechanisms and can sometimes be used to hide poor performance or transfer cost and responsibility from the users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The right to be consulted does not imply a right to determine outcomes, which depends on the goodwill of and competence of the relevant agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The concept of participation is managerial and technocratic in essence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Were projects do not emphasis and enhance economic and self-financing capabilities, participation could create new forms of dependencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consultation can only be effective as the agency allows it to be, it is a power play and this subverts principle or organisational accountability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s construct; compiled from various sources

The review suggests that during the implementation of decentralisation programs, the most popular form of participation identifiable is of attending public meetings. According to Crook and Manor (1998), however, this is not necessarily evidence of popular empowerment. These meetings are often dominated by local leaders and government supporters seeking approval for their plans. In Ghana, a popular forum for participation in local government initiated community development programs has often been in the form of consultation with community notables such as chiefs and elders by the district assembly members, through whom, public meetings are organised.
Although this use of existing institutions of repute could suffice as an effective means of mobilisation, it does not stand out as an effective form of community involvement and may actually lead to the alienation of the majority of community members.

In the peculiar case of rural districts, where poverty and the lack of formal education is a norm, and serves as social barriers to participation, it stands to argue that effective participation is compromised. The uneducated are less likely than those with any level of education to attend public meetings. It is also noteworthy that those with secondary or higher education will have a higher rate of participation than those with basic or no education. A further exploration of this will be carried out in later sections. We now explore community development and how it occurs.

### 3.3 Rurality and Community Development

In order to better place our conception of the enterprise of community development in context, it is important to first understand two concepts: rurality and community development. On their own, these concepts are broad, and theorists have struggled without success to tie them down to a specific all-encompassing conceptualization. From recent literature, the concept of rurality is ‘ambiguous’ (Ashley and Maxwell 2001), as a vast and diverse territory and phenomenon is tagged with the rural label. In reference to rural communities, this thesis considers two distinct features, first that it is constituted of space or physical locality and second, that it includes human collective habitation, where economic and social activities are carried out mainly for human survival other than anything else. This is consistent with Rahman and Westley (2001) who used IFAD’s, demographic approach to associate rurality to a people who eke out a living from the land in the form of farmsteads or settlements.

Rural communities, as has been suggested in the literature, are characterized primarily, by a high dependence on natural resources, and where production is merely sufficient for subsistence. In addition, there appears to be, an abundance of land which in the context of Ghana is held in trust by community leaders; is relatively cheap and mostly not monetized; with a difficult terrain, relatively inaccessible to public social services; which conditions are said to increase political transaction cost, and therefore magnify the possibility of patronage and elite capture (Binswanger and Deininger 1997; Moore and Putzel 1999; Ashley and Maxwell 2001; Johnson 2001).
In specific terms, Mikos (2001) remains of rural communities’ dependence on agriculture and non-farm activities as well as poor or non-existent basic social services. The literature further provides that rural community dwellers such as those in Northern Ghana, are characteristically poor, and survive in unstable situations. Further that their lives are constantly under enormous threats (for instance of disease); they are without defences to natural environmental problems; are faced with resource degradation; water scarcity; and the breakdown of social organisation.

A further characteristic of rurality is that poverty, and general want becomes a defining feature of the majority of the people. In the context of this thesis, the rurality of poverty and underdevelopment is undisputable. As Mikos, (2001:545), has suggested, 70% of the one in four people around the world who live in absolute poverty, live in rural areas. Despite the potential of migration, and increases in urban poverty, Rahman and Westley, (2001) insists that the percentage of the poor living in rural areas will stay high.

### 3.3.1 Rural Community Development

Returning to the idea of geography or locality and people, which Jimu (2008) insist are important identifiers for a community and its development. It is realistically a reflection of the nature of the relationships among and between people and the locality in which these relationships are played out. It speaks of the social obligations that individuals have towards societies through which they cultivate their talent (Jimu, 2008). This thereby underscores the indispensable fact of geographically specific local needs, people's aspiration, and the effective mobilisation of resources to meet these needs.

After an extensive review, Green, (2008), posits that community development occurs when a group of people within a given locality initiate a social action process (i.e. planned intervention) on their own or in partnership with significant stakeholders with the sole aim to changing their economic, social, cultural and environmental situation. Seeking the common good of a given community therefore, appears to be the most important concern in a rural community development endeavour, and this, notably is intrinsically linked to society wide social, economic, political, and environmental good. Perceived this way, community development would reflect a people’s actions, and attributes of self-consciousness.
Based on insights from leading theorists, this thesis posits that, for community development to be relevant, long lasting and locally owned, it should originate in-situ, emanate as direct and conscious collective action, for the common good of the community. The objective, of such a collective action, is usually "to change their economic, social, cultural and/or environmental situation" (Christenson et al. 1989:14).

In the context of the above, the thesis reiterates the view that there could not be a reason to compromise on essential working relationship in the drive to achieve acceptable forms of community development.

This kind of relationship, though complex, represents in the view of theorists, a dynamic web of personal relationships, group networks, as well as traditions and patterns of behaviour that develop against the backdrop of the physical locality and its social, economic and political situations (Flecknoe and McLellan 1994). In addition to these relationships, in the pursuance of community development, Bhattacharyya (2004:3) insists it should be " [...] the pursuit of solidarity and agency by adhering to the principles of self-help, felt needs and participation"

Notwithstanding the above, the thesis acknowledges that, to attain community development that is acceptable to all is not a straight forward process. This, as Green (2008) notes does not occur in a vacuum. Whichever route from which community development is approached; the end product should epitomise a change process with a central goal of transforming the present, often undesired life circumstances of a people. Through this change process, individuals within the community, and for that matter local government actors; or even the national level of government should let go of personal interest in furtherance of the common good. Commonly understood in this way, the developmental fortunes of the poor and multitude categories of other people would be turned around.

3.4 Models of Community Development

As Green (2008) has contended, there is a need for an overarching theoretical framework that helps make sense of the world and people’s actions within it. Therefore, a prevailing theoretical framework for community development is important not only to help in our comprehension, but to provide orientation frames of that which is developmental and occurs within communities (Domahidy 2003). It is clear from the foregoing literature that the concept of and approaches to attaining rural community development is diverse and has
been greatly influenced by a barrage of agenda over time. Foremost, theorist attributed to rural development reform movements argue for an inclusion of social, cultural, and moral reform for the modification of rural communities. From the perspective of earlier rural sociologists, community development is but a progeny of community life movements (Summers 1986).

Further to this, early community development planners believe that the major source of problems to rural people is a lack of organisation, a failure of rural social institutions and inadequate infrastructure, opposed to anything else. To this end, Summers(1986) concludes that the organisational structure of community decision making and values of the decision maker is critical to the success of the community development enterprise. In addition, there is an overarching need for the presence of active citizens’ groups organised for local development; and an active engagement of locals in the bureaucratic structures via proactive horizontal and vertical networking capacity.

To execute present day community development, the local state, must of necessity exercise firm control of essential resources. However, Summers (1986) suggests that at this level, communities compete for resources as pertains in the private sector, thus the local state which represents the communities’ interest in such competition must possess at least two crucial criteria of independence: the right to raise revenue and determine its use as well as the right to control personnel – who shall be hired and fired, and determine what shall be their conditions of work.

Summers (1986: 361), summarises earlier community development strategy puzzles, which this thesis still consider to be pertinent to present day Ghanaian local governments’ efforts to executing their mandate of community development. A review suggests that there are divergent questions or views on the way forward thus:

**Reform vs. revolution debate:** could improvements in the human condition be achieved by a revision of the existing systems or only by revolutionary action.

**Populist vs. elitist:** who should control the decisions regarding goals and methods of intervention? Should it emanate from those whose lives would be most directly affected; or should it reside with the scientist, technicians, politicians, administrators, or others perceived to possess specialised knowledge such as planners; or with capital owing persons with powerful vested interests in the system’s changes?
The structural vs. Individualistic: what is the appropriate target for intervention? Should efforts be focused on improving institutional or individual capacities?

Outcomes vs. process: Should intervention be directed towards producing immediate improvements in material wellbeing or should development of new social, economic and political processes be presumed necessary to sustain wellbeing in the long run?

On the other hand, Green, (2008) proposed three themes under which community development work may take place:

- Technical intervention, planning or assistance: which concerns access to and provisioning of information, technical expertise for development initiatives; which as Fear et al (1989) notes are necessary for collective pursuance of community goals.

- Self help, non-directive or cooperative: probably the most desired approach; this focuses on community residents working to achieve their own goals. Further, Green(2008) points out that this usually focuses on community building and professional community development practitioners may play a role in this but typically as facilitators or resource persons.

- Conflict or confrontation: This approach focuses on mobilizing, organizing, and advocating for change – it is more confrontational and power focus.

There still exist considerable ambiguities and differences in approaches to achieving rural development. In present day, this diversity as has been argued is almost as great as the diversity of rural spaces itself. Recalling the agricultural approach to rural community development, Ashley and Maxwell (2001), propose that the crisis in rural development reflects a loss of confidence in the rural development project, they call for a new poverty agenda which, according to them would position rural development beyond the consensus of the 1990s on both the content of the policy and the role the state should play.

Viewed from the complex nature of African rural communities, Barrett et al (2001:329), observe the potential that any effective rural poverty reduction strategy for Africa that does not aim to harness the potential of the non-farm sector and well-targeted interventions, stimulus of the rural non-farm economy, is likely to bypass most of the poorest in rural Africa.

An obvious advantage, it appears, of promoting this rural non-farm approach rests in its capacity to translate into increased incomes and livelihood diversification for the poor. In addition, it has been suggested that this approach further leads to a strengthening of
community institutional capacity, and enables rural folks to engage in innovative partnerships of commercial and political relevance. This approach usually is concerned with rural livelihoods and therefore rural development in the livelihoods parlance, has to involve assets that rural people access and about the structures and processes which mediate how these assets are transformed into income and other desired outcomes (Devereux 2001)

Yet again, the proponents of the new livelihoods approach to rural development and poverty reduction also emphasise differing approaches. For instance, while the World Bank (2000), emphasise opportunity, empowerment, and security as the arena for action; the DFID, according to Devereux, (2001), speaks of growth, equity, and security. The world bank's approach according to Csaki (2001), is focused more on the contribution of rural development to poverty reduction. According to this approach, sustainable rural development requires an approach that accounts for multi-disciplinary pluralist views as well as crosscutting issues such as gender equity. This presupposes that a more diverse and integrated approach is more credible than sector specific approaches. In this regard therefore, a preferred rural development solution must of necessity be contingent on; community participation and empowerment, strengthened rural governance and the promotion of consistent growth of the private sector and the development of rural institutional frameworks and capacities.

Contemporary literature emanating from the IFAD shows a preference for the role of agriculture as the ideal way to reach the targets of rural development. This, it is argued, would among others, reverse the decline in the flow of resources to the rural and agricultural areas and ensure that the institutions in rural areas are developed to increase capabilities of the poor to help themselves (Rahman and Westley 2001). Rural poverty and underdevelopment in the view of IFAD flows from and is perpetuated by the lack of access to essential assets (See:Sen 1990; Sen 1999). For this reason, community development and poverty reduction will involve changes in material factors such as land, water, infrastructure, technology, and above all knowledge. It involves, according to them, changes in social and economic relations as well as in institutions that give the poor greater control over their environment.

The European commission’s policy on rural development emphasise the need for macro-economic stability for poverty reduction to be driven by a countries’ own strategies and large scale capacity building so that public sector staff, the private sector and civil society
organisations can take leading roles in rural development. It focuses on support for competitiveness and growth, consolidation of democracy, the rule of law and human rights, and promotion of sustainable management of natural resources (Mikos 2001).

The policy thus introduces concepts and practices such as empowerment, participation, and decentralisation. Therefore, as the literature has it, rural development is broader than agriculture and covers all the economic and social sectors with a bearing on rural areas such as health, education, participation, and social protection. Furthermore, it contends that good governance, human rights, the emphasis on participation and collaboration with civil society, institutional development and capacity building, and mainstreaming of gender equality and environmental concerns are important. Notably, even though community development is approached differently, a common trend highlighted thus far, is the central role of the local community itself and institutional frameworks. Therefore, within the context of local government in Ghana, it would play out in the form of the support of decentralised initiatives that would, in real terms bring decision making closer to rural poor, promote better governance and support rural community groups such as farmers’ associations; creation of a generally supportive or enabling conditions for the poor to help themselves.

Unfortunately, this is a rather tall order in the context of Ghana public sector institutions; that is decentralised local governments’ capacity to facilitate this kind of rural development is often severely compromised because they are underfunded, confronted with conflicting mandates, and have limited or poor monitoring. These, according to the literature, contribute to inefficiency and rent seeking. People have little influence over the type and quality of services provided or the contents of plans drawn up for the use of resources (Mikos 2001). Consequently, to grant authority to local levels of the public administration and introducing elements of participatory planning and ‘public choice’ may represent a definite escape route.

With this in mind, the IFAD, according to Rahman and Westley, (2001), proposed a framework for sustainable sequential and cost effective reduction in rural poverty and hence community development:

- Improved allocation and distribution of water to increase the output of staples
- Redistribution in favour of the rural poor
- Special attention for certain groups – ethnic minorities and people living in difficult terrain such as hilly and semi arid areas
Participatory and decentralised methods – which are important in securing democratic control, developing human potential and improving the cost effectiveness of a range of actions, from developing new seed varieties, through micro-finance, to providing rural schools and public works programs.

In conclusion, drawing on the decisive work by Paolo Freire (1972), contemporary community development aimed at rural communities should include participatory and empowerment approaches. These, according to Green (2008), results in building a sense of consciousness, addressing power inequalities and expanding access to resources for people to pursue their development agendas collectively or individually. Green caution however, that these are ideal types of community development practices. On the ground, it is likely that most development initiatives involve a combination of these models in multiple variant forms.

3.5 Implications of Decentralisation to Rural Community Development

It is the considered view of this thesis that decentralised control holds much promise for community development. The particular emphasis given to decentralised local governance, its institutions and processes is premised on the literature reviewed in chapter two which suggests that decentralised local governance is one, if not the most powerful vehicle to empowering the rural poor, provided it is accompanied by genuine devolution and that local communities and groups are effectively interacting with the local administration to articulate their needs and priorities. The thesis therefore follow Crook and Sverrinson's (2001) position that, it is not accidental that democracy and decentralisation are often presented as necessary conditions in current development thinking for the realisation of effective rural development because where it is religiously implemented, local needs and aspirations are realised.

Decentralised local governance, as suggested in the literature among others, leads to increased accountability of those responsible for the management of resources because it solicits the input of, or works directly with the local community members themselves in the development enterprise. Local communities or their selected representatives certainly are advantaged in managing resources over government agencies as they may be closer to the resource and have a better understanding of its importance to users and therefore be able to devise more efficient rules. Additionally active participation of beneficiaries may
lower the information requirements and other costs directly associated with community
development interventions.

Johnson, (2001), however cautions that the mostly positive assertion about decentralised
local governance to rural development is not entirely clear. Speaking about democratic
benefits of decentralised local governance in particular, he points out that studies which
emerged before the World Development Report 2000/1 concludes that there was no
consistent connection between pro-poorness and democracy. For instance, Moore and
Putzel (1999)'s study concluded that, while the very worst development performers tend
not to be democracies, democracy does not provide some safety nets and that there are
non-democracies among the best performers. Going by this, Johnson (2001) concluded that
the notion that there is a predictable or general link between decentralisation of
government and the realisation of pro-poor development or poverty alleviating outcomes is
clearly lacking persuasive evidence.

The literature discussing indicators of democracy as a necessary means of poverty
reduction and community development is agreeably shaky. Fundamentally, links between
autonomy of local government to plan and implement coherent policy, and the
participatory spirit of representatives of rural communities is not straight forward and
appears greatly contested. In the least, manipulation of the demands on the state due to
vested political or other individual interests can undermine the policy effectiveness.
Further, systemic inequality and chronic poverty compromises local government's ability
to plan and implement sound, long term economic policy as it fights to contain a flurry of
demands to satisfy numerous short term needs of the poor rural dwellers (Johnson 2001).

Other arguments hold that by its very nature, local democratisation and decentralised local
governance comes with inherent biases against pro-poor policies. For the sake of political
expediency and the interest of dominate groups, local political elite and office holders
often ignore the developmental benefits of democratic processes for poverty reduction,
thus denying poor populations such potential benefits.

Notwithstanding the above, the thesis agree with views that democratic and decentralised
local governance still offer the best opportunity to enhance livelihoods of the poor. Rural
development that is hinged on local governance with a particular emphasis on democratic
and participatory processes may produce the needed effect. One way to attain this, as Ellis
and Biggs (2001) remarks, is by strengthening local government and civil society which
would allow resource user groups within local communities to exert targeted pressure on their local administration through democratic means. Unless this kind of pressure is exerted on local institutions to become more accountable to beneficiaries and not to central government, they (local governments) are not likely to plan and manage resources in ways that are efficient and participatory—potentially translating to pro-poor local community development (Mikos 2001). In sum, rural community development and poverty reduction cannot be achieved simply by handouts. Strategies structures and procedures have to be put in place to directly link the poor with existing political, economic, and social systems in sustainable ways.

Figure 1: A Conceptual diagram

Source: Author’s Construct based on the literature discussed above
3.6 Chapter Summary

Directly following from chapter two, this chapter delved deeper into the specific underlying theoretical underpinnings of the thesis. The intent of this review was to assess these theoretical concepts in order to help identify an appropriate framework that would highlight the theoretical gaps which justify the basis of the thesis, as well as serve as the anchor for carrying out the analysis of empirical data. Consequently, it covered the essential definitions and explanations of the key concepts related to decentralised local governance within the good governance framework; participation and the linkages of decentralised local governance; and community development. The review suggests that the main conceptual domain of this research lies in the interconnections between decentralisation, good governance, community participation in development planning and management and rural community development. It is clear from the review that primarily, the absence of the above noted interconnections represents a major constraint to realising effective rural community development.

However these interconnected concepts are conceptually very slippery or presents grey areas upon which local government actors and for that matter those responsible for ensuring the aforementioned democratic and development benefits or the versioned rural community transformation, to conveniently adjust the implementation processes of decentralisation or local governance away from these benefits in order to satisfy their own interest or that of the political or social elites. Moreover, the review noted that the existence of strong local government institutional capacity is critical for the effective pursuance of a meaningful and consistent local government community development that is devoid of political arm-twisting.

Again, the literature implied that where there is an over politicisation of the processes of local government service planning and delivery; the impact thereof on rural poverty and community development is truncated at worst, or minimal at best. To this end, local community development is only meaningful when it is an outcome of effective and efficient good local level governance that recognises the crucial roles of individual and collective community members (groups, and civil society) in a participatory system.
The clarion call for effective participation therefore in community development process is undisputed. What is highly contested however according to the review, is finding an acceptable level of allowable participation that should be granted to ordinary community members. In addition to the above, it became apparent from the review that the participatory processes suggested within local governance does not automatically guarantee empowerment and therefore social development to rural communities, thus footnoting the fundamental human rights of the citizens to other processes that are aimed at local community development (Crawford 2010; Hyden and Court 2002).

It is in continuance of the above that the review adopts a form of community participation in decentralised community development which goes beyond just political representation to include critically, the direct, deep or real involvement of rural folks. However, from the review, the thesis acknowledges potential limitations of ordinary folks to participate in every development process because of technical considerations. This notwithstanding, the same review suggests that in as much as community social development is concerned, local folks best understand their own needs in the light of this the thesis agrees with scholars who call for a form of strong participation in determining community development needs (Béné and Arthur 2006; Bhatnagar and Williams 1992).

The review has further highlighted that, indeed, any attempt to realise rural community development is a complex endeavour. In this regard, this thesis would follow Barrett et al (2001:329)’s observation that effective rural community development or poverty reduction strategies must aim to harness well-targeted interventions, and provide an effective stimulus for active engagement of the poorest rural folks. These conclusions necessitated the collection of contextual empirical data from Ghana to help understand and analyse the linkages between Ghana’s decentralised local governance and local community development. The review also formed the conceptual framework for analysing the empirical data. The next chapter responds to the first research question which is an examination of the historical nature of decentralised local governance in Ghana. In doing so, the chapter also provides a contextual understanding of the study.
CHAPTER FOUR: EXPLORING THE HISTORICAL NATURE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN GHANA

4.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses from a historical perspective, the nature of the local governance system in Ghana. It draws on existing literature to answers the first research of the study. It sheds light on the historical timelines that have conditioned local government development since colonial times. This historical legacy, the chapter contends, may have influenced the nature of decentralised local governance in present times. First, it briefly analyse the political and administrative context of Ghana and argues that the implementation of local governance since 1988 may have been path dependent. Overall, as a prelude to the empirical discussions, this chapter is intended to present a full comprehension of the fine distinctive features that may has impacted on the nature of local governance in Ghana. It concludes with a brief summary of the politics of decentralisation.

4.1 The Political and Administrative Context

The country Ghana, is an arbitrary amalgamation of a multitude of different ethnic, cultural, and heterogeneous groups of people (Fox et al. 2011). It is a unitary state (Ayee 2008), and has had a long political experience with changing forms of government since it attained political independence from the British colonial rule in 1957. Ghana returned to a steady democracy in 1992 after long spells of military interregnums (Abdulai 2009). The evidence thus far indicates that Ghana is dedicated to the processes of democracy, and democratic governance. Even though doubts still exist that Ghana has indeed achieved democratic consolidation (Abdulai and Crawford 2010), its relative stability makes Ghana’s democracy a remarkable feat. Evidently, since 1992 Ghana is implementing its sixth successive multiparty democratically elected government, the sixth democratic election took place on Friday, December 7, 2012.

If maintaining stable democratically elected government speaks to the democratic achievements of a nation, then this study cautiously envisages that these democratic tenets would significantly permeate sub-national political arrangements and hence have implications for local democratic governance. Sadly however, available evidence appears contrary to the above enthusiasm and thereby suggests that this kind of democratic
development is merely infantile (Mensah 2007:6), hence deficits to the ideal are still visible across board, within national, regional and local level political structures.

4.1.1 The Executive, Legislature and Judiciary

The political structure in earlier post colonial times was a parliamentary democracy (Berry 1994); however, the political structure since 1992 has metamorphosed into a presidential system of government (Ayee 2008:235). Although concentrating power within this presidential system of government may have contributed to consolidating Ghana’s relative democratic credentials; some critics have argued that it is this same over concentration of power in the executive branch which has been the country’s “principal democracy and governance problem” (Fox et al. 2011:1), because of the tendency for the executive branch to stifle the other levels of government. This appears manifested across the governance structure owing to a constitutional prerogative of the president (the executive branch of government) to appoint persons as cabinet ministers, senior civil servants, through to local level political and administrative staff.

The above notwithstanding, the crafters of Ghana's constitution sought to ensure that no one structure can exercise powers in ways prejudicial to citizens’ rights and freedoms hence they provided for checks and balances through the separation of powers between the executive, the legislature (Parliament), and the judiciary and assigned each with clear cut responsibilities (Ayee 2008:235). For instance, constitutionally, no president can solely enact laws or spend public money without the authorization of parliament, on the other hand, if the president finds a bill not to be in the interest of the citizens, (s)he may refuse to assent to it. This study contends however that, the practical implementation of this separation appears to be undercut by Article 78(1) of the constitution, which allows a sitting president to appoint majority of the ministers of State from among members of Parliament (Republic of Ghana 1992). By default, members of parliament may fail to be critical of the actions of the president if they hold ambitions to become ministers of state.

A third structure of governance provided for by the 1992 Constitution, to further the checks and balances is the judiciary. An elaborate, independent institution stretching from the superior courts to lower courts, tribunals, and district courts at the local level (Abdulai 2009). These “have jurisdiction in all matters civil and criminal” (Republic of Ghana 1992:[Article 125(5)]), and that “neither the President nor Parliament nor any person
whatsoever shall interfere with judges or judicial officers or other persons exercising judicial power, in the exercise of their judicial functions…”[Article 127 (2)].

Yet again, this provision appears severally compromised because supreme court judges are appointed by the president and since the constitution does not set an upper limit to the number of judges the president can appoint, (Abdulai 2009; Ayee 2008), there is room for executive manipulation of the supreme court for political expediency.

4.2 Sub-national Government

4.2.1 The Regional Level

Ghana’s decentralised local governance is currently structured into four layers below the office of the president and national ministerial level; with an additional level added when one comes across larger metropolitan areas (Hoffman and Metzroth 2010). At the apex of these tiers are ten Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs), which are mandated to coordinate, regulate, and supervise all the Municipal, Metropolitan, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) within their geo-physical area. Each region is headed by a regional minister, who exercises political, administrative, and security responsibilities over the region. By default, the regional minister, an appointee of the ruling regime, is the chair of the regional coordinating council (Crawford 2004; Ahwoi 2010a).

These councils draw their membership from existing structures and institutions within the region, and all districts assemblies that fall within the remit of the said region. In addition to the regional minister and his or her deputy, the district chief executives, and presiding members of each district assembly; two chiefs from the regional house of chiefs; and the regional heads of decentralised departments constitute the regional council (Ahwoi, 2010). The regional heads of decentralised departments usually are without any voting rights. As technical officers of the region, their function is mostly advisory to the regional council. The local government Act 462 provides the responsibilities of RCCs as monitoring, coordinating, and evaluating the performance of the district assemblies. What remain unclear is the possible implications this might hold for local government institutions' freedom to properly function. Below the regional coordinating councils, lies a three tier structure.
First there are the Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs); next in line are the urban, zonal and town/area councils; then the Unit committees. The foregoing sections would summarize each level in terms of composition and function within the local governance structure.

4.2.2 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies

Below the regional coordinating councils are the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs). These are constitutionally provided for in Article 241(3) as the highest political authority within their respective locales, with legislative, deliberative as well as executive powers (Republic of Ghana 1992). The membership of these assemblies is varied depending on their population, size, and the number of villages/towns it cover. The difference between MMDAs is based on the population of the locale. Ahwoi, (2010:68) categorizes them thus: Metropolitan Assembly with a population of up to 250,000 and over (6 currently exist); Municipal Assembly – a single compact settlement of 95,000 and above (40 currently exist); District Assembly – exist for a geographically contiguous area with population of 75,000 and above.

Though we have noted above that the MMDAs are composed both of directly elected (70%) by universal adult suffrage, Hoffman and Metzroth (2010), suggests that this does not make them directly elected governments. With the central government responsible for appointing up to 30% of the assembly, in addition to appointing the single most powerful political and administrative authority in the district, the district chief executive; districts are yet to reach a point of directly electing their own governments (ibid, 2010:7). In later sections, the study would point out that, this in the least constitute a government’s attempt to keep a check on local government activities.

Crawford (2004:15) provides a summary of the powers of the MMDAs to include: “Highest decision making authorities; planning authority; development authority; budgeting authority and rating authority”. Given these powers, section 10 (3) of the local government Act 462 mandates MMDAs to perform specific functions in their jurisdictions. Centrally, MMDAs are responsible for the overall development of the district\(^1\).

\(^1\) Emphasis added
To achieve this, it has to prepare relevant development plans that have to be approved by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC); and a budget to be reviewed and approved by the Ministry of Finance. Other functions are reflected in their planning; resource mobilisation; provision of social amenities or municipal services; and provision of basic infrastructure in the district. Others centre on provision of security, safety and justices. Critics note that, in order to do this, MMDAs have often relied on central government appointed civil servants, a situation which is injurious to their autonomy (Hoffman and Metzroth 2010:8).

There are sub districts structures which like the District Assemblies, are also based on the relative population of the area. They are established under 1996 LI 1589, as consultative bodies with no budgets of their own or taxing powers. They essentially exist to perform delegated functions from the MMDAs. These include urban councils; zonal councils; town/area councils and Unit committees at the very bottom of the hierarchy.

**Figure 2: Local Government Structure in Ghana**

Source: Adapted from (Ayee 2008; Ahwoi, 2010)
4.3 Major Decentralized Reforms in Ghana

4.3.1 The Historical Antecedents

Ghana is often cited as a leader in the implementation of many social, political and economic development policies. Researchers have studied Ghana’s development trajectory and agree that by far, decentralised local governance is the desired condition to further socio-economic development and greater democratisation (Ayee 2008; Ayee and Dickovick 2010; Awortwi 2011). It is assumed that decentralisation would result in the transmission of power to local governments; logically reducing the role of central government and importantly improve developmental performance and further guarantee accountability to local constituencies (Hoffman and Metzroth 2010).

Ghana’s historical experience with decentralisation is long and oscillating. Reviews reveal that starting from the colonial era Ghana has experimented with decentralised local governance in many forms. This appears to have been approached differently and influenced by the political and ideological agenda of ruling regimes. In addition, since attaining political independence, Ghana’s democratisation process has been punctuated by at least four military interventions. These and their civilian counterparts are mostly influenced by a statist, market economist or social democratic principles (Antwi-Boasiako 2010:166) each of which has deep consequences for the type of local governance adopted. As Ayee (2008:233) posits, successive regimes perceived implementing decentralisation for two unlinked reasons; first as a condition for socio-economic development of the locale; second, and probably most important to the regime, to propagate regime visibility leading to their parochial political objectives which may not be in any way related to the developmental interest of the locale.

4.3.2 Decentralised Local Governance in Earlier Times

Historical records have it that Ghana’s experience with Local government administration dates back to 1859 based on initiatives espoused by the colonial government with the aim to creating small local jurisdictions that would facilitate the relevant administration of the colony. This is essentially a part of the British project of indirect rule implemented across its colonies (Crawford 2004; Hoffman and Metzroth 2010).
Literature suggests that this project of indirect rule was not just a government policy but an effective administrative strategy given the size of the colonies they needed to administer (Crook 1986). In Ghana, this form of local government was categorized into two distinct parallels. That is the Municipal councils described as the major municipalities at the time covering major developed towns such as Cape Coast, Accra, Sekondi-Takoradi and later Kumasi, and Native Authorities, representing the rest of the country (Ahwoi 2010a).

The 1859 municipal council’s ordinance legalised the existence of municipalities. The literature indicates that these Municipal councils initially were composed of at least seven members elected by local inhabitants who in turn elected a mayor of the council. In today’s terms, this could be described as democratic since local inhabitants were responsible for choosing their representatives to the councils. Nonetheless, considering the size of the towns these councillors represented, the numbers were woefully inadequate to be representative. For this reason, this could best be described as a demonstrative exercise in which no real representative decentralisation was achieved. Even this was to be short lived because by 1861 the elective route to the municipal council was abolished as the colonial government realised that it was more in its interest to appoint people into the local councils rather than have them elected. This action further diminished any hopes of democratic local governance at the time (Hoffman and Metzroth 2010:2; Ahwoi, 2010:9).

The result of the above changes was town councils, implemented from 1900 to 1943 (Ayee, 2008, Ahwoi, 2010). Unlike earlier municipal councils which were characterised by a modicum of local representativeness, town councils lacked representativeness because membership was solely by appointment from among government officials and local inhabitants. Functionally, both Municipal and town councils played rather limited roles in local public administration. They were only involved in the management of peripheral public health services related only to sanitation and the preservation of law and order. History has it that, these roles were non administrative and subservient. It is apparent that they (municipal councils) only became necessary because the colony was inundated with health and sanitation challenges and because such duties were perceived to be the reserve of the unskilled.
A direct sequel to the Municipal and town councils concepts was the creation of *Native Authorities*. The government conditioned the creation of *Native Authorities* in a particular locale on the pre-existence of a paramount chief, a native court and an independent treasury (Ahwoi 2010:10). The intention for the preference for pre-existing institutions can be inferred among other things, as the authority’s quest for a cheap, easily controlled mode of administering the colony. Two grades of Native authorities thus emerged. The Superior Native Authorities composed of Paramount chiefs and state councils and subordinate Native Authorities consisting of subs-chiefs whose jurisdiction was less than a state.

Although colonial administrators may have perceived these arbitrary creations to represent a viable system of local government, they failed the primary test expected within contemporary local government administrations. In the least these were non-democratic institutions because representatives were mostly handpicked or none elected chiefs, sub chiefs or chosen community elders drafted into the colonial government and charged to achieve that which could best be described as the interest of the colonial master; which is to administer law and order, facilitate the collection of taxes and liaise between their relevant localities and central government commissioners (Ahwoi 2010). The appointed representation, as the research further shows had very limited powers to legislate and were not involved in local administration (Ahwoi 2010a; Awortwi 2011).

Realising pockets of resistance and low achievement among these appointed operatives, the British colonial government resorted to the use of a mixture of hard-handed tactics and rewards to ensure the functioning of local administrations. For instance, Hoffman and Metzroth (2010:2) reports that, “the colonial government determined and approved paramount and divisional chiefs and rewarded those most loyal to the crown with leadership positions in municipal and native authorities”. By implication, loyal chiefs and appointed persons were drawn closer to the administration, but effectively alienated from their communities.

The net effect is that, contrary to traditional chiefdoms where chiefs are the rallying point of the society, this arrangements effectively alienated chiefs from their people. At best, chiefs working for the colonial administration became coterminous with the colonial (Whiteman’s) administration, noted for collecting taxes for which the locals saw no immediate benefits and therefore abhorred.
On the whole, this drew a lot of dissent and culminated in small protestations and resistance to which the colonial government paid little attention and pushed through with the system.

There was however a gradual move towards including the natives into the local government system. First, the colonial government passed the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance in 1878, which for the first time recognised the central role of chiefs, and empowered them to form native tribunals for the purposes of enforcing law and order and to “deal” with those who infringed the local by-laws. They also exercised civil and criminal jurisdiction. This law, according to Ahwoi, (2010), was revised and replaced by the Native jurisdiction Ordinance of 1883.

Whereas the earlier ordinance allowed chiefs to implement law, this one conferred on them powers to make by-laws and exercise limited civil and criminal adjudication in the local courts, a former preserve of the colonial administrators. He provides further that by 1927 these powers were further extended to include civil matters. Notably however, these ordinances solely emphasised the role of chiefs, sub-chiefs, and loyalist to the colonial administration whose mandate sought only to forward the plans of the central administration. Therefore, local councils only existed and were encouraged where they, in the least, played tax collection and maintenance of law and order roles.

Towards the end of the 1940s, the role of chiefs slowly diminished in favour of nationalist politicians. This was conditioned by the fact that continual isolation of locals (educated elites) led to increasing agitations and mass anti-colonial movements. Crook, (1986:77) points out that these factors were powerful “insofar as they overthrew the apparently immutable alliance of chiefs and the administration…” and which gradually culminated in the introduction of a new local government system by 1952. Indeed, it would appear that by this time the colonial district commissioners themselves had less enthusiasm in the system (of indirect rule) as a viable decentralised local governance mechanism.

### 4.3.3 Decentralised Local Reforms of 1952

As indicated above, local demands were rife for participation in governance in various locales in the Gold coast. The evidence confirms that the Gold Coast witnessed nationwide unrest leading to rioting at the national capital in 1948. This according to accounts was a direct sequel of existing poor quality of life within the territory and a
conspicuous lack of representation of local elites in the civil service and other important administrative positions (Hoffman and Metzroth 2010).

Thus, the pressure for change was because of the need for greater recognition, self-determination and influence of the local populations in the governance process. Furthermore, the intricate romance between chiefs and the indirect rule apparatus had increasingly been questioned and rendered moribund (Crook, 1986). In addition, Crook argues that “local realities undermined the formal and legal purposes of Native Authorities’ resistance to both modern local government functions and the corporate […] made the Native Authorities by-words of corruption and inefficiency in government circles” (Ibid, 1986:104). Consequently, realising that power was fast slipping and taking into consideration increasing demands from the local elites, the British government commissioned two inquiries; the Watson commission and the Coussey commission of 1949 to look into the possibility of introducing a democratic system of local government (Hoffman and Metzroth 2010, Ahwoi 2010).

Two positive outcomes emerged from the recommendations of the two commissions in favour of local governance. First, a new two tier local government structure, that is, the District council on one hand and urban and local councils on the other emerged. Based on this structure, some 252 local councils and 26 district councils were created (Ahwoi 2010). This new structure allowed for a semblance of local representation because the establishing instrument guaranteed for election of council members on a partisan basis (Ahwoi 2010:15).

In spite of the introduction of competitive election, the resultant local governments were not participatory enough to reflect present day true democratic decentralisation. Albeit these local government reforms are said to have distinguished between chiefly or traditional councils from the new local government authorities, paradoxically it still retained a one-third representation for chiefs (Crook, 1986).

This highlights the manipulative antics of the central government which appear to have discounted the process of true local decentralised representation. Again, central government insisted that any locality would only qualified as a district only where there is a paramount chief, and who eventually was imposed as president of the local council. This arrangement by the colonial administration effectively took away the power from the local people and centralised it around their ‘trusted allies’, the chiefs.
Noticeably therefore, even though the legislation might have changed, nothing else did, in particular, regarding the composition of the council as “one third of the members were [...] to be chosen by traditional authorities” (Ahwoi 2010:14). Clearly, the role of chiefs, described by the educated elites as puppets controlled by the colonial government was again emphasised to the neglect of local community members. This evidence supports recent views that government priorities in the decentralisation process have often been misplaced.

The above shows that regimes in Ghana since the colonial era, have exhibited a tendency to implement local governance in ways that promote their own interest (Crawford 2008a). Arguably very little was gained during colonial attempts at reforms aimed at promoting local governance apart from a facial dressing in the name of elected assembly. The following section further traces the legacy of post-independence local government reforms to help identify if it promoted local participation and community needs.

4.3.4 The Immediate Post-independence Reforms

Ghana’s attempt at implementing a local government system that is participatory and truly local has witnessed a series highs and lows. Recent discussants of decentralised local governance remain doubtful that after two decades since popular proclamation of implementing of participatory local governance, Ghana’s decentralisation process is yet to make the expected gains (Inkoom 2011). As noted above, during the period leading to independence, attempts were made to augment the role of locals in self-government, representation and participation (Boafo-Arthur 2001; Hoffman and Metzroth 2010). Despite succeeding government’s acknowledgement of the utility of decentralised local governance to enhance relevant community development, achieving this goal has proved difficult to attain thus far.

Previous studies show that, attempts by the post-independence regime resulted in recentralisation (Crawford 2004; Ayee 2008; Kyiu 2010). The Nkrumah led Convention People Party (CPP), in an attempt to institutionalise decentralised local governance enacted a Local government 1961, (Act 54) as part of the 1960 constitution. However, this attempt was challenged on several grounds. First, instead of building on pre-existing locally respected community institutions such as the chieftaincy institution, the regime perceived them as a menace to national governance and therefore effectively sought to sideline them (Hoffman and Metzroth 2010).
The regime also perceived chiefs, particularly the most powerful ones as supporting the opposition party hence its actions to eliminate them was politically expedient.

Notwithstanding this, the regime is said to have created five autonomous regional assemblies (ibid, 2010:3). Following the requirements of the local government 1961 (Act 54), and adopting strategies akin to those used by the colonial regime, the country was divided into city, municipal, and local councils. As Hoffman and Metzroth (2010:3) point out, in spite of earlier worries about chiefs, the regime sought to control local governments by introducing council elections and making the presidents of these councils paramount chiefs who were appointed by the Ministry of Justice.

This “flip” in regime attitude was because Nkrumah soon realised he could manipulate chiefs for political gain. The government gradually fragmented local government units in order to weaken them. As a result it created two parallel government administrations, one based at the national capital with branches at the local level (a form of present day de-concentration); and the other based in distinct localities as in present day district assemblies. These local governments were mandated to deal with local issues (similar to the mandate under the colonial regime) and indeed were hardly resourced (in terms of material, financial, and human) to function as independent entities (Ayee 2008; Kyiu 2010).

Eventually, local governments under Nkrumah were charged as being inept and corrupt and hence they struggled for survival owing to a lack of political and bureaucratic commitment to decentralise. With the overthrow of Nkrumah's government, the National Liberation Council (NLC) government reversed the approach to re-emphasise the role of the “traditionally powerful chiefs” (Haynes 1991:286). Further, as a part of the regime's attempt to return the country to civilian rule, it enacted the Local Administration Act 359 (1971) which aimed particularly to “balance the system of quasi autonomous elected councils and administration by agencies of the central government” (Ahwoi, 2010:23). The Local administration Act 359 (1971) failed to be implemented due to government changes in 1972 upon which it was revised through the Local Administration (Amendment) Decree 1974, NRCD258 (Hoffman and Metzroth 2010).

This amendment is said to have brought in radical changes to the local administration system in Ghana. At least, it is credited for introducing a single hierarchical system and put a formal structure to local administration system.
Further, the regime transferred sector agencies such as agriculture, education, and public health, the fire service, community development, town and country planning and administration to the local level (Awortwi, 2011). In addition, it is credited for also creating and institutionalising the office of a District Chief Executive (DCE) as the head of the local unit, which exists to date (Hoffman and Metzroth, 2010).

Notwithstanding the comprehensive reforms executed by the regime, there were inherent challenges. First, the reforms failed to reflect the prescribed requirement of democratic decentralised local governance. This is because the regime abolished local level elections introduced earlier and reverted to the appointment of local council members. As would be expected from such an arrangement, there emerged a total disconnect between assigned local government functions and the availability of capacity to manage the roles. This is because the local council and the civil service were filled with loyalists of the regime without regard to availability of needed capacity among such (Ibid, 2010).

As remains the practice today, the office of the District Commissioner (DC), the highest office at the local level was by appointment. Since no democratic means was used to appoint them, their loyalty to the regime overshadowed professionalism. Another notable shortfall to full decentralised local governance was that even though sectoral agencies were transferred to the local level, this was not accompanied by transfer of political and financial authority and this remained a preserve of central government officials (de-concentrated staff) based at the local level. On the basis of the above, it is safe to conclude that actions within this time were more of a re-centralisation opposed to decentralisation effort.

4.3.5 Local Government Reforms After 1981

In spite of numerous efforts to localise governance and public administration, the nature and structure of modern local governance is often credited to actions of the Rawlings’ Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) which came to power in 1981 poised to reverse the over centralisation of public administration in Accra (Yeebo 1985; Awortwi 2011). Probably the regimes’ intent to radically change the structure of public administration in Ghana and eliminate apparent weaknesses in the governance system led to the most comprehensive reforms in the local governance systems.
To achieve its aim of reform, the regime sought to devolve central administration authority to the local level in order to ensure popular grassroots participation (Awortwi 2011). Decentralisation was top of their political agenda, as is eminent in its political cliché to guarantee power to the people (Ahwoi, 2010) participatory democracy, transparency and popular grassroots participation (Ayee 1996). In order to realise this agenda, the regime worked through a platoon of young revolutionary activist located within local communities in virtually all districts (Ayee 1996; Kyui, 2010).

Functionally, unlike the single or dual hierarchical systems of local governance promoted by earlier regimes, the PNDC government preferred a four tier system, which type is still in place today. This structure is further elaborated in chapter six. Effectively, each of the four tiers played a distinct role deemed critical to ensure that local government systems are capable of initiating, coordinating, managing, and executing policies in the matters affecting their localities (Ahwoi, 2010:36)

Contrary to the aim of decentralising government, the regime may have overemphasised regional administration which Ahwoi (2010:36) notes, was to “represent central government in the field”, and to establish cadres who eventually usurped the execution of the decentralisation policy from the local government. Additionally, in spite of the popular rhetoric of the PNDC, decentralisation only became an option for the regime to endear itself to the populace and to ensure the regime’s stability. This may have been conditioned by sustained internal and external pressure for the regime to reform and democratise as a condition for funding (Haynes 1991; Awortwi 2011; Ohemeng and Anebo 2012).

In this regard, beginning 1987 and following the Akuse group 4 “blue book”, which set out the modalities for district level elections among others, the regime promulgated PNDC Law 207, a legal framework for decentralisation. As a result of this law, and as contained in the Akuse Group’s blue book, the existing 65 district councils were transformed into 110 District Assemblies (DAs). Since then, the implementation of decentralised local governance appear to follow a combination of political, administrative and financial, with the three primary aims 5: “promote popular participation in the decision making process; promote responsive governance at the local level and enhance efficiency and effectiveness

---

4 A group composed to think through the decentralisation proposals and provide recommendations (Ahwoi,2010, Hoffman and Metzroth2010)
5 An empirical discussion of district assemblies implementation of these aims in present day are reflected in chapters 6, 7, and 8
of the entire government machinery through the process of restructuring of the institutions responsible to service delivery to be closer and accountable to the people” (Ayee 2008).

During this time, membership to the District Assembly was to be based on an individual and not political party. This is because the regime realised pressure groups were mobilising around remnants of banned political parties (Awortwi 2011:359). Further, the regime found reason to exclude traditional authorities from direct involvement in local level election arguing that this was to “insulate chiefs from the chicanery associated with politics, but it actually was to prevent local coalitions from becoming strong enough to negotiate power-sharing with the regime” (Ibid:259). While, political activists loyal to other political parties where banned, the PNDC cadres were actively engaged at the local level and as a result, a majority of them became elected into the newly constituted District Assemblies. This raises questions of the regimes’ popular democracy rhetoric and its emphasis that the local governance was to ensure popular participation. Further, the actual capacity of these cadres to effectively engage the local government administration, ensure accountability and responsive governance was probably severely jeopardised.

4.3.6 Decentralisation after 1992: Constitutional and Legal Basis

The framework for Local governance in Ghana is extensive. These, as Ayee (2008), points include relevant sections of all the national republican constitution, Decrees in military regimes, Acts of parliament, Legislative Instruments (LIs), bye-laws and standing orders. Areas covered by this broad framework range from “the objectives of decentralisation, finance, personnel, planning, budgeting, tendering, accountability, and central local relationships” (Ayee, 2008:241).

Aside being the basis of the current local governance system, these also provide the needed constitutional and political fuel for the implementation of local governance programs. Even though historical literature suggest often that both endogenous and exogenous forces drove the implementation of local governance in Ghana, the PNDC government of 1988 is credited for entrenching local governance with the passing of PNDC Law 207, which assigned the overall development planning and budgeting responsibilities to the district assemblies (Giles 1996). The 1992 Republican Constitution however marked the birth of constitutional local governance through decentralisation.
Chapter six, section 35(6) (d), of the Constitution, clearly instructs that government should “make democracy a reality by decentralizing the administrative and financial machinery of government to the regions and districts and by affording all possible opportunities to the people to participate in decision-making at every level in national life and in government” (Republic of Ghana 1992:36).

Due to the great importance attached to decentralised local governance, the entire chapter twenty of the 1992 Constitution is dedicated to decentralisation and local governance. The chapter contains what could be described as the objectives of decentralisation (Antwi-Boasiako 2010). This chapter contains provisions that serve as the broad policy framework for decentralised local governance. Article 240(1) serves as the primary building block of the decentralisation process in Ghana. It gives the primary legal backing to the decentralisation process in Ghana. It provides that “Ghana shall have a system of local government and administration which shall, as far as practicable, be decentralized” (Republic of Ghana 1992:150).

Ahwoi (2010:54) citing section two of Article 240 puts forward that the decentralised local system should have a coordinated transfer of functions, powers, responsibilities and resources […] from the Central Government to local government units. Section two provides the needed impetus for the Local Government Act 1993(Act 462). However Ahwoi (2010), explains that before the local government Act 1993, (Act 462), which transfers responsibilities to the local level came into being, the District Assemblies Common Fund Act, 1993, (Act 455) was passed to ensure transfer of resources to the district assemblies.

Section two contains four further provisions each directed at the proper functioning of the local government unit and which reflect objectives one, two, and three of this research. First, section (2b), underscores the independent role of local government which should have “discretionary powers at the grassroots” (Antwi-Boasiako 2010:171), it emphasis the local government’s powers and capacity “to plan, initiate, co-ordinate, manage and execute policies in respect of all matters affecting the people within their areas”. It would appear that ultimately ensuring the localisation of development is a key objective of this provision.
Together with the Civil service Law of 1993, this provision helps clarify the central-local relationships. Central government’s roles as Ayee (2008:242) points out is “policy planning, monitoring, coordination and evaluation” while local governments are explicitly mandated to be responsible for the “local development implementation to the district assemblies” (ibid, 2008). The powers in Article 240 section (2b), however could not be achieved without the requisite financial might, hence the next provision, that is section 240 (2c) enjoins government to ensure “[...] a sound financial base with adequate and reliable sources of revenue” (Republic of Ghana 1992:150).

In addition, to ensure autonomy of the administrative function and importantly effective local accountability and principle of participation in decision making process, it is stipulated in (2d) that: “as far as practicable, persons in the service of local government shall be subject to the effective control of local authorities; and (2e) to ensure the accountability of local government authorities, people in particular local government areas shall, as far as practicable, be afforded the opportunity to participate effectively in their governance” (See: Republic of Ghana 1992:150; Ahwoi, 2010:54; Antwi-Boasiako 2010:171).

In as far as local governance is concerned, the constitution in Article 241(3) makes the district assembly the “highest political authority” and goes further to assign it “deliberative, legislative and executive powers” (Republic of Ghana 1992:150). In addition, Article 242 through to 244 identifies the composition and functions of the officers of the District Assembly. According to Article 242, the district assembly shall comprise: District Assembly members 70% of who are directly elected while 30% are appointed by presidential authority in consultation with chiefs and special interest groups (Republic of Ghana 1992; Ayee 2008, Hoffman and Metzroth 2010). Assembly Members in turn elect from among themselves a presiding officer; while a district chief executive is appointed by the president and voted by two-thirds of the assembly persons present and voting. The Chief executive represents the highest political and administrative authority in the district (Ayee 2008; Ahwoi 2010a). The Member(s) of Parliament within any given district assembly is an automatic member(s) of the assembly per the provisions of the national constitution; nonetheless they are non voting members.

The Local government Act (Act 462) together with the legislative Instrument assigns unambiguously 86 responsibilities to the local government institutions. These include the provision of basic services, infrastructure development, and provision of education
including the building of relevant local capacities, health, water and sanitation, public safety and revenue collection among many.

### 4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has traced the history of decentralised local governance since colonial times. The aim was to provide a context to the historical challenges which may have compromised the effective practice of local governance in present times. This section takes a look back at the historical timelines in order to highlight the politics of the process of decentralisation which may have compromised the promise since colonial times. The overview has uncovered that probably, decentralisation and local governance has filtered through all regimes including the British colonial government. As a major reform process, different regimes have conceived of and implemented it with a view to achieve a set political and administrative agenda and also as a means to promote local development.

What is clear from the historical experience is that various regimes since colonial times have tended to evolve and covertly engaged in some form of political tinkering of the process which may have run counter to the envisaged positive outcomes. In most cases, political considerations took pride of place over the promotion of a truly responsive local governance process. This thesis is inclined to agree with views that native authorities put forward by colonial administration was far from being representative. In essence such local governments encompassed chiefs and selected loyalist of the regime opposed to locally elected community leaders. This approach effectively eliminated local communities from any form of participation except for the payment of taxes and information provision all of which were specifically tailored at servicing colonial extractive purposes.

It is observable also that the local administrations, like their contemporary counterparts were riddled with capacity challenges. Even when there was a modicum of human resources available, huge questions lingered on regarding their professional capabilities and competence to carry forward the requirement of an effective local government system (Rathbone 2000). This among others demonstrated a need to drastically reform the system. However, owing to largely political and economic reasons the colonial government is said to have ignored this clarion call for reform (Rathbone 2000:125).
Yet again, after independence, the regime prioritised political considerations over the real need to decentralise and thereby pushed to re-centralization agenda which concentrated power in the nation’s capital, particularly at the Office of the President (Haynes 1991; Ayee and Dickovick 2010:2). This, from the discussion however appears an expected rather than exceptional outcome because the government was suspicious of the so called “strong chiefdoms” especially in the Asante Region and therefore feared that decentralisation would promote divisive tendencies at best or promote agitations for federation along ethnic lines (Haynes 1991). This ‘politics of fear’ surrounding the decentralisation process probably explains why the high administrative centralisation was preferred and thereby rendering the already weakened local government authorities stillborn.

Later regime’s political philosophy to ensure grass root popular participation in local affairs drove a comprehensive and vigorous implementation of local governance; however, inherent structural challenges torpedoed the regime’s cliché of democracy and popular participation. For instance a return of the fear factor again blocked an otherwise great approach to local government reforms. Insecurity of technocrats and members of the regime in central government who felt that it was probably premature for political decentralisation torpedoed it and instead implemented administrative de-centralisation with the view to increase government efficiency. Kwamena Ahwoi, an architect of the local governance program and minister of local governance and rural development at the time laments in his own book that “[…] instead of the devolution that we wanted, civil servants found ways of dribbling us into implementing [a] de-concentrated system”(Ahwoi 2010a:360).

In sum, it is realised that, many a regime feared that the trade offs of complete decentralisation could hold telling consequences on their future electoral fortunes. There were also cost considerations; for instance, of ensuring partisan election of local district assemblies which proved too huge for the regimes to support at the time. Further successive government since independence feared to fully implement devolution because they believed that some already existing strong institutions, such as chiefdoms within opposition strong holds may become too powerful to control and thereby undermined state authority.
In a country where decentralisation is often described as ‘quasi-democratic’ the fear of central government to implement true local government reforms since colonial times would only go away when they (central government) understand that allowing full realisation of local governance as Haynes (1991:296) notes, “does not have to be a zero-sum game, where central government concedes full sovereignty to local governing structures. A balance can be struck between the understandable desires of central government to oversee development programs, while at the same time allowing local people as far as possible some self determination within their locales.

Having put into perspective the historical antecedents of decentralised local governance in Ghana since colonial times, the next chapter describes the research methodology, methods and techniques used to elicit empirical data that answers the research questions.
CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

5.0 Introduction

Eminent contextual as well as theoretical gaps highlighted in the preceding chapters provide sufficient justification to delve deeper into the practice of decentralised local governance in Ghana. The main aim therefore of this thesis is to understand the function of decentralised local governance and how it has resulted in rural community development or otherwise within the context of Northern Ghana.

The overview of the theoretical and empirical literature in chapters two and three above, have suggested a mirage of key themes related to the main objective of this study. Paramount among these, is that, the contextual realities of decentralised local governance across Africa are different and hence would require the adoption of the systems and process of decentralised local governance to suit the context (Ayee and Dickovick 2010; Ahwoi 2010b); further, that whenever local governance is implemented the local institutional arrangements, which Smoke, (2003), terms as the institutional architecture, ought to be strong in order to effectively carry out the objectives of decentralisation (Hope 2009; Hope and Chikulo 2000). In addition, the literature suggest that the links for the decentralisation process to realised community development lies in the effective integration of local people into the process via participation to guarantee their human rights are met (Crawford 2010; Hyden and Court 2002).

5.1 Research Questions

Sequential to the reviews therefore, the study sought to empirically pursue these identified themes by means of a field study. To facilitate this, the following research questions were outlined:

1. What is the nature of local governance in Ghana?
2. What local community development strategies have been implemented by local government institutions?
   - How were these initiated? Were they effectively contextualised to the needs of local communities?
   - Do local communities perceive decentralised initiatives as useful to their development?
3. How do decentralised local authorities effectively engage the participation of communities in rural development initiatives? and
4. What institutional capacities exist at the local level for effective decentralisation?

This chapter details the methodology which has been utilized to address the above research questions. It presents the general research design, methodology and specific methods and techniques of data collection utilised to gather relevant data. It further presents the data management process utilised to adequately respond to the research questions and overall objectives. It also discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the research approach and points out the relevance of the chosen approach. The chapter concludes with a summary of methodologies used and limitations of the study.

5.2 Theoretical Perspectives

A decision to conduct research leads to a choice between one of two dominant research approaches to which this thesis is not exempt. This choice is between a quantitative and qualitative approaches or a mix of the two methods. The eventual choice of a researcher's set of methodology and methods reflects the researchers' assumption about reality, which as Crotty (2009:3), suggests is the researchers’ "approach to understanding and explaining society and the human world".

This thesis accepts the notion that a social research of this nature cannot effectively explain social realities without a sound basis for those explanations and that, this is informed by the researcher’s epistemological stance (Crotty 2009), which in turn is directly informed by the theoretical perspective ‘we stand by’. Some authors take the view that social research is fundamentally different from the objectivist stance of knowledge. They traditionally believe that objectivist scientific knowledge mirrors truth and therefore all research must follow appropriate methods of inquiry leading logically to an objective and accurate knowledge of truth.

This thesis follows those who reject this view in favour of a constructionist position of meaningful reality (Crotty 2009). It imagines that, social research is a complex endeavour and hence, in spite of following the scientific methods, cannot claim absolute control over society; consequently, to unconditionally claim objectivity or certainty of outcomes is a far cry (Rosenberg 2008).
Converse to positivists’ position to research, constructionists suppose that social meaning is dependent on an abstraction of socially appearing realities. Proceeding from this view, this thesis believes that, no research occurs in a vacuum, and that meaningful reality only emerges through the scientist’s engagement with the world they attempt to interpret. In other words what is meaningful is not just ‘there’ and therefore, making meaning is an ongoing accomplishment (Fish 1990; Crotty 2009). This view is important to this study of decentralised local governance and community development in northern Ghana because these concepts are social constructs, which involve people's actions within a given culture. The social is therefore emphasised cognisant that the act of making sense of the world is only meaningful when set within a social and historical perspective. In this light, we accept Crotty's (2009:54) position that all reality is meaningful and is socially constructed and that society is actively and creatively produced by human beings in their natural environments.

Even though this study employs some descriptive quantitative methods, it departs from the natural scientist’s way of studying nature, which is “from the outside and then inventing concepts and theories to explain” (Blaikie 1993:36). The choice of methodology therefore is informed by the fact that the study was carried out within the social arrangements (contexts) of three rural District Assemblies in Northern Ghana; a social world, which was constructed by people, and which is continually reproduced through interactions of same social arrangements in which people are constantly involved in interpreting (Blaikie 1993; Crotty 2009).

5.3 The Research Approach

This study proceeds from an understanding that research is mostly empirical and as such involves both quantitative and qualitative data (Punch 2005). The quantitative favours a positivist approach to social phenomenon. It often applies social survey instruments in gathering data. The assumption, as (Bryman 1984:77) notes, is that:

[...] through questionnaires, concepts can be operationalized; objectivity is maintained by the distance between observer and observed and there is the possibility of external checks upon one's questionnaire; replication can be carried out by employing the same research instrument in another context; and the problem of causality has been eased by the emergence of path analysis and related regression techniques to which surveys are well suited.
Conversely, to perceive the social world it seeks to understand qualitative methods take an opposite approach to social inquiry. In essence, a qualitative investigator invites and works with the views and perspectives of its participants and proceeds from a mostly phenomenological philosophical underpinning (Bryman, 1984). Emphasis here is laid on the active engagement of its participants in the discovery of the social world and a positive preference for contextual understanding. In this way, qualitative research is sharply contrasted to quantitative research; in fact that it is much more amenable to the social context while quantitative approaches mostly emphasis fixed measurements.

This thesis follow arguments that suggest that beyond these somewhat strict philosophical segmentation, the long debate of qualitative vs. quantitative, is merely a matter of method whose choice is dependent more on the research context and problem rather than the superiority or otherwise of a particular method (Trow 1957 as cited in; Bryman 1984). Clearly, the context is an essential matter in any social research and therefore, “paradigms that simply examine isolated variables within laboratory [like] settings or other impoverished contexts of participation will necessarily lead to an incomplete understanding of their relevance in more naturalistic settings” (Barab and Squire 2004:1).

In addition, because utilising only quantitative methods has the potential to conceal wide variation in the measures of social interventions, Plewis and Mason (2005) suggest that it may therefore be useful to integrate methods that go beyond estimating mean effect to reveal nested meanings and variations.

The above considered, this thesis emphasises the research context and problem rather than the superiority or otherwise of a particular approach before adopting an approach. The study carefully followed some specific conditions while selecting the approach to apply in each case: where a particular question calls for generation of quantitative data or where the information sought is reasonably specific and familiar to the respondent, for instance the bio-data, occupation and other personal data, and researcher himself had considerable prior knowledge of particular problems and the range of possible responses that would emerge (Bryman 1984).

The thesis utilised quantitative techniques because, in some instance, there was the need to generate simple descriptive statistics that helped to categorize the responses. Again, because it sought information about rural community development, which could best be gained from rural people themselves; and finally from examining theoretical information as well as drawing from the researchers own contextual knowledge of problems within the
study areas, it was safe to pre-categorise such responses and elicit participants’ views about them.

The thesis also followed Lowndes et al. (2001a), who used a combination of survey and in-depth qualitative methods to gauge the experiences and aspirations of local government members and officers regarding public participation. This thesis however, expanded the sample to include perspectives from a variety of local community groups, associations and individuals. This enabled the capture of a diversity of experiences of a broader range of participants. It also afforded the opportunity to triangulate the views of local government officials with perspectives from communities.

Further, the survey component allowed a statistical underpinning with regard to field observations, albeit descriptive. Moreover, the survey component afforded the opportunity to probe community member’s opinions about their participation in the development processes (Lowndes et al. 2001b:446) such an approach is often neglected in academic research directed at local government. In addition, Lowndes et al. (2001b:446) have argued that gauging the perspectives of local community members is important in the midst of local politicians’ deep seated cynicism about the participation.

5.3.1 Importance of this Research Approach

There is still great contestation between researchers as to which approach leads to the truth. For instance the idea that qualitative research leads to the truth is often rejected (Alasuutari 2010; Denzin and Lincoln 2000). Those unsympathetic to the humanistic approach have criticised it for not being based on any empirical analysis.

The entire social research process from a positivist view point comprised an elaboration of the chains for cause and effects which is strikingly different from contextual information that is deemed unscientific (Alasuutari, 2010). In response to this criticism, this thesis like many other predominantly qualitative studies would utilise methods such as systematisation and codification in the way in which contextual information was collected and used. Further, the study perceives that quantitative social research on its own is not a sufficient method to adequately answer the research questions and its current data and knowledge (soft social knowledge) requirements.
Thus the study included in-depth local interviews to gauge social and cultural developmental dynamics at the rural community level. As noted earlier, social relationships are complex, therefore, when change is observed using a predominately quantitative or survey method alone, such an observation maybe be silent as to why that change has occurred and thus obscures the ‘big picture’ (Alasuutari 2010), or the ‘rich data’, that is, data with great depth (Bryman, 1984). Therefore to follow a solely quantitative approach may ultimately miss out on the deeper meaning to those individual social worlds they are meant to represent. For instance, how can one be sure that a change in community development is or not due to some other effects other than the practice of decentralised local governance?

Notwithstanding the above, the quantitative components helped obtain robust estimates while the qualitative part went a step further to help understand and establish the width and depth of the decentralised programs, the social process that condition the programs, and why these occur. As has been pointed out, statistical relations between variables are only indirect clues which cannot be made intelligible by resorting to information gained from quantitative social research alone (Alasuutari 2010), this is why the study collected other information about the practices that make up social institutions and produce regularities reflected in statistical relations.

Again, while there is no doubt that quantitative methods provide a systematic way to collect data, the problem of relevance to our current study is that the researcher has no opportunity to observe directly what people say, do or feel, but can only rely on reports of what people say. On this basis, it was thought prudent to visit communities and partner institutions of local government agencies, to find out the intricate internal process that condition the current outputs of decentralised local governance and community development programs as the locals themselves perceive them. Indeed it was interesting to examine the ‘whole’ which allowed us to discover the key dimensions of community development programs that only systematic observation and not systematic survey approaches could help us uncover.

In addition to the use of social survey instruments, which allowed a bird’s eye view of the impact of local governance on community development, a qualitative engagement was important because of the study’s interest in revealing the connections that local government development policies have had; intended, unintended or counterproductive effects on social life as a whole.
This helped to measure the relevance of local governance to society at large, and reveal problems and contradictions in the way local government institutions in Northern Ghana have worked.

As Alasuutari, (2010), has suggested, social perspectives in public and private spheres are increasingly becoming important. The process of governance is less based on authority of public administration to impose rules or restrictions on the actors at the lower level of the power hierarchy to one that acknowledges service workers and citizens as clients; therefore, governance works through the creation, shaping and utilisation of human beings as subjects. Consequently, quality governance, that which caters for the needs of society, is increasingly based on one’s ability to foresee and manage individuals’ acts of choice, hence the need for expertise in qualitative approaches or subjectivity. The choice hence, to use qualitative methods in this study, was not just to provide contextual information to a quantitative research design or to prepare food for thought for theorists, but to offer different lenses for perceiving social reality on the ground, those guaranteed to make the phenomenon of decentralisation, local governance and rural community development more perceptive (Alasuutari 2010:142).

**5.3.2 The Mixed Method Approach**

From the analysis above it appears safe to conclude that our intension to conduct research should not be limited to conforming to one way of understanding social phenomena. Researchers from both the social and physical sciences have regularly used a plethora of techniques in their quest to deeply comprehend or explain from different perspectives - any phenomenon under investigation (Scerri and James 2010). An important reason why this study chose mixed methods was to help expand the scope of and deepen our insights from the study (Sandelowski 2000).

Clearly, since the study has a two prong objective to measure the nature of decentralised local governance in Northern Ghana and to understand how it brings about community development, the task involved not only estimating the average effect of the program but also understanding the variability around this estimate. Again, since the study also aimed to understand why such variability may arise; generating data from qualitative approaches became invaluable (Plewis and Mason 2005). Researchers, at least of the social persuasion, have long agreed that qualitative data can enhance quantitative data and also lead to a better understanding of the strengths of a given program (Ibid, 2005).
This thesis therefore, employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to improve the validity of the research results (Alasuutari, 2010). Further, by mixing methods alone, it was possible to make substantial theoretical propositions.

Through mixed method research, which has developed to become a third major research approach or research paradigm according to Onwuegbuzie et al. (2010), this study capitalised on the relative strengths of the different techniques and combined them effectively to enhance the research project. Since all research methods have cost and benefits, and since they differ greatly in their particular cost and benefits, it was best to use an appropriate combination or mixture of methods as the contexts and goals of the study dictated and allowed the study to easily accommodate (Bryman 1984; Bryman 2004; Bryman 2006; Bryman et al. 2008). For instance, in triangulating various strategies, a better overall view of the reality on the ground was achieved when the social survey component was effectively linked to some unstructured questioning and participant observations.

Mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches is not new to social research, where this is done; the researcher seeks breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2010; Scerri and James 2010; Tashakkori and Tenddlie 1998; Tenddlie and Johnson 2009). In addition to the above, the interest of this research in mixing methods was to unlock the reliability of the data acquired (Tilly 2004; Scerri and James 2010). After all, Delanty(2002) opines that science is quickly and progressively becoming communicative, hence a researcher must interact reflexively with society which makes an understanding of scientific knowledge both in its natural and social form important.

As pointed out above, Social science knowledge is an important component of policy making and implementation process. That apart, social science knowledge derived from combining qualitative and quantitative research help grasp the full complement of the required knowledge and to break down what is reasonably deficit between the two approaches. Branmen (2005), helped dispel euphoria that such an approach to social research shifts emphasis from one approach to the other or even compromise quality. In addition to reasons adduced above, this study adopted the mixed method approach in accordance with four rationales adduced by Onwuegbezie et al (2010:57), who pointed out that conceptually, mixed methods research ensure:
participant enrichment, where, mixing of quantitative and qualitative techniques optimize the sample, such as increasing the sample size; Instrument fidelity, maximizing the appropriateness and or utility of the instruments used whether quantitative or qualitative; Treatment integrity; and Significance enhancement, mixing qualitative and quantitative techniques to maximise researchers interpretations.

5.4 Research Methods

5.4.1 Sampling Procedures

Data collection methods and analysis techniques are not linked to paradigms, researchers who are sympathetic to different theoretical positions may combine the use of data collection methods that are associated with either qualitative or quantitative research such as open ended and unstructured interviewing and structured questionnaires respectively to help answer their questions. The point of departure lies in the use of techniques and more importantly how the results analysed (Sandelowski 2000).

As has been established in section 5.3 above, this study adopts a mixed methods approach and consequently uses a mixed methods sampling strategy. The study acknowledges that in any inquiry into human behaviour, scientist have often differentiated between two groups of sampling techniques; probability and purposive, because they exhibit different logic and responds to different data requirements (Teddlie and Yu 2007). Following from this, the study preferred the use of a mixed method sampling approach because of the flexibility, as Teddlie and Yu (2007:78) suggests to select “… units or cases for a research study using both probability and purposive sampling strategies” where needed.

Following from the above, this study purposively sampled local government leaders and administrative actors for inclusion the in-depth individual interviews; and randomly selected local communities and individuals household members for inclusion in the household surveys component. Details of each of the above are described in the following sections.

5.4.3 Sampling Procedure for In-depth Interviews

The rationale for conducting in-depth interviews was to achieve a deep understanding of the issues under investigation. A purposive sampling procedure was preferred for selecting this category of interviewees because it is a non-probabilistic procedure which allows the
researcher to select respondents without needing an estimating formula to achieve representativeness.

In specific terms, the study purposively selected local government officials, such as district chief executives, district planning officers, district finance officers, local District Assembly representatives, and heads of the various decentralised departments (see Table 8 below) because they encapsulate a critical knowledge base of the local government system, and also have lived experiences working with the local government. This is in line with the suggestions that such a technique in the least is based on the need to isolate some specific units, for the important information they can share with the researcher to help answer the research questions, which otherwise can not be gotten (Teddle and Yu 2007). Therefore, choosing from this critical mass of respondents helped the study to gather deep and diverse information unique to the local government administrative setting, only available to the selected respondents, and without having to sample a large quantity of individuals (Maxwell 2005).

Also, the use of purposive sampling as the literature suggests has a unique character of achieving representatives not of the entire population – in this case local governments in Ghana – but typical of the unit of interest. In doing so, the researcher was able to compare views from all three selected local government units (Tongco 2007; Teddle and Yu 2007). Further, using this procedure, as Maxwell (2005) has suggested, helped the researcher to reach conclusions that goes beyond mere averages, drawing views from a particular set of interviewee population (local government leaders and administrators) from across the study sites hence allowing the opportunity to compare views across the study sites. It is noteworthy however that, because these participants were specifically chosen because of their special character and that the numbers of respondents was limited; it was possible for an in-depth exploration of the subject. Though the responses could be quantified, it was not possible to draw vigorous statistical inferences from such data. It was in anticipation of such a challenge that the study choose interviewees from three characteristically comparative local governments in Northern Ghana.

5.4.4 Sampling procedure for Survey Interviews

The study also collected data from individual community members above the age of 18 years who qualify as household heads. This individual household survey interviews were conducted using semi-structured guides. The primary purpose of conducting the household
The study gained some advantages by adopting the simple random sampling design. Firstly, it was possible to select a representative population for inclusion in the study. From the range of communities within the three selected local governments, the simple random process enables us to equally target every adult individual within the selected communities. Secondly, it was possible to avoid the complex processes involved in large probabilistic sampling procedures (Doherty 1994). As at December 2008, there were 170 District Assemblies in Ghana (Ghana Districts 2006a). The selection of participating districts was based on the fact that although the selected sample could not be considered representative for the entire 170 District Assemblies currently in Ghana, it is representative of the selected districts because the process allowed every community member in this study a fair chance of being included into the study.

Proceeding on the basis that this process guarantees representativeness of the population, the study was able to produce fairly balanced generalisations from the population. In addition to the above, a main purpose for the survey component was to allow for simple statistical estimations regarding local community members’ descriptions of their experiences with the local governance systems in Ghana. Because the simple random sampling technique has a strength of yielding representativeness, it was possible therefore for the study to make these simple statistical inferences based on the data gathered. The study acknowledged inherent difficulty with reaching statistical precision with data
gathered using a simple random sample and also the potential for errors. However since the interview process was semi-structured, in-depth probing yielded additional data, and furthered understanding where the statistical data fell short.

5.4.5 Characteristics of Survey Interview Participants

Participants for the household interviews were randomly selected. However, the categories turned out to represent a rather diverse core of local community actors. The study initially targeted 30 participants from each district. However, including responses from the instrument pre-test yielded a total of 99 responses. That is 38, 31, and 30 responses respectively from district C, B, and A. These were taken from a total of 32 different local communities spread across the study sites. Though randomly selected, the study gained more responses from male respondents than female as indicated in Table 5 below. Again, the age dynamics of respondents was highly skewed towards those between the ages of 24 to 38 years and again those at 54 plus. This is captured in table 6 below. Again, a tentative explanation as in Chapter seven could be found in the social structure, and cultural arrangement within local communities.

Table 5: Sex of Respondent by District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey 2011; N=99

Table 6: Age structure of Respondent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19-23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-28</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34-38</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39-43</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44-49</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49-53</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54+</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not given</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey 2011; N=99
As indicated in table 7 below, the education dynamics of all respondents interviewed could be described as functional. That is, apart from 23.3 per cent who never went to school; the rest have had at least 6 years of formal basic education. This was interesting for the study, because with basic education, it was easy for respondents to understand the questions posed. In addition, they were actively aware of their local environment and hence could offer relatively informed responses during the discussions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never went to school</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JHS/MSLC</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical/Vocational</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey 2011; N=99

5.4.6 Reason for Selection of local governments

The characteristics of local governments in Ghana, as discussed in chapters five and six, are very diverse. Indicatively, this diversity range from highly populous districts called metropolis to very sparely populated local government jurisdictions. The study acknowledges that, to select three local governments from a total of 170 is anything but representative. However, it proceeded to select them because its primary aim was not to attain representativeness but to isolate certain proxy characteristics of these districts that advance our understanding of poverty and community development activities of local governments. Again, this choice follows from the study’s preference of a purposive case study approach.

All three local governments were selected from a specific geographic location, that is Northern Ghana, and care was taken to include those that are characteristically similar. First, all three districts are among the categories of “old, or pre-existing” local government jurisdictions. In particular, district ‘C’ has been in existence since colonial times while ‘B’, and ‘A’ were among the first 110 districts existing since 1988. Statistically, the Ghana
poverty reduction strategy paper (2003), has highlighted all three selected districts to be among the poorest in Ghana and therefore it was interesting to explore the dynamics of such districts for useful data on local government activities to strategically elevate local communities from the drudgery associated with poverty and deprivation.

5.5 Data Collection Instruments and Process

5.5.1 Interviews

Interviews are a form of participatory research methodology. They satisfy questions raised by post-positivist and the challenge of the principles and practices of social research (Clark et al. 2009). As Hickey and Mohan (2005) write, the qualitative data gathering techniques meet the call for a more socially relevant research process. It enabled the study to, rather than removed participants, be actively engaged with them in a joint meaning making process that helped participants to bring their own voices to the research process.

Since this study subscribes to the social constructivist approach, conducting interviews was particularly important because it suits well with our understanding and co-interpretation of the social worlds of decentralised local governance in rural Ghana. Through the interviewing process, respondents became co-constructors of knowledge in collaboration with the interviewer. This was particularly important because the study sought to holistically understand rural community folk’s relationships to the local governance process within the complex population dynamics. This was achievable mainly through in-depth interviewing (Jody and Glassner 1997). Since the entire research deals with a social policy and social development, this process allowed both researcher and participants to get actively involved in social policy development process (Clark et al. 2009:346).

5.5.2 In-depth Individual Interviews

In-depth interviews were used in this study because they are a convincing way to conduct a systematic social inquiry. In particular, because this study is primarily a social science endeavour, it was important to utilise in-depth interviewing because more than 90 per cent of all social science investigations in one way or another, utilise in-depth interviews (Holstein and Gubrium 1997). Further, because in-depth interviews are a more methodical form of information collection. It is in this regard that this study followed what Holstein and Gubrium (1997), called a dynamic meaning making process in an attempt to
understand, and interpret rural people and local government officials’ perspectives on how local governance impacts on social developments within their locality. This process was greatly furthered by directly engaging interviewees in a non-threatening highly informal context of which they are familiar with.

To optimise the benefits of the use of in-depth individual interviews within these mostly rural contexts, the study ensured a culturally sensitive process. For instance, the most comfortable interview venues and times were suggested by interviewees themselves. Importantly, all interviews were conducted in languages chosen by respondents using expressions that interviewees best understand or could easily relate to. Through this process, this study produced deep experiential perspectives because it effectively engaged people in pertinent conversations about their lived experiences with the local governance systems, and how this has facilitated or constrained their relevant social and community development.

One advantage the study gained in using in-depth individual interviews is that the informal engagements allowed the researcher to gain the needed information in a stress free manner, and also to reach depths which would otherwise have been hidden. In addition, it helped to approximate lived realities, perceptions, and attitudes of the respondents which are otherwise not accessible through any other means (Peräkylä 2005). In addition to the process being mostly flexible and co-constructed with interviewees, the study minimised the potential of asking the wrong questions, through the study design and utilisation of a precise data gathering instrument which not only contained few, but un-structured or open-ended questions. This further helped to obtain the sought after lived experiential information from selected participants (Creswell 2008). Appendix 1 is the in-depth interview guide used.

Aware that this is a social research, the study did not seek to achieve a mirror reflection of the social world through these in-depth interviews (Jody and Glassner 1997). However, it was possible to gain unparalleled access to the deep meanings that interviewees use to account for their experiences of local governance activities and how this affect their social world. While engaged in this meaning making process, the researcher was fully aware that issues of social distance pose a critical challenge in qualitative interviews, particularly when one does not share membership with or understand the cultural dynamics of interviewees. In some instances during this study, interviewees’ responses were
conditioned on how the research was able to seamlessly connect to their social worlds, world views, and social categorization, such as age, gender and class.

The researcher's contextual knowledge of the study area therefore helped to address these challenges. Sufficient time was allowed to interact with and gain the trust of interviewees before proceeding to conduct the interviews. The researcher's personal experience and understanding of the social context of the research ensured mutually reassuring conversations which facilitated effective probing in the form of an informal conversation; thus eliminating the potential for interviewees misunderstanding the questions or to purposefully mislead the researcher through the responses they provide.

The approach adopted in this research is consistent with proposals suggested by Glassner and Loughlin (1987:35), that establishing trust and familiarity, showing genuine interest, assuring confidentiality and not being judgemental are some important elements of building rapport with the interviewee. Further, the study adopted Jody and Glassner's (1997) suggestion that the social researcher should be a ‘good listener’ and have the capacity to neither be firmly entrenched in the mainstream nor too far at any particular margin. During this in-depth interview process, interviewees were empowered by acknowledging their understanding of the context and subject matter as well as demonstrated unflagging interest in the topic.

### Table 8: Categories of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY OF INTERVIEWEE</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Chief Executives</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Planning Officers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Finance Officers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of Decentralised Departments</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Assembly Members</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field Study*

5.5.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI) are probably the most common forms of interviewing in the social research enterprise. This study employed SSI believing that they are unique, because it allowed the study to utilise both standardised and non standardised survey techniques (May 1997). As a mixed method technique, SSIs interviews allowed respondents in this study sufficient latitude to open up and share in a non-threatening
manner, their opinions and experiences of the local governance process and how this has impacted on the development of local communities in rural Northern Ghana. Because SSIs permitted the gathering of both quantitative and qualitative information, the study was able to deeply appreciate respondents’ view point as well as make generalisations about their behaviour.

Primarily, the study used SSIs because of its suitability as a tool for exploring the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding the complex and sometimes social and politically sensitive and nuanced issues embedded in the processes of local government’s actions for community development in Ghana (Louise Barriball and While 1994). This is because, the open ended options in the SSIs was critical in facilitating deep inquiry, seeking more information, confirming views, and clarifying answers; which process helped the study to understand and determine the true meaning implied by respondents.

Also, because this allowed further probing, the interviewer and interviewee were able to enter into an intense dialogue that enabled the joint or co-creation of reality. This was particularly paramount for this study because in a rural social milieu and local governance institutional settings, there are different cultures and sub-cultures with peculiar language, expressions and behaviour. Therefore, the words which respondents used to describe phenomenon could be vastly different and subject to varied interpretations. In order to ensure that data reveal what is thought to have been revealed, the researcher probed further into responses given (Louise Barriball and While 1994:331). Probing further was an invaluable tool to this study because it afforded the opportunity to ensure data reliability in five different ways.

First, given the rural culturally rich context of the study, respondents often offered rich proverbial responses which are not immediately clear to the interviewer. Hence the leverage to search further into the meanings implied, in the least allowed for the researcher to clarify and understand what is being implied (Hutchinson and Wilson 1992); in addition to this, the process also provided an opportunity to explore sensitive or political issues (Nay-Brock 1984; Treece and Treece 1986); allowed the study to elicit valuable and complete information (Bailey 1987; Gordon 1975; Austin 1981); enabled the exploration of, and clarification of notable inconsistencies within respondents’ accounts; and finally, helped respondents recall information for questions involving memory (Smith 1992).
Furthermore, the open ended portions of the SSIs were useful because the sampled interviewees were varied; with diverse and interesting life histories that could not be sufficiently captured with the use of a standardized interview schedule alone. On the other hand, information such as basic demographic data and other perceptual forms of information was collected with the standardised portions of our SSI forms.

This provided greater structure and allowed for easy comparability across interview sites and population compared to its open-ended counterparts. On the whole, the use of SSIs in this study produced the kind of ‘rich insights into people’s experiences and opinions that the study required (May 1997:109). Social research satisfies both validity and reliability tests. Compared to structured interviews, validity and reliability has been noted as a major challenge of SSIs (See: Brink 1989; Louise Barriball and While 1994). This is because in structured interviews the wording and sequence of all the questions are exactly the same for each respondent so that one can be sure that any differences in the answers are due to differences among the respondents rather than in the questions asked (Louise Barriball and While 1994; May 1997). The same cannot be said of SSIs.

The above notwithstanding, the study believes that changing the words of the questions asked does not necessarily change the meaning of questions. Rather it offers an opportunity to adopt the study to the perceptual needs of interviewees. After all, within the complex, socio-cultural settings in which this study was conducted, not every word has the same meaning to every respondent and equally so, not every respondent uses the same vocabulary (Treece and Treece 1986). Therefore, the validity and reliability of the semi-structured interviews is dependent upon equivalence of meaning conveyed to respondents in the language and manner that they best understand, rather than the sequence and exactitude of words used (Denzin and Lincoln 2000)

5.6 Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data involves the utilisation of already existing sources. This study made use of a variety of secondary sources which Lewis et al (2009) suggest could include documentary data, survey data and readily available external data sources such as national population sources. Secondary documentary analysis was extensively carried out during the study. This formed the main source to determine the historical nature of local governance in Ghana. Further, it provided the foundational information which informed further probing during the individual in-depth interviews. Apart from providing
background information, which enhanced the nature of in-depth interviews, using such sources was important because it ultimately afforded research replicability since the sources used are readily available and could easily be cross checked by other researchers interested in the field of study (Pallangyo 2009).

Although documentary sources available to this study were extensive, it focused on government and local government documents available at the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development; the office of the administrator of district assembly common fund; and the Institute of Local Government Studies. The main documents which this study collected and analysed could be segregated into two: first, local government legislative frameworks; Conditions of service for the local government service; the local government (departments of District Assemblies) (commencement) instrument, 2009: and the local government Acts (1993, 2003). Others included the national development strategy documents - starting from the immediate post independence seven-year development plan, through the Ghana vision 2020 to the present Ghana shared growth and development framework- and annual implementation review reports of these development strategies.

The second set of documents was drawn from the local assemblies. These included but not limited to: District wide development plans; district profiles; district wide development thematic documents; district medium term development program reports; and community development action plans. Primarily, this process helped the study to better understand the nature and dynamics of the local governance process. This not only helped in the process of conceptual clarification; it served as a baseline upon which the study analysed data collected from other primary sources. As we noted elsewhere in chapter six, there is an inherent difficulty to access and utilise such data from the research context.

It became apparent that these documents; particularly the district level documents were produced to reflect national government or the ruling regime’s party desires. Further, there was limited access to required documents. For instance, the study could only acquire local government development plans dating back to 2005. Earlier versions were either unavailable or were incomplete. In addition to the above, access was also deliberately limited by some local government officials who wrongly perceived the study for a national or an external audit. Notwithstanding the above, secondary sources were complemented with other sources of data to deal with the incompleteness and inadequacy issues.
5.7 Data Capture, Analysis and Presentation

A study of this nature, which is about human phenomena, and particularly in this case, within rural communities is a complex enterprise. This requires the use, not only of an equally complex research design, but of a data treatment, analytical and presentation framework sophisticated enough to accommodate all the complexities extant in the process. The study therefore adopted a process that allowed it to mix data processing and analysis techniques in ways that helped to expand the scope and improve its analytical position (Sandelowski 2000; Onwuegbuzie et al. 2010; Braun and Clarke 2006).

As a mixed-method study, a mixed method data treatment approach was gracefully pursued, as a vibrant option to help expand the analytic power of the study in terms of breadth and range. Beyond increasing analytical leverage, mixed method analysis also offered an opportunity for triangulation which further allowed an attendant advantage of comparing findings from both qualitative and quantitative results for the purposes of convergence (Greene et al. 1989). This allowed the study to prospect for stronger meta-inferences, which involves a combination of interpretation of findings into a coherent whole (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2010).

Conspicuously, through mixed data analysis, the data sets became effectively linked (Caracelli and Greene 1993), and yet did not compromise the unique qualities extant in each data set. The approach was flexible to the extent that in some instances, the data sets were unified into a single whole, by quantifying qualitative data and vice versa (Caracelli and Greene 1993; Sandelowski 2000); while in some instances, each data set was individually treated with an appropriate technique for its analysis and the result linked at the time of data interpretation (Sandelowski 2000:252).

This study optimised the benefits of mixed method analysis, by implementing crossover analysis which, according to Onwuegbezie et al (2010), is the highest form of mixed data analysis techniques. The aim, was to extract maximum meaning from the data sets by gestalt switches between approaches of analysis (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2010). Because of the leverage to switch between analytical methods, performing cross over analysis certainly allowed this study to combine both quantitative and qualitative assumptions and stances, and this, arguably helped to further our construct validity and ensured what Greene et al, (1989) refers to as complementarity.
Since a greater portion of our data is qualitative, diverse and complex narratives, descriptions, perceptions and perspectives methods were used (Braun and Clarke 2006; Plewis and Mason 2005). In a word, the data obtained through interviews and observations were captured using field note books, dairies and digital tape-recordings. Upon which they were transcribed, collated and processed in various ways. Firstly, the study analysed naturally occurring data meticulously transcribed from tape-recorded conversations. Through this, recurrent categorizations, articulations, and discourses occurring in their natural context were isolated, critically examined, and interpreted (Alasuutari 2010). The study focused on this as a matter of precedence to generate the necessary concepts and theories to the data that aptly answer our research questions.

Complementary to the above, the study also used thematic analysis as a fundamental method of qualitative analysis, to filter and compare emergent themes. This method is hugely different from others that seek to merely describe patterns across qualitative data such as thematic decomposition analysis and grounded theory. As the name imply, this study essentially used thematic analysis to help identify, analyse, and report patterns within data. In the least, this allowed for systematization and expression of the data set in a ‘rich’ detail; in as much as it allowed the study to interpret the various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis 1998; Braun and Clarke 2006). One clear benefit of qualitative thematic analysis is its flexibility, both theoretically and analytically. Particularly interesting in the view of this study, is the fact that thematic analysis is firmly anchored in constructionist method which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society.

In order to identify and codify themes, the study considered a theme as one that captures something important about the data in relation to the research questions, or deals with some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. To navigate this issue, the researcher’s judgement guided by the overall research focus, was a critical factor to determining what themes to capture. This way, the researcher was able to reach a rich description of the data sets aimed for.

In carrying out the thematic analysis described above, the study was careful to avoid the associated common pitfalls that potently compromise the quality of the analysis(Braun and Clarke 2006). First, the study engaged in a thorough analysis of the data as opposed to merely collecting extracts with little or no analytical narrative. Secondly, to avoid the temptation of reporting data collection questions as themes, a methodical analysis was
carried out to arrive at themes. In furtherance of this, and in keeping with the overall research question as a focal reference point, the study identified themes which coalesce around a central idea or concept. Further, all analytical claims made using thematic analysis are a reflection of the data and not pre-conceived researcher theories or precepts and finally, all interpretations drawn from the data are solidly grounded within the concepts, theoretical framework, and research questions adduced.
Table 9: Summary of Research Questions linked to Research Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Objective</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Research strategy</th>
<th>Data collection Process</th>
<th>Types of Respondents (sources)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To explore the nature and context of decentralized local governance in Ghana</td>
<td>What is the nature of local governance in Ghana?</td>
<td>• Documentary review • Field study</td>
<td>• Documentary analysis (primary technique) • In-depth interviews</td>
<td>• Local Government departments/practioner literature • Academic literature • Institute of Local Government Studies • Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To examine rural community development strategies implemented by decentralised local government institutions</td>
<td>What local community development strategies have been implemented by local government institutions?</td>
<td>• Documentary review • Field study</td>
<td>• Documentary reviews • In-depth individual interviews • Semi structured interviews</td>
<td>1. Documentary analysis • Review of historical national development strategies • Review of district development plans • Review of district annual reports • Review of national development strategy review reports • NGOs and international development organisations reports • In-depth individual interviews • Individual household level semi-structured interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Objective</td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>Research strategy</td>
<td>Data collection Process</td>
<td>Types of Respondents (sources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To investigate local community participation in determining community development initiatives</td>
<td>How do decentralised local authorities effectively engage the participation of communities in rural development initiatives?</td>
<td>• Documentary review • Field study</td>
<td>• Documentary reviews • In-depth individual interviews • Semi structured interviews</td>
<td>• Documentary analysis Academic and practitioner literature, reports and district assembly meeting reports, district wide development plans • In-depth individual interviews • Individual household level semi-structured interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To analyse institutional capacities for effective decentralised local development</td>
<td>What institutional capacities exist at the local level for effective decentralisation?</td>
<td>• Documentary review • Field study</td>
<td>• Documentary reviews • In-depth individual interviews</td>
<td>• Documentary analysis Academic and practitioner literature, reports and district assembly meeting reports, district wide development plans • In-depth individual interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Author’s construct
5.8 Limitations of the Study

Theoretically, this study benefits from a large availability of related research and academic literature from various contexts, therefore it was not possible to review all the literature available. Again, decentralisation and rural development represent a rather large area for any one particular study to comprehensively cover in its entirety. Hence this study focuses on the particular context of Ghana and specifically Northern Ghana. It is a measured attempt to focus on the areas that are of immediate relevance.

Given the scope of decentralisation, the study acknowledges the time limitations it faced in attempting to comprehensively cover all possible aspects it represents. The context of decentralisation in Africa is large and that of Ghana is difficult to navigate therefore this study acknowledges limitations in both financial and material resources it would have required to conduct a comprehensive study. Therefore, it carefully selected a few districts from which a compelling story could be told and which helped to effectively answer the posed research questions.

Methodological challenges regards the selected methods abound. In the least, generalisability challenges of research findings based on selected case studies is acknowledged. Therefore the study does not seek to make generalisations based on its limited coverage. Further that a sample of 99 individual community level respondents taken from three districts out of a total of 170 could hardly be representative. However, care was taken to cater for shortfalls in representativeness through the use of in-depth interviews. In addition, since the study is a social one, selecting an appropriate methodology in such studies is a particularly complex task. Further, the study context is also subject to continual change, making it unsuitable to use one particular methodology and claim perfection. Certain methodological deficiencies may thus become apparent long after the study is complete. This notwithstanding every attempt was made to carefully select and utilise appropriate methods.
5.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the research methodology, methods, and techniques used in the thesis. It captures the theoretical and philosophical basis of the research. The study proceeds from the premise that social research is not pure science hence there are inherent difficulties to claim unconditional objectivity or certainty of outcomes. This is because the subject of investigation cannot be completely subjected to the researcher’s absolute control (Rosenberg 2008). This study therefore was guided by the social constructionist approach to reaching a meaningful reality. It is the understanding of this study that meaning making in the social world is best co-constructed with the research subjects rather than generated from an abstract position. The study therefore placed premium on the social arrangements within the context of the three District Assemblies in Northern Ghana. It insist on actively engaging with the social arrangement within the context primarily because the crux of the study was to identify some social relationships, which are essentially complex and therefore, it could not be sufficient to, on the basis of observed quantities, arrive at the conclusion. Doing that, as Alasuutari (2010), has observed would have obscured the ‘big picture’, or the ‘rich data’, within the context (Bryman, 1984).

In order to optimise the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches, the study adopted a mixed methods approach. It engaged local government actors and administrators in in-depth interviews to gain from their rich exposure and experience of the local government process and involved local resident in a semi-structured interview process to estimate their collective views about the nature and effect of the local governance process on their lives. On the whole, the study benefited from 35 in-depth interviews and 99 semi-structured interviews covering a diverse proportion of local communities.

The study also sourced for and reviewed secondary information from the selected local governments, central government actors and non-governmental organisations active in the local area. This revealed the challenges and opportunities within local governments to promote local community development. The next chapter is based on secondary sources. It is a descriptive review, which traces the historical nature of local governance in Ghana. It concludes with a short discussion on the politics of local governance in Ghana since colonial times.
CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

6.0 Introduction

This chapter addresses the second research question of this study which is: what local community development strategies have been implemented by local governments? This question is broken down into two follow up questions: a) whether these development strategies implemented by local government took into consideration the expressed needs of local communities; and b) whether local communities perceive these strategies as useful to their development. The chapter is structured into five distinct sections. The first section sets the broad stage for the chapter. It is based on a historical review of development strategies implemented in Ghana. This provides a context to understanding the evolution of national and local government development strategies. Section two draws broadly on interview data and documentary analysis to highlight how local community development strategies that have been conceptualise and implemented within the Ghanaian local government systems, and what where the key drivers of these programs. Section three focuses on contextualising development strategies to community needs. It is also based on empirical field data and documentary analysis. The fourth section draws on the empirical perspectives of rural communities as to whether their Local Governments are viable development actors. Section five presents a summary of the chapter.

6.1 A Historical Experience with Development Strategies

Ghana has experienced a chequered development history since independence. It is often difficult to effectively locate the country’s development history within one consistent strategy. As early as 1919, Ghana is said to have developed one of the first national development plans in the world (Vordzorgbe and Caiquo 2001). Although this was a welcome process which provided the impetus for a development planning process in the country, this study found that it was purely a colonial government enterprise with little or no participation of local Ghanaian elites, institutions or those for whom these plans were to directly impact.
Figure 3: Ghana’s Historical Development Plans

- Ten year Development Plan (condensed into five-year plan) – 1951 - 1956
- Consolidation Development Plan 1957 – 1959
- Second Development Plan 1959 – 1964
- Seven Year Development Plan 1963/4 -1969/70
- Two Year Development Plan 1968/69-1969/70
- One Year Development Plan 1970 – 1971
- Five Year Development Plan 1975/76 – 1979/80
- Ghana Vision 2020 (First And Second Step) 1996-2000
- An Agenda for Growth And Prosperity (GPRS I) 2003 -2005
- Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II) 2006 – 2009
- Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGD) 2010 – 2013

Source: Adopted from (Vordzorgbe and Caiquo 2001)

Since then, Ghana’s endeavours at evolving comprehensive development strategies has mostly depended on the developmental and ideological orientation of ruling regimes, as well as the influence of international and multi-lateral institutions. Often times however military interventions have rendered some development strategies short lived.

6.1.1 Immediate Post-Independence Strategies

Ghana’s first seven-year development strategy starting from 1964 sought to lay a strong economic foundation for the country to achieve an accelerated economic growth and sustained human development. This was envisaged to radically transform the economy while effectively dismantling colonial structures (Vordzorgbe and Caiquo 2001). With a socialist orientation, the plan emphasised domestic import substitution industrialisation, supported by a robust physical and social infrastructural base (see: Meng 2004). This emboldened the nationalist regime to firmly locate within the national development agenda social targets such as free social housing, public transport, education; which the country struggled to realise.

Within a short time, this pervasive inward looking industrialisation drive failed to garner the desired human and economic development. Rather, the economy is said to have witnessed a continual downward spiral; the regime increasingly became isolated; while the leadership persistently engaged in hard handed approaches to secure political continuity in form of a one party state.
Not surprisingly therefore, the implementation of the plan was truncated via a military coup which ousted Nkrumah’s regime in February 1966 (Gebe 2008).

6.1.2 One Decade of Economic Recovery and Structural Adjustment

Since February 1966, no regime has stayed long enough to develop and implement a comprehensive development plan until 1981 when the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) led by Flt Lt J. J Rawlings ceased power from a democratically elected government. According to the presidential note on Ghana’s Vision 2020 document, between 1975 and 1983, Ghana’s real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) plummeted by 10% while GDP per head dipped by 27% (Republic of Ghana 1995). Meng (2004) adds that by 1981, the economy could best be described as stagnating with a hyper-inflation estimated at 70%.

Aside the internal pressures noted here, there were bigger external pressures which ensured that Ghana could no longer pursue its home grown social and economic development priorities but to follow the Economic Recovery and Structural Adjustment Programs of the early 1980s. It has been argued that for more than a decade since then, Ghana and its contemporaries became laboratories for experimentation of “the Washington Consensus with Official Development Assistance (ODA) as the main tool” (Baah 2003:5)

The expressed intent was to arrest the aforementioned economic decay in a bid to improve the living conditions of Ghanaians. This strategy may have been relevant because it was centred on the overall improvement of the social wellbeing of Ghanaians, particularly the under-privileged, deprived, and vulnerable (Vordzorgbe and Caiquo 2001:49); it was also geared towards poverty reduction programs. This study found that contrary to realising default rural community transformation, a contrary scenario occurred. This happened because at the recommendation from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF); social and human development programs were gradually de-emphasised in place of macro-economic stability.

---

6 Note that the factors leading the overthrow of Nkrumah were many and go beyond mere economic management failures. Both internal and external forces culminated in his removal. Conspiracy theories suggest his anti-western rhetoric and policies may have contributed. It also fingers opposition political parties and in particular the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States (see details in Gebe, B. Y. 2008; Baah, A. 2003:3)

7 Mostly due to military interventions
The focus of this strategy appears to have supplanted previously home grown approaches. Further analysis show no evidence that its preparation was participatory or that it took the needs of rural communities or local civil society organisations into consideration. Therefore, such strategies could only be said to have been far removed from policies that really mattered to rural communities (Stiglitz 2002). The analysis suggests that as a development strategy, ERP failed to achieve any social development goals particularly at the local level. Rather it achieved all the anti-development indices including unemployment, inflation, low real wages, poverty, rural misery, inequality, poor quality education and indeed huge external debt (Baah 2003 :6) In spite of its missed opportunity to galvanise sectoral actions for local social and economic development, the study found that this strategy helped to restore the economy.

6.1.3 The Ghana Vision 2020 Development Strategy

As a direct sequel to the economic recovery program and consistent with Article 36, clause 5 of Ghana’s 1992 fourth Republican Constitution, the ruling regime, in 1995 laid before Parliament a comprehensive development strategy called the Ghana vision 2020. This aimed within the medium term “to consolidate the gains already achieved and to lay the foundations for accelerated growth in the 21st century” (Republic of Ghana 1995:i); and to serve as a launch pad to propel the country onto a long term goal of becoming a middle income economy in two and half decades. This was to be achieved by ensuring a healthy life for all; eliminate hard core poverty; increase national income; reduce population growth and harness science and technology. This was to be achieved within five identified thematic areas: human development; economic growth; rural development; urban development and providing an enabling environment (Republic of Ghana 1995:2).

The review found that the implementation of this strategy was critical for re-igniting commitment to decentralised public administration. It also led to strengthening of the decentralised administration’s ability to plan, execute and lead overall development. Therefore, the study found that it was in the era of the Ghana’s vision 2020 that local community development strategies were given a renewed impetus. Indeed the Local Government Act 462 of 1993; a precursor to the Ghana vision 2020 first step of 1995 is credited for directing the district assemblies to prepare four-Year Medium Term Development Plans, which process was to be subject to public hearings and broader local community consultations.
The vision 2020 strategy further emphasised the harmonising of these local community plans into the district wide development plans; which were to be harmonised at the regional coordinating councils to ensure they reflected the national development policies and priorities (Republic of Ghana 1995; Botchie 2000). As a direct consequence, local government agencies are said to have received “strong professional support in formulating, implementing and monitoring their development programmes” under the vision 2020 program (Republic of Ghana 1995:26).

An additional strength of the strategy as the study discovered was that it was of great importance to rural community development because of its trajectory towards a bottom-up, community centred development planning at the local government level (Botchie, 2000). It probably gave overall meaning to the decentralised local government planning process because of its participatory nature and elicits local involvement in planning and resource mobilisation which leads ultimately to improvements in community livelihoods.

6.1.4 The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (I & II)

A multiplicity of factors culminated in the radical shift away from the planned Ghana Vision 2020 strategy whose ultimate completion was to make Ghana a middle income economy. In particular, intense pressure on government resulted in the adoption of Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative which required the preparation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) as a condition for debt relief and access to the IMF Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility and the World Bank concessional loans and grants (Baah 2003 :7).

In addition lessons learned through the implementation of the Vision 2020 strategy such as the lack of guidelines and props for ministries, departments, and agencies (including local governments) to prepare appropriate development strategies (Republic of Ghana 2003), also conditioned the adoption of GPRS I. This change in development strategy focus brought equally far-reaching consequences for rural community development. The strategy was focused on the regime’s belief that wealth creation holds benefits for all communities.

Thus the government aimed to “create wealth by transforming the nature of the economy to achieve growth, accelerated poverty reduction and the protection of the vulnerable and excluded within a decentralized, democratic environment” (Republic of Ghana 2003:i). The strategic view, therefore, of the regime was three pronged: a) to stabilise the economy
and lay the foundation for a sustainable, accelerated and job creating agro-based industrial growth; b) provide an enabling environment that would empower all Ghanaians to participate in wealth creation and to partake in the wealth created; and c) ensure that all Ghanaians […] have access to basic social services such as health care, quality education, potable drinking water, decent housing, security from crime and violence, and the ability to participate in decisions that affected them (ibid, 2003).

The study makes two interrelated observations regarding the effects of this strategy to sustainable rural community development. First, the strategy was greatly externally motivated by the World Bank and IMF. Historically however, strategies motivated by these institutions without sufficient domestic content, are mostly elitist and often do not translate to the needs of the poorest sections of society. For instance, Santiso (2001:9) points out that the process where grants are used as condition for change does not always appear to yield the desired results unless there is high internal commitment or ownership of the process. Paradoxically, as late as 2003 when the first GPRS was developed, it does not appear that a lot of local content and commitment, in particular from rural Districts was favoured.

Secondly, in spite of expressed needs to bridge the gaps in access to essential services critical to rural social development, the regime’s fundamental emphasis on neo-liberal approaches was ambitiously biased towards private sector development which effectively undercut the social development abilities of the strategy. For instance, the study found that the regimes emphasis on private, market economy approach to rural infrastructural development, and modernised agriculture only gave opportunity to that section of the population with a given resource leverage to effectively take advantage of the ongoing programs to the detriment of rural poor communities. Further, on good governance, the study noticed that the strategy terminates at the national level with emphasis on “strengthening of the three arms of government, the executive, judiciary and the legislature” (Republic of Ghana 2003), with limited or no direct emphasis on good local governance which may directly translate to local community development.

The above considered the study’s fear that the GPRS I was not strategically aimed at poverty reduction within local communities may not be a completely misplaced judgement. The strategy, as a matter of nomenclature, may have aimed at poverty reduction but in real terms, particularly at targeting those that matter or evolving pro-poor programs aimed at the over 53 per cent rural dwellers who are described as chronically poor, it left much to be
desired (see Aryeetey et al. 2009 citing GLSS 4). As pointed out earlier, the main thrust of the policy favoured the middle class with economic leverage rather than pulling the bottom class out of poverty. The regime’s belief that building a viable private sector would have a spill-over effect on the poor did not materialise, as the policy did not target or promote ventures which are the main stay of rural communities. Indeed as J. H. Mensah, a Senior Minister and Chairman of the National Development Planning Commission noted, the GPRS I envisaged minimal poverty reduction strategies (Republic of Ghana 2005:ii).

There is little wonder that an independent review which offered opportunity for rural citizens to assess the progress of the implementation of the strategy revealed mostly negative outcomes. Local community members were very dissatisfied with achievements of so called special programs for the vulnerable and excluded implemented within their locales (See: Government of Ghana 2006). In particular rural communities often were strongly dissatisfied with the quality, type and quantity of services provided by the District Assemblies, and therefore called for an “increased interaction between the District Assemblies and the communities” (Government of Ghana 2006:ix) in order to enhance future service delivery. As this study would point out elsewhere in chapter seven, almost six years forward of the above assessment, the sentiments of local communities remain very much the same. Did these reviews result in a fundamental change in focus of subsequent national development strategies? We explore the GPRS II next and briefly summarize the on-going Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda.

The ruling regime in 2004 believed that the nation was ready to “attain the social and economic status of emerging middle income country within the next decade” hence it had to strategically position itself for same. The expressed ambition of the regime for the GPRS II was to, beyond all else, “place more emphasis on growth” (Republic of Ghana 2005:4). The strategic priorities identified under the GPRS II therefore did not drastically deviate from those emphasised under the previous strategy. Specifically, these were centred on: ensuring private sector competitiveness, human resource development, and good governance and civic responsibility (Ibid, 2005). The idea was to transform living standards through improved access to basic needs such as food, housing, clothing, water, education, health, and transport facilities. Within this broad framework, the strategy envisaged human resource development as the fulcrum around which development would entirely revolve.

---

8 Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda is the current national development strategy for Ghana.
In this regard, plans were instituted for education sector development as a fundamental human right and hence were to train and re-develop teachers to provide quality education beyond the basic level. This was also because the strategy acknowledged from historical introspection that “the single most crucial key to the attainment of economic success is the educational quality of a nation’s work force” (Republic of Ghana 2005:iv), therefore, it was crucial to build the cream of human resources required to transform the civil service and build strong institutions to enable the country fully take advantage of an envisaged economic growth. Further, the strategy also aimed within its private sector competitiveness goal to facilitate modification of agriculture. This strategy acknowledged that a majority of the Ghana’s working population; particularly those of rural extraction are cultivating small pieces of agricultural land for their survival. Therefore, it was only prudent for the government to pay attention to developing the agricultural sector from a rudimentary exercise to one based on vibrant economic enterprise.

To achieve this goal the exposed strategies varied from “improving the complement of equipment and tools with which the small-scale woman farmer earns her living, through many intermediate stages of applying scientific and technological improvements to the farming practices of medium-scale agriculturists, and going up to the most sophisticated systems of irrigation, high value horticultural production, and scientific fish farming” (Republic of Ghana 2005:viii). Other areas of attention were; improved access to health care, malaria control and prevention and a renewed focus on decentralisation! Unlike in the GPRS I where decentralised local governance was effectively de-emphasised in favour of national level governance infrastructure, the GPRS II re-introduced and insisted on effective decentralised local governance.

The area of emphasis highlighted resonates in the extant weaknesses of the local government systems to deliver on their mandate. For example the GPRS II envisaged the enhancement of the capacity of local government to be more accountable, efficient and effective in performance of its service delivery functions. This was to be achieved via an enhanced devolution of political power and enhanced financial status of local governments. The latter objective was pursued with an increased in the allocation into the District Assemblies Common Fund from 5 to 7.5% of national revenue (International Monetary Fund 2006). The strategy imagined that citizen participation would be enhanced and finally that opportunity was to be afforded to local governments to effectively mobilise and utilise revenue to enhance their performance.
This study maintains that the re-introduction of decentralised local government offered very little opportunity to effectively better the needs of rural communities. This is because after implementing the strategies, the strategic directions of local governments remained the same - largely administrative hubs for central government (Domfeh and Bawole 2009). Therefore, fundamental development of rural communities remains compromised. Instead of focusing on changing the fundamental modus operandi of local governments as is required to bring democracy and decision making closer to ordinary citizens the regime through the GPRS II strategy, rather engaged in what is in the opinion of this study an exercise of political gerrymandering by creating 28 new District Assemblies in the name of “bringing democracy closer to the citizens and deepening good governance” (Republic of Ghana 2005:58)

Evidence from the 2008 annual implementation review report suggests that, the social indicators of rural development appear to have been unimpressive. The strategy, like its predecessors, succeeded in achieving mostly macro-level indicators often touted by the political elite as true development. However social development indicators such as education, health, and local level decision making rather declined. For instance, an annual implementation report of GPRS II (2006-2009) notes:

Improvements in quality of education appear to lag behind increasing enrolment despite increased government efforts in 2008. Between 2004/05 and 2007/08 the proportion of trained teachers at the primary level has persistently declined from 72.4% to 59.4%. This has given rise to a skewed distribution of the available trained teachers to the disadvantage of deprived districts (Republic of Ghana 2009:xvii).

Further, investment in the health sector and human resources development did not translate into an improvement in the patient doctor ratios across the country and in particular within the predominantly deprived local government jurisdictions. For instance, with a Doctor-Patient ratio of 1:34,044 and Midwife-Patient ratio of 1:4,895, the Upper East Region amply demonstrates this mismatch of strategy vision and the practice in deprived locations (Ghana Health Service 2010). Indeed, it was further realised that, notwithstanding explicit efforts within the GPRS II to facilitate the revenue generation and utilisation by local governments, there was a reported 18.4 per cent decline on average of internal revenues generated in the districts (Republic of Ghana 2009), which further compromised the ability of local governments to properly deal with local community needs.
In sum the review of recent development strategies shows mostly negative outcomes. But what account for this negative impact? As noted earlier, failures of earlier development strategies such as the post independent strategy of Nkrumah could be located within broader systemic failures and overly ambitious plans which the prevailing economy could not support. This was compounded by external shocks and military adventurism. Within this medley of struggling national development strategies, what is the status of development strategies within the local government milieu? As we have noted earlier, as part of the requirement of the national development planning systems Act, 1994 (Act 480), local governments medium development plans must of necessity be harmonise with the national level development strategies and budget (Botchie 2000). Does this requirement to harmonise plans constrain local development planning, and when plans are eventually developed, are they contextualised to the real development priorities of their local constituencies? The following sections answer these questions.

6.2 Local Government Development Strategies

In chapter five, this study pointed out that local governments in Ghana are responsible for the overall development of their locales. This is contained in the new system of decentralised development planning which is strongly supported by legal provisions in the 1992 constitution; the local Government Act 1993 (Act 462); and the National Development Planning Commission Act (Systems) Act, 1994 (Act 480) (See: Botchie 2000:9).

Prior to the adoption of this new development planning approach in 1994, development planning was overly controlled by central government agencies and for that matter did not allow for rural development plans to effectively draw on the circumstances and requirements of rural communities or even to benefit from the rich in-situ information gained by engaging rural folks in the planning process. Has this changed with the adoption of the new development planning system, which as Botchie (2000) opines, recognises the need to take on board the views and aspirations of rural communities with regard to development plan formulation and implementation? This section discusses the development plans implemented by local governments since 2005.
6.2.1 Planning District Wide Development Strategies

This study first explored the awareness of district departmental heads of the existence of district wide development strategies and how their departmental plans are harmonised to form, as per the legal provision, a truly composite district wide development plan. This process represents the first step to meeting the mandatory participatory development planning process at the local level. This enquiry discovered revealing diversities in the opinions of local government department staff on the development strategies they have implemented overtime.

First, few knew of the social development plans which sister departments had to implement for the year. Further, each department was focused more on taking on board programming priorities of their mother ministry or department in the capital (Accra) rather than those of local government. This kind of diversity holds important implications for effective participatory planning and implementation of programs that would foster holistic development of the locale within local governments. By virtue of the composite planning process which forms a critical part of the decentralised planning process, these heads of the decentralised departments are required to participate by providing technical expertise and guidance, as well as indicate roles that their departments would play to the achievement of the district wide development process.

This process starts from the sub-committee level as the local government Act 1993(ACT 462) section 24(4) specifically directs that heads of departments of the district assembly shall attend the meetings of the sub-committees and shall advise them on the performance of their functions. In addition, they are responsible for the implementation of the plans that are developed thereof as per section 24 of the local government Act, 2003 (Act 656) (See: Government of Ghana 2003; Government of Ghana 1993).

The above suggests that the planning process is all but truly participatory. It also shines light on the extant planning and functional disconnect between decentralised departments and local governments. As a Ghana health service representative interviewed in this study aptly noted:

[...] first because of decentralization you have departmental heads here who carry out their functions in the district, however, it is important to know that there are the policy of the Ministry of Health and Ghana Health Service and there are the local government policies as well [sic](RB6, 2011.Emphasis mine)
Although these projects may eventually be captured in the annual reports of the local government concerned, it was originally evolved directly from the ministry of health and implemented by the district health administration within the district. Ahwoi (2010a), explains that this attitude clearly indicates that departments are actually de-concentrated and not devolved departments. This compares to other perspectives which suppose that in theory the arrangement emanating from the national development planning systems act, 1994 (Act 480) and built into the decentralised development planning system would involve a devolution of administrative, planning and political authority to local government and by default would empower local communities leading logically to real inclusivity and participation at the local level (Botchie 2000).

The deficiency of a collective understanding does not detract from the fact that studied districts actually developed noticeable district wide development strategies. The examples of development strategies implemented appeared widely varied. The programs or projects as the data indicate could conveniently be categorized broadly into two. Firstly, a majority are physical and infrastructural development projects that are implemented by the district assemblies, decentralised departments and development partners which are mostly NGOs working in the districts. Examples of mostly social infrastructure provision by local governments included schools; markets and roads.

Others include the establishment of health centres; community-Based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) compounds; refurbishment and equipping of district hospitals, the provision of staff accommodation; and provision of office blocks for the district health management teams. Community level examples included the drilling of boreholes; extension of national electricity grid to some communities which were previously left out; and the provision of environmental sanitation, including the sensitisation of the rural communities on environmental hygiene.

The second set of strategies were mostly centred on social development projects that included micro finance projects; skills training, and supply of gratis equipment; youth employment development projects that offer training and other skills development to the youth in these districts. Others were specifically targeted at school going young people. These included but not limited to broad national government programs such as the school feeding program; the capitation grant to schools and currently the free school uniforms for basic school pupils.
The study however observed that these programs were either directly pushed by central government often for political reasons or were aimed to fulfil specific thematic goals of national development strategies and therefore could not be attributed to the local governments who implemented them. Even then, it was evident that without the support of non-governmental organisations, and international development assistance such as the European Union (EU), some of these social development projects would probably not have been implemented.

Between 2006 and 2009, when Ghana implemented the GPRS II, the same phenomenon described above was observed to have occurred. This evidence suggests clearly that the local government medium term development plans are tailored according to the same thematic goals of the national development strategies priorities and not the local realities. This is noticeable particularly where the local governments studied pointed out that the 2006-2009 medium term development plans were a direct sequel of those of 2003-2006 which were directly based on the GPRS II. On this premise, local governments prioritized their development strategies along the lines of “private sector competitiveness; human resource development; and good governance and civic responsibility” (District Assembly C 2010; District Assembly A 2010; District Assembly B 2010). This leads some local governments to argue their case that resultant projects and programs were “assessed based on their relevance and consistency to the priorities and focus of GPRS II” (District Assembly C 2010:10)

Interestingly however, the local governments studied somehow had customized strategies which suits their local area albeit around the same broad thematic areas of National development strategies noted above. For instance, in areas of agriculture, one local government aimed to reduce post harvest losses while increasing productivity of all sectors within the agriculture sub-sector. On the human resource development thematic area the district developed two strands of strategies aimed to improve education. These were targeted at improving the standards of education, increasing transition and infrastructure development. The second strand were health strategies aimed to increase the access, quality, and coverage of services provided.

Another local government focused its strategies at providing training, capacity building, provision of dams and other agricultural enhancing facilities under its agriculture development and the private sector competitiveness thematic area. In this regard it categorizes its targets under human resources development relating to the health sector
under: immunization, HIV/AIDS control, and malaria control and water and sanitation strategies. A similar situation prevailed in the third district. It would appear that these social protection strategies implemented by the local governments which are meant to facilitate rural community development are strategies consistent with their implementation responsibilities spelt out in section 24 of the local government Act, 2003 (Act 656).

One common feature however runs across all districts. It was revealed, both from interview data and the review of medium term development plans, that all three local governments claim to have successfully implemented more that 75% of their planned activities. Notwithstanding this, the national implementation review reports suggests that majority of the targeted strategies were far from being achieved (See: Republic of Ghana 2009; International Monetory Fund 2006).

In one instance, the study noticed that targets set towards developing human resources particularly in the education sector had not been achieved. Lamenting this situation a District Development Planning Officer noted that, contrary to their set targets, education infrastructure increased minimally by three percentage points, while transition levels are observed to have stagnated. On the same education sector, another planning officer points out that:

[…] look at our budget [for this district]: we spend not less than 70% on the provision of educational infrastructure …but let me admit however that our contribution to infrastructure provision especially in education is yet to translate into good performance for the basic education certificate examination (BECE) results […] because for the last five years we have an average performance of 40% pass rate at the BECE level which is not good (RS2, 2011; emphasis mine)

In mostly rural districts, a couple of other reasons including socio-cultural barriers may have accounted for this situation. This notwithstanding, local governments admits that they are faced with too many needs than they could cope with. This, they indicated was because of the nature of the local areas they represent, and that this is further compounded by inadequate funding and other capacity challenges. In particular, local governments pointed to human resources gaps as the second most worrying constraint to achieving their planned strategies. Given that most strategies are problematic to achieve, or in the least translates into unsatisfactory results, which shines the spotlight on an apparent disconnect between government pushed strategies and local realities, one wonders what remain the main

9 This is explored in details in Chapter Eight
influence behind local governments’ continued adoption of this line of development strategies over time?

6.3 Drivers of Local Government Development Strategies

Field data confirms purposeful attempts by local governments to adhere to the district development planning and implementation process by the local government agencies. Section 46 of the local government Act 1993 (ACT 462) ascribes planning authority to the local governments which is exercised with oversight from the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) and the Regional Coordinating Councils (RCC). By this arrangement district development plans must conform to the format prescribed by the NDPC in accordance to Act 479 of 1994. With this arrangement, local government plans are supposed to emanate from community structures and become harmonised with national development priorities. Evidence from the field interviews however suggest that, on the contrary, this arrangement has become the bane to local governments’ ability to respond to the needs of local communities.

This is because the arrangement appears to be the avenue for central government manipulations of the planning process for reasons including political interests. An analysis of field results reveals some protruding challenges within this framework. First, local governments appear greatly pressured to adhere to these directives with little or no room for flexibility. The result is that local government struggle to function, plan or respond to obvious and real local development challenges or priorities.

Although by law the NDPC is only to provide guidelines, its imposing and overpowering stature within the national development planning structure means that these guidelines effectively become directives to which local governments must adhere to, and in which case deviations are not welcome. Perhaps what compounds the problem is the capacity challenges faced by local governments, making them effectively unable to manoeuvre and engineer innovative ways of customising their plans to suit local demands. Therefore, it was not surprising to observe that, all the local government’s medium-term plans since the inception of the Ghana-Vision 2020 document mostly mimic these national guidelines with limited regards to the contextual realities of each district.
Currently, the field data does not suggest a potential among local governments to act differently even if this present arrangement were relaxed. A further analysis show clearly that each district [even those within the same geographic region] exhibit radically different development needs, constraints and thus would have required varying development programs to deal with same. It was obvious that the participatory process of development planning certainly results in greatly different preference on account of the nature of, and conditions of the locales involved.

One could safely infer that on their own, local governments may have followed the desires of their constituencies and evolved radically different development plans than they presently do. However, in practice, local governments have often not been able to develop plans that are truly relevant and driven by their contextual realities because of the above noted pressures. According to a senior District Planning Officer:

[…] this is the gap! Just as that which is fit for community “A” would not be fit for community “B”, so is it with local governments. But in most cases they [local governments] make the mistake and try to fit development programs wholesale when they should be tailored to their specific needs (RL7, 2011 community names changed)

This is a clear indication of how local governments have often struggled to erratically ‘fit’ their plans into the national framework rather than feeding them in as the participatory bottom up approach requires. For instance, it was realised that some local governments preferred to invest in human capacity development by way of awarding scholarships to locals who in turn are required to return to work in the district, because it finds it difficult to attract and retain qualified staff, hence the need to train its own (See: Fox et al. 2011). However within the current need to ‘fit’ plans into the national framework, it has been difficult to achieve this preference.

Although the NDPC and related central government agencies often point to ‘capacity challenges’ at the local level to explain their actions, this thesis argues that relaxing the strict regime of ‘guidelines’ in place for a system of robust monitoring and quality assurance may allow local governments to be more responsive and put on their caps of innovative planning. This, in the view of this study, would imply that local governments would plan for what they can do, which are in line with community needs, and not be forced to take on ‘too many’ programs.
In addition to the above, another practical driver observed during this study appears to be central to the administrative structure of local governments themselves. Within the local government structure the President, in accordance with article 243 of the 1992 Republican Constitution, appoints a chief executive for each local government. By virtue of his/her political position, the chief executive is not directly accountable to the locals, yet, (s)he is constitutionally the highest political and administrative decision maker within the district aside the general assembly. The chief executive is a key liaison between the local government and central government; (s)he is the chairperson of the executive committee of the district assembly which has oversight responsibility for collating the development proposals which are then put before the general assembly for approval.

The field evidence show that, because of their power and position, chief executives are able to, and often filter the needs of the local government to make them ‘in-tune’ with the ruling national regime’s plans and aspirations; and also in ways that would best guarantee political expediency. Further, the chief executive has his/her political position to protect as (s)he serves as the head of the ruling party at the local level. For this reason, the study observed that, there is a strong tendency for him/her to pay more attention to party programs, which when implemented has the potential to deliver electoral fortunes rather than serving the interest of the local government (see: Fox et al. 2011).

As the field data confirms, this kind of politics directly drives as well as challenge effective planning of local development. One District Assembly person lamented that this leads to a situation where some communities are left out. He noted this is the case

[…] particularly when a community is perceived to be on the opposing side or is sympathetic to the opposition political party, it is not considered in the planning process, […] even though the Assembly is considered to be non-partisan, elements of partisanship crop in [and] that distorts the whole thing (RL12, 2011)

In this way local government strategies are significantly influenced and eventually developed around the thematic areas extant in the national government policy at the time, which may greatly have divergent priorities to local needs. As one district assembly member lamented:

These are basically strategies that are generated by the central government [and] its agencies such as the National Development Planning Commission […] it is only the implementation, and monitoring of these projects that are manned by the District Assembly, communities, and other decentralised departments (RL12, 2011).
Indeed it became apparent upon further interrogations, that between 2003 and 2005, the development strategies of local governments were developed around, and in many cases very similar to the thematic areas of the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I). The data also shows how local governments struggled to ‘tailor their plans to thematic areas’ of the GPRS; in particular reference to theme three of the GPRS II which sought to enhance private sector competitiveness as the engine for growth and development. This struggle was because most local government jurisdictions are without any vibrant private sectors.

Although a majority, that is close to 80 per cent of the population in some districts are engaged in agriculture production and agricultural related activities (District Assembly C 2010; District Assembly B 2010), these are mostly in rudimentary or traditional forms merely for subsistence. Rural dwellers hardly engage in these activities for economic purposes.

The drivers of the current nature of local government development planning systems do not appear to support a truly participatory process which would guarantee that development strategies reflect the needs and aspirations of local government jurisdictions. It is evident that local government planning has effectively been confiscated or is directly under the wimps and caprices of central government. The research suggests that local governments lack jurisdiction regarding planning even within their own locales, especially in the provision of social services, and as Fox et al. (2011:22) writes, this form of a highly centralised local government arrangement emanates directly from the 1992 Republican Constitution. Given this state of affair, it may be difficult to simply assume away the fact that local development plans are indeed contextualised directly to the local needs and therefore are acceptable by local communities. The next two sections assess if development strategies are contextualised to community needs.

6.4 Contextualising Development Strategies to Community Needs

This segment draws on section 46 of the local government Act 1993 (ACT 462) and the planning authority conferred on local governments in Ghana. The advantages of the participatory bottom up planning process which emphasises the significant roles played by local community members and notable community stakeholders has been thoroughly underscored (Botchie 2000; Ahwoi 2010a; Bandie 2007). A system of truly participatory local government development planning process is perceived to represent a unique
opportunity for local communities to contribute to, and truly own their development. In the least, such a process is linked to sustainable development (Dalal-Clayton et al. 2000).

The literature suggests that contextualising development to local realities finds expression in various forms of participation theory and is therefore a viable alternative to the erstwhile principally top-down approaches (Dalal-Clayton et al. 2000:24). This was a high point considered by designers of the Ghana local government system when it was emphasised that the planning process should in all circumstances seek to provide local communities pride of place to participate in the design and implementation of programs that matter to them. Hence participation became a principal route to empower local communities, as well as ensure that development is contextualised to the local realities.

Promoters of this form of planning such as the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID), argues that by this process, plans are specifically adopted and relevant to local people’s conditions and by extension, increase community ownership of local development (ODI 2003:1). However, this appears achievable only in theory as the practical observations are incongruous to the theory. Field engagements with technical staff revealed an overwhelming acceptance that the development of local communities is intrinsically linked to an effective uptake of their (local communities’) desires into the local government development planning processes. Realistically therefore, as the data has shown under section 6.3 above that local governments struggle for independence within their planning jurisdiction, how then could they ensure that participation truly results in benefits to local communities? The section would first examine rural communities’ expectations from their local governments, before briefly discussing how the development planning process inculcates these expectations.

6.4.1 Local Community Development Expectations

This study has revealed that local communities do have great expectations of their local governments. These bother on the need for local government to facilitate local development, and enhance community livelihoods. The greater awareness and pressure from local communities for local governments to deliver services that would enhance their livelihoods lies in part on increased advocacy by NGOs and other promoters of the participatory bottom-up community-based planning processes (Bond and Hulme 1999).
For instance, the literature suggest a huge support for and promotion of such an approach since the early 1980s, a time frame consistent with the adoption of decentralised development planning as an approach in Ghana (Gariba 2009). Increasingly therefore local communities have come to acknowledge their role as rights holders and local governments as the duty bearers or providers of local development as field data aptly captures:

 [...] it means so much, from normal conversation with people in the district, the local people look at the district assembly as an entity that is capable of addressing their development challenges [...] they [local people] know that by law, the district assembly is solely responsible for all their development challenges to the extent that when they notice that their developmental needs are not addressed, they do not look up to the Member of Parliament or even the district assembly member, they consider that the assembly is the one that is not coming to address their issues. The local people know the relevance of the district assembly [...] but from my own point of view they are institutions that are supposed to be galvanising efforts within the local people so that they can achieve development (RL11, 2011)

The District Assembly is perceived both as the vessel and executor of all development within its constituency from whom all local communities insist on drawing their social and economic uplifting. In addition to this, a District Finance Officer (DFO) notes that:

At the community level, their (community member’) expectation is that they are involved in the processes of project selection, that their voices should be heard in the process (RL9, 2011)

Aside the above, the study also noted that local communities expect not only to be involved, but that eventual projects implemented should reflect and target their local needs. Owing to the participatory planning processes used to decide local development, communities are fully aware of the projects they selected. However, in reality the contrary exist to which several reasons are adduced in an attempt to account for the divergence. For instance, a Local Development Planning Officer (DPO) insists that local government is unable to meet community expectations because contrary to the fact that:

They (communities) expect that programs and projects implemented by government should actually target their needs, because they take part in deciding what the programs are... But the reality is that their expectations are not being met because programs and projects are being decided politically. That is according to what the politician feel should be done (RL10, 2011; emphasis mine)

Field interactions indicates a willingness among local planners to generate plans that are reflective of the local realities, and are capable of effectively dealing with expressed community priority needs. However, within the current context of the Ghanaian local government system, planners are mostly caught up in a vicious circle of political
interference, and insufficient resources to carry out the desired development planning process.

They often have to wait in hope that central government would dish out the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF), which timely release the local governments cannot completely count on. Even when the Common Fund is released local governments are often deprived of the freedom to disburse such funds in ways consistent with community needs and desires because central governments often ‘commandeer’ the funds for purposes other than priorities of the locale.

We noted further that, essentially, community expectations are centred on what has become commonly known as social amenities. Within the local context, these mean different things at different times. However the most notable of these are:

1. **Public social amenities and needs**: including school buildings, hospitals, community centres, health centres and roads. Others mentioned are dams, good drinking water markets, community centres and rural electrification

2. **Human development**: these are sector based and include job creation; and provision of agricultural facilities (improved technologies, seeds, fertilisation, ploughing, seeds, and extension) and improvements.

   [...] you know, basically, almost 80% of the people in this district are farmers so they like assistance to develop their farms [...] farmers are poor people, so first they expect us to help them to get enough food to eat, and after that to be able to get something to sell and get some money to take care of themselves (RB3, 2011).

The data also suggests that, local communities further expect an extensive opening up of the district through the provision of feeder roads. This, they explained would enhance their livelihoods by facilitating easy carting of mostly perishable agriculture produce to nearby markets. On the part of education and human development, the community expectations centred on overall human capital development (all processes leading to an increase in knowledge and information); provision of education infrastructure, including adequate teachers, housing for teachers and health workers.

It was explained that in the long run, these would lead to improved welfare and a healthy society. However a further analysis shows that community expectations of the local government are mostly very varied and mostly raw, nebulous, and unorganised. This probably epitomises the existence of a weak community empowerment process which speak to the overall quality of the decentralised local development planning process. A
DFID research earlier on highlighted significant problems present in micro level planning and described it as “a shopping list” of projects villages expected from the local governments (ODI 2003:2). Again, this ‘shopping list’ phenomenon appears to give credence to arguments about capacities of local government technical staff. This is because, the ‘list of expectations’ were not developed by communities acting on their own, but emerged mostly from discussions with mostly technical and senior local government staff. These shopping lists again do not make reference to existing medium term development plans, which these same technical staff led communities to develop.

It could be inferred therefore that there are still legitimate doubts as to whether decentralised departments are truly loyal to the core methodology for developing community development priorities in ways that would not only empower local people but would lead to a more comprehensive and less ad-hoc list of expectations. This re-emphasises early arguments that decentralised departments are indeed parallel de-concentrated departments who own their primary loyalty to their mother ministries in Accra. This has often been noted by discussants of Ghana’s local government system. For instance, Gariba, (2009:9) writes that:

[…] sector departments “co-exist” with the District Assembly, they share information about planning, but priorities for sector plans are still defined by sector ministries, departments, and agencies. At the level of the District Assembly, the sector departments bring their plans to be aggregated into the medium term development plans, but […] resource allocation is contingent on the mother departments in Accra […]

Another implication to the ‘shopping list’ phenomenon in the Ghanaian system as the data demonstrated is a superficial participatory process which does not bring about true community ownership or even result in capturing a true picture of their real needs. Upon further interrogations, this research accepts the above conclusions of Gariba (2009) and adds that, although remotely, this may have been accounted for by the existence of instances of ‘planning overload’ (Dery and Dorway 2007).

The research identified that this planning overload occurs because a single Development Planning Officer, is often expected to cover very large and difficult geographical areas, which often has non-functional unit committees and area councils10. This further highlights extant capacity challenges at the local level (for details see chapter eight). These findings strongly confirm identified conceptual and practical challenges within the Ghana local government systems (Dery and Dorway 2007; Gariba 2009; Ahwoi 2010b).

10 according to the acceptable development planning process envisaged by the national development planning commission Act 480, demand-driven, bottom up plans emanate from the area council level and are harmonised by the district development office
Within the context of disarray in perspectives regarding the development expectations of local communities, one wonders how district development plans reflect real community needs. The next section presents field results on this.

**6.4.2 Do District Medium Term Development Plans Reflect Community Expectations?**

Over the last three decades, development practitioners searching for a truly community-based planning process have suggested many approaches. These proposals albeit coming from different agencies ultimately emphasize a strong bottom-up, people-centred and empowering planning process (ODI 2003). In the least, such a process is expected to make use of participatory meetings with local level structures such as the unit committees and area councils. Some research has identified a strong commitment from the local governments in Ghana for the use of community based planning process and therefore highlight the process whereby local government frontline staff would serve as facilitators that engage the local structures in ways that bring out local needs (Awoosah et al. 2004).

This study found that at every stage of the local development planning process, the unit committee and area councils are the structures most in touch with the local communities. Therefore they are strategic in contributing to as well as vetting the final plans before they are submitted to the RCCs which in turn forward them for the approval of the NDPC. For instance, each unit committee within a given local government are first to submit area specific plans to local government plans. Again, they subject draft plans to a public debate before plans are finalised (See: Awoosah et al. 2004:36).

In this way, local government do not only capture rural community expectations, but allow communities to eventually own the development process. Following the process above, some researchers tend to suggest that citizen governance, reflective of local direct influence and participation in decision making has reached down to erstwhile marginalised groups and the youth (Pratchett et al. 2009). The evidence from field observations of the context of local governments in Ghana reveal an impracticality for all local community members to participate in decision making process, and therefore that the existence of strong local level structures is critical for a truly representative local decision making process to occur.
In which case, the unit committees, area councils, and community gatekeepers such as the traditional chieftaincy institution become prominent stakeholders. The field studies suggest that local governments in the least, attempt to bring these structures on board their medium term development plan development process. It was noticed however that this process is only taken seriously depending on the extent of external (donor) influence. The data suggested that where donor influence, in the form of financial, material and monitoring and evaluation oversight was lacking, local governments followed the process sparingly and to their convenience. Field evidence however suggests that the above is the case because central government often stifled local government funding, and given that facilitating a participatory process is hugely expensive, local governments prefer to apply their limited funds to other ‘important uses’.

The study also discovered that local governments actually attached little importance to public hearings, but when there was an external injection of funds, technical and material resources local governments appear to demonstrate capacity and commitment to use community based planning in developing long term plans emanating from the unit committees and area councils. Below is a summary of statements that epitomise what prevails within local governments. A district town and country planner:

[…] a good decentralised system would not only want information to flow from the top [central government through local government] to the bottom [local communities], but would also want to hear from the bottom on what they need before carrying the development. To do this, assembly persons liaise with the community to find out their needs […] through the top-down, bottom-up communication. Through that, they [local governments] are able to listen to the communities and take into consideration their opinion” (RS5, 2011; emphasis mine)

A budget officer adds:

[…] What happens is that, after a plan is prepared, we disseminate the plan, the dissemination enables us […] to source funding to implement the projects, […] when we are going to implement the projects we often ask rural communities to apply to us with their needs, we look at these needs and match them with the various standards, select the project and send the selected project to the assembly for approval (RS2, 2011; emphasis mine)

On his part, a prospective District Assembly Presiding Member (PM) of one district notes:

At the district level, we have what is called the district medium to long term development plan, the district administrators; that is the district planning officer, coordinating director, and district finance officer, engage the people at the local level, unit committee level or zonal level, so that every community would at least set up their development plan which would be fed into the district development plan which would be sent to the regional level and then the national level […] (RB5, 2011; emphasis mine).
In sum, contrary to views that Ghana’s current local community development planning process is a shining workable example; this research suggests a not so glistering picture. Local governments are not wholly faithful to the practical process that ensure that development process truly reflect the needs of local communities. Even though this research does not discount individual attempts by some local governments to realise a truly local and participatory community development. However, to the extent that local government officials have demonstrated a humdrum appreciation to the laid down participatory local development process, one could only conclude that they sing the song that is trumpeted both by the central government and donor agencies (national, international and multinational or bilateral agencies) because it is expected of them.

This would be buttressed by arguments in chapter seven that local governments only technically appear to project community participation in planning process while the practice is sometimes radically different. The apparent lukewarm attitudes challenge the credibility of local governments as viable architects and promoters of the development of their locale. An indictment to their constitutional and legal mandate as custodians of the overall development of the locale (Republic of Ghana 1992; Government of Ghana 1993). The next section discusses local community members’ perspectives of the usefulness of their local government to local community development.

6.5 Are Local Governments Viable Development Actors?

It is obvious that, try as local government have, the rhetoric is mostly more glistening than observed reality. As have been shown in chapter four, both local and national politicians often undercut genuine efforts by some local governments to transform local communities in ways that the local people desire. In Ghana, as the data has shown, this situation heighten when there is limited political consensus between the District Chief Executive (DCE) and the Member of Parliament (PM) on one hand; and between the DCE and elected members of the District Assembly on the other. The data shows that this is often the case when they belong to different political parties. This lack of consensus appears to work against local community development. What is unclear within this state of affair is how local communities perceive the development functions of the local governments. The study has shown above that local communities hold great expectations of their local government and yet, either deliberately or due to many uncomfortable constraints on the local government, these are not met. The remaining section discusses community perspectives of the developmental roles of local governments.
It is a generally held perspective among local government officials, as was shown above; that the local government system have, and continue to demonstrate good faith in engaging with local communities in what could best be described as a functional participatory process, which they perceived to be an effective route to ensuring sustainable community development. Despite that this kind of participation accorded local communities is merely a form of placation participation; local communities still appear to believe that local governments are helpful to community development. This is demonstrated in Table 10 below. The table shows that at least 83.8 per cent of respondents affirmed the development benefits of local governments to their communities. Broken down into a district by district comparison, the support remains unaltered. Only one and three persons respectively of districts A and B did not know for certain whether the local government was beneficial or not. Four persons in all districts said the district assembly was not beneficial to their development while the majority, 33, 24, and 26 persons respectively from A, B and C affirmed that the district was beneficial. Further to the above, local government administrators also confirmed that from their daily interaction with local communities, they realised that the local government means a lot to the ordinary Citizens. For instance, a DPO noted:

> It is beneficial! In the first place, the participation of the people in the process enhances their capacity at the local level, secondly, because they take part in the process of planning, and because they oversee the implementation and monitoring projects, they are able to correct errors [...] this ensures that the projects are implemented to the expectations of the people and therefore development is not removed so far from people, it becomes part of the people (RS2, 2011; emphasis added)

Other opinions are that, district assemblies have been critical in the provision of poverty alleviation funds; in creating awareness for new government policy and that the needs of local people are directly addressed because local governments actively, through community based structures seek out their development needs and design projects to suit them. Further observations are that decentralising local government has in the process served as a ‘wake-up call’ to local communities to get involved in the way and manner their welfare is catered for by the government through the local government:

> I quiet remember that before the coming into being of this new local government system, when we talked about doing something, everybody taught it was the responsibility of government, but now it is not like that, the communal spirit is coming up and people are gradually involved in the way and manner they are managed (RB1, 2011)
Ironically, as has been noted earlier, local governments have paid lip service to community participation and influence in local decision making. A triangulation of opinions from local communities and local government officials appears to show great inconsistencies on the benefit of local government to community development. It appears that for local communities, this is a case of the proverbial ‘bird in the hand, is worth two in the bush’.

As the observations from communities shown in the tables below would indicate, that local governments still enjoy a great deal of support from communities as local development actors.

**Table 10: Is the local assembly beneficial to community development?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District beneficial?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>83.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>96.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don't know</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field survey, 2011 (N=99)*

**Table 11: Cross-tabulation: Local district beneficial by District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District beneficial to community development?</th>
<th>District</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field survey, 2011 (N=99)*

In addition to the above, **Figure 4** below shows the different ways in which local communities believe local governments are important to their development. In the least, more than 50 per cent of respondents from across all districts consider their local government as important in initiating community development (63.6%); providing community needs and amenities (78.8%) ; helps them to identify and plan development (54.5%); and lead the development initiatives (55.5%).
However, asked if their local governments provided the needed funds for selected community development initiatives the observations for those showing support or not was almost evenly split with 46.5 per cent in agreement while another 44.4 disagreed. This observation is an early indication of the magnitude of financial incapacity of local governments to fund most identified development needs identified in chapter eight. It further confirms earlier observations in section 6.3.2 of this chapter, that local government development activities are only furthered with the injection of external funding mostly from Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and in recent times multi-donor facility.

A particularly interesting observation is that the views of those (over 70%) local community respondents who said the District Assemblies provide their needs and amenities coincided with findings from in-depth interviews and the review of local government medium term development plans, in which the study noticed reports that more than 75% of District Assemblies’ budgets are spent on the provision of local amenities.

**Figure 4: How is Local Assembly beneficial to development**

![Figure 4: How is Local Assembly beneficial to development](image)

**Source:** Field Survey 2011 (N=99)

In spite the above noted enthusiasm about the importance of local government as community development actor, to which extend is the local government considered a key player among other agents in ensuring local community development? Contrary to the above when compared to other local development agencies, enthusiasm about the importance of local government appeared to dwindle.

142
For instance only 42/99 (42.42%) of respondents said they compared averagely as a social development agent and an even lesser number of respondents 36/99 (36.36%) said to a large extent. This compares to 15/99(15.15%) who said it was to a limited extent an important social development agent. In spite all the challenges that local governments face in Ghana, local communities’ faith in them is indicative that given that they function effectively in concert with local communities, their mandate to ensure overall development is achievable albeit slowly.

**Figure 5: Extent to which district is an effective development partner**

![Figure 5: Extent to which district is an effective development partner](source: Field Survey, 2011(N=99))

**Table 12: Extent to which district is an effective development partner**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is district important?</th>
<th>Dist C</th>
<th>Dist B</th>
<th>Dist A</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to a great extend</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To an average</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a limited extend</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not sure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2011(N=99)

Notwithstanding good faith of local communities in the works of local governments, when compared to other development agents, in particular local and international NGOs, the comparative inability of local governments as community development agents becomes obvious. Again, more than half of the respondents considered the local government either less effective or not effective; that is 44.44% said it was less effective while 9.09% thought it was not effective. This compares to less than half of the respondents or 42.42% who thought it effective. Though the difference in opinions may not be statistically significant,
it certainly gives an indication that local governments are probably only considered as a choice-less choice when local community development is considered.

**Figure 6: Effectiveness of Local Government compared to other agencies**

![Effectiveness Bar Chart]

Source: Field survey, 2011 (N=99)

In Sum, the data has shown that local communities hold a lot of development expectations for their local governments. Although local governments are desirous of delivering the expected development, they face huge structural and politically constraints to meeting such expectations. It was not surprising when further investigations revealed huge dissatisfaction, from at least 85% of respondents (local community members) with the services provided by their local assemblies.

**6.6 Chapter Summary**

The aim of this chapter was to identify and discuss the local development strategies implemented by the selected local governments. The chapter addressed the second research question of the study. This discussion was based on three interrelated sub-questions: were these implemented community development strategies initiated at the local level and in partnerships with local communities? Or were they centrally influenced? Has decentralised local development been effectively contextualised to the needs of local communities? And what are perceptions of local communities of the usefulness of the implemented local government community development initiatives? The chapter briefly traced Ghana’s experience with implementation of development strategies and highlighted their potential effects on local level development strategies.
This is within the context that the implementation of well targeted development strategies holds ultimate benefits to local communities and leads in general to exceptional socio-political and economic transformation. However, to be successful, there is the need for clear national and local government development strategy. It is only through well targeted local development strategy development and implementation that community priorities become central to the development frameworks and hence engender social and economic advancement.

The chapter observed that overall, most earlier national development plans effectively de-emphasised home grown community development strategies at the recommendations of the World Bank and IMF in place of macro-economic stability (Baah 2003 :5) and are therefore unrealistic to rural communities (Stiglitz 2002). The reason for preceding the discussions of local government development strategies is situated within a discussion of the national level development strategies on the inalienable links between these strategies. As is established by the national development planning act 1994 (Act 480), these two feed into each other. Local level plans provide the basis for national development strategies which in turn serve as a guide to future local development plans.

Within this network of mutual dependency, the study notes that local contextual differences cannot be discounted and therefore, national plans can only be adopted to local situations and should not replace locally evolved plans (Botchie 2000). The findings suggest that local governments should purposefully attempt to adhere to this legal requirement which would ensure that their development strategies follow the framework as proposed by the NDPC. This finding is momentous as it contrasts sharply with further observations that local government staff has either misconstrued this requirement or for political reasons, are ‘arm twisted’ into reproducing national development strategy thematic areas as their desired development strategy for a given planning period. In addition, great diversities were discovered among heads of decentralised departments regarding the existence of district wide development strategies and how their department plans are harmonised to form a truly composite district wide development planning process.

This has implications for the development of a truly relevant local development strategy. The diversity among the heads of departments may reflect the quality of district wide development strategies. It is not surprising therefore that there still exist a disconnect between department programs and those implemented by district assemblies. Ironically,
these departments are supposed to be the technical and implementation wings of the assembly. An additional force against relevant local level planning process is the existence of an all powerful DCE who seeks to, and most case succeed in ‘filtering or fine-tuning’ district development priorities in line with the ruling national regime’s plans and aspirations. By implication, the local government planning process has generally effectively been confiscated by central government or its agencies.

The above notwithstanding, local governments at least make concerted efforts to capture rural community expectations? First, local councils approximate the process of consultations according to the district planning process. Even though this process often lacks the needed depth, there is an indication of some faith in the participatory process. Interestingly however, this only occurs where there is significant external support and monitoring from local and international non-governmental organisations. In spite of these enormous challenges and confusion at the local government level, there is consensus that local governments are beneficial as agents of local development. Local governments still enjoy a great deal of support as local development actors within communities. The next chapter explores in detail the nature of local community participation in local governance and therefore community development.
CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS ON CITIZEN’S PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

7.0 Introduction

The role of citizen participation in local governance and community development has long been identified as a central theme in the democratic development discourse (Michels 2012:287; Cuthill and Fien 2005). Within this discourse, the notion of the citizen has gained centre place in policies of many local government bodies across the world. In discussing issues of participation, this study uses the concepts of citizen and community interchangeably. In recent times, opinions seem to converge on the centrality of citizen engagement or involvement in the community development initiative formulation and implementation.

The chapter report findings on community participation and influence in local government decision making process. It addresses the third research question of the thesis: How has decentralised local governments engaged the participation of local communities in development process? Documentary analysis and interviews (individual in-depth and semi structured) were used to gain empirical data for this chapter. The document analysis covered among others, academic and practitioner literature; National and local level legislative instruments; District Assembly meeting reports; district wide development plans; and annual review reports while the interviews involved individuals at the local government administration and its partner organisations and sampled adult individual community members.

The rest of the chapter is structured as follows: First, it locates participation within the broader national governance structure of Ghana. It highlights areas of potential direct community activism and the challenges to achieving this. Next, it assesses the nature of community engagement; drawing on the interactions between community members and their District Assembly representatives. The chapter also captures perceptions on the requirements for effective local participation and explores the mechanisms availed local communities to participate. Finally, it addresses how local administration has carried out its obligations to continually enhance local capacities for effective participation.
7.1 National Governance and Administrative Structure

As alluded to in chapter four, the local governance structure in Ghana is directly derived from the nature of the national government and administrative system. Ghana is a unitary republic with a “quasi-executive presidential system of government” (Ayee 2008). However, under the current 1992 Republican Constitution, there exist the separation of powers within the national governance machinery that is between the executive or presidency, parliament and the judiciary.

All of the above mentioned structures represent arenas of people’s participation with a prospect of influencing national development outcomes. The National Constitution seems to suggest that per this governance arrangement, ultimate accountability of each of these structures is to the people of Ghana. For instance, the president acting through state ministries, agencies and departments, including the local government machinery, responds to the needs of local people. The presidency again directly responds to citizens by answering to their representatives in parliament. Further, the Constitution in its Directive Principles of the State Policy mandates, in section 34(2) that, the President shall report to Parliament at least once a year and that steps should be taken to ensure the realization, in particular of basic human rights, a healthy economy, the right to work and the right to good health care as well as the right to education (Republic of Ghana 1992).

Parliament, by definition is the arena of government with members elected my local communities to represent them. In democratic terms, parliamentarians are the gate keepers of the voice of their constituents as representatives. In this regard, section 37(2) of the National Constitution directs the state to ensure citizens enjoy “[…] the rights of effective participation in development processes […]”(Republic of Ghana 1992:38). Members of Parliament are expected to, in the least carry out four interrelated duties, “legislation, executive oversight, constituency representation and constituency service”(Lindbergh 2010:118). In order to effectively carry out this responsibility, parliamentarians are required to be in constant touch with constituents to learn at first hand their needs, challenges and desires. However, in spite of this provision, accountability deficits exist both within supposed democratic and representative national structures which does not make them helpful arenas for effective and direct participatory influence of local communities. For instance, the study gathers that so much power is reserved in the presidency.
This situation allows elite capture at the presidency and in essence, limits meaningful participation of ordinary Ghanaians in the political process (See e.g : Government of Ghana 2007; Abdulai 2009; Fox et al. 2011).

Further, the presidency is noted to wield enormous control over the national economic resources which it can and indeed deploys in search of political support (Fox et al. 2011). In addition to the above, the executive also holds great powers and control over national or state institutions including local government institutions. For instance, the executive holds powers to appoint officers to other administrative and governance branches of judiciary, ministries, agencies and departments. Constitutionally, majority of the cabinet ministers are appointed from parliament (Abdulai 2009). This has notable consequences on effective democracy and participation. In the least, it compromises the oversight responsibility of Members of Parliament as they endeavour to be as loyal as possible to the executive in anticipation of increasing their fortunes for ministerial appointments. Historically therefore, parliaments rarely disagree with the policies of the presidency, even when they are unacceptable to the needs of their constituents.

The study notes that a Constitutional review process at the behest of the late President Atta Mills’ government has thus received instructive proposals that seek to transfer more powers to the people while curtailing the potential for the president to use his power of ministerial, departmental and agency appointments to subdue parliamentarians and other structures of government (Star-Ghana 2011). There is yet another challenge against Members of Parliament’s ability to truly be responsive to local communities. Field interactions with communities at the local level confirm findings of earlier studies (See e.g : Lindbergh 2010; Abdulai 2009) that communities look up to the MPs more for their individual personal interests and tend to pressure them (MPs) to deliver on their campaign promises to provide community amenities rather than putting pressure on them to hold government accountable and to develop long term development policies which encapsulate the long term community development desires of their constituents.

This stands in direct contravention of the above noted overwhelming power of the presidency which limits individual MPs’ influence on policy options. Further to this, field evidence from MPs local offices support Star-Ghana’s (2011) view that, [perhaps], it is a risky business on the part of sitting MPs, particularly those that belong to the ruling regime who desired [through community influence] either to introduce legislation or vote against
government legislation as extreme consequences including eminent expulsion from the party may apply.

Even though nominal direct community participation in the form of information giving should have occurred at the top echelons of governance and administrative structures, the existence of penurious institutions and physical barriers effectively eliminate any form of direct citizen participation. Where in lies the space of governance in which effective participation of the ordinary citizen can be an integral fulcrum?

Local Government authorities are touted as being closest to local communities and serve as the conduits for their development (See: Republic of Ghana 1992; Kumi-Kyereme 2008). These also represent the most viable option for community participation. In chapter four, these local governance and administrative structures and how they represent arenas of participation was extensively discussed. The following sections would expand on how these local government structures afford direct community participation in local government.

7.2 Community Engagement with Local Government Structures

This section presents a combination of the views of local government officials, and community members regarding the decision making process employed by local governments. This analysis is based on the extant governance and administrative structures at the district, sub-district and community level as presented in Chapter four. It looks at local community involvement in the processes of community development initiation, formulation and implementation.

The literature discussed in chapter two and three firmly established that local government agents who actively seek to gain and utilise citizen’s views in the planning and implementation of local services delivery effectively promote community participation which is the bedrock of sustainable community development. Participation which starts from initial decision making processes is seen to directly contribute to sustainable community service improvement and indeed results in best value for money (Pratchett et al. 2009; Lowndes et al. 2001b; Lowndes et al. 2001a).
7.2.1 Community Development Decision Making Processes

Citizens’ crucial role in active local governance has already been underscored. However, *in what ways could citizen involvement be measured in the local government context?* The study asked citizens and local government officers about their opinions on processes through which local community development decisions are usually reached within the district. They suggested that, they apply the laid down processes of reaching community development decisions. As is to be expected, these officers alluded to the use of the bottom-up planning processes stipulated in the national development planning Act 1994, (Act 480).

Applying Act 480 implies that, local government agencies (district assembly) play the role of a facilitator at the decision making process. This is because, per this planning Act (480), the District Assembly officials are in the least expected to listen to the views and developmental needs of local communities in coming up with their district wide development plans. The basic unit of the district level in community development planning process as noted earlier starts from an identification of community problems with the help of over 16,000 unit committees located within local councils across the country. They are nearest to the people by virtue of their location within the local community.

The understanding of this study is that, with the presence of these unit committees and other community based structures, community level action plans would be produced, which would then pass through a rigorous debate and harmonisation process along three or four tiers of the local governance structure (town/area/urban/zonal councils), through to the District Assembly, at which stage these plans are put to further extensive debate and deliberation to become the District Medium Term Development Plans (Bandie 2007). A senior District Administrator succinctly described this process saying:

> the District Assemblies are always guided by the plans they receive from the area councils, and these plans are set up by the communities within the catchment areas […] so the information [for the plans] is from the areas councils to the district assembly […] and anytime they [district assembly] are going to set a plan, it involves all the communities within the area council’s catchment area (RS3, 2011; emphasis mine)

Applying the process as described above would by default guarantee local community participation at each stage of the process decision making process. As it has been suggested in the literature and in chapter four, the Assembly person is a crucial representative of the interest of the people in this planning process, while the various
decentralised departmental agencies serve as the primary centres of engagement with the local communities. Reference to local development decision making it was discovered that the district development planning unit of the local government, through its interactive planning processes is perceived to facilitate an effective community engagement process when it comes to local development.

when we come to the community action/development process, we train the community capacity building teams [...] so we train them in the participatory community process, they go to the community, and facilitate the process in the community, and the communities identify their needs and come out with their action plans which are harmonised at the area council. The harmonisation process [...] involves representatives from all the communities, we look at all the actions plans and all of them are prioritized, to get the area level plans [...] and the decisions are taken by the people from the communities [...] the district officers go to facilitate the process, and guide them based on the planning standards, the norms and ethics of the planning process [...] from the area level we come to the district level where we invite area level representatives to participate (RS2, 2011; emphasis, author’s)

There was a consensus among respondents that, local communities through their community representatives lead the decision making process, while the local government provide the technical, material, logistical and supervisory support needed to complete a successful planning process. As a facilitator of the participatory process, the District Assembly, and its agencies are said to enlighten communities of their roles and responsibilities and engage with local communities through their local representatives (unit committee members, chiefs, and elders) in applying all community participatory tools which allows communities to take their own decisions.

It was found that, the local government administration is not alone in promoting this rhetoric about facilitating local community engagements. The field evidence suggest that, depending on the chosen sector for which the decision is to be made, the various decentralised departments in particular those with extension agents such as departments of agriculture, community development department and the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE), actively organize community meetings through which they sensitise communities to ensure that they actively hold duty bearers to account. However noted local political elites are said to manipulate this engagement processes to the extent that local community active involvement become dependent on the political agenda of the leadership in the district. For instance one member of a district assembly notes:

If there is a project that is to be implemented, the stakeholders that are involved are consulted either in a group meeting, a community meeting, or a focus group discussion [...] to let the people understand what is actually taking place and what they are expected to input into the process [...] so the stakeholders are always informed (RB5, 2011;emphasis mine).
As can be inferred from the above, the priority mostly is to **consult and inform** local community members. This raises a lot of doubts as to whether this process can be an effective community participatory process. Further investigations suggested that, the above limited process of participation, which could best be described as condescending, only happens when the project at stake is directly owned by the District Assembly. As the local administrators cautioned, if the project is coming from the central government, even the local government administration themselves are **not consulted** as a local councillor lamented:

 [...] they (central government) just tell you that they have brought a contractor to drill a borehole for you without even asking the people where they want it to be sited […] (RB5, 2011).

The study discovered therefore that, the local government agencies are only keen on the rhetoric of participation as a matter of procedure; and where possible as an attempt to satisfy the requirement of the local development planning act 1994 (Act 480). They do not employ the process because they truly trust that it is the best process that would guarantee the interest of local community members.

This kind of citizen participation could best be described as non-participatory in the least. As Kumi-Kyereme’s (2008:223 citing Arnstein's 1969) ladder of citizen participation points out, even though there is so much talk from the local government agencies about the importance of participation and refer to their effort to enable citizens to own the decision making processes, “the real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or implementation of programs, but to enable traditional power holders to educate the participants”. Realistically, it was observed that this form of controlling participation occurs across the study sites, where citizens are only met as a “requirement”, while the actual decision making process is reserved for the power holders.

It was further observed that, even this process of educating the local community members becomes less prominent within the local development decision making process. At best it is but a process of placation. This is supported by views obtained from officers central to ensuring community involvement within the local government agencies. For instance, a district information officer cautions that what remains is a question of the degree of participation allowed. The emphasis is often on the role of representative participation or representative democracy as it is referred to in the literature.
With regards to decisions relating to the decentralised system of governance, it is often the Assembly Member who represents the people who leads the discussion in conjunction with the chiefs of his electoral area. Irrespective of the level of discussions that local communities engage in, ultimately, development decisions are said to be taken by the management.

 […] they also meet the stakeholders, you know, the community members, the group leaders, they bring out their grievances, and their feelings which are discussed to know exactly what they are doing and how it should be done (sic). But when the development support comes[…] they (district assembly management) go back to the people and say that this is what we have received and this is what we have planned[…] and so that this is the way we want you to form yourselves before we can also distribute the resource in the right proportion (RL2, 2011; emphasis mine)

A DPO suggests that, these processes are wholly a tokenistic approach he pointed out that:

 […] to be frank with you the text book approach that we are suppose to use is to involve these people (local communities) in deciding development decisions, but is it actually done? That is the question! We can only claim that it is done to some extent because the district chief executive on his rounds meets with the people and they tell him what they want. So you see that at the end of the day, we can see (guess) that this community want this and we give it to them […] though we involve communities, but it is only to some extent. And I can also say that most times development projects are not within our control as they are imposed from Accra. For instance, the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFUND) just sits down and decide they are coming to build a three unit classroom block […] so most of times there is no proper development or needs targeting at the community level (RL10, 2011; emphasis mine)

This sentiment was echoed throughout our encounters with local government officials during the study. Two potential implications are implied: Firstly, of the political influence alluded to earlier and secondly, the willingness and ability of the local government agencies to involve communities. Further, this re-emphasises the fact that, for practical reasons as alluded to in the quote above; in the decision making process, citizens can only “hear” but not be “heard” (Michels 2012). It further indicates that in some cases the local government agencies themselves are powerless because of the hegemonic influences of higher government agencies

Notwithstanding the above, the study encountered a repeated mention of the existence of community based structures that are said to be critical to ensuring the participation of local communities. These are the structures of the local government such as Unit Committees, Area Councils, and to a lesser extent Civil Society Organisations, which the national development planning Act 1994, (Act 480) identifies to play complementary, but critical facilitative roles in supporting local communities to effectively provide the right inputs into the district development planning process (see Bandie 2007).
Successive governments since the introduction of contemporary decentralised local governance in 1988 have emphasised the role of these local community structures as key to the success of decentralisation process. However, the field evidence which confirms earlier findings that, within the current arrangements, community involvement in the decision making process effectively probably stops at the level of the District Assembly because these sub-district structures, are largely ineffective (Fox et al. 2011:24).

This diverge from the generally held view within extant literature that, sustainable initiatives only occur where there is effective partnerships – including decision making partnerships between local communities and local governments (Cuthill 2002). It is indicative of a classic case of local government administrative and political decision makers refusing to show commitment to sharing their power base as Cuthill, (2002:80) suggests. This study supports the view therefore that often times, this kind of local government decision making processes that do not garner overwhelming public support would fail (Lowndes et al. 2001b; Lowndes et al. 2001a). The next section present views gathered from local communities of their participation in local government development decision making process through the survey component of this study.

7.2.2 Local Community Perception of Decision Making Process

Figure 7: Perceptions on development decision making process

As can be seen from figure seven, interactions with community members reveal a similar pattern of perceptions regarding local community involvement in the development decision making processes as spelt out in the national development planning Act 1994, (Act 480).
Out of a total of 99 respondents, 42% said that decisions were reached through community meetings and another 18% thought decisions were reached in joint meetings between district assembly and local communities.

Put together, ‘joint meetings’ and ‘community forums’ form a great proportion of the responses. Taken at face value; this would imply that the District Assemblies ensure direct community involvement in the decision making process and that local communities are central to the development decision making process. This appears to directly contradict earlier observations from local administrators, and also re-emphasises observations in chapter six that local communities believe that the local government is an important development agent. The fact of the centrality of local community participation in determining development projects, leads this study to be cautious of the above observations. Further, the study notice that these views probably echoes doubtful voices of local government officials, which suggest that actual decision making is reserved to the power holders. This is demonstrated in the fact that at least, 31% or a third of the respondents pointed out that the District Assembly decides, or that communities are merely recipients of decisions taken by the local Assembly.

When asked what usually happens in their local communities before the local government implements development projects, opinions reiterated earlier suggestions that the decision making process is tokenistic at best or reserved to the power holders and local administrators. For instance it was observed that, 90/99 respondents (94%), perceived that local governments do not consult local communities on decisions before local development is implemented. Additionally, comparatively less people agreed that local government authorities held local community fora; consulted with local communities and/or political leaders\(^\text{11}\). The graph in figure 8 below further reveal pre-existing believes that the local level structures, that is, Unit Committees, Area Councils, and even Assembly Members are either nonexistent in some communities, are weak or completely left out of the local decision making process. This is because, as structures of the district assembly, one would expect that they are consulted.

\(^{11}\) Local political leaders would include unit committee members, area council staff, assembly members, chiefs and elders, association leaders and some household heads.
This is sharply contrasted to the legal requirements that, participation should be the fulcrum around which the local government’s development planning and decision making process should revolve. It is further in contrast with the theoretical argument that local governments are able to better deal with the local community development because they are closer to the people and therefore have access to local knowledge and information which the central government lacks. Based on this evidence, the study observes that this may not be the case for every local government, particularly for those in which the political and administrative leaders seek opportunities to implement politically expedient projects that would deliver electoral fortunes; in which ever case, local communities lack influence in decision making process that directly impacts on their daily lives.

Ironically however, when the same respondents were asked if they considered the above mode of decision making optimal in their communities, the response was overwhelmingly positive. Citizens perceive the current decision making process as a reflection of the best way to reaching community development decisions.

**Figure 9: Is this the best decision making process?**

Source: Field survey, 2011 (N=99)
This is shown in Figure 9, where at least 73% agreed that this was the best decision making process compared to only 21% who taught otherwise. It can be inferred that an interplay of factors might have accounted for this finding. Tentatively however, we observe that given the structural and administrative challenges noted above, citizens may actually participate in decision making process, but merely as an exercise of tokenism by the local government agencies. Another reason may be that, based on historical antecedents under authoritarian regimes, the people feel this is the best decision process even if they were merely consulted to fulfil a constitutional provision.

However, as regards the 21% who think this is not the best decision making process; it could be inferred that in rural Ghana where social action is premised on mutual trust and accountability, it is not surprising that communities’ perception of inaction by the District Assemblies to meet their needs have become an influential factor for such apathy on the part of communities to participate in the decision making process. This kind of attitude by the local Assembly in time would earn it a ‘bad name’ among local folks. Again, in spite of joint decisions reached in partnership between local government and local communities, central government and its agencies ‘parachute’ into communities’ development decisions.

On this basis, the study observes that communities may actually have given up participation owing to fatigue and limited direct results. Among many motivators that ensure enthusiasm of citizens in the participatory decision making process is the feeling within members that they actually contribute by participating, to the improvement in their local communities (Michels 2012). This could be informed by a realisation that, their involvement would yield nothing good. Local communities are not oblivious of what happens within their local government. They closely observe and measure how their involvement in local government decision making process inure to concrete, direct benefits to their communities or area councils (See: Lowndes et al. 2001b). It could therefore be concluded that, local communities are consistently disappointed when they realise that expected benefits do not accrue and there is no visible demonstration that their opinions truly influence the choice of local development options, they most certainly would opt out of participating in future processes.
7.2.2 Community Engagements with District Assembly Representative(s)

Overwhelmingly, almost every respondent (98%) attested to the presence a local government representative (assembly person) within their respective communities or in close proximity to their community. This evidence coincides with an earlier research conducted by the Ministry of Local Government which also found that, nine out of every ten persons knew about the assembly person of their electoral area (Ghana Districts 2006b). In theory, this observation would imply that there is some level of interaction between the local communities and their local District Assembly.

As has been noted elsewhere, local communities require help from the local government in order to participate effectively (Cuthill and Fien 2005). Within the context of this study, a key component of this help would be the amount of relevant information made available to local people through the active direct interaction with the local government structures, among which the assembly representative is central. As indicated earlier, a key facilitator of local engagement is the local government representative. They serve as the vertical and horizontal link between their electoral areas\(^{12}\) and the local government administration.

Table 13: District Assembly Representative present in your community?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rep. in community</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2011 (N=99)

The decentralised local governance process itself has provided three ways through which local communities can influence decision making. Firstly, local communities exert influence via the various electoral processes (democratic decentralisation or electoral representation). Secondly, through the elected Assembly Person who represents their electoral area and finally, through direct participation in district assembly meetings albeit not as voting members. This is situated within roles of the District Assembly representatives.

\(^{12}\) An electoral area may cover many communities or a single large community, which are represented by a single assembly person
They gather and communicate community decisions to the District Assembly and in turn, report back to communities, decision of the assembly and its executive committee (see Crawford 2010:98; Ahwoi 2010a:81). The mere presence however of an Assembly representative is not a guarantee that local communities’ interest would be effectively represented or that effective community participation is guaranteed. The study observes that in order to leverage upon the presence of an Assembly representative and affiliated structures in ways that would ensure effective community participation, the local communities themselves need to be aware of the ways in which these structures can further their course and to actively engage them.

Botchie (2000:39) writes that, “popular participation at the local community level is normally conducted through meetings with village groups or individuals or through developing and implementing local projects”. For this to be effective there must exist a mutually rewarding relationship between local communities and their assembly structures. This furthers, Cuthill’s, (2002) explanation that at this level of engagement, it is a question first of a community’s access to the social structures which form the basis of power in modern society. Notably where this access is lacking or ineffective, community participation is constrained.

As the findings suggests, access to the District Assembly representative on its own is not a big challenge to local communities. As can be seen in Table 14 below, at least 58.6% of community members agreed they had met with their district assembly person within the last twelve months. Nevertheless, more than a third (36.4%) pointed out that, they had not met the local assembly person within the same period.

Table 14: Access to District Representative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Met rep in 12 months</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>97.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalid</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>99</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source*: field Survey, 2011 (N=99)
This finding again supports a study conducted by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, which also found the same contrasting views regarding access to Assembly Persons. They found nine out of 10 persons who attested they had personally met with their assembly person and conversely they found that 93.6% of these, who where non-Assembly Members did not know their Assembly Members (Ghana Districts 2006b). These contrasting observations leave obvious questions within the scheme of community engagement with local representatives which require further clarification. For instance, *do community members attend local meetings organised by the assembly structures? How often and for what purpose are these meetings organised? And most importantly, how do local representatives appreciate the opinions of locals expressed during such meetings?*

Gaventa and Valderrama (1999) provide that participation at the social or community realms should engender two things; 1) it should enhance citizens’ awareness of their rights and responsibilities; and 2) should develop a more informed citizenry capable of holding duty bearers to account. The emphasis of the engagement they posit should be for citizens “[…]not only to [be able to] hold others accountable, but also as a self-development process, starting with the articulation of grassroots needs and priorities, and building popular forms of organisation” (Gaventa and Valderrama 1999:unpaged). This proposition however, would be feasible in rural community contexts when the Assembly Persons actively play their mandatory role of offering local communities the opportunity to directly engage with local government through their office. These would best occur when Assembly Members hold regular pre-session meetings to consult their electorates and also provide adequate opportunity for feedback.

**Figure 10: Meet community before Assembly meetings?**

![Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents who always, sometimes, never consult community leaders before Assembly meetings.]

**Source:** Field Survey, 2011 (N=99)
Figure 10 above shows community survey results which strongly dispute that Assembly representatives embody an effective forum for the District Assembly to ‘hear’ opinions of the local communities. Although some respondents (14.1%) agree that representatives always conduct pre-meeting sessions with communities; a greater proportion (29.3%) utterly disagreed that this happens. A minority (6.1%) who agreed said that the consultation is not all-inclusive as attention is concentrated on community gatekeepers. More than a third of the respondents (44.4%) said this only happens sometimes.

This finding further shines light on community members’ scepticism about the roles of representatives noted above. One could infer that in the eyes of the communities, these representatives have become little replicas of Members of Parliament who carry themselves like ‘ivory towers’; far removed from the community they purport to represent but only descend to seek re-election or push central government agenda for political gains.

As is to be expected, there were initial opposing views from Assembly representatives and staff of the local government administration, as a District Information Officer puts it:

the representatives go down to the communities to hold meetings with them to discuss the options and projects, and take their views up to the Assembly level; they go down to the communities to meet the chiefs and the opinion leaders to seek their opinions on specific projects(RL8, 2011, emphasis added)

This notwithstanding, a number of respondents cautioned of existing difficulties to achieving this requirement when they pointed out that representatives serve large and difficult to traverse electoral areas. The logistical requirements to carry this out are not within the capacity of some Assembly Persons. Representatives argued that to effectively represent an electoral area is largely a sacrificial and voluntary undertaking. This is because representatives are neither paid any wages nor provided an accountable impress to run their office. As a senior local government administrator lamented:

This, I think is the greatest challenge to our decentralisation, especially the Assembly concept, […] is that the Assembly Member is not remunerated! It is purely a voluntary job. I believe that if the Assembly Member has to serve his purpose then it must be a remunerated position. so that from time to time, because he lives in the community he thinks he knows the needs of the people [sic], but ideally he should be organising meetings with the community so that community grievances and concerns would be articulated to him for onward discussion at the assembly but this is not done. I belief this is a serious bane to the assembly concept. (RL7, 2011; emphasis mine).

What is obvious from this is the capacity deficit between what the situation should be and what it actually is. This compromises the potential to fully optimise the role of the local council representatives.
This understandably could have accounted for citizens’ apathy to the participatory system noted above. Besides this, there appear to be bigger systemic and structural challenges to the District Assembly’s participatory concept.

Firstly, internal ‘politicking’ means that some Assembly Members sometimes do not receive the meeting schedules or agenda within time to allow them conduct pre-session consultations with entire communities. In this case, as the study observed that they rely on personal knowledge or count on community gate keepers as proxy to the entire community. Although this guarantees a rapid scan of local needs, the social structure of rural communities is complex with inexplicit needs of the various sections of society; therefore, this process means that the views of whole sections could be missed (Assimeng 1989; Assimeng 1981; Nukunya 1992).

Another internal structural challenge observed is that, District Assembly Representatives who are noted to have previously blocked or actively opposed ‘politically motivated developments’ on the grounds of their technical feasibility, or because they do not address true local needs, are earmarked and deliberately frustrated by the local administration. Such representatives are treated with cynicism and subjected to all forms of ‘dribbling’ including being called up for meetings at the nick of time or not being given the right schedules. This attitude was noted as purposefully orchestrated to undermine representatives’ ability to attend meetings, talk less of offering amply to hold consultations with their constituency. The study observed that without doubt the local administrators are successful in carrying out this clandestine dribbling activity because most Assembly Representatives reside outside their electoral areas contrary to the expectations of the local government system.

However where Assembly Representatives are able to organised local community meetings, are they actively patronised by community members? Interestingly, as shown in Figure 11 below, more than half, (54.4%) of community members do not attended such meetings. Again, this observation may reaffirm the general disappointments of communities with the functioning of the local government systems and structures. Existing literature speculates that this is because the local government and its representatives are distant from the local communities. Besides this distance, questions also remain of the quality of the interactions between local government officials and these communities (Gaventa and Valderrama 1999).
Expectedly, where the interaction has been tokenistic and hence failed to deliver local community needs, or indeed perceived to be a waste of local community time, they certainly would not yield their support.

**Figure 11: Attend meetings organised by Assembly Member?**

![Pie chart showing attendances]

**Source:** Field Survey, 2011 (N=99)

Further to the above, the study results seem to coincide with Gaventa and Valderrama’s (1999) position that local communities appraise the nature of the interaction before they attend meetings. It was realised that when local communities do attend local decision making meetings, they choose those that are closest to them, in which their contributions are expected to make the most impact. For instance, as can be seen in **Table 15** below that, community members preferred village committee meeting and community fora compared to meetings of the local council structures. Although, community members are allowed to attend general Assembly meetings as none voting members, very few ever considered attending them.

**Table 15: Which Meetings attended in the last 12 Months?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which meeting attended</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>local council meeting</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>area council meeting</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>village committee meeting</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unit committee meeting</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community forum</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school committee meeting</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalid</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2011 (N=99)
The increasingly low numbers of attendance to local government organised meetings is indicative of citizens’ disillusionment with the structures and systems. The irregularity and ineffectiveness of the interactions which has resulted in this disillusionment further highlight capacity challenges to participation or even knowledge gaps between citizens’ awareness and willingness to participate and what actually happens on the ground. It may also be a factor in part of citizens’ perceptions of how influential their participation is or indeed whether local government take them seriously. Not surprisingly therefore some rural community members showed serious disbelief that the local government valued views they expressed during such meetings. As indicated earlier, local government agencies may just organise such meetings with the aim to satisfying obligations rather to seek to bring on board local opinions. This probably suggests that when local governments organise meetings, it is but an exercise of tokenism. Again, this situation serves to illuminate why some citizens are disillusioned and do not take part in local meetings when they are organised.

In spite of the above, community members recognised the functions of assembly persons to include: mobilisation of local communities to undertake development activities; serving as a representation of the voice of the electoral area at the District Assembly; negotiating on behalf of communities for amenities and providing feedback to communities on discussions and decisions reached at the District Assembly. They also recognised how these are expected to impact on the locals. In all cases, up to or more that 70% recognised these functions as demonstrated in grouped bar chart in figure 12 below.

Figure 12: knowledge of role of Assembly Representative

Source: Field Survey, 2011 (N=99)
This finding suggests that local communities have what it takes to hold their representatives to account and could leverage their access to the Assembly structures to their development advantage. As Botchie (2000) puts it, where interaction between local communities and the Assembly structures is effective, not only would citizens be motivated to participate in the development planning process, they may even be prepared to contribute material and financial resources to the process. Local communities also demonstrated awareness of the functions of the District Assemblies themselves. As can be seen in Figure 13, less than 3 %, did not appear to know the functions of their local District Assembly. A majority, mostly above 70% knew these roles.

Ironically however, more than 30% did not know that the District Assembly also had responsibility for environmental management; maintenance of peace and security, public health and education respectively. This deviates from the MLRD’s study which found that local communities to be overly aware of the roles of their local governments (Ghana Districts 2006b). The question this study posses therefore is how could local communities demand services they are not aware is the responsibility of their local government to provide?

**Figure 13: Community knowledge of the role of District Assembly**

![Figure 13: Community knowledge of the role of District Assembly](source)

**Source:** Field Survey, 2011(N=99)
7.3 Involvement in Local Government Decision Making Process

Contrary to local communities’ apparent apathy and disassociation from local government systems and structures, an analysis of the data obtained from local government administrators, decentralised department heads and other District Assembly actors reveal a peculiar preference for pre-existing structural arrangements. These structures included: the local government administration and the decentralised departments; local level structures (area councils, unit committees, assembly persons); and community level structures, including chiefs and elders, groups and associations.

This was an expected outcome that local government officials would prefer to engage with these structures for community development decision making purposes. However, cross checks with community members suggested they actually do not effectively use these structures. Even though disparities exist among local government officials regarding whose involvement is primary, the data suggests a preference to ascribe central roles to the local government and its actors. Local governments appear to place premium on the involvement of its own community structures - which as the data suggest are non-existent- as opposed to the often emphasised ‘grassroots’ or local communities. This is in spite of the fact that communities’ direct involvement is a fundamental basis of Ghana’s professed decentralised local government system. The following exemplifies local government official’s priority of involvement as spelt out by a senior administrator:

[...]

A head of department of a decentralised agency adds:

The key players are the District Assembly members, and all stakeholders who bring their expertise and experience in combination to have an effective and standard way of setting public investment priorities[...] they are critical because they come from different backgrounds and have various views which when [sic] they bring together would facilitate development (RL5, 2011).

Coming from senior local government officials, it was greatly surprising that no reference is made of the local communities themselves. Although the National Development Planning Act 1994 (Act 480) suggests that local communities are paramount and should participate at least in District Assembly sessions.
Local government officials were careful however to separate participation into two distinct compartments. One occurs at the level of District Administration, and the other which within local communities.

We have the Assembly Members, the chiefs, and opinion leaders (community leaders). It is hard to reach individual members of the community [...] that is why I was saying that if the system were perfect or near perfect, then you would find out that the voice of the people would be heard at the Assembly [...] but there are challenges to that, maybe the Assembly member may depend on hearsay from the community as to what their priorities are and come and articulate them but if he had time and resources to enable him meet with the community, that would have been the perfect kind of arrangement (RL7, 2011; emphasise mine).

Probably the preference for local government structures is because they are perceived to be technically savvy. This perception reiterates doubts about the existence of necessary capacity at the community level to engage. Furthermore, this observation suggests that local governments still favour the professional planner conception of participation as has been highlighted in chapter three that some technical issues cannot be opened up to non-technical ordinary citizen participation (Michener 1998). Although this may be true in the case of technical policy and planning decisions, it would not be true in local community development prioritization and decision making processes.

However, it was noticeable away from local central administration that a more supportive view emerges among lower level agencies and departments. One that favours the involvement of local communities. These agencies appeared to relocate emphasis of preferred involvement from the local government actors to community members themselves. It was argued in most cases that, they (local communities) are key players. In the words of a district director of agriculture:

[…] the community is first, before the linkages, that is the Assembly Member in the community; the unit committees […] so from the community you come to the unit committee, to the Assembly Member who then links up to the Assembly (RB1, 2011)

Within the local government system, it would appear that those who matter most involves not a single institution or group, but multiple stakeholders stretching from individual community members; groups and associations; community leaders; the district chief executive; and even the members of parliament. The study observes that it is best to accord each layer the opportunity to be part in the decision making process. Given this held perceptions within the local government administrative system, who do local communities themselves belief matter in the decision making process?
Respondents in local communities were more forward looking about the involvement of the youth in decision making processes. Locals believed that the youth in the communities represent the core of society and are without doubt the ultimate beneficiaries of any projects. They suggested that it is the youth who would have to deal with the consequences of today’s decisions and hence must be considered critical parties to the decision making process. To succeed, local government decision making require community support – material, physical and sometimes fiscal – from inception through to completion.

Again, the youth are perceived as decisive in supporting projects because they are able to garner respect among their peers, can organise themselves to supply labour and ensure the success of any project implemented. This perception of the decisiveness of the youth is not completely misplaced. It is consistent with the findings of the interim report of Ghana’s 2010 population and housing census, which suggest that Ghana has a youthful population (Ghana Statistical Service 2012 :3), who form a critical mass and therefore cannot be ignored in the decision making process. Local communities’ further perceived that the youth are becoming the more assertive part of the population who tend to be ‘revolutionary’ if they feel their views are not taken into consideration. Interestingly however reports from the survey component shows a divergence of opinions as indicated in Figure 14 below.

The statistic showed a near equal support for (49.5% of respondents) and against (50.5% of respondents) the involvement of the youth. This is understandable because in the social structure of Ghana, young people traditionally do not decide. This reaffirms traditional orthodoxies where the young, women, and children were not required to speak, and hence should not be heard where important decisions are being made (Nukunya 1992). This finding tells of a society that is struggling to hang on to traditional structures on one hand, while reaching for ‘modernity’ with the other. This evenly split statistic does not appear to completely contradict the earlier high support for youth involvement. It is however revealing in that it shows how local people may just be affirming the rhetoric of advocacy NGOs and other stakeholder holders who call for youth involvement. These may suggest that development practitioners should pay attention to prevailing local norms.
Although this situation may not be unique to Ghana, in general women, ethnic minorities, and young people are often ignored in decision making and representation (Michels and De Graaf 2010:486). This indicates that, the mantra about youth involvement is probably still an advocacy issue yet to be realised practically within all segments of the Ghanaian society.

**Figure 14: Whose Involvement matters**

As Figure 14 above shows, for rural communities, the involvement of chiefs and community leaders (gate keepers) was of great importance as affirmed by 65.7% of respondents. To exclude this category of citizens within the context of rural communities, as the responses indicate, is controversial to say the least. This is because rural people consider these traditional leaders not only as knowledgeable people, but very influential whose views are greatly respected and thus cannot be discounted. This category, also hold the traditions, customs, and land(s) of local communities in trust. As one respondent pointed out, these are local leadership structures within the communities that must necessarily be followed. The support for youth and knowledgeable traditional leaders sets the opinions of community members apart from those of the local government officials who appeared supportive of the traditional technical planner decision making process.

The study found it greatly surprising however, that local communities did not perceive their own involvement as very important in decision making processes. As shown in figure 14, only 43.4% taught ordinary community member’s involvement was important. Further in-depth studies may be required to establish aptly what drives such a perception. In the interim viable explanation is located within the social organisations and cultural norms of local people. This view seems to reinforce the perspectives expressed by local government
actors, that the involvement of local communities may be problematic because of the share diversity within these communities.

This preferences for existing structures are not far removed from observations elsewhere that local governments fail to value the involvement of local citizens for fear that they (individual community members) could be self-interested, and that individual citizens are considered outside of the established structures and networks (Foot 2009:12). The above findings strengthen arguments that, the contextual experiences of communities are important in profiling individual involvement in community development decisions in rural communities. It may also highlight capacity challenges extant within the local government administration and indeed within local communities themselves.

For instance, local government officials are still steep in minutiae of the legacies practiced within ‘colonial officialdom’ (chapter four) where the local administrators represented the entirety of the locale, and hence, reserved decision making to themselves. On their part, rural communities are probably still stuck in the obscure times, when the District Commissioner\(^\text{13}\) or his technical administrative representatives decided and communities only had to obey.

This may also be firmly located within citizen’s previous experiences with the participatory machinery. As evidence has suggested earlier, local communities appear disillusioned to participate in local government decision making largely because their contributions do not appear to influence the final decisions. It is local government officials who ultimately decide and only seek affirmation from rural communities. This coincides with Michels and De Graaf’s (2010:484) finding that, in deciding major policy issues, civil servants are perceived as major actors and that, in most cases where communities provided information, civil servants are inclined to doubt the value of information and suggestion provided by citizens.

**Figure 14** further shows that an overwhelming majority (75.8%), disagreed as compared to 24.2% that the involvement of local community politicians\(^\text{14}\) mattered. Those who supported the involvement of local politicians were of the view that, these are the community’s own chosen leaders hence, it would not be proper to leave them out.

\(^{13}\) The equivalent of the present day’s District Chief Executive
\(^{14}\) Assembly persons, unit committees, area council members
Contrary to suggestions elsewhere that, citizens are most in support of the participation of older men with higher levels of education, the study observed that over 69.7% disagreed with the assertion that community members with some formal education were crucial. Only 31.3% of respondents acknowledged that they were important and should be involved in all levels of the decision making process. They argued that, this segment of the community cannot be ignored not only because they are believed to understand government policy better, but because they are also perceived to be abreast with ongoing development debates and hence, can effectively contend options presented by local government officials. Aside this, the data shows that local community members are uncomfortable about the involvement of the rich in deciding the development initiatives of their locales. The evidence suggests that, the rich may allow their economic motives to skew their decision making away from the interest of the local rural folk.

There is no doubt that both local government officials and community members acknowledge the desired effects of community engagements. The hesitation to fully engage, in the view of this study is that local governments remain sceptical about the capacity of ordinary citizens to effectively engage with the process, for which reason they are mostly reluctant to bring them on board or engage with citizens outside the structural arrangement. However as we have noted elsewhere, local government structures themselves are locked down by structural and political challenges to ensuring effective engagement.

On its part, community members are disillusioned and discouraged from actively seeking involvement because local governments more often than not fail to fully integrate local community views in prioritising for development. Given these dilemmas, the next section looks at ways local governments have attempted to enhance effective involvement in order to fill the participation gaps.

### 7.4 Promoting Effective Citizens Involvement

It is envisaged that, citizen’s involvement takes many forms. In Ghana, the least action expected to ensure citizen’s involvement is first, by actively providing information to communities; secondly, to extensively consult with citizens particularly in prioritizing community needs and development precedence. Further it would also require the involvement of locals in the implementation of the chosen interventions.
Foot (2009) suggests that, to enhance participation across board, the statutory process of informing, consulting, and involving, should also be extended to other local partners and probably community notables. In the case of Ghana, local partners would include civil society organizations (CSOs) such as local groups, associations, and NGOs within the locale. While discussants point to generic forms of citizens involvements which includes, participatory budgeting (Robinson 2004); lobbying, holding consultation, and regular public meetings (World movement for Democracy 2010), This study observes that, with practical capacity challenges, some expressed approaches may not be appropriate. We associate with the views of Gaventa and Valderrama (1999) that, at the local level, it may suffice to emphasise participatory planning and implementation of development; citizen education and awareness building; training, capacity building and sensitisation; for local government actors to be more accountable to build added citizen trust; and above all to build stronger networks, alliances and collaborations among actors.

The evidence also shows that local governments have approached this differently given different contexts. This is however expected because local governments within Ghana are different and have special contextual challenges. In sum, it was realised that, geography and economic status are important defining parameters for which approach local government eventfully adopted. On the whole, local governments appear to follow through with approaches that further their overall development plans and priorities. Summarily, we found that, empowerment drives were a priority approach across locales.

Analysis of the in-depth interviews reveal at least six interconnected preferred ways through which local governments may enhance abilities of citizens, associations, and local actors for effective engagement. It emerged that the need for commitment and sincerity among actors both within the local government and the community level is paramount; the lack of this poses significant challenges for both parties.

For instance, as the literature and the field evidence of this study suggest, where participation is a mere exercise of platitude, or simply fulfils statutory and sometime donor demands, local governments struggle in vain to achieve community development. It is not surprisingly therefore that there are resounding calls for commitment of all parties to see through an effective community engagement. As a district planning officer in one local government lamented:
There must be commitment at all levels. First of monitoring, nobody really comes to check whether people are effectively enforcing community engagement or not [...] so that if nobody is doing it [...] there are no sanctions and therefore it does not happen [...] so for us to be able to ensure effective engagement, there must be mechanisms in place to check [...] you see, it is only Assemblies who still think that those processes are important who go by them. we do a lot of them because it is the donors who support us to do that [...] that is to get and involve community priorities [sic] but if it means the district on its own using its resources to do that, they don’t consider it as important [...] where there is no donor support we simply truncate the process (RS2, 2011; Emphasis mine).

As noted earlier in chapter six, the influence of donors in agenda setting and ensuring community involvement could not be missed. It is realistic to think then that, third sector actors within local communities appear to be a critical route through which local governments eventually enhance citizens’ ability to effectively engage. As the data has shown, there appear to be a mutual mistrust between communities and local government when it comes to the issue of participation.

In particular, local communities do not have trust that, local governments actually take into consideration their ideas; on the other hand, local governments mostly doubt the depth and quality of involvement local communities can offer. These underline the gravitations towards NGOs and civil society organisations as effective promoters of community involvement. NGOs are said to have a better capacity to engage. Within the environment of great mutual suspicion, NGOs were noted to have both horizontal and vertical leverage to stimulate and ensure that effective engagement happens.

Consistent with prevailing literature, the study observed that NGOs are more equipped with the knowledge, skills and resources needed to conduct effective civic education and capacity development for communities compared to the local government administration (World movement for Democracy 2010). Further, reviews of program reports obtained during the field studies seem to suggest that by virtue of the extensive work they carry out within communities, NGOs and civil society organisations have a deep appreciation of local community’s development priorities hence are capable of aptly articulating them.

The capacity of NGOs contrasts with earlier findings about local government representatives themselves, who depend mostly on proxy information and ‘hearsay’ when they go to articulate community needs at general assembly meetings. Understandably NGOs have a collaborative capacity to ensure engagement albeit indirectly via their activities in assisting communities with information and education.
Further, the ostensible success of NGOs and civil society has led some assembly members to form what they called ‘special purpose Community-Based Organisations’ (CBOs) who are believed to be able to gain resources from other sources that enable them to better reach out to local community members.

Again, it was realised that, by their special nature, such CBOs are able to gain support both from district assemblies and communities, effectively eliminating the expressed mutual suspicions. On their own, local governments have argued that, they provide information education, and training that communities need to make informed decisions.

we carry out a lot of training at the community level, like if we are to implement a new policy we go down to the community to educate them through the community development office. Also a lot of these other departments organise programs for community leaders. For instance, the gender desk officer organises training for women in leadership, business, while the cooperatives officer train communities in basic financial processes […] a lot of training have been going on just to facilitate their participation (RL9, 2011; emphasis mine)

Another respondent added that:

[…] yes I think so, but it’s always a matter of the degree to which this is done, the assembly members for instance […] from time to time, they organise capacity building workshops for them, community organisations, there are some NGOs who go into the community and conduct programs […] the gender desk officer also organise women groups, gives them training, and micro-finance, (RL7, 2011)

Local agents insist further that, all stakeholders within the district are catered for in the capacity development process. As a district administrator intimated:

We involve some organisations in our quarterly reviews and even in the general assembly meetings. Stakeholders and individuals are involved. In the case of Assembly Members especially those who are members of subcommittees, they were trained in areas of financial management together with some of these organisations that are resident in the district (RL10, 2011; emphasis added)

The study envisages that, this information provision would include all acts that enhance or empower individuals, groups and associations. In some cases it was observed that physical access becomes a major barrier to such information as the training programs are mostly carried out at the district capital or the local government administration. The analysis suggests that although mention is made of “[…] carrying out a lot of training at the community level” (RL9, 2011), this rarely happens. For instance a director of the National Board for Small Scale in Industries (NBSSI) had this to say:
You see, the challenge is with the funding, the department has planned community level programs and activities for the whole year [...] there are programs for each quarter. But at the moment we are in October, and I have been able to run only one program because I was given only GHC 700\(^{15}\), and there is no transport to go to communities (RLS, 2011)

In addition to the physical access barriers, when training occurs it was noted however, that the information is not packaged in a form the local people can easily understand. Further, the study observed that there is also a social barrier to the access and utilisation of information by community members.

There was no evidence to suggest that local governments deliberately target individual community members for training, this is because of their preference to work with existing groups and associations, and local level structures. It was obvious therefore that those who do not belong to known groups and associations, such as minorities and the vulnerable, including the disabled are sometimes effectively excluded. To be effective therefore, local governments must include logistical and resource provision so as to enable citizens cross the extant barriers.

Again, it is noteworthy that, even within the generally agreed process above; there appears to be a high preference for the use of the local government’s own structures, in particular the District Assembly persons and the various unit committees as critical conduits linking local governments and local communities, through which community capacities could be enhanced to get involved. A prospective presiding member of one District Assembly insists that:

> what happens is that, every stakeholder is informed, be it through a meeting, a discussion or whatever means [...] the representatives of the various communities, that is the Assembly persons, take part in those discussions and they go back to give the communities the feedback and take the responses from the communities to the Assembly (RB5, 2011; emphasis added)

The head of agriculture in one of the local government area summarizes the approaches adding that:

> Apart from the decentralized departments who always go into the communities to sensitize them about their programs, other key officers of the Assembly also move into the communities with heads of the decentralized department to educate them on what the government has done for them, what it would be doing and if the communities also have needs, they say it. There is that direct interaction with the community to sensitize them. And also, through the unit communities and assembly members, a lot of information also flows from the community up to the assembly (RB1, 2011; emphasis mine)

\(^{15}\) The equivalent of £225.90 as of December 2012 inter-bank conversion rate (£1=3.03795)
The study notes that, these expressed approaches are mostly generic, further as observed earlier; these preferred structures are functionally non-existent in many communities. Therefore, even though such processes may have been the preferred process, this study and other recent research confirms that because the enormity of existing functional barriers that these structures face, it is problematic for them to be completely effective approaches (see: Galaa 2008; Kumi-Kyereme 2008).

It has been argued that to be truly engaging, such processes needs to be truly empowering, recognise, and foster a coalition and partnership model involving communities and all stakeholders (Galaa 2008). Others have proposed a new way of looking at, and doing things (Foot 2009). Consistent with this later view, the study found that some local governments have modified the generic process to suite their specific needs. The district in question has integrated into their development plan and followed through a ‘human resource development’ approach to achieving community involvement.

As part of our medium to long term plan, we deem that an informed population would effectively take part in local governance than an illiterate population. So over the years we have spent a lot of money not only improving on educational infrastructure, but assisting brilliant but needy students to pursue various courses in higher institutions of learning. We believe that, education is the bedrock of this process, if we are able to educate a greater proportion of the people, their involvement would be enhanced. For this reason, we have embarked on this approach (RB3, 2011; emphasis mine).

While noting this, it is a considered fact in some cases that, the local government should lead and sustain the process of community involvement in ways relevant to their particular locales. The motivation to do this is amply noted and should not be new to local governments. In the least, one positive trade-off for enhancing participation is the greater sense of community ownership and therefore support for local government policy decisions (Michels and De Graaf 2010). It further allows governments to tap into larger indigenous options to development challenges, and improve the quality of decisions reached. For this to happen however there must be a deliberate concerted effort by local governments, marked by carefully considered and implemented engagement mechanisms. Next section interrogates the mechanisms within local governments to facilitate citizens’ participation. The study sought to investigate if these mechanisms are any different or can be described as innovative.
7.5 Mechanisms for Effective Citizen Participation

Thus far, it appears that the issue of citizen participation in local government development decision making lacks lustre. Aside the occasional exercise of platitude noted, decision making still appears very much the preserve of local government officials. Further, where a modicum of opportunity is genuinely available for communities to engage, they shy away, probably because of existent barriers. Within this dilemma however, the local government planning process insists that, local engagement be central to development decision making processes. What strategies therefore do local governments employ to ensure that this happens? Where such strategies exist, how have they been adapted to deal with the observed citizen apathy to participate?

In his 2002 exploratory research to gauge citizen participation, local government and sustainable development in Australia, Cuthil, locates successful sustainable initiatives as a collaborative engagement between local government and its citizens. He points out the crucial role of citizen engagement and conclude that [...]“politicians are our servants [...]you have to give them ideas and get them to take these ideas where you need them”(Cuthill 2002:86). In order to facilitate this collaborative approach where citizen engagement is central, this study expands on Cuthil’s (2002) three mechanisms for citizen’s engagement.

These include; that local governments facilitate citizens to understand the process; ensure citizen’s participation friendly institutional and administrative frameworks; and most importantly offer political sympathy and bureaucratic support. It was observed from the field data that senior local government officials are fully aware of and indeed insist that local governments follow the process laid down by the NDPC. In particular, all district development planning officers interviewed argued that, districts strive in all their development planning activities to provide institutional support, by organising various stakeholder meetings starting from the community level with the unit committees, through to the area councils, to the district assembly general meetings. Additionally, they garner the needed political support for local community engagement. One Planning Officer spelt this out thus:
you see, per the planning guidelines that are developed by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), there are clear guides as to how citizens can be involved in the planning process. It is stated that we need to have stakeholder meetings; these need to be held at the area council level and in the district level we have to hold stakeholders meetings, and when we hold stakeholders meeting all stakeholders, business associations, market women association, traditional authorities, youth associations, all take part in the plan preparation: we prioritize together, we develop the objectives and strategies together, then we put the plan together, we then send it back to the public hearing where the various stakeholders would scrutinise the plans and make changes where the need arises (RS2, 2011; emphasis mine).

In addition, citizen sensitization was identified as a key mechanism used by local government officials. Local governments argued that, they often used community durbars; a durbar of the chiefs and their people to tease out community aspirations and challenges, and together they plan towards them. This process could be said to answer the need for community education to ensure they understand the need to participate. It can be inferred that, since such processes are citizen friendly in the view of local government agencies, they should logically lead to enhancement in participation. This notwithstanding, a further analysis indicates that there may be challenges to this ‘one size fits all approach’ as community engagement mechanisms. As one district assembly member has noted:

indeed, they hold meetings in the communities [... the only problem about participation in my local area is that, the people would come but when it gets to decision making, you find out that, the women, maybe due to some cultural arrangement, find it difficult to take part compared to the men. (RL11, 2011; emphasis mine)

Such observations therefore cast doubt as to whether the process currently followed is completely acceptable or that local governments may have to evolve innovative ways to ensure sections of the population are not excluded. Some other Assembly Persons agree and opine that, local people at all times needs further persuasion, and should be provided with the appropriate forums to voice their views.

Away from the community level, the study found a preference for the use of half yearly review meetings, annual review meetings and the general assembly meetings as mechanisms to promote effective participation by the local government authorities. They pointed out that, these meetings offer other stakeholders such as governments and NGOs, assembly members, and opinion leaders, a friendly platform to discuss the development of their district and further allow local governments to fill gaps in development plans and find ways forward.
On their part decentralised departments insist on using their own structures and systems within the communities. For instance, a presiding member of one local government council alludes to this when he points out that:

The mechanisms in place are diverse. For example when you come to education; we have the School Performance Appraisal Meetings (SPAMs). Here, they get all stakeholders in the communities where the school is located to a meeting to get them to understand how their school is supposed to perform. If it is on health, you have community health nurses who are stationed in the communities and every time you have outreach programs where they go to the communities to hold discussions with them to help them understand the policies relating to health in the country and take the feedback from the communities whether these policies are being carried out to their satisfaction or otherwise (RB5, 2011; emphasis mine).

The case is not different from department to department. For instance, directors of the department of Agriculture agreed that they use their extension agents who cover specific operational areas. This discovery confirms earlier suggestions that there are conceptual and operational challenges existing in Ghana’s local government systems (Ahwoi 2010b), it also makes practical challenges highlighted earlier that some decentralised departments merely co-exist with the local government instead of working directly for them (Gariba 2009).

Further analysis reveals a preference for local government to work with local community institutions such as chiefs. They argued that, chiefs are important because, in the absence of the modern governance system, the traditional leadership govern the local area; they are effective leaders of social change. There also appear to be greater community involvement in processes when the chiefs lead the process. An Assembly Person reiterated earlier findings that, “sometimes rural communities do not trust the politicians because of failed promises, but the chief is with them […] so a well sensitised chief is an asset” (RB4, 2011).

This study observes that, a community led process may appeal most to local communities, because, local governments only romanticise local engagements through the meetings. Further analysis show that meetings may not necessarily lead to community participation. Indeed, some decentralised departmental heads interviewed were not even aware that they could attend general assembly meetings. However when they do attend, the overly politicised process is repulsive and therefore limits their potential to impact as technical staff.
Indeed, community members expressed the view that, they were either not aware that they could attend District Assembly meeting, or where they were aware, faced significant constraint to attend. For instance, meeting are held in the district capital and in the English language which represent significant barriers to effective community participation (Ahwoi 2010b).

7.6 Chapter Summary

There is no doubt that effective and strong participation and accountability are viable mechanisms to improve the quality of governance and therefore guarantee overall community development. This chapter investigated community participation in local government decision making processes. It addressed how decentralised local governments engaged the participation of local communities in development process, the third research question of the thesis.

The following key findings were highlighted in the chapter. First that although the national Constitution places premium on the direct and effective participation of every citizenry in development processes as a fundamental human right, political, structural, functional and accountability deficits within the local government system curtail the opportunity for effective and direct participatory influence of local communities at all levels of the national administrative structure.

Secondly, that these constraining structural, political, and administrative arrangements at the local level have hijacked the process to the extent that local governments merely promote rhetorical engagement process more than reality. To say the least, community participation and involvement lacks depth. Further, the main stream politicking seems to have seeped into local government processes, effectively manoeuvring the process away from an emphasis on the role of local communities in favour of political expediency and visibility. This manipulative attitude has effectively relegated local level structures into functional obscurity.

Further it became clear that local communities are mostly aware of the mediums of engagement with local government. However this awareness has not translated into effective community participation. Further, due to the weakness of the local government structures, both local government and communities prefer third sector organisations as conduit to ensuring the necessary community input into the development planning
processes. This is because these organisations have both vertical and horizontal capacity to stimulate action as well as eliminate the mutual mistrust and suspicions between local government and communities which stand in the way of participation. In addition it was found that local governments have identified communities’ attachment to traditional chieftaincy and other traditional leadership mediums as an effective means to reach out to communities. Therefore that without doubt, community-led process is appealing and should be the panacea to this participation debacle.

The main bane to ensuring participation emanates from local government’s inability to implement the process laid out by the NDPC. Further because of the perceived inability of local government to fully inculcate local communities inputs into the decision making process which is based on their dependence on the technical planner conception of decision making, which in turn breeds the mistrust, suspicions and thereby apathy among communities to fully participate. In this regard, the next chapter looks at the institutional capacities challenges among local governments to facilitate decentralised local community development.
CHAPTER EIGHT: FINDINGS ON INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES

8.0 Introduction

The ability of decentralised local governments to deliver services in an effective and efficient manner to local communities lies in doubt. This is because as the proceeding chapter has highlighted, opportunities in Ghana for community participation and influence of developmental decisions are limited. Therefore observations are that local governments exhibit a generally weak ability to deliver social services to the satisfaction of citizens (Fiszbein and Matsuda 2012). A primary reason for this state of affairs is that the context of decentralised local government appears challenging.

This chapter is based on data derived from in-depth individual interviews and documentary analysis. It answers the fourth research question of the thesis: “What institutional capacities exist at the local level for effective decentralisation”. It is a direct follow up on the chapters on development strategies and community participation discussed above. It presents data that link local institutional capacities to the promotion of effective decentralised local development.

The first section is descriptive. It draws on secondary documents to discuss the external or environmental institutional capacity facilitating frameworks. It looks at the adequacy of macro and micro level policies, legal frameworks, and structures, which directly influence or constraint the internal or local institutional capacity to function in ways beneficial to local communities. It would then discuss the institutional capacities before drawing some general conclusions.

The literature suggests that the factors that would make decentralised local government work for the population are numerous. For example Fiszbein and Matsuda (2012:7), suppose that simpler and more transparent use of inter-governmental transfers; the enforcement of hard budget constraints for local government; clear definition of responsibilities (including legal/administrative instruments); and the strengthening of capacity of central government to monitor and audit sub-national government as well as the development of evaluation systems, are sure ways to ensure effective local government service delivery.
This ties in with Smoke (2003)’s call not just for the existence of the ‘institutional infrastructure’ but of adequate local capacity to manage the processes at the sub-national governments in order to ensure locals benefit from decentralisation.

### 8.1 The Enabling Environment for Effective Local Government Performance

The effective performance of any given local government organisation is a direct reflection of the existence of a seamless governance and management structure that is firmly anchored in a framework of supportive policies (national and local), regulations, and elaborate structures. For this reason, local governments’ primary claim to effectiveness within the Ghanaian context would be based on a reliance on the existence and successful utilisation of such policies, structures, and regulations to condition its functioning.

The study perceives that this elaborate implementation machinery is a definite bedrock for local government’s capacity to seek for and address the needs of its locales. Mostly driven from the overarching national legislation and policy framework, they work in concert to define the might of local government’s freedom to function, and to ‘breathe’ the needed energy to effectively prosecute their community developmental agenda. These are central within the context of Ghana’s local governance not only because they facilitate continual decentralisation reform process, but also because they serve as the levers upon which the process proceeds in a consistent and coordinated manner (Government of Ghana 2007).

The study thus considers that this centrality serves as a starting point of local government ability to function independently, and in the interest of local people. Logically therefore, the government of Ghana, and its partners have in recent times argued for, and carried out a comprehensive decentralisation policy review. Government’s vision for this process is to realise “a policy and legal framework, which clearly stipulates the division of roles and responsibilities between different layers of governments which can play a role in poverty alleviation and address local needs”(Government of Ghana 2007:3).

Notwithstanding this, a less than normal optimism was observed among discussants that the current policy review, a first in the two and half decades of the implementation of the decentralised local governance program, would provide the needed administrative, political, or financial wherewithal for local authorities to function as expected, or even to bring about more effectiveness or democratic benefits (Hoffman and Metzroth 2010).
Though the above arguments may hold speculative merits, this study considers that it is probably too early to reach a convincing conclusion on the review process. The evidence gathered however suggests that this process is aimed to give local governments the developmental and functional flexibility it deserves. In the interim, the study foresees that, like all other good policies, the outcome of the review would doubtlessly play an essential role within the complex web to ensure effective local government functioning in Ghana.

In the least, it would help local governments to better describe its development problems, as well as guide in the development of appropriate solutions as pertains to their local areas. This should however be contingent on an exposition and application of effective social, governmental, and institutional policies useful in helping local administrators and politicians in their struggle to deal with problems of their constituencies. In addition to the above, this study support those that argue that in the least, good policies would guide the acquisition of the human, and other capacities needed for effective functioning, as well as determine how best to conceive and deliver the needed public goods (Ellison 2006:1260).

8.1.1 National Level Legal and Regulatory Frameworks

The study discovered that, the super-structure on which the foundations of Ghana’s local government and decentralisation is based, is not without the necessary policy, legal, and structural framework. Earlier research have suggested that the legal and policy framework is extensive (See: Ayee 2008). Notably, Ghana’s 1992 Republican Constitution and the Local Government Act (Act 462) represent the basic anchors on which the local government policies, legal frameworks and structures are derived. In the least, it was noticed that the retinue of policies and legal framework drawn from the 1992 Constitution confers on local government agencies considerable capacity and responsibility within their jurisdictions.

As established in chapter five, since colonial era, various political regimes have accorded some form of local governance pride of place. In order to achieve their objectives, successive regimes have all designed and deployed various policies, regulations, and identified various structures to condition the implementation of local governance. For example, in relation to structures, since colonial times, successive regimes have preferred to work through different structures at a time. Which preference has oscillated between native authorities (chiefdoms and traditional authority structures), and other community based structures epitomised by present day unit committees (See: Ayee 2008; Crook 1986;
Crook 1987; Rathbone 2000; Ahwoi 2010a). Field evidence support the view espoused by Inkoom, (2011:393) that, probably at the national level, “Ghana’s decentralization appears to have all the legal (policies and institutional frameworks) necessary for the smooth operation of the process of local level governance and participation”. The empirical data suggests that, most regimes since independence, particularly those that have pursued local governance as an instrument for community development have developed equally extensive frameworks covering almost every aspect of local government function.

Those extensive frameworks on which this study draws, and would directly refer to, goes as far back as the early 1980s; a period when the World Bank and other international and multinational agencies insisted on the process of democratisation (see chapter two), giving birth to local governance as a primary approach to government’s developmental strategy. This process is credited as culminating in the enactment in 1988 of the first comprehensive local government law, the PNDC Law 207, which was eventually adopted and expanded in the 1992 Republican Constitution (Gariba 2009:3).

We observe that within this context, the local government system of Ghana is replete with an elaborate policy and regulatory framework and sufficient implementation structures which, as Ayee (2008:241) points out “range from the Constitution [chapter 20], acts of parliament, legislative instruments (LIs), bylaws and standing orders [and] provides broad-based conceptual and legal basis for decentralisation”. The study does not intend to dissect the details of each of these. It is interested in determining their existence and how they have furthered the functioning of local governments in ways that inure to the benefit of local communities. Figure 15 presents a summary trajectory of local government policy and regulatory framework.
Figure 15: Local Government policies and Regulatory framework in Ghana

PRE - 1992 CONSTITUTIONAL ERA

- PNDC Law 207, 1988;
- Legislative Instrument (LI) 1514, 1991, which has been repealed by LI 1589, 1994;
- Financial Memorandum (Section 81) of the Local Government Act, (Act 54), 1961;
- Financial Administration Decree (FAD), SMCD 221, 1979, which has been repealed by Financial Administration Act, Act 654, 2003;
- The Financial Administration Regulation (FAR), LI 1234, 1979;

CURRENT 1992 CONSTITUTIONAL ERA

- Local government Act (Act 462), 1993
- District Assemblies Common Fund Act (Act 455), 1993
- Civil Service Law (PNDC Law 327), 1993
- Model Standing Orders for Municipal and District Assemblies, 1994;
- Subsidiary legislation including the individual Establishment Instruments for the respective district assemblies and local units (urban, town, zonal councils and unit committees) (Establishment Instrument LI 1589), 1994
- Local Government (District Tender Boards) Establishment Regulations (Legislative Instrument 1606), 1995
- Local Government Service Act (Act 656), 2003
- Public Procurement Act (Act 663), 2003
- Audit Agency Act (Act 658), 2003
- Local government studies Act (Act 647), 2003
- Legislative instrument (LI 1961), 2009
- Legislative Instruments of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development


Thus far, this section has drawn attention to the existence of an elaborate collection of national policies, regulations and structures that condition the implementation of local governance in Ghana. Though it is amply demonstrated of the expanse of national level policies, legal frameworks and structures aimed to facilitate the smooth functioning of local governments, could the same be said to exist at the local level? In the opinion of this study, governance is only local as long as it balances between technical input and thorough local community involvement.

Further, the study agrees with Fiszbein and Matsuda (2012)’s, views that a clarification of responsibilities between the central and local government is necessary to enhance service delivery capacity of the local government. Opinions here resonates with our earlier arguments that clear legal and administrative instruments in particular those that are matched to, and reinforces the local, political and administrative realities would obviously strengthen capacity for local public administrators to function both effectively and efficiently in the service delivery (Antwi-Boasiako 2010:167).
In the light of the above, questions remain whether there are any that are locally evolved taking into consideration the contextual realities of local governments. Although, decentralisation is often perceived as a fait accompli to strengthening local governance (Nyendu 2012), the reality as demonstrated in chapter seven above does not appear to be a straight forward affair.

8.1.2 Local Level legal and regulatory framework?

Like the case of national level, there is an equally extensive collection of local government policies, legal frameworks and structures at the local level. Perhaps worthy of notice is that these locally available policies and legal frameworks are not different from those emanating from central government as highlighted above, probably because local governments do not work in a vacuum (Fiszbein and Matsuda 2012). The case of Ghana therefore does not reflect a radical deviation from the norm. It has been suggested that rarely does any local government exist in isolation, and that how the legal regulatory and policy frameworks is structured demonstrates the nature of central and local government relationship within the context of community service delivery. A local Development Planning Officer sums up the situation in Ghana as follows:

You see the structures and policies that we have in place are not different, they are broad national policies, we implement our programs alongside these national policies. For instance before the Kuffour administration, our plans were based on the Ghana Vision 2020 document, so we prepared our plans using the guidelines of the vision 2020. When the kuffour government came into power, the vision 2020 was abandoned and we now have the GPRS I. after which they (government) also introduced GPRS II. Now when the Mills administration came, we plan based on the Ghana shared growth and development agenda, [...] basically governments come out with broad national policies and all our plans must find expression within these broad national policies. We are basically implementing programs based on the national policies. The structures are there for instance, the procurement law is there, the financial administration Act is also there, the district administration common Act is also there [...] these are all the regulatory systems that we have in place and we also have the local government Act. At the district level we also have various structures, like the unit committees, the area councils, the general assembly, the executive committee, and the sub-committees of the assembly who all play various roles (RS2, 2011; emphasis mine)

This view summaries the situation as pertains with the local government system in Ghana. Confirming this assertion, one district coordinating director maintained that:

[...] the district is the representative of the government at the local level, and as such we do not have different policies from what pertains at the national level (RB3, 2011).
Another respondent, a local politician and member of the District Assembly adds that:

I think that the district does not live in isolation; it tows the political policies implemented in the various districts and at the national level. However there are structures put in place where it pertain to local issues [...] but even then, they [local assemblies] still have to follow national political policies in the implementation of local issues (RL5, 2011)

Notwithstanding that national policies and legal frameworks are transplanted wholesale to the local level, these are supposed to lend functional and performance capacity to local governments, it would have been safe to conclude that local governments would equally be elaborately capacitated and functional. Our analysis however reveals a distinctive deviation from this expected outcome. Without discounting the fact that national policy is needed to guide, monitor and sometimes mitigate potential excesses in local government actions. The study found that the inherent difficulty to separate national policy and locally evolved policy or legal framework appears a universal phenomenon and therefore represent the biggest source of local government incapacity to perform.

There is no doubt that the decentralised policies of Ghana are laudable, concerns however exist on the capacity of these to translate into practical realities that work for locals. While officials of political regimes argue to the affirmative, opponents severally disagree. The mere existence of the frameworks is not sufficient to guarantee the effective functioning of local governments. On the contrary, the study noticed that, local government institutions’ service delivery ability is not commensurate with the amount of legal and policy frameworks aimed at ensuring they function properly.

As the analysis suggests, some of these policies and regulations have become the nemesis to local governments’ effective functioning. The study observed that, the direct transplant of national policies and legal frameworks without due regards to the local context and realities may have effectively incapacitated local governments flexibility contrary to popular views that it accords them considerable freedom and leverage to act in the best interest of their constituents. Indeed some administrators at the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, and other central government departments are perceived to over exert their oversight responsibilities in requiring local governments to tailor their activities strictly to national development policies, even when doing so overly infringes local desires and plans. This difficulty has already been noted in chapter six.
This attitude is because, central government administrators believe their local counterparts do not possess the insufficient capacity and therefore they must exercise strict directions in order to achieve desired outcomes. A DPO noted this when he complained that, “[…] there is this funny thinking that a lot of the departments within the local government lack sufficient capacities” (RS2, 2011), which suspicions according to Ahwoi (2010b) is merely perceptual and derives largely from inherent conceptual confusion of the decentralisation process itself. The current situation appears contrary to the character of local governance spelt out in the 1992 Constitution. The Constitution stipulates in article 241(3) that:

Subject to this Constitutions, a district assembly shall be the highest political authority in the district, and shall have deliberative, legislative, and executive powers (Republic of Ghana 1992:151)

A few reasons have since been adduced to explain this challenge. In the least it was argued that Central governments everywhere exercise some oversight over their sub-national governments so as to improve service delivery and therefore would employ varied processes including ‘arm-twisting’ directives or other inducing means which the regime deems necessary to achieve this goal. In Ghana, despite the potential of such actions to infringe upon the Constitutional provisions sited above, it has been perpetuated since the inception of formal decentralisation. This is because they [central government] may desire to be visible enough to local communities in anticipation of future electoral fortunes. In addition, central government ministries also seek to ensure a significantly ‘balanced development’ that reflect the prevailing government’s development priorities and further, to ensure that where applied, administrative processes and procedures remain similar.

Given that pockets of capacity challenges may realistically exist within local governments, this central government approach would appear to be a normal strategic choice. Although this approach has deliberately been pushed by successive regimes in Ghana, and may appear strategic from government’s perspective, the evidence from this study leads to the assumption that this imposes intractable challenges to local government functioning. Locked in this web of central government ‘requirements and supervision’ vis-à-vis their local realities, local governments, face chaotic dilemmas in their attempt to respond to local needs. This situation often compelled administrators to adopt a fire-fighting strategy which severally compromises their capacity to pursue a well thought out or visionary long term community development strategies. This in sum over-stretches their adoptive ability because apart from the legal frameworks which may remain fixed and predictable overtime, central government policies and priorities are continually changing.
There are community based structures below the district administration which are directly in touch with local communities. In the true spirit of devolution, it is through these that community service requirements are gathered, analysed and fed into the implantation of policies, projects, and programs. Within the local government system, these include the area councils and unit committees, which are further divided into functional units within the communities. The data confirms that these structures are supposed to exist within the communities to represent the communities and deal with their interest. In addition, different local governments develop their own regulatory frameworks in the form of district by-laws which condition the functioning of the area councils and unit committees, and also to deal with district specific issues. For instance, one decentralised department head pointed out that:

With the regulatory frameworks, they [local government] make certain by-laws to confront whatever challenges that are in the district. For example, in this district, by-laws are made to deal with pigs on free range in the area because they are destructive. The Assembly through its local structures use sanctions to enforce the regulations (RL5, 2011)

Another administrator adds that:

The structures are there! Let’s take sanitation for instance, when they saw that sanitation was a problem in this district, the Assembly sat with the community representatives (Assembly Members), and decided what to do and what sanctions to use to ensure enforcement [...] apart from the national level issues, when things become critical at the district level, people can also come out with their own policies to deal with their own issues (RS4, 2011)

In practice however, the study discovered a very different situation. First very few local communities were observed to have active unit committees, or where they existed, they were non-functional at best or existed only by name. Consistent with arguments advanced earlier in chapter seven, it appears that the constraints to the functional ability of local Assembly Members extend to the case of unit committees and area councils. For want of financial, material and sometime physical structures from where to carry out their operations, these community level structures have succumbed to functional obscurity. Local government administrators themselves pointed out for instance that:

You would find out that if all these structures are fully operational, we would have no problems [...] the structures are there but the challenge is operationalising them (RB1, 2011).
A gender desk officer on her part suggested that:

Looking at the structure of the Assembly we have at the community level, what we call the unit committees and area counsels, these for the past years have not been functional due to the scarcity of human resource and other capacities to man these units (RL1, 2011)

In addition to the aforementioned practical functional challenges, a further analysis suggests that even the few existing structures appear to have been hijacked by central government agents or powerful political elites who manipulate them for their political or personal purposes. When this is the case, a political smear is put upon otherwise non-political structures, in which case they lose their neutrality and therefore face challenges of becoming effective rallying forces for community mobilisation. In the light of the these, Smoke (2003)’s conclusion that without appropriately designed and implemented structures, processes as well as adequate local capacity to manage the political and fiscal functions of sub-national government, decentralisation will fail appears to be an eminent reality within Ghana’s local government context.

8.2 Financial Resource Capability

The availability and effective utilisation of financial resources is probably the greatest known local government functional capacity facilitator. This study therefore required whether local governments in Ghana were adequately financially resourced to deliver community services. As established in chapter two, financial resource availability as well as unrestrained discretion to utilise these financial resources would not only enhance local government’s ability to plan and implement the desired community development, but would ensure that they function properly and efficiently in their service delivery mandate.

Paradoxically however, our analysis of the field data revealed that the reverse is true in the study context where there is a great lack of financial resources to operate. This was identified as the biggest constraining factor within the larger functional environment of the studied local governments. Surprising as this may appear, the case is not completely strange to find. Evidence adduced in existing literature suggests that, decentralised local governments in developing and transitional countries are enormously challenged by the lack of fiscal decentralisation in real terms (Crawford 2008a; Jütting et al. 2005).
Confirming that a financial inadequacy is a major constrain to the service provision capacity of many a local government, one local administrator put it forcefully that:

_Inadequate funding is number one!!_ This is because the developmental projects or effective service provision that we are talking about here all involves money, and before anything could be executed there is a need to spend money, but this money hardly comes from the central government (RL2, 2011; emphasis mine)

A senior planning officer supports the view, adding that probably this is the case across all local councils within the study area when he lamented that:

From where I sit, I am responsible for the local development plans and I can attest that we try our best to develop relevant community development plans. However my biggest frustration with this system is that we simply do not have adequate resources to implement our activities. You see, the inadequacy of resources stem from the fact that before we embark on our [local] planning we always look at the District Assemblies’ common fund, which is a major source of funding […] then we also make projections of potential donor funding […] In most cases however, the donor funding tend not to come in or is not commensurate to the project quantities. As for the internally generate funds, it always goes into fuel and other running cost, hardly do we execute any physical projects with our internally generated funds (RS2, 2011).

Another administrator agreed, but went ahead to propose that the sharing formula for the Common Fund be adjusted to favour districts most in need. He cited the plight of a newly created local council in another region that he witnessed which was in a state not conducive for effective administration to take place. He provided that:

As with the inadequacy of the common fund, we all agree that government cannot on its own support all the districts, but I would suggest they (government) re-look at the distribution formulae of the common fund to re-direct a lot of funds to less developed districts […] I was passing by a district in the Brong Ahafo region where the Assembly has had to rent a few rooms in somebody’s private house for use as their district administration (RB3, 2011).

Unquestionably, it also emerged during further interrogation that not only is the Common Fund insufficient, it does not arrive at the local councils in a timely manner. It was established that although local administrations can always anticipate the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF), they do not have any capacities to predict how much they would receive, or when exactly it would arrive. As Banful (2009) suggests, this is because no District Assembly can adequately predict the distribution formula that affect the allocation they get. According to her, variables in the distribution formula or the weight allotted to each variable are changed by Parliament on a yearly basis. Although these changes are justifiable because of changing national socio-economic and demographic factors, its unpredictability, and openness to political meddling contribute to rendering local government’s financial planning capability ineffective.
This notable unpredictability is probably more frustrating to local governments than the inadequacy of the funds itself because when such funds eventually arrive local governments cannot optimally utilise it. As one of the District Planning Officers has noted above, there is a potential miss match between the local plans developed and income which eventually arrive, which constraints their ability to meet the performance expectations from local communities.

In addition to the above, it was further revealed that it is not uncommon for local governments to receive transfers of the DACF for the first quarter of a financial year at the end of the financial year. Recent evidence suggests that disbursement covering the fourth quarter of 2011, and the first two quarters of 2012, was only released by the administrator of the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) within the fourth quarter of 2012 (Daily Graphic 2012). There is no doubt from the above that the in-flow of funds is not analogous to the ‘nice development plans’ that local administrations suggested that they draw up at the Assembly. Clearly, as a Community Development Officer asserted:

> Without money you cannot carry out any project and if you even start and along the line there is no money to complete it would be standing there, and the communities would think you do not want to complete the project, but the fact is that the money is not sufficient to complete it (RS4, 2011).

The DACF is critical for local governments. It accounts for at least 80% to 90% of most District Assemblies yearly expenditure (Banful 2009). Its importance therefore for the effective functioning and service delivery capacity of local governments could not be overemphasised. From this evidence, the study observes that the potential functional ability that this fund brings is effectively lost because of its unpredictability.

There is no doubt within the context of the above that local governments consistently struggle to discharge the basic duties required of them. This is compounded by the fact that in addition to the financial incapacity, they are said to be systematically denied the ability to self-determine the use of allocated resources in accordance with local realities. This situation appears to contravene Constitutional provisions in section 252 of the 1992 Republican Constitution; and the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) Act (1993), Act 455.
In furtherance of the above, it became obvious from the interviews that, political heavyweights again influence the eventual use that the local government puts the funds to. In most cases however these were purposes either than the local government originally intended. For instance, some local governments complained that directives followed which sought to ‘earmark’ given percentages of their common fund for programs such as malaria prevention programs; youth employment; and disability support; although these are mostly already catered for in the District’s five year development plans. This manipulative antics not only effectively defeats the purpose of the fund, it also contravenes their planning functions as specified section 12 of the Local Government Act, 1993 (Government of Ghana 1993).

This effectively reduces local governments to sheer receptors or implementers of central government directives. In the least, the data demonstrate that central government ministries interfere with, or dictate items that local government budgets should contain. As one district budget officer opined:

We are not even allowed to prepare the budgets here. But you know that a budget is well executed when the one executing it took part in preparing it. They sit down in Accra and give us what is called matrixes and every matrix is a set of activities; both service and investment and when we get down there [Accra] we must allocate the money to those activities in the matrix [...] sometimes we may have a local need with say the district education Service but we are not allowed to go beyond what is in the matrix [...] and because of that we go and come and they have given us the activities short of what the reality is here [...] and when we give them the budget estimates they further cut it making it difficult for us to function (RS6, 2011)

According to the data, the central government often accused local governments of possessing acute shortage of skilled personnel to justification its reluctance to allow local administration a free hand to operate. As claimed by one district administrator, there is this “funny feeling at the national level that there is inadequate managerial capacity at the district level (RS2, 2011), for which reason the central government does not want to let go. An implication however, is that it effectively renders the Constitutional responsibility of local administrations to plan, harmonise, and coordinate the implementation of all local integrated development lifeless.

A further challenge to local government financial incapacity is that, central government again subject the funds to what one respondent described as ‘heavy deductions at source’ to finance activities that are often not in tune with local government service requirements.
A district coordinating director lamented thus:

Upon conducting a recent due diligence audit, we realised that almost 47 per cent of our common fund allocation was deducted at source by the central government for other purposes for which we had no hand in determining [...] You see, during the last quarter of 2010 for instance, after the government deductions, we realised that they had actually deducted far more than was due the district (RS2, 2011).

Field interactions reveal that such deductions are used to fund capital intensive provisions which yield limited direct benefits to local governments or their constituents. For instance, one district reported that government had used their deductions to provide them with a water browser and road grader. While another said that these deductions sometimes go to fund supplies such as the president’s portrait, tea cups, and political party paraphernalia to be displayed in the premises of the local government administration which, in most cases are not a priority to the local administration. Some local governments charged that central government makes such deductions to fund certain national policies which were introduced without the needed budgetary allocations. This is probably what Crawford, (2008a:253) discusses when he suggests that local administration revenues in Ghana remain limited and “subject to central government ‘earmarks’ over its expenditure”.

As noted earlier, local governments, aside the Common Fund rely on the internally generated fund (IGF) which mainly come from local taxes, including market tolls, basic rates and property tax. However, consistent with existing literature, it was discovered that these are not viable tax bases because central government holds on to all the high yielding tax centres, while local government has access to only low yielding ones (Nkrumah 2000; Crawford 2008a; Pallangyo and Rees 2010). Notwithstanding the above, tax raising abilities of local administrations are critical ingredients to the capacities of such administrations to function properly (Jütting et al. 2005). Incidentally because local administrations are left with un-economic tax bases, it was discovered that they did not think it was economically wise to invest funds to collect low yielding taxes.

The above discussion is a clear demonstration that decentralised local governance as a process geared to catalyse the development of the locale is effectively a problematic endeavour. Their capacity to implement developmental policies effectively is perceptibly constrained by the institutional, and administrative arrangement that are supposed to support them (Ohemeng and Anebo 2012). In the light of the above conclusion, the next sections explore further the nature of the relationships between central and local governments and whether these acts as levers or constraints to local level capacities.
8.3 Local Government’s Autonomy to Function

In Ghana, the district assemblies Act 462, 1993, and the Local Government Planning Act 480 emphasises the freedom of local government to act as independent entities in the best interest of their constituencies. This is consistent with the reviewed literature which demonstrates the need for an un-ambiguous delineation of functions between the local and central government as a condition for success (Jütting et al. 2005; Crawford 2008a:252).

However, with the above demonstrated limited fiscal decentralisation and by default limited financial capacity of local governments, the question remains whether the central government would deliberately keep a functionally dependent relationship with local government or would they eventually allow them to function independently. The evidence appears mixed, while some respondents indicated local governments have the needed autonomy, others were emphatic local governments are currently not allowed the autonomy to function per the dictates of the local government process. The views of a top local government official encapsulate the general opinions at the local level:

[...] for that one, it is none existent!! we don’t have that freedom and autonomy, as I have just mentioned how they (central government) deducted the common fund, they decide how much money you get at anytime and we can’t question them, decisions that come from the national level, we have to implement, we cannot question them. [...] so it is nothing more than a mere rhetoric. Then even the various sector departments, report to the mother bodies, for instance the district education office plan with the ministry of education and we only harmonise their plans, money from the ministry of education come directly to the district education office, thus when they are asking for money we feel reluctant to give them because we do not know how much they get from their parent ministries [...] unless when it comes to infrastructure that the Assembly provides but for other things we are reluctant (RS2, 2011)

A local district assembly member and prospective presiding member of the assembly argues that the current nature of the relationships renders Ghana’s local government system restrained of the needed autonomy to function as required. This view lends support to earlier arguments advanced in this study that the decentralisation process is all but complete. In the words of the Assembly person:

Our decentralization process is so limited, or should I say that there are restrictions. I cannot even say that we are up to 50% decentralised! You see [...] though the common fund is given to the districts, it comes with a lot strings attached, they (central government) determine what you should use the money for [...] For example, we in this district would have preferred to use our common fund for the development of human capital, but the common fund regulation specifies that we should not use more than 2.5% of the district’s common fund on the development of human capital alone. Further, all the decentralized departments are not under the control of the district assembly, so they do what they think fits them. For example when a nurse is posted to this district and if that particular nurse does not like the area, the District Assembly cannot take a decision to ensure that they go there [...] so for decentralization to be
implemented effectively every department should be under the District Assembly (RB5, 2011).

Further analysis shows however that even those with a glimmer of optimism regarding the autonomy of local government function still harbour doubts owing to ‘practical experiences of constraints’ as a District Coordinating Director puts it:

To some extent we have that autonomy but we still have our umbilical cord attached to both the regional and national level. Most at times they call you to attend programs for instance and if you have not planned for such it affects your own local plans (RB3, 2011)

It was also found that this ‘freedom’ further diminishes when it comes to issues related to the award of local government physical development project contracts. It was revealed that central government agencies award contracts to their preferred contractors without recourse to the district. This demonstrates that the local government discretionary and functional capacities are effectively annexed. A situation which Crawford, (2008a:252) suggests is radically contrary to the provisions of the District Assemblies Act 462, 1993, and by default the abilities of these Assemblies to implement their functions as per Act 462. In sum, the practicality of the emphasis which Ghana’s Constitution places on the importance of decentralisation is probably merely real on paper. Actual power, and functional discretion still resides in the hands of central government, rather than at the District Assemblies (See eg: Daily Graphic 2011).

Ironically however that data shows that some of local administrators fail to recognise the need for full local government autonomy. This serves to further dampen structural and functional deficiencies within the local governments and also highlight the obvious paucity of quality and innovative local government personnel capacity. It appears this structural and functional deficit has relegated some local government administrators to accept and embrace an attitude of helplessness thus forcing them to resign to a fatalistic believe that the local administration has to be completely dependent on the central government in order to be sustainable. They accepted the lack of autonomy as the norm rather than an exception believing that they (local governments) are not mature enough to be autonomous.
Overall, local governments’ financial resource over-dependence on central government makes it difficult for them to strive to wean themselves from the continuous attachment to the central government, and this is perpetuated because most local government administrators fail to adopt innovative ways of seeking alternative funding sources for their activities. By default they are perpetually resource-starved. On the whole, this resource paucity creates a relatively nervous relationship between the decentralised departments and the local administration which further compounds perceptions among the District Assembly is an outsider to their function, and probably offers a possible explanation why the decentralised departments prefer to receive budgets directly from their mother ministries, as well as to implement their own programs. This offers possible reasons why an “estimated 85% of government funds at the district level are not controlled by the District Assembly” (Crawford 2008a:250).

Some possible implications of the above noted relative uneasiness between decentralised departments and local government authorities is that it leaves the local administration in a catch 22 situation where its departments mistrust it, and thereby further constraining the proper functioning of the entire system. As a system, this continually curtails the desire to act in the interest of local people. This also dampens the passion to deliver public services in an effective and efficient manner and leads logically to noted under performance as prevails currently. The findings of this study coincides with recent opinions expressed by the UNDP (2010:4) that “central/local relations are notoriously strained and typified by competition, lack of clarity over roles and mistrust”. Aside the relational hindrances that leads to systemic incapacity at the local level, the next section explores what other hindrances may exist at the local level that constraint their effective service delivery and performance.

### 8.4 Hindrance to Effective Local Government Performance?

Probably the most debilitating hindrance to the functional capacity of any system is nature of its internal structures and support systems. These support the system as it struggles to survive. Like the proverbial double edged sword however, it was discovered that the functioning of the internal structure and support system of some local governments appear to be the biggest challenge yet to their functional capacity. The study found an unhealthy institutional politicking among District Assembly members and administrative staff. Further it was noticed that there exist unnecessary competition, and sometimes administrative sabotage to the effective function of some structures and systems within the
Local governments. For instance, some district coordinating units, and administrative staff unnecessarily hold on to approval letters, permits, and other vital documents critical to the function of some units or individuals. This led an Assembly Person to lament that:

No! I believe the hindrances have rather come from within the District Assembly itself, because of personal interest; the assembly is divided into those assembly members that have the technocratic knowledge and would like to come out with positions that would push the assembly forward, and the administrative staff who do not want that to happen. So when there is a subcommittee meeting to take vital decisions, they call you at the nick of time and hence making it impossible for one to attend! (RL11, 2011)

Like the case of the central and local government relationships, there appears to be a problem with too much fusion of responsibilities and supervisory roles within functional units. By default some departmental heads have become over controlling of lower departments to the extent of frustrating their effective functioning. For instance, there exist, in most cases an edgy relationship between some District Coordinating Directorates and the District Planning Officers. Although they are supposed to function together as the core departments of the district, there is a tendency for district coordinating directors to interfere, control and frustrate the work of district planning officers.

[…] one main thing they need to do is to make our planning unit or position independent to act, and to not make it fall under control of administrators who do not understand the functional needs of the department and therefore stand in its way […] (RL10, 2011)

Abraham Lincoln’s popular citation taken from Holy Scriptures: “And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand; and if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand (Mark 3:24-25 KJV), is probably the most enduring admonition critical to the survival of a system that still contains much credence for any successful administration today. Truly, no polity, administrative system nor government, in the opinion of this study, can endure in an uncoordinated or fractured state.

Another peculiar hindrance observed in the functioning of local governments is the lack of incentive to motivate actors within laid down structures at the local level. For instance, members of the District Assembly, area councils, and unit committees work on a voluntary basis. They point out that sometimes they have to use their personal resources to carry out activities for the District Assembly which is a disincentive to effective performance. Local administrators opined that District Assemblies do not have a budget to support the activities of these units and thus, they expect some provision from central government which is not forthcoming. As a local administrator opined:
Yes! Let me tell you something [...] you know we have community structures out there [...] most of whose members perform voluntarily, they don’t attract any pay, and as such you have to get some incentive to motivate them, but these things are not forthcoming and the district alone cannot provide them unless they come from central government [...] (RS1, 2011)

Another stated that:

This lack of remuneration for Assembly Members is a problem! most of the instances are not able to hold the central administration to account, you would realise that instead of being the watch dog over the public purse, that is the way the Assembly disperses of funds for various projects and activities, most of the Assembly Members are rather seeking favours [...] there are instances where you think that they should question some of the things, for instance as a lay man sometimes you can see issues with the figures, but they[assembly members] just endorse them, so if they were remunerated they may scrutinise the system as required[...] (RL7, 2011)

The lack of, or under resourcing of local government may in the opinion of this study, be the central government’s subtle attempt to maintain political patronage, and elite capture at the local level (UNDP 2010). These posses huge challenges on local administrations’ capacities to “plan, initiate, co-ordinate, manage and execute policies on matters affecting local people.

The lack of full decentralisation was also cited as a major capacity hindrance to the local government’s performance, with a gamut of spiral effects. Be as it may, central governments continually seek involvement in local government affairs with the view to ensure adequate accountability, proper use of resources and equitable service accessibility across the national territory (Barima and Analoui 2010; UNDP 2010). However, this study found that this has rendered decentralised departments logistically deficient to facilitate their service delivery.

For instance, sometimes if there is a disaster, we know that they (affected communities) need immediate response, we go to the communities to assess their needs [...] but you know if these things (support) don’t come from the national level, you cannot get anything to give them; such is the constraint you see? May be you go and see that the people need cement to re-build their homes, but you cannot get that to give them unless you call on the national level (RS3, 2011)

Speaking to the same issue, one director of National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) lamented thus:

well I think the major problems are that we do not have enough facilities and also accommodation for officers[…] as a young district there is the need for infrastructure, accommodation, transport and logistics to function […] so those are some of the handicaps but it takes a long time for central government to get these through to the district. We have departments that are still very much dependent on central government. You see, the devolution is still a problem as the central government hang on the power thereby making it difficult for some departments to delivery decentralised services to local people (RL5, 2011; emphasis mine).
This is further compounded by the existence of too much bureaucracy or paper pushing requirements; too much control from head office (Central government agents in Accra) and administrative instructions to follow. Local government officials complain that much of the work they carry out are bureaucratic processes which leaves them very limited time and opportunity to plan and deliver services to their constituencies.

8.5 Institutional and Personnel Capacities and Competencies

Probably the most important of all local level capacity is reflected in institutional capacity. That is the quantity and quality of administrative and functional personnel availability to deliver the needed services. The analysis of data revealed a mixed perception on local capacities to effectively plan, implement, and generally deliver effective and efficient services at the local level. Some interviewees interpreted questions about personnel capacities to mean their own abilities and hence vehemently defended that there is an adequacy of capable personnel at the district level. The study found however from further interactions with departmental heads that indeed the competencies in terms of technical ability, education, training and task skills is generally not lacking.

The analysis further suggest that this observation, probably effectively stopped with jobs that required employees to possess a certain level of professional training such as teachers, health staff (nurse and doctors) and Police and Fire officers. Even within these departments, a declining number of human (numerical and functional) and functional capacity was observed, in particular as one moved down the ranks. In some particular case, the numerical strengths of local staff to deal with the enormity of the functions required was observed to be quiet weak and in some instance completely non-existent. For instance, lamenting about the nature of human capacity, a director of the department of social welfare; one of the most critical units responsible for dealing with the vulnerable in local communities noted:

> I would say there is the human capacity[...] but competencies is still a problem, not all of them have the capacities to function as is required...material capacity and technical know-how is not sufficient, we need more training [...] we need more in all aspects, but in terms of human resources we need more particularly in the quality (RS3, 2011).

Probably a very disturbing challenge that seems to exist across most departments visited is that, even where there were a small number of personnel available, characteristically they epitomised what one senior local administrator described as:
a collection of political ‘apparatchiks’ who lack sufficient education and training to deliver either administrative or technical service, but who are put there to merely warm the seats […] they are hardly available for work when you need them and so we cannot even train them, they become so irrelevant to the function of the district and yet so powerful that the district cannot refuse to take them on (RB6, 2011).

Indeed as one District Assembly member explains that:

It is this partisan nature that is the problem […] even though the Assembly is considered to be non-partisan, elements of partisanship crop in at all levels, which tends to distort the whole thing. There may be competent people just that partisan politics distorts their ability to perform (RL12, 2011)

However, the study observed that that personnel capacity requirement at the local level may go beyond the educational training of staff. Indeed in some cases an over insistence on certificated formal education has resulted in the exclusion of critical competencies for performing critical services at the local assemblies. This, we believe should involve other competencies such as innovation, leadership, institutional memories and indeed astute social and emotional abilities to function within the chaotic nature of local government.

This apart, and even though some respondents believed human resources are available, we found that in terms of the adequacy of personnel capacity, there was a great deal of insufficiency. Some local administrators agree that there are issues of numerical inadequacy of personnel capacities as a district coordinating director notes that:

[…] In most cases at the District Assembly level only two or three people have a semblance of the capacity we need to function […] when those people are not in office for any reason, their department literally come to a standstill. And then there is a problems […] so there is an issue of capacity (RS2, 2011)

Again, apart from the departments of education, fire service, police and agriculture for instance that have a semblance of capacity in terms of quality and quantity that approximate the full complement of personnel to man their internal departments, the core District Assembly departments were found to be mostly ‘one man’ offices with key functional personnel missing. As a district education director observed:

for me it is low […] because some of the departments lack staff […] they are skilful but since the numbers are not there, the work load become too much for the few that are available so at the end nothing gets done properly as one would expect […] take this department for instance, at a point in time we had just one circuit supervisor to cover almost half the district. That is not possible for one man! (RL4, 2011)
Another added that:

no we do not have sufficiency of these […] for instance I think that the planning unit needs to have more than one planning officer, because the work in that unit is so much for one person to carry out […] again, we need to have more engineers too, with the requisite technical knowhow to supervise the various construction and technical jobs that the Assembly is undertaking […] furthermore, some departments are just under resourced in terms of personnel, for instance take this district hospital, there is only one doctor and the 2000 population census put the district population at 77,000, how can he take care of all these people? (RB4, 2011)

With this precarious staffing capacity challenges, it was worrying to note that until the recent passage of the local government (Departments of District Assembly Commencement) Instrument in 2009, it was legally outside the remit of local government authorities to recruit their own permanent staff. Further to this, as noted earlier, local authorities have limited ability to motivate and retain the required staff owing in part to their limited financial capacity. Therefore deprived local authorities have very high staff turnover because staff do not find the working environment attractive enough to want to stay, and since they are not directly recruited by the local authority, they have little power to hold them.

In addition, it was found that even though the district coordinating unit together with stakeholders from decentralised departments can discipline non-performing or offending staff, the highest form of action they can take against such staff is to suspend or query them but they do not have any powers to dismiss, or even transfer them. Indeed our findings coincide with Sakyi’s, (2008:314) suggestion that the degree of transfer of authority in respect to human resource matters remains ‘taboo’ areas in which district administrators can only meddle at their own peril.

The dearth of capacities within various decentralised departments becomes even more prominent when viewed in terms of personnel’s abilities to realistically develop workable plans and co-ordinate related activities. It was observed that this is an area where acute capacity challenges are eminent in many decentralised administrations. In addition to the non-availability of personnel to carry out evidence-based planning, decentralised departments themselves do not appear to fully appreciate the need for planning. For those who do, it is because of collaborations not with the local government as the case should be, but with their mother ministries.
Again, it is observed that due to interferences from central government and its ministries, there is little commitment among staff to follow due process. This is particularly noticeable when it comes to the processes leading to the award of contracts, where work is awarded to contractors without the needed capacity, such as equipment, knowledge or implementation ability which not only delays project execution but results in shoddy outcomes. This process, we noticed is again transferred into the district level as a district development officer suggested:

Even when there is the needed capacity, the commitment to follow due process is also another challenge [...] you see, because of ‘foot soldier’ (political apparatchiks) agitations. [...]for instance, they want contracts and the district must give them contracts so it becomes a problem because if one wants to follow due process no foot soldier would get any contracts because they are not qualified (RS2, 2011)

The above political process of contract award, and the catapulting of contractors unto District Assemblies in the words of a District Assembly Member:

[...] makes it difficult for the local government officials to monitor such work. Take for instance, the DCE goes to monitor a project and the contractor argues that he was not awarded the contract from the district and hence he has no reporting relations to him. The decentralization is indeed not complete, at the moment it is like giving half of the power to the people and keeping the other half [...] or in this case it is more of designating responsibility to people without giving them the power to do the work. In this case how could decentralization be complete? (RB3, 2011)

Local administrators with a responsibility to monitor the service delivery are powerless to follow the due process in carrying out their duties. The result is the delivery of sub-standard jobs at best. Further, the study found that, even when there is a modicum of personnel capacity and competence coupled with a willingness to deliver high quality services, material and logistical insufficiencies effectively block this enthusiasm. Local administrations appear to be without the very basic tools to enhance their performance. Decentralised departments go without adequate arrangements for transport and logistical needs that would enable them to perform. A district director of the National Disaster management Organisation aptly puts it that:

If we have two offices, at least you would have expected that when you come you would see computers, but look at it[...]not even curtains!!, so generally, the constraint facing the Assembly in its development drive is logistics (RS3, 2011).
8.6 Chapter Summary

The chapter is based both on documentary reviews and in-depth interviews. It established that that there is a need for a comprehensive and supportive policy and regulation machinery that would offer the opportunity for local governments to function effectively. The local government system of Ghana this appears to have given serious consideration. There is an extensive legal and policy framework derived from the National Constitution and the Local Government Act. However these have not directly translated to a strong functional capacity for local governments. It appears that the relationship between the extensive frameworks and effective functioning of local governments is not straightforward. In some instances it was realised that central government has capitalised on legal regimes and supervisory relationships to deliberately keep local government units functionally dependent on central government.

This notwithstanding there is space, albeit limited, for local governments to translate the broad national policies and legal frameworks into contextualised, workable local level policies that administrative, program, functional and even communities members can understand and relate with. Local governments are able to develop local by-laws that deal with context specific issues. Ironically however, in most cases an attempt to develop local by-laws results in the transplanting of broad national policies and frameworks wholesale, resulting in a complete delink between existing legislation and the local contextual realities.

The functional capacity of local government, the data show is further constrained by financial resource inadequacy. First, the DACF, the main source of local government financing is subject to severe manipulations and earmarks by central government. Further, central government seeks to, and control local governments’ freedom to dispense of their common fund. In addition, the common fund is highly unpredictable or unreliable to say the least. Central government is accused of ‘deducting heavily’ from it without the consent of local administrators in order to supply unwanted services, and facilities.

In terms of personnel and institutional capacity, in the form relevant education, training and functional abilities is not completely missing from within local government administrations. Technical and professional staffs were noted to possess the needed education and training to perform their duties.
However, this appears to effectively stop with this category of staff. As one moves down the hierarchy, the capacity deficits became more pronounced. Further, a declining number of human (numerical and functional) and functional capacity is noticeable within local administrations. In most cases the numerical strength of local staff to deal with the enormity of the functions required is weak, and in some cases non-existent. Most departments are ‘one man’ offices with key functional personnel missing. Notwithstanding this, local authorities do not to have the mandate to recruit, motivate, and retain the required staff. However the few technical staff are highly willingness to deliver high quality services, but yet again material and logistical insufficiencies effectively block this enthusiasm. The next chapter present an overall summary and implications of the study.
CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

9.0 Introduction

This chapter sums up this study focused on decentralised local governance and community development. Though this study by no means claims to have exhaustively covered all the issues related to the nature, and workings of the decentralised local government systems in Ghana and its impact thereof on local community development, it touches on what it believed forms the critical components (Effective community development strategies; community participation; and local government institutional and functional capacities) that links the two concepts.

The main aim of the research has been to examine how the practice of decentralised local governance translates into rural community development within the Ghanaian context. In order to achieve the above aim, the study had three interrelated objectives: To examine rural community development strategies implemented by decentralised local government institutions; to investigate local community participation in determining community development initiatives; and to analyse institutional capacities for effective decentralised local development. Essentially, the study sought this understanding by answering questions related to the historical nature of the decentralised local governance; development strategies that have been implemented thus far; who was critical in developing these strategies? In other words, within the network of negotiations and relationships that translate into development strategies, what is the role of local communities in whose interest the strategies were developed; and finally the capacities available for this to happen. These it suggests forms the crux to linking the two concepts of local governance and community development.

The rest of the chapter is organised thus: the next section presents an overview of the study. The second section summarizes the conclusions in reference to the major findings of all four research questions. Section three looks at the potential contributions to knowledge, and the last section discusses the implications of this study for future research.
9.1 General Overview of Study

In Chapter one, the study is introduced from whence it is situated within the broader decentralisation and local governance literature. Within the Ghanaian context, this study uses the concepts decentralisation, local government, and local governance interchangeably.

The general introduction and literature reviewed has demonstrated that African countries, and for that matter Ghana has had a long, and circuitous encounter with the implementation of decentralisation and local governance for various reasons. The literature supposes therefore that the adoption of decentralised local governance in developing country context is no longer a new phenomenon. This is because decentralised local governance has become common practice in nearly all countries within the continent, in Asia, and east and central Europe (Gaventa and Valderrama 1999; The World Bank 1995; Crawford 2009).

The compelling reasons for this euphoria about decentralisation lies in perceptions that it would help to rejuvenate otherwise collapsed economies, structures, and public institutions. By achieving the above, decentralised local governance is thought to engender developmental and democratic benefits(Crawford and Hartman 2008). Which potential emerge because the central government or state roles becomes diminished, while concomitantly elevating the role of local governments into service delivery prominence. This is anchored in the vision to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of locally relevant services or development projects (Olowu et al. 2004; Wunsch and Olowu 1990).

Contrary to the above, in the case of Ghana, which is often cited as a shining example of democratisation and development in Africa (Awortwi 2011; Awortwi 2010), the evidence of local governance translating into realistic, locally relevant development, does not appear to glitter (Nkrumah 2000). Typical among challenges accounting for this lies in its limited capacity to carry forward decentralisation in a manner most beneficial (Bangura and Larbi 2006). Thus effective community participation is highlight as a potential means through which decentralisation would translate to the perceived democratic and developmental benefits. Yet again, it is not clear what level of local participation is promoted to ensure good local governance, and potentially development given perceived capacity and implementation challenges.
The literature seem to suggest that decentralised local governance alone does not necessarily guarantee effective local community engagement (Ishii 2007). Consequently, the very elements which are supposed to facilitate beneficial consequences to local level communities are missing and thereby account for a rather disappointing experience with decentralising. In sum, limited citizens participation; inadequate capacity; insufficient fiscal decentralisation; and the lack of accountability to the citizens, the literature suggests may have accounted for the above (Asante and Ayee 2004; Johnson 2001).

Institutionally, decentralised local administration, an integral component of local government, emerged as an offshoot of the general new public management paradigm (OLOWU and Wunsch 2004); it is assumed that it would further consolidate the efficiency and effectiveness benefits of local governance. On the whole, applying NPM principles to local administration promises same benefits as extant in private sector services delivery. In addition NPM type local administration further pushes the frontiers for performance based service provision; guarantees the needed devolution; and above all ensures increased accountability due to a strict monitoring regimes (Auccoin 1990; Hope 2001).

This tradition of local administration deals with the fundamental ills of large centralised public administration by breaking down structures into manageable units, and allows the critical decisions on service delivery to be made nearest to the point of delivery. Bringing with it the desired accountability (Manning 2001); because it provides scope for direct feedback from local communities and interested parties (Hope 2001); and over time develop into the desired institutional culture, better management systems and increases the quality of participatory process dependent on effective and efficient utilisation of resources.

There appears to be a clear disparity between the rhetoric of decentralised local governance and the reality on the ground in Africa. The review suggests that the availability of resources, and the implementation design has severally challenged the achievement of the stated goals of decentralised local governance (Sakyi 2008). Others have cited the deficiencies within the political as well as bureaucratic machinery, in the form of limited commitment; limited local ownerships; and poor coordination as factors that have compromised the achievement of the benefits of decentralised local governance in Africa (Conyers 2006).
The study utilised both primary and secondary information. It adopted a mixed methods strategy to gather the primary data. Predominantly, in-depth individual interviews with local government officials and other stakeholders; and semi structured household interviews with local community members. Three local government institutions were purposely selected, while households were randomly selected. The Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS) was used to capture and translate the semi-structured interviews into descriptive statistics and reported. A deductive approach was used to classify and categorise the qualitative data into themes and reported.

9.2 Summary of Major Findings

Based on the reviewed contextual and theoretical literature, this study identified four research questions which it believes has not previously been answered. This section presents a summary of the major findings.

9.2.1 The Nature of Local Governance in Ghana

The structure of local governance in Ghana is elaborate stretching from the national administrative structure to the sub-national government and the lowest level is the unit committee within local communities. Each of these structures, are intended to play complementary roles to support the functioning of the local government. The findings suggest that local governance has been implemented in Ghana since colonial times albeit for different reasons. Any given political or administrative regime in Ghana prosecuted a slightly different brand of local governance to further their own political agenda and administrative convenience.

The national administrative structure of Ghana has been variously celebrated as a shining star of democracy and good governance in Africa, however there is evidence to suggests that Ghana is yet to achieve complete democratic consolidation (Abdulai and Crawford 2010), in this respect, it is immediately eminient that these democratic deficits therefore, transmit challenges to the local governance system in Ghana. An important finding feature within the national level administrative arrangement that sprinkle constraining functional challenges to local governments is that, the three arms of government, that is the executive(president); the legislature (parliament); and the judiciary(courts); are in theory supposed to the separated.
In reality however, powers of appointment vested in the president is often utilise to subjugate these bodies underneath the presidency or turn officials into political favour and rent seeking demagogues. As a consequence they fail in their fundamental task of serving as checks and balances.

This percolates the next level of the administrative network. That is the regional, and the metropolitan; municipal and district assemblies. The regional level has both monitoring and supervisory jurisdiction over the local level government. Again it became obvious that the most powerful actors, such as the Regional Minister and DCE, are political appointees who are there to prosecute the political agenda of the national government. One major thread in Ghana’s historical experience of decentralised local governance is the fact that the national political regimes overtly or covertly manipulate the process to the obvious disadvantage of expected positive local outcomes. This tinkering, stifles local governments of all the capacities needed to be effective and efficient providers of realistic community services. Again it was discovered that there is a historical tendency at re-centralisation, evidenced by a lack of commitment to fully decentralised. Especially prominent in this re-centralisation move is when central government work to render the local ineffective by inadequately resourcing (human, material and above all financial) local institutions.

In sum, it appears that central government is yet to devoice itself of the ‘fear’ of complete decentralisation because of political fortunes; fear of opposition developing from the local level or even that local government may eventually threaten separation.

9.2.2 Local Government’s Community Development Strategies

Practitioners of international development agree that a consistent, realistic and above all locally generated and implemented development plan is key to achieving sustainable, community development (Shaw 2011; Fuller 2009; Jimu 2008; Bhattacharyya 2004; Flecknoe and McLellan 1994; Baah 2003 ). Such locally evolved plans redirect attention to the under-privileged, deprived, and venerable (Vordzorgbe and Caiquo 2001). For this reason, the study investigated the local development strategies implemented by the selected local governments.
Nationally, upon tracing the country’s experience with development strategy development since 1951, it was realised that there is a great enthusiasm for a focused and planned development process. This zest tremendously increased with, and in particular deliberately sought active local community inputs, with the introduction of structural adjustment and Economic recovery programs in the early 1980s. Paradoxically, however, these externally influenced strategies had a completely different agenda which is to effectively de-emphasised micro and meso level community development strategies in favour of macro-economic stability (Baah 2003 :5). The study therefore follows the conclusion that these are unrealistic to rural communities (Stiglitz 2002).

Focused on decentralisation as a strategy to achieve rural community development; the study found that the Ghana Vision 2020 development strategy approximated effectively engaging rural communities more by its commitment to empowering decentralised administrations to plan, execute and lead overall development in their locales. Surprisingly though the strategy did not achieve its promise, because of professional, structural, and systemic capacity weaknesses.

Ghana’s contemporary encounter with the poverty reduction strategy papers as development strategies shows a consistent graduation towards a more locally led community focused process to the development and implementation of development strategies. It was noticed however that the biggest constraint to achieving a realistic local strategy development and implementation lies in central government’s nervousness at allowing a functionally independent local governance process which would guarantee a truly participatory and strictly local development strategy planning and implementation process. First, because central government use decentralised development activities to prosecute politically motivated strategies which necessarily may not be consistent with local realities. Further, as indicated earlier, holding tight to local development process appear to offer political capital in terms of delivering electoral fortunes hence each regime applied it for none either than their clientelist purposes.

Contrary to the strong anchoring of the local development strategy planning and implementation within Ghana’s national constitution and supportive legislative instruments, the historical and empirical experience suggest a highly confusing and contrasted position. Effectively, without discounting that local government invest enormous resources (material, financial, and human) in order to profile the development needs within their jurisdictions, and to development medium term development plans, this
study found evidence which suggest that attempts are made to replicate wholesale [without reference to contextual difference in development needs] national development strategies or priorities at the local level. This is in spite of the fact that each district [even those within the same geographic region] exhibit radically different development needs, constraints, and requires varying potential and capacity to deal with same. This situation suggests that local governments act within a very chaotic environment. In the least, local communities hold great expectations of them. These expectations as it stands are often times difficult to meet as they mostly differ from the nationally imposed strategies or development priorities on which basis district wide development budgets are developed.

Patently, the rhetoric of decentralised local strategy development is more glistering while the reality is murky. All these notwithstanding, local communities still hold their local governments in high esteem as critical players in their development agenda. The field data strongly support this view with more than 70% of local community members arguing that the District Assemblies provide their needs and amenities. This coincides with other findings that indeed more than 75% of District Assemblies’ budgets are spent on the provision of local amenities.

Based on the above the study re-emphasis the fact that local governments are critical to the development of their jurisdiction in spite of the existent enormous political, administrative and structural constraints imposed when central government and other significant players pay lip service to implementing a complete decentralisation, while footnoting laid down processes, structural functions and for that matter local interest over political interest.

9.2.3 Citizen Participation

The study contends that an acceptance of the developmental responsibility of local governments coupled with the above cited strong expectations of local communities for local governments to deliver developmental services; is a clarion call for a strong partnership to exist between local government and all interested stakeholders including central government, local communities themselves, Non Governmental Organisations, and civil society. The findings of this study support suggestions within existing theory for strong partnerships via and a participatory process in local government activities to translate into the goals of decentralisation in Ghana.
This, the study envisages would translate to the desired efficiency and effectiveness in decentralised development process; ensure great accountability to the local communities; and thereby realise overall community development.

Again, tracing the chances for local community participation in the process of local government developmental activities from national level structures down into the communities themselves; the study found great deficits to effective participation within the national administrative structures, which again trickle down to constrain local level participatory processes. In the first instance, members of parliament, who represent the interest of individual constituencies are found to struggle with balancing their democratic responsibility to push legislation in ways directly beneficial to local communities, and servicing their own or political regime’s agenda irrespective of whether it compromises the rights of local communities. In particular, where locally desired development priorities were found to run counter to national regime’s preference, the MPs appear to subjugate the local interest in support of national regime’s interest with the hope to increase their political visibility, and thereby their chances of securing ministerial or administrative appointment, because the national constitution requirement for the president to appoint a sizable number of ministers from sitting Members of Parliament.

Perhaps a more complex case emerge at the District Assembly level, where a politically appointed chief executive officer is handed limitless power as the political and administrative head; and more crucially as the chairperson of the District Assembly executive committee. This committee has the privilege to filter development programs and all proposed activities of the local government even before the people’s representatives (Assembly Persons) could debate and pass a vote on them. This way, politically expedient programs opposed to locally preferred options are pushed forward.

This apparent perpetual political grips on local government processes effectively deny any chance for a truly participatory decision making process. This dilemma is further compounded by various regimes hijacking the provisions for 30% of the local Assembly to be filled by people with special technical and professional competencies that would further the functionality of the Assembly, to fill political apparatchiks with limited or no competencies as political gatekeepers to safeguard the political purposes of the ruling regime. Indeed, the over politicisation of the decentralisation process has also become inimical in various ways.
For instance, competent Assembly Persons who insist on the right engagement process to decision making are sometimes effectively ‘dribbled out of play’, particularly when his/her views diverge from the political interest of the elite, or (S)he is known to be sympathetic to an opposition political party.

Further, ordinary community members and sometimes their Assembly representatives become less and less prominent in the decision making structure prompting a conclusion that elite capture is very much a reality and overtime does not appear to be receding in any way. Again, this highlights a critical fact that local government agencies most often are only keen on the participatory rhetoric as a matter of procedure, and to satisfy national requirements; and not because they truly believe it is the best process to ensure the interests of local community members are served.

In addition to this, inappropriate structural constraints were found to restrict chances for local community representatives desirous to right the current situation. In the least a lack of financial, administrative, and logistical support for District Assembly representatives restricts adequate contact with local communities in ways they would have preferred. Therefore they have become absentee representatives who like the MPs only re-appear during electioneering to seek re-election or to push central government agenda.

Not surprising therefore, even though the rhetoric is that local community members matter as interested parties in a participatory community development continuum, community members themselves do not perceive their involvement in decision making processes important but often look up to some form of structural representation, in particular the local traditional authority or existing groups. On the whole, though crucial to local community development, the study found the participatory process in Ghana is at best fanatically chaotic. Therefore, the study supports Ahwoi (2010b)’s call for conceptual and operational clarity in the local government systems in order to achieve the goals of the process.

9.2.4 Institutional Capacities for Community Development

This section presents main findings on the availability of relevant holistic institutional capacity within local government systems to deliver local community development. The study proceeded by acknowledging the enormity of ways to conceptualise capacity which has rendered it impossible to pin it down to an appropriate or definite definition (Morgan
Notwithstanding the conceptual difficulties the study follow those that believe that capacity is absolutely essential to ensure the transformation of a locality and the general development endeavour, in particular within developing country context (UNDP 2010; Osmani 2001).

Care was however taken not to limit our examination of capacities to the normal human resource conception, but to include other aspects such as the legal and legislative frameworks that facilitate abilities to function. Considering the internal and external networking or relational aspects that facilitate institutional competencies to function, it was discovered that the local governance system in Ghana appears complete with the needed supporting legislative and legal frameworks to function effectively. However political and administrative notables actively employ manipulative antiques to effectively remove any chances that these would strengthen local government capacity.

The manipulative tendencies of central government agencies was found to be contrary to the original intend and character of Ghana’s local governance system as contained in the national constitution, and local government frameworks. In the least, it is contrary to Article 241(3) of the 1992 constitution that [...] “the district assembly shall be the highest political authority in the district, and shall have deliberative, legislative, and executive powers”(See:Republic of Ghana 1992:151).

Again, the study found evidence that the often cited achievement of Ghana’s decentralisation is only perceivable in political decentralisation, other forms; in particular fiscal decentralisation is still a far cry. This finding coincide with prevailing theoretical arguments about incomplete fiscal decentralisation in Africa (Crawford 2008a; Jütting et al. 2005). There is significant manipulation of the distribution formulae for the DACF, which again makes financial and budgetary planning an impossible task at the local level. In theory, decentralised administrations have control over financial budgets and expenditure decisions but in practice, these decisions are limited to complying with directives from central government or its relevant ministries without the leverage to question them. As it were, local government staff are constantly under the tutelage of central government officials, which in our view effectively amputates their ability to function as desired.
The study found that unhealthy politicking among Assembly Members and administrative staffs, which sometimes include blatant sabotage by key local actors, have severely compromised capacities to deliver services in a timely manner. Probably the most obvious capacity challenge noticed during this study was firmly hinged in the institutional and personnel inadequacies and competencies. However, it was discovered that at the level of technical officers, and professional staff, there are sufficient competencies. However the technical staffs often lack adequate competent support staff to carry out their departmental responsibilities.

Further, the core District Assembly departments such as the district planning and coordinating unit, the district budget office, social welfare and community development office were mostly thinly manned or in some cases completely lacked personnel. Related to this, where departments had a semblance of personnel capacity, we found that they are merely thrust with responsibilities but not given the appropriate job orientation or refresher training that would enable them cope with effectively delivering services. In addition, local community structures such as the unit committees, and area councils were found to be mostly non-functional in the least because of staff and resource limitations. Until recent pronouncement of the transfer of departmental staff from the Ghana civil service into the Local government service, local governments did not have any powers or ability to recruit, motivate or retain their own staff. The prerogative was on the central government to appoint to post staff into the local government. Hence an acute shortage of competent staff was noticed across sites.

On the whole, departments and units of the Assembly, owing to the inadequacy of financing did not have the needed material and logistical requirement to deliver the required services.
Table 16: Summary of Key Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
<th>Implication/conclusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the nature of local governance in Ghana?</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. The Political and Administrative Context</strong>&lt;br&gt;a) Political, administrative, and systemic deficits challenge effective local government function&lt;br&gt;b) Concentration of powers in presidency to appoint political and administrative heads increases political contestation above and below&lt;br&gt;c) Role of Powerful Political appointees (e.g. DCEs) within the local government structure</td>
<td>Incomplete separation of powers within the arms of government and in particular the over politicisation of administrative machinery, leaves mostly ineffective structures replete with opportunities for political favour and rent seeking behaviours. This has percolated to the local level with supervisory relationship turned into a constraining monsters rather than a facilitating process. Within this framework, local political elite are noted to seek to prosecute the political agenda of the national government instead of dealing with local needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What local community development strategies have been implemented by local government institutions?</strong>&lt;br&gt;• How were these initiated at the local level&lt;br&gt;• How local communities perceive decentralised initiatives?</td>
<td><strong>2. The Historical Antecedents</strong>&lt;br&gt;a) Tendency of re-centralisation&lt;br&gt;b) Colonial tendency not to completely decentralised permeate&lt;br&gt;c) Political gerrymandering</td>
<td>This historical experience show a continual tinkering of the decentralisation process mostly to for political convenience a persistent ‘fear factor’ of federation. This over overtime only stifles local governments of all the capacities needed to be effective and efficient providers of realistic community services. Additionally instead of strengthening current local governments political regimes compete to create new local governments, mostly fragmenting current jurisdictions into smaller less ineffective units.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What local community development strategies have been implemented by local government institutions?</strong>&lt;br&gt;• How were these initiated at the local level&lt;br&gt;• How local communities perceive decentralised initiatives?</td>
<td><strong>1. Historical national development strategies</strong>&lt;br&gt;a) Ghana has had a long circuitous experience with development strategies - experimented with at least 12 national development plans since 1951&lt;br&gt;b) Plans implemented since 1966 mostly externally motivated&lt;br&gt;c) Ghana vision 2020 strategy provided the impetus for enhanced decentralised local governance</td>
<td>powerful donor external stakeholders has historically influenced the process in ways that de-emphasised home grown local development strategies directly leading to mostly unrealistic decentralised rural communities development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What local community development strategies have been implemented by local government institutions?</strong>&lt;br&gt;• How were these initiated at the local level&lt;br&gt;• How local communities perceive decentralised initiatives?</td>
<td><strong>2. Local Government Development Strategies?</strong>&lt;br&gt;a) Tendency to transplant national development plans as local development strategies&lt;br&gt;b) contradictions and confusion in planning process at the local level&lt;br&gt;c) Local government struggle for planning congruence as they are effectively implementing agents for national government development priorities</td>
<td>Planning incongruence, because decentralised departments are in essence deconcentrated departments with a preference collaborate with their mother departments instead of collaborating with local government to develop a truly composite development local plan. Net implication is that local development projects hardly a result of participatory planning process. Active political interferences, and manipulations because of the overbearing influence of district chief executive officers who ‘filter’ development strategies and arm-twist district assembly members to rubber stamp these plans to meet national politically motivated strategies or interests. Local politics means that local development strategies are decided on partisan line and not always in the interest of local communities thought it was -probably only considered as a choiceless choice when local community development is considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What local community development strategies have been implemented by local government institutions?</strong>&lt;br&gt;• How were these initiated at the local level&lt;br&gt;• How local communities perceive decentralised initiatives?</td>
<td><strong>3. Drivers of Local Government Development Strategies</strong>&lt;br&gt;a) Central government or its agencies has high jacked - local government&lt;br&gt;b) Powerful national and local political&lt;br&gt;c) Partisan politics over-take non-partisan districts&lt;br&gt;d) Struggles to ‘tailor their plans to thematic areas’ of the national development strategies&lt;br&gt;e) No truly participatory process to drivers of the current local government development planning systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What local community development strategies have been implemented by local government institutions?</strong>&lt;br&gt;• How were these initiated at the local level&lt;br&gt;• How local communities perceive decentralised initiatives?</td>
<td><strong>4. local government a viable community development actor</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>Key Findings</td>
<td>Implication/conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| How do decentralised local authorities effectively engage the participation of   | a) Local governments are still highly valued by rural communities as development actors  
b) Local government perceived to have different values to community development: e.g. in providing community needs and amenities; helps them to identify and plan development; and lead the implementation of development initiatives  
c) Local government spend a large portion of their budgets on the provision of local amenities  
d) However compared to other development actors (NGOs), local governments rated lower as effective development agents |                         |
| communities in rural development initiatives?                                    | a) Participation in national structure  
1. Penurious institutions and physical barriers to direct local level influence of national level governance and administrative structures  
b) Accountability deficits does limit effective and direct participatory influence of local communities  
2. Local Community Development Decision Making Processes  
a) Local governments struggle to apply the National Development Planning Act 1994, (Act 480)  
b) Local politics limits this community engagement process - active involvement of community heavily dependent on the agenda of political and administrative leadership  
c) The priority mostly is to consult and inform local community members  
d) This happens when the project is directly owned by district assembly - if the project is coming from the central government, even the local government administration themselves are not consulted  
e) Ultimately, development decisions are taken by the management and political leadership  
f) Local communities insist that local governments do not consult them  
3. Opportunities to engage  
a) Local government representatives are available within communities  
b) Preference for involving district assembly structures and community gatekeepers  
c) Sceptical about the capacity of ordinary citizens to effectively participate  
d) Community members disillusioned and discouraged from actively seeking involvement  
4. Promoting Effective Citizens Involvement  
a) Approached differently given different contexts  
b) Geography and economic status important parameters for involvement approach  
c) Local governments follow approaches believed to promote development plans and priorities  
d) Empowerment drives were a crosscutting priority approach across locales |                         |
### Research Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e) Third sector organisation preferred to enhance citizens’ engagement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Implication/conclusions

5. **Mechanisms for Effective Citizen Participation**
   a) Districts strive to provide institutional support through stakeholder meetings, unit committees, area councils and assembly general meetings
   b) Strive to gather needed political support for local community engagement
   c) Citizen sensitization
   d) Review meetings, general assembly meetings preferred means for intuitional stakeholder participation
   e) A community led process appeal most to locals

### What institutional capacities exist at the local level for effective decentralisation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. The Enabling Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) The legal (policies and institutional frameworks) available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Unclear responsibilities/relationship between central and local government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Oversight responsibilities over exerted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Limited modification of policies and legal frameworks to local context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Districts have own by-laws to deal with district specific issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Expectedly the local government system within this list of powerful guiding frameworks which constitutionally sanctioned should necessarily inure to a smooth operation. Ironically noted deliberate, systemic and political processes constraint the smooth function till date. In the least central government deliberately keeps a functionally dependent relationship.

One direct result of the subjection of local government within this perpetual highly dependent functional relationship is a continual blurring of roles, eventually local governments are able to get away without un-noticed when they fail to deliver.

### Financial Resource Capability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Financial Resource Capability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Financial resource inadequacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Limited or no financial resource diversification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Local governments unable to generate sufficient local taxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Limited financial unitisation freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) District assemblies common fund arrives late and is subjected ‘heavy deductions at source’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Hindrance to Effective Local Government Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Hindrance to Effective Local Government Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Incomplete decentralisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Strained internal relationships, competitions and mistrust – between departments and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Unhealthy ‘politicking’ between district assembly members and administrative staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Limited motivation for local and community level structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Diminished ‘freedom to function’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Institutional and Personnel Capacities and Competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Institutional and Personnel Capacities and Competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Technical staff are highly skilled, well educated, have necessary training and competent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) This level of competence effectively stopped with technical and professional staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Declining number of human (numerical and functional) and functional capacity within departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Adequacy of personnel capacity, observed great staff insufficiency- mostly ‘one person’ offices with key functional personnel missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Material and logistical insufficiencies observed across departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Limited ability to recruit, motivate, and retain required high quality staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.4 Contributions to Knowledge

The contribution of this thesis is in two parts; theoretical and empirical. The theoretical contribution is demonstrated in chapters One to three. These curved out the theoretical basis and evolved a theoretical framework used to understand decentralised local governance and community development; and related relationships needed for it to impact on community development.

The second contribution; is captured in chapters Four, six, seven, and eight. These includes a historical trace of the nature and evolution of local governance in Ghana; the development strategies implemented by local government how this ensured local involvements through community participation in local development decision making processes; and local institutional capacities to successfully implement local community development.

9.4.1 Summary of Theoretical Contributions

Current theoretical propositions to decentralisation and local governance are vast and address usually macro level components and indicators. This study therefore contributes a new dimension to the prevailing theory by introducing the meso and micro level perspectives to the investigation of this subject matter. In addition its focus on local governance opposed to broader decentralisation offers yet another micro indicator to investigations.

Further, the study distils from the prevailing literature and proposes a three pronged framework (development strategies/programs; local community participation; and institutional capacity) to the analysis and understanding of the impacts of decentralised local governance to local community development. By so doing the study has contributed not only to understanding how these play out within the decentralisation framework, but how they are related to each other and again how they come together to influence local community development. Drawing on various individual frameworks, the current framework offers researchers a one-off ability to view important and specific factors that would link local governance to community development.
9.4.2 Summary of Empirical Implications

This study contributes to empirical discussions in the field of local government, development policy and administration. It adds to an understanding of the theory and practice of local government activities, and its effects on local community development. On the basis of empirical evidence this study proposes that local government policy practitioners and political agencies would better help the course of community development by effectively de-emphasising the often obvious unbridled politicking in all local government processes and work to provide practical, functional opportunities for local governments to deliver realistic services in accordance with local needs.

Probably, Within the current struggles to achieve a transformation of the locale through local governance, probably politicians, local administrators and all notable stakeholders would do better service to communities by putting people first before considering themselves and their political regime’s interest. Difficult as it may be to adopt such within the current local government context, an adoption as a moral standard in governance as Dwivedi (2002) puts it, as a guide to direct conduct, and actions of local government actors may be a first step to achieving a holistic, humane process of local transformation. In this light, the study proposes that a truly passionate process of ensuring effective local engagement be allowed to truly flourish as this would populate the local authority with real needs leading to the development and implementation of realistic programs.

However, this is possible in the context of real decentralisation. The study therefore suggests a re-think of the decentralisation process in Ghana to ensure that it is not only complete but practical as well as devoid of manipulations and political interferences. Finally that local governance would come to naught, without a capable, elaborate, and fluid system. It is suggested therefore that real attention be redirected at practical ways to financing local governance, provision of deeper capacity institutional infrastructure complete with logistical and human resources capacity.

9.5 Directions for Future Research

Although the study refers to local governance in Africa, the sample was limited to Ghana and for that matter Northern Ghana. This is mostly due to time, and financial constraint to carry out such a large study. By implication, the findings cannot be a representative position of the nature of local governance and community development in Africa.
However the framework that has evolved from this study could be adopted and applied across Africa to verify its applicability and potential contributions to theory. Further to this, though this present study used a mixed method approach, resource constraints meant that it was again limited to a relatively small sample, and applied simple uncomplicated statistical techniques.

It would be interesting to expand the quantitative sample and delve deeper with the qualitative aspects to fully comprehend and potentially draw more robust and effective conclusions. In addition, the territory covered by any local government, is also populated by many development actors, whose actions come together to ensure a holistic development is realised in communities. Prominent among these are civil society activist, National and International NGOs, and indeed quasi-governmental organisations. It may be interesting to isolate how the relationships between these organisations and local governments foster community wellbeing. In addition it would be interesting to extensively analyse their contextual views and experiences of the local government and community development process in rural settings.

This study has confirmed earlier fears of elite capture of the local government process. In particularly it has demonstrated how power and politics interact to condition to nature and relevance of the decentralisation process. It is no longer doubtful within the Ghanaian context of the conceptual and practical inconsistencies, which politicians and elites exploit to constrain to appropriate implementation of locally relevant decentralisation. What is not clear however is how the trend of power and politics relationship could be effectively harnessed to benefit rather than constraint the decentralisation process. It would be interesting to explore further in this direction.

9.7  Final Remarks

In sum, in spite of mostly negative reports found within all parameters of this study, this is not an indication of a complete lack of progress with the decentralisation enterprise in Ghana. Given the historical antecedent of military adventurism; the fact of a unitary state system is superimposed on decentralised local government machinery; and the general difficult development trajectory of Ghana, it could be concluded that significant gains have been made thus far. This conclusion notwithstanding, Ghana is yet to effectively harness its often extolled democratic tenets and the developmental benefits of local communities.
Appendix 1: In-depth Interview Guide

Individual in-depth discussions guide

Explore Decentralised local governance in poverty stricken rural communities?

1. From your experience of the implementation of local governance, what would you say the decentralised local governance means to ordinary people of this district? *(Probe case of how it has been beneficial or not to local people)*

2. Please tell me, what rural communities expect from this district and how are these dealt with by the assembly

3. Would you say decentralised local governance hold any advantages compared to centralised planning and implementation of development? *(Examples??)*

4. How would you say decentralised local governance has really occurred in this district?

Explore local community participation in local governance and community development

1. How community development decisions are usually reached in this department/district? *(probe effective engagement and involvement of individuals, local groups, associations and community based organisations )*

2. What mechanisms are available in this district to ensure citizen participation and involvement in local the planning and implementation of development initiatives

3. In which ways are public investment priorities reached through the local government system in this district to ensure they reflect needs and aspirations of local community members?

4. Who are they key players in such priority setting and decision making process? *(why do you consider these people as critical)*

5. Would you please give experience of how decision making processes can be said to have effectively reached local communities over time

6. In which ways has the district assembly enhanced the ability of individuals, and local organisations to effective engagement in the decentralised process?

7. In which ways could the services delivery ability of this district be made more community oriented?

Explore development strategies implemented and their impacts in rural communities

1. Request for district wide development plans over the last five years
2. Progress reports, annual reports
3. Request for district /department strategic and operation plan
4. Access and review local government and rural development manuals, plans and sets of guidelines for the effective implementation of local governance in Ghana if any
5. specific discussion questions to be generated from these reviews

Explore capacities for effective performance of decentralised local governance bodies

a) In general are there identifiable implementation challenges to the decentralisation process in this district? *(Probe for what they are if any)*

b) What in your opinion are the major challenges of local governance in this district

c) What does effective local governance mean to your outfit

d) Would you say decentralised local governance holds any advantages to your outfit

e) How would you describe the ability of local government staff to generate, share and use information at the work?

1. Broader system societal level
a) Taking the district as whole, how would you describe the prevailing environment for effective and efficient performance of local government (probe for sufficient freedom to act, overall appropriate and enabling policies and regulatory framework for effective functioning?)

b) From your experience in this district, would you describe the relationships of your local governance system and central government in terms of your autonomy and freedom to function as an entity (investigate potential and real interferences from central government and how this hinder the district’s capacity to deliver relevant and effective services to local people)

2. Entity and organisational level

Request for review district profile, administrative and management manuals – where available (Mission and strategy, Culture, Processes)

a) From your experience working in this district, how would you describe, the interactions between and within different decentralised departments, administrative, stakeholders and clients

b) Throughout your interaction with the local government, decentralised departments, and administrative units at the district, how would describe the local competencies (skills and ability) of officials to properly and effectively deliver local governance to communities in the district.

c) Taking the district as a whole, in your opinion, does local authority have the needed capacity to perform its duties for the citizens of your local area (could you please give specific examples and cases?)

d) Developmentally, what abilities to plan and manage sustainable development would say is exist at the your local district assembly

e) In your opinion, are there sufficient capacities at the local government level to seek of and acquire resources from alternate sources either than central government allocation for community development (cases and examples?)

3. Group of people/individual level

a) Request from district coordinating directorate, capacity profile of the district if available – human resource, quantity(adequacy) and quality (no of qualified stuff, education of staff, relevant trainings for staff)

b) That local government should be fully responsible for planning, recruitment, rewarding, promotion and discipline of local level personnel: would you say this has occurred in your district? (please explain your answer)

c) Effective and successful decentralised local programs depends to a large extend on the design but most importantly institutional and human capacity governing the implementation of such, From your experience working in this district, how would describe the state of individuals needed for the district assembly to function effectively and effectively
Appendix 2: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Community level semi structured interview guide
(Please indicate as appropriate)
1. Region of Interview ..........................
2. District of Interview ..........................
3. Name of community interview is conducted .................
4. House name (and/or) Number? ..........................

Respondent profile
1. Sex of respondent
   2. Male [ ]
   3. Female [ ]

1. Age (in years) ...........................................
   1. Marital status
   2. Single [ ]
   3. Married [ ]
   4. Divorced [ ]
   5. Widowed [ ]

2. level of formal education
   1. Never went to school [ ]
   2. completed primary [ ]
   3. completed JHSS [ ]
   4. secondary education [ ]
   5. Technical and vocational [ ]
   6. Tertiary education [ ]
   7. Other please specify [ ]

3. What do you do for a living?
   i. ____________________________________________

4. Are you a member of this community?
   1. Yes [ ]
   2. No [ ] if no go to question 12

5. What role do you play in this community? (multiple answers possible please tick all appropriate)
   1. member of community [ ]
   2. Community leader [ ]
   3. Head of my clan [ ]
   4. Head of household [ ]
   5. Association chairman [ ]
   6. Women’s group member [ ]
   7. Youth association member [ ]
   8. Member of unit committee [ ]
   9. Member of district assembly [ ]
   10. Other please specify ____________________________

Decentralisation in rural communities
6. Is there a district assembly representative for this community?
   1. Yes [ ]
   2. No [ ] skip question 14
   3. Can’t tell [ ] skip question 14

7. If no, why is there no district assembly representative for this community?
   _______________________________________________________________________

8. In the last 12 months, have you met the member of assembly of this community personally
   1. Yes [ ]
   2. No [ ]
   3. Not sure [ ]
9. How would you describe the role of your local district assembly representative (assembly member)? [Multiple options possible, please tick all which applies?]
   1. mobilise the community for development [   ]
   2. represent the voice of community members at district assembly meetings [   ]
   3. inform community members of what happens at the district assemble meetings [   ]
   4. Negotiate for local amenities for our community [   ]
   5. Don’t know [   ]
   6. Other please specify [   ]

10. What would you say are the functions of your local district assembly to your local community? (Multiple responses Possible please tick as apply)
   1. The assembly is the agent of development [   ]
   2. Agent of for revenue generation [   ]
   3. Mobilisation of communities for development [   ]
   4. Responsible for environment management [   ]
   5. Maintain peace, security, and law and order [   ]
   6. Provide public education [   ]
   7. Provide health services [   ]
   8. Represents the central government in this area [   ]
   9. Don’t know [   ]
   10. Other please specify [   ]

11. Would you say that the local district assembly is beneficial to your local community’s development process?
   1. Yes [   ]
   2. No [   ]
   3. Don’t know [   ]

12. In which ways has the local district assembly been of benefit to your local community development? (Multiple responses Possible please tick as apply)
   1. They initiate community development [   ]
   2. Provide our needs/amenities (waters, schools, hospitals, roads etc) [   ]
   3. Helps our community identify and plan development [   ]
   4. Lead community development initiatives [   ]
   5. Fund community development initiatives [   ]
   6. Others Please specify ____________________________

13. Do you believe that the district assembly is an important partner to your community’s development process?
   1. Yes [   ]
   2. No [   ]
   3. Don’t know [   ]

14. To what extent is the local district assembly important for your local community development?
   1. To a large extend [   ]
   2. To a average extend [   ]
   3. To a limited extend [   ]
   4. Not sure [   ]

15. How are members of this community involved in the district assembly activities?
   1. Sometimes work with the assembly [   ]
   2. Always work with the assembly [   ]
   3. Never work with the assembly [   ]
   4. Don’t know [   ]
   5. Others please specify [   ]

16. Compared to other local development agents, how would you rate your district assembly as a development partner?
   1. The most important development partner [   ]
   2. Equal to other agencies [   ]
   3. Less important as other agencies [   ]
   4. Don’t know [   ]
5. Other please specify [ ] ___________________________________________________________________

17. Compared to other development agencies providing services in your community, how effective would you say the district assembly is:
   1. More effective [ ]
   2. Less effective [ ]
   3. Not effective [ ]
   4. Don’t know [ ]

18. In your opinion, has the district assembly helped to improve the lives of the people in your community greatly in the last five years?
   1. Yes [ ]
   2. No [ ]
   3. Don’t know [ ]

19. If yes, in which ways has the lives of your community members been improved through the work of the district assembly

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

20. If no why not? (probe for options)

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

21. Would you say the district assembly is able to provide your community with
   1. Most of the services required [ ]
   2. Some of the services required [ ]
   3. None of the services required [ ]

Community participation decentralised local development

22. How are development decisions reached in this community?
   1. Through community meetings [ ]
   2. The district assembly identify them [ ]
   3. Assembly decisions are communicate to the community to act on [ ]
   4. Joint meetings involving assembly and community leaders [ ]
   5. Don’t know how decisions are reached [ ]
   6. Other please specify [ ] __________________________________________________________________

23. Before the Assembly implement community development initiatives in your area (multiple options possible please tick as appropriate)
   1. Everybody contribute in community fora [ ]
   2. Seek the opinions of community leaderships only [ ]
   3. Consult the political leaders only (assembly members) [ ]
   4. They organise group meetings in community [ ]
   5. They do not seek the opinion of any person [ ]
   6. Others please specify [ ] __________________________________________________________________

24. Is this decision making process best for your community?
   1. Yes [ ]
   2. No [ ]
   3. Don’t know [ ]

25. Who in this community are perceived to matter the most during community development meetings by the assembly (multiple options possible please tick as appropriate)
   1. The youth of the area [ ]
   2. Chiefs and community leaders [ ]
   3. Every community member [ ]
   4. The rich in the community [ ]
   5. Local Politicians [ ]
   6. Those with formal education [ ]
   7. Other please specify [ ] __________________________________________________________________ note reasons for response given above
26. In the last 12 months, have you attended any meeting district organised by the assembly in your local area
1. Yes [ ]  
2. No [ ]  
3. Don’t know [ ]

27. Which meeting did you last attend that was organised by the district assembly
1. Local council meeting [ ]  
2. Area committee meeting [ ]  
3. Unit committee meeting [ ]  
4. Village committee meeting [ ]  
5. School committee meeting [ ]  
6. Community forum [ ]  
7. Other please specify [ ]

28. How would you describe how local government officials perceive members of your community during community development decisions sessions?
1. as important stakeholders in decision making [ ]  
2. work together as equal partners [ ]  
3. They give instructions for the community to carry out [ ]  
4. consult community leaders to make decisions [ ]  
5. Don’t know [ ]  
6. Other please specify [ ]

29. As a member of this community, do you believe your opinions are valued by the assembly during community development decision making meetings?
1. My opinions are taken seriously [ ]  
2. My opinions are not seen as important [ ]  
3. Don’t know [ ]  
4. Other please specify [ ]

30. Would you say members of your community can influence decisions that affect your community and district?
1. Yes [ ]  
2. No [ ] skip question 36  
3. Don’t know [ ] skip question 36

31. To what extent would you say members of your community can influence decision making in your district assembly
1. To a great extent [ ]  
2. To the limited extent [ ]  
3. Not at all [ ]

32. Do you believe that local associations or groups in this community could influence the decision making at your district assembly?
1. Yes [ ]  
2. No [ ] skip question 38  
3. Not sure [ ] skip question 38

33. Please describe how this happened __________________________________________________________________________

34. Before assembly meetings, does your assembly member visit the community to seek your opinions about your community development
1. Sometimes [ ]  
2. Always [ ]  
3. Never [ ]  
4. He/she only meets with the community leaders [ ]  
5. Other please specify [ ]

35. How often does the assembly member of your community explain what goes on at the assembly to members of your community?
1. Once every two weeks [ ]  
2. Once every month [ ]  
3. Once every two month [ ]  
4. Once every three months [ ]

230
5. after every assembly meeting [ ]
6. Never meet the community [ ]
7. Other please specify [ ]

36. Are you aware of the kind of services community members can access from the district assembly?
   1. Yes [ ]
   2. No [ ] skip question 42
   3. Don’t know [ ] skip question 42

37. How did you become aware of the services that the district assembly is supposed to provide?
   1. Learnt through regular community meeting [ ]
   2. Through my family or friends [ ]
   3. Community representative told us [ ]
   4. Heard about these services on local radio [ ]
   5. Others please specify [ ] ________________

38. What would you say are the most important services available at the local government office that community members can access?

39. Do you agree that the district assembly has been able to deal with community needs?
   1. I agree [ ]
   2. Strongly agree [ ]
   3. Disagree [ ]
   4. Strongly disagree [ ]

40. Do you think your district assembly is able to meet your needs quickly?
   1. Yes [ ]
   2. No [ ]
   3. Yes but after a long time [ ]

41. How would you rate availability of the local government officials when you go to seek services they provide?
   1. The officials are not readily available [ ]
   2. Have to wait long to meet the officials [ ]
   3. I was not able to meet with the officials [ ]
   4. I was not attended to at all [ ]

42. In which ways could it be easier for your needs to be served at the local assembly when you visit?

43. Who in your opinion, should the assembly representative regularly answer to? (multiple responses possible please tick all which apply)
   1. The chief executive and administrators at the district capital [ ]
   2. To the chief and elders of community [ ]
   3. To the entire community members [ ]
   4. To groups and associations in the community [ ]
   5. Don’t know [ ] skip question 51
   6. Others please specify [ ] ________________

44. In your opinion who should the assembly member regularly report to?
   1. To the administrators in the district capital [ ]
   2. To the chief and elders [ ]
   3. To the entire community members [ ]
   4. To groups and associations in the community [ ]
   5. Don’t know [ ]
   6. Others please specify [ ]

45. What in your opinion are the major obstacles to effective decentralisation and local governance in this district?

_______________________________________________________________________________________

231
46. Are you generally satisfied with the performance of your local district assembly in regards to your area development

1. Satisfied [ ]
2. Somehow satisfied [ ]
3. Not satisfied [ ]
4. Don’t know [ ]

47. Could you please provide reasons for your response above

______________________________________________________________

Thank you!!!!
List of References


District Assembly A (2010). District Medium term development Plan Savelgu Savelgu District Assembly.


Fuller, M. A. (2009). Where the Grass is Greener: Collaborative Stakeholder Strategy Within the Context of Community Development. Niagara Falls, Ontario: ASAC.


the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) United Nations.


Pallangyo, W. A. (2009). Impact of local government reform program on local authorities' human resource capacity in Tanzania PhD, University of Manchester


