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THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION OF TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES ON SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN GHANA: A CASE STUDY OF THE AJUMAKOENYAN-ESIAM DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT: This study sets out to examine impact of the current level of participation of traditional authorities in the District Assembly system on socioeconomic development in the Ajumako Enyan-Esiam District in particular and local governance throughout Ghana. Data used for the analysis were obtained through qualitative approach and methods like semi-structured, focus group discussions, interviews and semi-structured questionnaire were used. The sampling procedure was generally purposive. The research design was a case study, partly descriptive, explorative and cross-sectional. The findings demonstrated a picture of low level of participation of traditional authorities in local government in the Ajumako-Enyan-Esiam District Assembly and its negative influence on the provision of development projects to the people. They also confirmed a deeply held acceptance on the Traditional Authorities' full participation in local governance. Again, the study found that, traditional authorities play several roles at the local level. These roles were identified as settling disputes and managing conflicts, soliciting and initiating development projects as well as mobilizing people for development, but their level of involvement in the District Assembly is negligible. The study recommends the full participation of traditional authorities in the planning, implementation and execution of projects in their various communities as a way of integrating the chieftaincy institution into the formal governance system to enhance socio-economic development.

Keywords–Development, District Assemblies, socioeconomic, Traditional Authority, localgovernance.

I. INTRODUCTION

Governance in Ghana is based on the decentralised system as it subsists in most parts of Africa and Traditional Authorities have long been central to Ghanaian societies with a general consensus that, they should be integrated into both central and local governance. For instance, the Coussey Committee on Constitutional Reforms in 1949 recommended a strong representation of traditional authorities in state governance. Also, the National Liberation Movement (N.L.M.) of the then Gold Coast, among other things, fought for the protection and participation of traditional rulers in governance (De Waal, 1997, cited in Khoza, 2002). A research report by the Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development (CIKOD) Ghana and the University of Cape Coast (UCC) in eight districts in Central and Brong Ahafo regions of Ghana describes the institution of the traditional authority system to comprise chiefs, queen mothers, clan heads, elders, asafo and youth groups and traditional priests. The traditional area is the basic unit of governance with a traditional council as the administrative structure. In that report, traditional authorities' respondents stated that, they are generally relegated to the background by the District Assemblies in terms of planning and implementation of projects in the district. However, officials from those districts think that the assemblies have created sufficient room for Traditional Authorities to participate through community forums, frequent consultations and their representation on committees of the assemblies. The same research report states that, although the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Culture and the Houses of Chiefs are the official institutions charged with the responsibility of integrating traditional knowledge into national policy, there are no legal mechanisms for interaction with other government institutions, except for some token representation on the Council of State, the Regional Co-ordinating Councils and some state commissions. At the community level, the unit committees and area councils are the official organs of the decentralized governance system. These existing linkages between state institutions and traditional

authorities at various levels are clearly insufficient, resulting in conflicting activities between them. The research again found out that, there was a general call for a return to the Town and Village Development Committee System of the 1970s which brought together both traditional institutions and all stakeholders with the chief as the head. The barrier between the traditional and formal structures is mistrust and fear of conflicting power relations. Nonetheless, it was evident from the study that, there is goodwill between the two sides in terms of the willingness to work together. This is particularly true at the sub- district levels. (Guri et al, 2008). However, none of the existing legislations on the decentralization process in Ghana today specifies any automatic inclusion of traditional authorities in local governance, despite their contribution in socio-economic development. This is exemplified in the promotion of educational development programmes and projects by Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, environmental conservation and climate change programmes and projects by Okyene Osagyefo Amoatia Ofori Panin, value added agricultural production and processing programmes/projects by Juabenhene, among others. During the 1999–2001 and 2002–2003 rounds of the Afro Barometer Public Opinion Surveys, data was collected from over thirty-five thousand respondents in fifteen African countries in face to face interviews. When the data was analysed, the results indicated that about two thirds of respondents acknowledged and generally valued their traditional leaders, with a slightly better opinion of them than of formal governance institutions (Logan, 2009, cited in Dokurugu, 2011). The ultimate concern of governance is to create the conditions for ordered rule and collective action which is central to achieving political stability even though such a capacity has remained a challenge to Ghana. The local government system is carried out through the District Assemblies, Area Councils and Unit Committees who make up the decision-making bodies to which some of the representatives are elected. Being the lowest level of authority for planning and development, the District Assemblies are expected to engage the people in constant dialogue so as to determine the development goals as enshrined in the 1992 Republican Constitution as well as the Local Government Act 462 of 1993 (AAG, 2002 cited in Edu-Afful, 2010). Article 36 (5) (d) of the 1992 Republican Constitution states that, “the state makes democracy a reality by decentralising the administrative and financial machinery of government to regions and districts by affording all possible opportunities to the people to participate in decision making at every level in natural life and in government”. It is believed that, meaningful development can only be achieved when traditional authorities work in partnership with the government institutions, especially at the local level where traditional leadership is deeply rooted and state agencies are seen only as axis for development.

In addition, decentralisation, which involves the delegation of authority for the operation of public functions from the general government or its agencies to the lower levels (Rondinelli, 1981), has become a core issue in development discourse, since it provides the medium for effective participation of the rural sector in the governance process. It is seen as a key element for the process of attaining democracy, particularly in the search for a more participatory approach to the development process. And traditional authorities and central government with its local agencies are stakeholders when it comes to the issue of good governance. Development effort can only be sustained over the long.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Ghana is well endowed with a resilient traditional authority system that is involved in the socio-economic development of the country at the local level. It brings in the added value of local resource mobilization, useful indigenous and local knowledge as well as effective local organizational systems to complement the formal modern governance systems for a more socially, economically and environmentally sustainable development. However, the 1992 Republican Constitution and Local Government Act of 1993 do not have provisions for the automatic membership of traditional authorities on district councils, except for a clause in the Local Government Act which states that, not more than thirty percent (30%) of the district assembly membership may be appointed by the President (which includes traditional rulers) in consultation with traditional authorities and other interest groups in the district. This has resulted in traditional authorities voicing their discontent at the way they have been neglected by the district assemblies and central government in decision making, especially, at the local level (Cook, 2005; cited in Edu-Afful, 2010). To them, this representation is not enough and so needs a greater representation at the district assemblies.

Also, the reduction of power of traditional authorities and taking over the control of their resources such as lands, mineral deposits, and so on by the central government and district assemblies does not make it possible for them to respond effectively to the demands of their constituents. As a result, traditional authorities are unable to play their leadership roles in the development of their traditional areas, even though their prestige and legitimacy are deeply engrained in the consciousness of the people (Akropong, 2006). The little attention being paid to the current level of participation of traditional authorities in development at the local level by the state and researchers make this study very necessary.

III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The research sought to examine the impact of the current level of participation of Traditional Authorities in the Assembly in the development efforts of the Ajumako- Enyan-Esiam District in particular and local development throughout Ghana.

IV. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- (a) assess the extent to which traditional authorities participate in local governance in the Ajumako-Enyan-Esiam District
- (b) highlight the impact of the current level of participation of traditional authorities in the Assembly on socio-economic development in the district.

V. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent do traditional authorities participate in local governance in the Ajumako-Enyan-Esiam District Assembly?
2. How does the current level of participation of Traditional Authorities impact on socioeconomic development in the A.E.E.D?

VI. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is deemed significant and beneficial to the following stakeholders:

Traditional Authorities– These are the centre of the research, and as such, the study will highlight the significant roles they could play in the local government system if given the opportunity to do so to enhance socio-economic development in their areas of jurisdiction.

Communities in the District – This study will inform people in the towns and villages in the district on the important roles traditional authorities could play if given the needed support and opportunity in the local government system to bring about meaningful socioeconomic development in the area.

The District Assembly and Central Government – The results of this study will help the Ajumako-Enyan-Esiam District Assembly as well as the central government of Ghana to see the need to fully involve traditional authorities to enable them play active roles in local government system for accelerated socio-economic development.

Future Researchers-The report will also be a source of reference for future researchers intending to study about traditional authorities in local government in Ghana and elsewhere.

VII. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is a case study. Frankfort- Nachmais and Nachmais (1996) maintain that a case study is a useful approach for understanding the complexity and dynamism of social issues that require lasting responses. Also, Kumekpor (2002) opines that case study enables understanding of an individual, a group, a community, a social situation or an issue in order to take decisions that take into consideration the special and peculiar circumstances surrounding the case investigated, or practical solutions relating to the case in question. He further states that case studies investigate issues from all possible sources and angles. Yin (1994) also points out that case studies investigate contemporary phenomena within their real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomena and their contexts are not clearly evident. The debate on the relevance of traditional authority to local level development is contemporary and within a real-life context. The case study approach therefore enriches the findings of the study and for that matter provides useful information for development policy formulation to foster development in the district and the whole country.

VIII. DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

In this study, the population included residents of the Ajumako-Enyan-Esiam District in the Central region of Ghana. The research required the views of traditional authorities, assembly members and district assembly officials and as such, they constituted the target population.

IX. SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The sample for the study consisted of sixteen (16) traditional authorities (comprising seven (7) male chiefs, two (2) queen mothers and seven (7) male family heads), three (3) males and one (1) female district assembly officials and seven (7) male and three (3) female assembly members. In all, a total sample of thirty (30) respondents was targeted for the research- twenty-six (26) respondents for interviews and four (4) respondents for questionnaire. The purposive sampling procedure was employed because it was the best way to

get the target population that could give the necessary information for the research. Table 3.1 below presents the sample category and the data collection method used. It also shows the categories of participant

Table 9.1 The samples and data collection methods

Sample Category	Total	Sampling Technique	DataCollection Instrument
Traditional Authorities	16	Purposive	Interview
Assembly Members	10	Purposive	Interview
Dist.Assembly Officials	4	Purposive	Questionnaire
Total	30		

Data collection in qualitative study usually involves techniques such as interviews, questionnaire and observation. However, in this study, interview schedules and questionnaire were adopted for collecting data. Each group of participants was with similar characteristics.

The participants of the focus group discussion were contacted and briefed on the focus of the study and given a week notice and a reminder the day before the focus group. The questionnaire was mostly open-ended and comprised six sections. Section A considered the demographic data of respondents; Section B considered the level of involvement of traditional authorities in local governance; Section C assessed the gap created by the absence of traditional authorities (chiefs, queen mothers and family heads) in local governance and Section D assessed the ways to open the local government system in order to integrate traditional authorities into formal local government system to accelerate socio-economic development in the studied area. Semi-structured interview guides were used as a data collection tool for traditional authorities while focus group discussions were employed to gather data from assembly members of two groups on two different schedules. Focus group discussion is a data collection technique extensively employed by social science researchers. It involves persons specially selected because of their expertise or position in the community in an attempt to collect information on certain issues, as well as brainstorm on a number of solutions. As Patton (1990) points out, multiple sources of information are sought and used because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective. In addition, a combination of interviews, questionnaire and focus group discussion provide the researcher different data sources for triangulation in order to validate and cross-check its findings.

Result and discussion of research Questions

Research Question One –To what extent do traditional authorities participate in local government in the Ajumako-Enyan-Esiam District Assembly?

The researcher wanted to assess the respondents' perception and satisfaction on the extent to which traditional authorities participate in local government in the Ajumako-Enyan-Esiam District Assembly. There respondents' responses were presented in Table 4.0 below

Table 4.0 Respondents' satisfaction on the Traditional Authorities' participation in the District Assembly

Responses	Traditional authorities %		Assembly members %		District assembly Officials %		Total %	
Yes	5	31	4	40	3	75	12	40
No	11	69	6	60	1	25	18	60
Total	16	100	10	100	4	100	30	100

This question was posed to all three categories of respondents (that is, Traditional Authorities, District Assembly Officials and Assembly Members). In the case of the traditional authorities as shown in Table 4.6 above, 69% of them felt that they were not satisfied with their involvement in local government in the Ajumako-Enyan-Esiam District Assembly. The traditional authorities' responses were supported by the Assembly members. Out of 10 Assembly members who participated in the study, 6 of them or 60% reported that they were not satisfied with the level of the traditional authorities' involvement in local government in the Ajumako-Enyan-Esiam District. Assembly officials had contrary perception to both the traditional authorities and Assembly members. To majority of them (75%), they were satisfied with the traditional authorities' involvement in the local government system including the Ajumako-Enyan-Esiam District Assembly. One of the District Assembly officials stated that:

'chieftaincy institution is fraught with a lot of conflicts and disputes and as such cannot govern the local people without running into serious difficulties'

In addition, the researcher wanted to find out from the study participants their perception on the roles played by traditional authorities. The roles the respondents mentioned include settling disputes and managing conflicts,

maintaining law and order and managing community resources as well as mobilizing people for development projects. Their responses were categorized and presented in Table 4.1 below.

Responses	Traditional Authorities	Assembly members	Dist. Assembly	Total
Settle disputes and manage conflicts	50.0	50.0	75	53
Mobilize people for development	25.0	30	25	27
Manage community resources	12.5	20	0	13
Maintain law and order	12.5	0	0	7
Total	100	100	100	100

As can be inferred from Table 4.1 above, 53% of the respondents indicated that the common role of the traditional authorities was to settle disputes and manage conflicts. Concerning the traditional authorities, 8 of them, representing 50% confirmed this role.

Table 4.1 above further revealed that the second common role of the traditional authorities was mobilizing people for development (27%), followed by managing community resources (13%), while maintaining law and order was their least role (7%).

The findings of both survey and interview data demonstrated a picture of low level of involvement of traditional authorities in local government in the Ajumako-Enyan-Esiam District Assembly and its negative influence on the provision of development projects to the people. The findings demonstrated that majority of the three categories that participated in the study were not satisfied with the current level of involvement of traditional authorities in the local assembly administration. The traditional authorities had restrictive views about the lack of effective relationships between them and the District Assembly.

The respondents clearly indicated that they were not satisfied with the current level of involvement of traditional authorities in the District Assembly's activities as well as its relationships with the traditional authorities. They reported that the traditional authorities' roles of settling disputes, managing conflicts and mobilizing people for development should usher them in the District Assembly Administration.

The findings also confirmed a deeply held view of Ababio (2003) on Traditional Authorities' involvement in local governance. He emphasized that Traditional Authorities' involvement in District Assembly is more associated with development projects, and that, in the area of the local people's participation in the development projects it takes the form of communities' involvement in the projects to help reduce the total cost or expenditure of those projects. Nukunya (2003) also added that community members are usually involved in moulding of bricks, collection of sand and stones, in short, anything that can be found locally, which also include free labour. The traditional leaders by virtue of their power over customary rites exert tremendous influence on social life as such failure to comply is associated with serious sanctions.

Research Question Two—How does the current level of participation of traditional authorities impact socio-economic development in the A.E.E.D.?

Table 5 How the current level of participation of traditional authorities in local governance impacts on Socio-economic Development in the A.E.E.D.

Responses	Frequencies	Percentages
Delays in releasing land for projects	3	30.0
Poor management of natural resources	2	20.0
Lack of respect for Traditional Authorities	5	50.0
Total	10	100

This question was posed to the Assembly Members to identify the negative effects of the non-full participation of traditional authorities in local government in the Ajumako-Enyan-Esiam District Assembly, especially in its socio-economic development efforts. All of the 10 members who were interviewed emphasized that, they appreciated the value of the role traditional authorities play, for instance, in keeping law and order through the enactment of by-laws and settling disputes. They argue that without social order and peaceful co-existence with each other, the survival of humanity will be jeopardized. Their responses were categorized and presented in table 4.9 below.

The traditional authorities, mainly chiefs, were responsible for maintaining law and order in their localities, as well as for collecting taxes and undertaking minor public works like the establishment of village

markets and construction of feeder roads in the colonial era. To enforce law and order, the chiefs had native courts and police. Colonial government agents in the field were the governors, who had executive authority to manage their provinces. Also, Nkrumah (2000) argues that the administrative officers were expected to advise and supervise native authorities, but never to interfere directly.

The strategy was to establish local self-rule built on traditional political institutions and custom. He emphasized that, such institutions enhance checks and balances at the local system of administration.

The current level of participation of traditional authorities in local governance does negatively affect the District Assemblies' socio-economic development efforts. This is because, it has undermined the ability of traditional authorities to mobilize their people for development and in some cases, projects and programmes are either uncompleted or totally abandoned. The reasons for this disturbing phenomenon are not far-fetched. For instance, the study revealed that, mostly the traditional authorities are not consulted by both central and local governments before these projects are undertaken. Sometimes only assembly members are informed about the assembly's intentions to bring development projects to the people in their communities. This sometimes leads to conflicts between assembly members and traditional leaders as well as relocating developmental programmes and projects to elsewhere. Again, the phenomenon makes some District Assemblies having less influence on traditional authorities because of the former's inability to provide development-oriented leadership to their people in contemporary society. From the above discussion, it can be said that, indeed the current level of participation of traditional authorities in local

governance does negatively affect the socio-economic development efforts of the Ajumako-Enyan-Esiam District. There is therefore the urgent need to fully integrate them into the District Assembly system for them to contribute effectively in terms of socioeconomic development locally.

Chieftaincy in Ghana is modeled on a hierarchical structure of authority. The traditional authorities still hold that power in terms of governance and so when one is taking any decision which borders on the traditional areas, one ought to first inform them (Bacho, 2001). He further indicated that if one looks at the indirect rule system, the colonial masters saw the important roles chiefs could play in governance hence the desire to use them. Therefore, if the Assemblies want to manage the affairs of the people, they

need the chief; that was why the indirect rule used them to push certain policies and they were successful. Same is recommended today for active and effective participation of our traditional authorities in the district assemblies. This is because the study revealed that the traditional authorities should be invited to join the assembly in the planning of the development programs and projects for the various communities, particularly when the projects concern them, for they are the custodians of traditional resources. The finding was consistent with that of Kendie et al, (2008) who emphasized that both traditional authorities and the Assembly should live in peace and respect each other's offices; there should be joint meetings/ discussions to find solutions to problems confronting the people and that both should be accountable and transparent to each other. Addo-Danquah (2004) on his part, added that the modalities of integrating chiefs into the formal system of governance include the creation of an upper house of chiefs to run alongside the district assembly. He reiterated that, maintaining the upper house of chiefs includes giving chiefs the powers to legislate and maintain the traditional courts, with chiefs performing judicial duties and having the authority to enforce their rulings.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions from the study, these recommendations are made:

1. The roles and functions of traditional authorities and local government officials must be well-defined and agreed upon and the public must be made to understand this delineation of responsibilities.
2. Traditional authorities must be fully involved in the implementation of programmes and projects in their areas of jurisdiction to enhance the legitimacy of those projects and programmes to the local people.
3. There should be frequent workshops and platforms to educate traditional authorities on the state of affairs of the district to ensure some form of accountability and transparency in the governance process.

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