

Leadership in the Decentralised Local Government System in the Central Region of Ghana

Adom Baisie Ghartey

Executive Director, Ghartey Associates, Accra, Ghana..

Benjamin Baisie Ghartey

Lecturer, Department of Administration and Management Studies
Wa Campus, University for Development Studies, Ghana.

David Wellington Essaw

Research Fellow, Institute for Development Studies
University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana.

Abstract

Effective leadership is vital for achieving the virtues of decentralisation. However, the leadership approaches regarding the behaviour of leaders and the interrelationships among leaders and followers in the decentralised local government (LG) system in most developing countries appears to be directive, instructive and prescriptive rather than involving the followers and beneficiaries in the decision-making and implementation processes. The paper examined the leadership approaches in LGs in the Central Region of Ghana. Descriptive survey design and mixed-methods were used. A sample of 989 respondents was selected from three LG areas namely; Cape Coast Metropolis (CCM), Effutu Municipality and Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa (AOB) District using multi-stage, purposive and stratified sampling procedures. Interview guide and interview schedules were used to collect primary data from regional, district and community actors. The data were analysed using content analysis and descriptive statistics. The study revealed that leadership was perceived as a position and not an influence relationship and mixed leadership behaviours were exhibited depending on the accountability expectations of leaders and followers. Also, capabilities of leaders were based on academic qualifications, professional backgrounds and experience and not their ability to influence followers to enhance management of LGs. It was recommended that LG practitioners and civil society should raise consciousness among the leadership of the LGs to recognise leadership as an influence relationship between leaders and followers and to adopt leadership approaches that will facilitate interdependence between leaders and followers.

Keywords: Leadership, management, development interventions, decentralisation, local governments

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is an influence relationship between leaders and followers that reflect their shared purposes (Rost, 1993). Leadership approaches regarding the behaviour of leaders and the interrelationships among leaders and followers is vital for effective management of development interventions (Flynn, 1997). Management focuses on planning, organising and controlling the interventions to maintain stability (Daft & Marcic 1998). Development interventions on the other hand are the initiatives, actions, processes and procedures adopted in providing social services, improving well-being of citizens, alleviating poverty and achieving

development goals (Chambers, 2005). LGs are established to undertake development interventions to alleviate poverty and provide other social services (Oates, 2006; Shah, 2006).

Leadership approaches that facilitate leader-follower interrelationships ensure commitment, ownership, achievement and sustenance of development goals. Jung and Avolio (1999) have argued that in accordance with the transformational and integrative leadership theories, leaders must build self-confidence, self-sufficiency and self-esteem in the followers, positively influence followers' identification with the organisation and vision, as well as boost motivation and goal achievement. Similarly, proponents of decentralisation theory have emphasised that effective leadership facilitates achievement of the virtues of decentralised local government (LG) system by eliciting participation and enhancing responsiveness to mandates and development aspirations of constituents (Ahwoi, 2009; Antwi, 2009).

Literature on leadership and management of development interventions in most developing countries suggests a tendency for leaders to be directive, instructive and prescriptive rather than involving the followers and beneficiaries in the decision-making and implementation processes (Chambers, 1997). According to Chambers (2005; 1997), this approach to leadership slows down development and sustained growth at the various levels of governance. The followers and beneficiaries are disempowered and assume passive roles in managing the development process, resulting in loss of confidence and trust in their ability to drive their own development agenda (Covey, 2004). Until the followers reduced dependence on the leader and followers developed their creative abilities, development goals cannot be achieved and sustained (Osei-Ababio, 2007).

Ghana's decentralisation programme introduced in 1988 devolves political, administrative and fiscal authority to LG structures: the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies [MMDAs] (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development [MLGRD], 1996). Following two decades of implementation, it has been observed that the LG system is faced with leadership challenges (Asante, 2009; Gyimah-Boadi, 2009; Offei-Aboagye, 2009). Similarly, Ahwoi (2009) notes that the MMDAs experience frequent and uncoordinated transfers and changes in the top political and administrative hierarchy of the leadership due to autocratic tendencies of the leaders, arbitrary use of power as well as inability to respond to mandates and development aspirations of constituents.

Several studies have been conducted to assess progress made by LGs in responding to their mandates and the development aspirations of constituents, but the focus has been on response to legal and regulatory requirements with less attention to the role that leadership approaches play in the process (MLGRD, 2007). The MLGRD introduced the Functional Organisational Assessment Tool (FOAT) in 2008 to assess the performance of the MMDAs in responding to their mandates and management requirements, and motivate them by giving qualified ones additional resources known as the District Development Facility (DDF). Two assessments had been conducted as at January 2011, the first in 2008 and the second in 2009 (MLGRD, 2010a, 2010b) but the assessment focused on efficiency and effectiveness requirements with less attention to the leadership approaches in motivating followers and coordinating actions of the various actors.

It is within the context of the FOAT assessment that this paper examined the leadership approaches in LGs in the Central Region of Ghana which has featured prominently in Ghana's decentralisation process. Despite being a precursor in the decentralised LG system in Ghana,

the region is facing leadership and management challenges. It is the fourth poorest region out of 10 regions in Ghana despite its first class educational institutions (Central Region Coordinating Council, 2009). It was also the second poorest performed region with only two out of the 13 districts qualifying for the DDF in 2008, and the third best in 2009 with 16 out of the 17 MMDAs qualifying for the DDF (MLGRD, 2010b).

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The paper is steered by leadership theories, structural functionalism and systems thinking. Several theories, including the great man, traits, behaviour and situational theories underpin the leadership approaches of leaders. The great man theories of leadership led to the trait and other theories that emphasised situational and environmental factors as well as theories around persons and situations, psychoanalysis, role attainment and contingencies. The great man theory argues that few people are born with the necessary characteristics to be great and created the perception that only few people were born with and could exercise leadership (Covey, 2004). Similarly, the traits theory suggests that the leader is endowed with superior traits and characteristics that differentiate the leader from followers. Researchers characterised these traits as initiative, creativity, enthusiasm, intelligence, emotional maturity, communication and interpersonal skills, self-confidence, honesty, fairness, loyalty, dependability as well as technical mastery (Manning & Curtis, 2007; Fairholm, 1998).

In Bennis' (1993) view, effective leaders perform three functions, they align, create, and empower. Leaders transform organisations by aligning human and other resources, creating an organisational culture that fosters the free expression of ideas, and empowering others to contribute to the organisation. Enthusiasm shown by a leader generates enthusiasm in followers (Covey, 2004). Manning and Curtis (2007) contend that the cluster of characteristics differentiate leaders from followers and effective from ineffective leaders. They submit that conceptions of the characteristics of leadership are culturally determined. The qualities of the person and environmental factors are critical elements in the leadership equation, thus leadership results from the inextricable interaction between the two.

Lewin, Lippit and White (1939) identified behaviours indicative of three leadership styles namely; autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire. The autocratic style was characterised by the control of group activities and decisions made by the leader. The democratic style emphasised group participation and majority rule, while the laissez-faire leadership style entailed low levels of involvement by the leader. The leadership styles emphasise the impact of the behaviour of the leader on the performance of followers. Marriner (1994) notes that the traits in a leader differ according to varying situations including situational and environmental factors so the leadership behaviour cannot be predetermined. This makes leadership behaviour and its responsiveness to followers' expectations complex (Beerel, 1998).

The structural-functionalists see the society as a system of interconnected parts that work together in harmony to maintain a state of balance and social equilibrium for the whole. They emphasise the interconnectedness of society by focusing on how each part influences and is influenced by other parts (Mooney, Knox & Schacht, 2002). It is in the context of the structural-functionalist paradigm that this paper views the leader-follower relationship in the leadership process from a systems thinking perspective. Systems theory provides the framework for systems thinking. It focuses on the interconnectedness between the parts which make it a whole, referred to as 'holism' and which provides synergy (von Bertalanffy, 1968). This perspective is known as 'systemic' while the way of thinking is 'systems thinking' (Checkland,

1999). These principles of holism and synergy provide the basis for understanding the interrelationships between leaders and followers in LGs.

Covey (2004) contends that the leadership approach should seek to reduce leader-dependency and leader-follower co-dependency inclinations in which the followers over-depend on the leader and both the leader and followers depend on one another for subordination and authority. It should empower followers to conceptualise and analyse issues in order to enhance commitment and ownership.

LEADERSHIP IN THE DECENTRALISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

Leadership is the ability to inspire confidence and support among people (DuBrin, 1997). Daft and Marcic (1998) and Hodgetts (1999) see leadership as the process of influencing people to direct their efforts toward the achievement of some particular goal(s). In Robbins' (2003) view, leadership is about controlling and directing people or organisations towards predetermined goals. Covey (2004), on the other hand, defines leadership as communicating to people their worth and potential so clearly that they realise it themselves. According to Manning and Curtis (2007), leadership is a social influence. It is leaving a mark by initiating and guiding to achieve change. Leadership has, therefore, been understood as a real and powerful influence in organisations and societies (Rondinelli & Heffron, 2009).

The different notions about leadership translate into having a vision and the ability to communicate that vision to influence people to achieve a desired goal. However, all but Rost (1993) and Covey (2004) appear to highlight only the leaders' ability to influence the followers without making explicit the ability of followers to influence the leaders. Daft (1999) argued that leadership involves influence, occurs among people and those people intentionally desire significant changes that reflect purposes shared by leaders and followers. The relationship among people is not passive, but multidirectional, non-coercive and reciprocal.

Covey (2004) contends that leadership is not a formal position, but a choice to deal with people in ways that communicate their worth and potential. The definitions of Rost (1993) and Covey (2004) respond to the context of this paper and highlight the complex interrelationships between the leader and followers. They see leadership not as a position but involving leaders and followers, with leaders influencing the followers to achieve shared purposes. Implicit in the definitions is the followers' opportunity and choice to influence the leaders.

The leadership of the MMDAs are expected to play critical roles in facilitating efficient service delivery, good governance and effective management of development interventions (Kendie & Mensah, 2008). Management involves getting things done in an effective and efficient manner by planning, organising, leading, controlling and making decisions on the use of organisational resources to accomplish goals. Planning defines goals for the future organisational performance and the tasks and resources needed to attain goals. Organising entails assigning tasks, grouping tasks into departments, and allocating resources to departments. Leading involves the use of influence to motivate employees to achieve the organisation's goals, while controlling is concerned with monitoring employees' activities, keeping the organisation on track toward its goals, and making corrections as needed. Managers and leaders use a lot of skills to perform these functions. They require conceptual, human and technical skills (Daft & Marcic, 1998).

The conceptual framework for the study (Figure 1) views the leadership process in the LG system from a systems thinking perspective. The interrelationship between leaders and followers should form the basis for achieving responsive leadership approaches. Each sub-system needs to function in relation to its elements. Leadership cannot be reduced to position but should be viewed from the leadership approaches in terms of style, and how it influences leader-follower interrelationships. Leadership should also be viewed from the perspective of how it relates to the situational and environmental contexts of LGs in order to respond to mandates and development goals (Van der Lee, 2002).

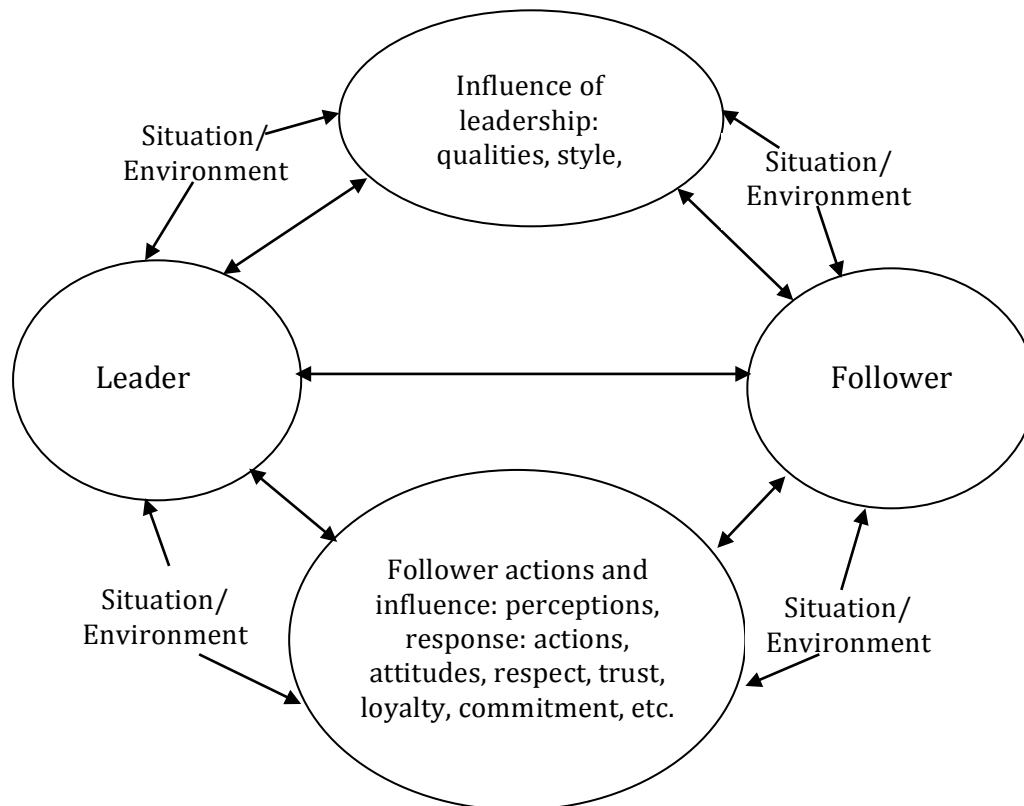


Figure 1: The leadership process

Source: Adapted from Mooney, Knox & Schacht, 2002; Covey (2004) and Rost (1993)

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The interrelationships among leaders and followers have been used to emphasise the importance of viewing leadership from a systems perspective. A number of studies have examined different processes through which leadership effects are ultimately realized in terms of management outcomes (Avolio et al. 2009). These processes include followers' formation of commitment; satisfaction; identification; perceived fairness (e.g. Liao & Chuang 2007, Walumbwa et al. 2008); job characteristics such as variety, identity, significance, autonomy and feedback (e.g. Piccolo & Colquitt 2006); trust in the leader (e.g. Wang et al. 2005); and how followers come to feel about themselves and their group in terms of efficacy, potency, and cohesion (e.g. Bass et al. 2003, Bono & Judge 2003, Schaubroeck et al. 2007).

Nitin et al. (2003) in Covey (2004, p.115) conducted a five-year study on over 200 well established management practices used over a 10-year period by 160 companies and concluded that practices which yielded superior results were those that promoted stronger interrelationships among leaders and followers. Similarly, Heifetz (1994) in his work on leadership and management at the JF Kennedy School of Government concluded that effectiveness was demonstrated by the co-creation of solution through meaningful

participation of all relevant stakeholders. Although the concept of leader-follower interrelationships has met with wide acceptance in the scientific community and has proved successful in many Western countries, it is not confirmed, whether the same level of success will occur in the decentralised system of LG in Ghana, as leadership approaches in Ghana are still evolving in response to the tenets of decentralised system of LG.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analysed using the mixed-methods design. In addition, descriptive survey study design was used to obtain information on the current situation of the leadership process in the MMDAs. Three areas were selected for the study namely; CCM, Effutu Municipality and AOB District. The study population was 53,506 out of which 989 respondents were sampled for the study. This comprised the Regional Coordinating Director (RCD) and Economic Planning Officer (REPO) at the regional level, the political and administrative leadership at the district level, as well as the registered voters in the electoral areas of the elected Assembly members in the three study areas.

Using a multi-stage sampling procedure involving five main stages, the respondents at the regional, district and community levels were sampled. This ensured that the different categories of regional actors, MMDAs, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs), Metropolitan, Municipal and District Coordinating Directors (MMDCDs), heads of department (HoDs), Assembly members (AMs) and community members that were of interest to the study were adequately represented on the sample. This facilitated comparison, ensured valid conclusions, and enabled generalisation in terms of the population.

At the first stage, the regional level respondents namely; the RCD and REPO were purposively selected. As the study was conducted within the FOAT setting, the regional actors who provided policy, monitoring and coordinating support were purposively sampled to share their perspectives on leadership and management issues in the MMDAs.

The second stage involved purposive selection of the three MMDAs. As only two FOAT had been conducted by January 2011, the 17 MMDAs in the region were categorised into three, namely MMDAs that qualified for the DDF in all the two assessments, MMDAs that qualified in only one, and those that did not qualify in any of the two assessments to ensure representativeness. One district was purposively selected from each of the three categories as follows: the only Metropolitan Assembly (CCM) which qualified for the DDF in the second assessment; one District Assembly, AOB, which qualified for the DDF in both assessments and the only Municipal Assembly, Effutu, which did not qualify for the DDF in both assessments.

At the third stage, all the three MMDCEs and all the HoDs (16 in CCM, 13 in Effutu Municipality and 11 in AOB District) were purposively selected due to their key roles in the leadership and management processes in their Assemblies. Also, all the AMs (60 in CCM, 24 in Effutu Municipality and 33 in AOB District) who ended their term of office in October 2010 were purposively selected to ensure that the AMs in office at the time of the FOAT assessments were interviewed. They constituted the leadership of sub-committees of the Assembly and could appropriately respond to the leadership and management issues investigated.

The fourth stage entailed establishing the number of elected AMs that were available for interview in order to ensure that their constituents were located to assess their leadership approaches. Since the term of office of the elected AMs had expired, some had relocated

outside the area and could not be contacted. Those who could be contacted formed the basis for selecting the community level respondents.

For the CCM, 36 out of the 60 AMs (18 elected and 18 appointed) were located. Of the 24 AMs in the Effutu Municipality, 14 comprising seven each of appointed and elected members were located. For the AOB District, 20 (10 elected and 10 appointed) members could be located. Since the community level respondents were expected to share their perspectives on their elected representatives, only the communities that constituted the electoral areas of the elected AMs who could be contacted were purposively selected. This resulted in the selection of 18 electoral communities in CCM, seven in Effutu Municipality and 10 in AOB District.

The list of the 2008 registered voters by constituency was procured from the Electoral Commission of Ghana and used to establish the adult population in each of the electoral areas of the elected AMs that were contacted at the fifth stage. The registered voters were selected as respondents for this study on the assumption that at the voting age of 18 years they were capable of making informed judgement on the leadership approaches of their AMs (Government of Ghana, 1992).

The registered voters were selected using the stratified sampling method, with each selected district forming a stratum from which the registered voters were selected. Using Cochran's (1977) sample size estimation formula, the sample size of the registered voters from the three study districts was calculated. A margin of error of 0.05 was adopted, indicating the level of risk the study was willing to take that the true margin of error may exceed the acceptable margin of error. By using the formula, the proportion of registered voters in the selected communities to the total number of registered voters produced a sample size of 295, 230 and 302 voters for CCM Assembly, Effutu Municipal Assembly and AOB Assembly respectively. Based on the proportion of the registered voters in each community to the total number of registered voters in the respective district, the sample sizes were proportionately allocated to the various communities.

A key factor considered in sampling the community level respondents was the need to ensure that only persons who had experienced the leadership of the elected AMs were interviewed. A minimum of five years stay in the community was considered. Consequently, a snowball sampling approach was used until the required sample sizes were exhausted in each community. Interview schedule and interview guide were used to collect the data. The data was analysed using Statistical Product and Service Solutions version 17 software. Descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages were used to present the data. The descriptive statistics were supported by statements and quotations from the respondents to explain the reasons behind the figures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the perspectives of respondents on who constituted the leadership in the MMDAs. It also discusses the leadership behaviours, qualities and interrelationships.

Leadership in the MMDAs

The views of the 105 district level respondents were sought on who constituted the leadership in the MMDAs. Overall, 35 percent, 21.7 percent and 27.2 percent of the 180 responses indicated that the MMDCEs, MMDCDs and Presiding Members (PMs), respectively, constituted the leadership in the MMDAs (Table 1). Similar proportions were observed in the MMDA-specific responses. For example, 37.3 percent in CCM, 32.7 percent in Effutu Municipality, and

33.9 percent in AOB District regarded the MMDCEs as constituting the leadership, whilst 26.7 percent, 28.5 percent and 26.8 percent in CCM, Effutu Municipality and AOB District respectively, perceived the PMs as the leadership.

Thirty-eight percent, 14.8 percent and 28.1 percent of the 128 responses from the 105 respondents on who provided vision and direction for development also perceived the MMDCEs, MMDCDs and PMs, respectively, as doing so. Figure 2 on the MMDA-specific responses revealed similar proportions, for example 35.8 percent, 13.2 percent and 32.1 percent in CCM as perceiving the MMDCEs, MMDCDs and PMs respectively as providing vision and direction.

Table 1: Perceptions on who constitute the leadership by Assembly

Leadership	District responses							
	CCM		Effutu Municipality		AOB District		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
MMDCE	28	37.3	16	32.7	19	33.9	63	35.0
MMDCD	15	20.0	10	20.4	14	25.0	39	21.7
Presiding Members	20	26.7	14	28.5	15	26.8	49	27.2
Heads of Department	6	8.0	4	8.2	4	7.2	14	7.8
Chiefs	4	5.3	4	8.2	4	7.1	12	6.6
Opinion leaders	2	2.7	1	2.0	0	0.0	3	1.7
Total	75	100.0	49	100.0	56	100.0	180*	100.0

f = frequency

***The total number of responses (180) is more than the number of respondents (105) due to multiple responses.**

Source: Field survey (2011)

The results suggest that leadership was perceived as the exclusive preserve of the administrative and political top hierarchy of the MMDAs due to the positions they held. The HoDs who were in positions to influence management decisions were not perceived as part of the leadership as very few responses identified them as leaders. Similarly, chiefs and opinion leaders, including religious leaders, queen mothers, market queens, community and civil society leaders were not perceived as part of the leadership.

These perceptions confirm the relegated role of chiefs in the LG system (Ahwoi, 2010). They also confirm Covey's (2004) assertion that both leaders and followers had the tendency to see leadership as a position and not an influence relationship between the leaders and followers. In addition, they support Chambers' (2005) view of the followers looking up to persons in position to provide direction. As noted by Litvack and Seddan (2002), this limits commitment and ownership.

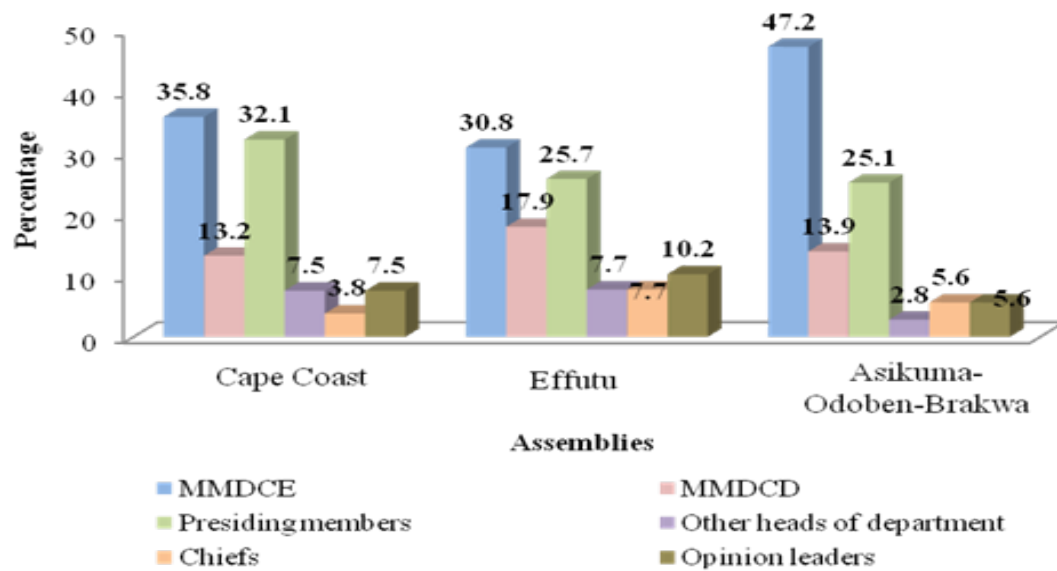


Figure 2: Perceptions on who provides vision and direction for development by Assembly
Source: Field survey (2011)

Leadership behaviours, qualities and inter-relationships

Effective leadership requires an integrative leadership approach that aligns human and other resources, an organisation culture that fosters free expression of ideas, and followers empowered to participate in the leadership process (Bennis, 1993). In order to examine how these elements revealed themselves in the MMDAs, respondents' perceptions were elicited on the leadership approaches in terms of behaviours, qualities and inter-relationships between leaders and followers. Issues elicited on the leadership behaviours related to whether the leaders were autocratic, democratic or laissez faire. The leadership qualities focused on competence: qualifications, experience and capabilities; concern for others; integrity; self-confidence; and performance of the MMDAs. The inter-relationships examined the leaders' interactions with followers, communication and information sharing and interdependence between the leaders and followers.

Leadership behaviours

Table 2 presents the perceptions of the 107 respondents made up of the RCD, REPO, the MMDCEs, HoDs and AMs about the leadership behaviours at the various levels. The respondents viewed the leadership as exhibiting a mix of autocratic, laissez faire and democratic behaviours. Of the 731 responses, 36.1 percent, 17.7 percent and 46.2 percent indicated that the leadership behaviours were autocratic, laissez faire and democratic respectively.

Table 2 also reveals that each group of leaders at the various levels were perceived as exhibiting mixed leadership behaviours. The majority, 54.4 percent and 51.7 percent of the respondents reported that the leadership behaviours of the AMs and heads of civil society organisations (CSOs) respectively, were democratic. About 50.6 percent of the respondents also perceived the heads of the central administration as autocratic. The leadership behaviours of the MMDCEs, MMDCDs, HoDs and heads of sub-district structures (SDS) were perceived as skewed towards autocratic and democratic tendencies.

There were, however, variations in the district-specific responses in the three study areas (Figure 3). About 34.4 percent, 51.7 percent and 54.8 percent of the responses in the CCM, Effutu Municipality and AOB District respectively perceived the leadership behaviours as democratic. The variations in responses by MMDA were statistically significant as indicated by chi-square of 7.05 with p-value of 0.01.

Table 2: Perceptions of the leadership behaviours at the various levels in the Assemblies

Level	Leadership behaviours			Total
	Autocratic	Laissez faire	Democratic	
Assembly Members	24(23.3)	23(22.3)	56(54.4)	103(100.0)
MMDCEs	40(37.0)	20(18.5)	48(44.4)	108(100.0)
MMDCDs	42(37.8)	19(17.1)	50(45.1)	111(100.0)
Heads of Central Adm.	47(50.6)	11(11.8)	35(37.6)	93(100.0)
Heads of Department	42(43.2)	12(13.4)	43(44.3)	97(100.0)
Heads of SDS	35(34.0)	22(21.3)	46(44.7)	103(100.0)
Heads of CSO	34(29.3)	22(19.0)	60(51.7)	116(100.0)
Total	264(36.1)	129(17.7)	338(46.2)	731*(100.0)

Percentages are in parentheses

*The total number of responses (731) is more than the number of respondents (107) due to multiple responses

Source: Field survey (2011)

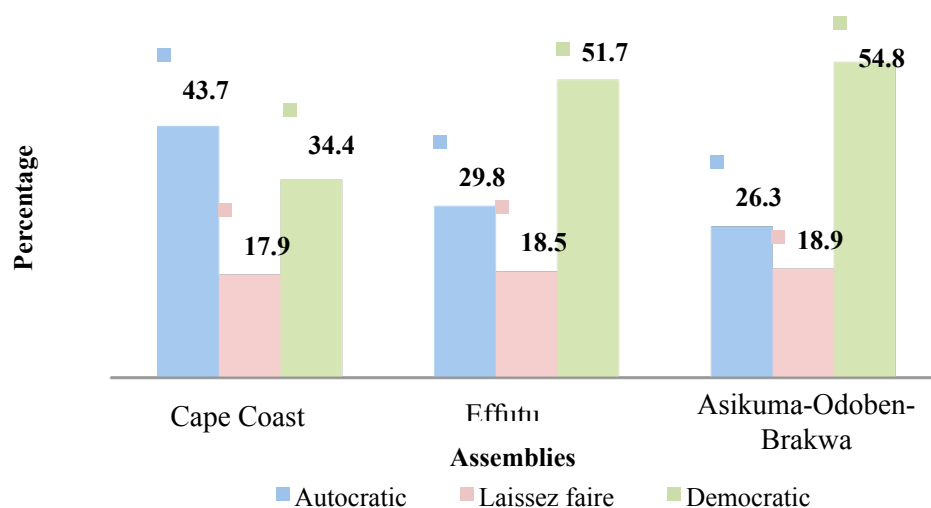


Figure 3: Perceptions of district-specific leadership behaviours
Source: Field survey (2011)

Although 58 percent of the 827 sampled community level respondents perceived the leadership behaviours of the AMs as democratic, the MMDA-specific responses varied. In CCM, 67.9 percent of the sampled respondents perceived their AMs as democratic while in the Effutu Municipality and AOB District, 47.7 percent and 48.8 percent respectively held that view.

The respondents at the regional level and in CCM attributed the predominant autocratic leadership behaviours in CCM to its location within the regional capital. This had implications for their vertical accountability and demanded that the leadership responded to the demands of the political and administrative leadership in the region and the national headquarters more promptly than the other districts outside the regional capital. Decisions in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation were more likely to be implemented by the leadership without recourse to democratic and laissez faire behaviours.

The respondents at the MMDAs and regional levels also indicated that districts located further from the regional capital and national headquarters tended to have some leeway regarding timely implementation of directives from the regional and national headquarters. As noted by a respondent at the regional level: “the leadership had the opportunity to experiment with democratic behaviours before adopting autocratic behaviours to get the directives implemented to avoid reprisals from the authorities”.

The context-specific ways in which leadership behaviours were perceived is consistent with Fielders’ (1957) contingency theory of leadership which indicates that the most productive leadership behaviour is contingent upon situational variables. It also corroborates Manning and Curtis’ (2007) view that conceptions of the characteristics of leadership are culturally determined and differ from time to time and from culture to culture. In addition, it confirms the complex nature of the leadership process which needs to be viewed from a structural-functional and systems thinking perspectives in order to understand and appreciate the dynamics in meeting decentralisation and management challenges (Mooney, Knox & Schacht, 2002; Checkland, 1999).

These perspectives on the leadership behaviours in the MMDAs resonate with the integrative leadership behaviours expounded by Bennis (1993). They also suggest that the leaders at the various levels adopted different leadership behaviours in different contexts in order to align, create and empower the followers but the followers had varied perceptions about the behaviours of leadership groups. Generally, the AMs and CSO leaders were perceived as democratic while the MMDCEs, MMDCDs and HoDs were perceived as autocratic.

The reasons assigned by the respondents to their perceptions suggest that the AMs had horizontal accountability towards their constituents. The AMs were elected into office by their constituents and were directly accountable to them. Therefore, skewing their leadership behaviours towards the autocratic behaviour could make them unpopular and result in their failure to be re-elected. Similarly, the respondents indicated that CSO leaders by their mandate were expected to be democratic in order to secure buy-in from the people to achieve ownership and commitment.

The respondents further indicated that the MMDCEs, MMDCDs and HoDs, on the other hand, had vertical accountability requirements and were not directly accountable to the people. These leaders responded to the demands of those who appointed them into office by adopting autocratic behaviours to ensure that their constituents work towards the agenda of the headquarters of their political and administrative hierarchy. This autocratic behaviour confirms Chambers’ (1997) assertion that leaders in developing countries tended to be directive and instructive in their leadership approaches.

The autocratic behaviours contravene the second principle of Stigler’s (1957) menu which required people to have the right to vote for the kind and amount of public services they want.

It also goes contrary to the demand responsive approach in which development interventions are provided based on demands of the beneficiaries and followers to ensure sustainability (Litvack & Seddan, 2002). The followers, therefore, failed to successfully pursue the development agenda initiated by the leaders as they had not been adequately involved in the decision-making process. The autocratic behaviours undermined the initiative, ownership and commitment of followers.

Leadership Qualities

The perceptions of the 107 respondents at the regional and district levels of the capabilities of the leadership at the various levels of the MMDAs are shown in Table 3. About 13.5 percent and 48.3 percent of the respondents perceived the leaders' capabilities as very good and good respectively. Around 50.5 percent of the respondents perceived the capabilities of the AMs as at least good while less than 50 percent of the respondents perceived the capabilities of heads of CSO and SDS as at least good.

Table 3: Perceptions of the regional and district level respondents of the capabilities of the leadership at the various levels

Leaders at various levels	Capabilities					Total
	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor	
Assembly Members	14(13.1)	40(37.4)	43(40.2)	10(9.3)	0(0.0)	107(100.0)
MMDCE	29(26.7)	60(56.0)	17(16.0)	0(0.0)	1(1.3)	107(100.0)
MMDCD	27(25.2)	66(61.7)	13(12.2)	1(0.9)	0(0.0)	107(100.0)
Heads of Central Adm.	16(14.7)	60(56.0)	27(25.3)	4(4.0)	0(0.0)	107(100.0)
Heads of Departments	11(10.6)	56(52.0)	37(34.7)	3(2.7)	0(0.0)	107(100.0)
Heads of Sub-District Structure	1(1.3)	51(48.0)	32(29.4)	19(17.3)	4(4.0)	107(100.0)
Heads of CSO	3(2.6)	29(26.7)	60(56.0)	15(14.7)	0(0.0)	107(100.0)
Total	101 (13.5)	362 (48.3)	229 (30.6)	52 (6.9)	5 (0.7)	749 (100.0)

Percentages are in parentheses

Source: Field survey (2011)

The MMDA-specific perceptions followed similar trends with the MMDCEs, MMDCDs, Heads of central administration and HoDs being rated higher than the AMs, heads of SDS and CSO. In the AOB District, none of the leadership's capabilities were perceived either as very good or very poor. Reasons assigned by respondents for perceiving the leadership as being capable focused mainly on their academic and professional qualifications, long experience in their various fields as well as responsiveness to regulatory requirements. In the case of the AMs their ability to mobilise the communities for development activities was given as the main reason.

On the contrary, the 827 respondents at the community level rated the AMs higher than the respondents at the regional and district levels. About 72.5 percent of the community level respondents rated the AMs as good and very good compared to the 50.6 percent of the regional and district level respondents. Similar proportions in rating of the AMs by the community members as at least good were observed in the district-specific situations (i.e. CCM - 78.8%; Effutu Municipality - 70%; AOB District - 62.5%).

The respondents at the regional and district levels attributed their ratings of the capabilities of the AMs to their low academic and professional qualifications, inadequate experience in their various fields and their inability to respond to regulatory requirements. However, the community level respondents rated the AMs higher because they found them responsive in mobilising the community members for action.

The respondents at the MMDAs level attributed their lower ratings of the heads of SDS and CSO to the non-functional SDS and CSOs in the study areas. The varied perceptions about the leadership capabilities at the various levels agree with the perception and attribution theories as well as the systems thinking perspective of multiple realities with different people perceiving their realities as a range of diverse relationships (Saal & Moore, 1998; Starbuck & Mezas, 1996).

Apart from the community level respondents in the three study areas who indicated that the AMs' leadership behaviours enabled them to mobilise the followers, none of the reasons focused on the leaders' behaviours and other qualities and skills. The focus on the academic and professional qualifications and regulatory requirements as the basis for rating the capabilities confirms the tendency for both leaders and followers to overlook the leadership behaviours, qualities and skills (Manning & Curtis, 2007). This suggests that although followers may be uncomfortable with the leaders' behaviours, once they had the qualification, experience and ability to deliver results as mandated by the regulatory requirements and as expected by the political and administrative authorities, they were seen as capable. Thus, the initiative, ownership and commitment of followers to the development agenda are undermined with followers living with the perception that the leader was capable of doing everything without their involvement.

The majority (79.1%) of all the 934 respondents indicated that the leaders were competent in managing the MMDAs. The MMDA-specific responses reflected that 80.6 percent of the 345 respondents in CCM, 72.3 percent of the 255 respondents in the Effutu Municipality and 82 percent of the 332 respondents in AOB District perceived the leaders as competent. The reasons assigned to the higher ratings included their qualifications, experience and good performance in the FOAT assessment. As noted earlier, these reasons limit the competence of the leaders to qualifications, experience and responsiveness to regulatory mandates.

However, the respondents who gave lower ratings attributed leadership competence at the various levels to their inadequate response to reporting requirements, poor response to the constituents' needs and slow pace in operationalising systems and structures. Other factors were over-dependence of the leadership on the headquarters for instructions, poor performance in the FOAT assessment as in the case of Effutu Municipality, autocratic leadership behaviours, politicisation of issues and inadequate involvement of followers in managing development interventions. These views resonate with those shared by Ahwoi (2010), Asante (2009), Gyimah-Boadi (2009) and Offei-Aboagye (2009) on the challenges confronting the LG system in Ghana.

Even though some critical issues were overlooked in assessing leadership capability and competence, the majority (79.1%) of the respondents had positive view in terms of mobilisation of followers in the leadership process. This is especially so, if it is complemented by integrative and transformational leadership behaviours that would ensure the adoption of appropriate mix of leadership behaviours, qualities and skills in response to a given context.

Higher ratings were also given to concern for others, integrity and self-confidence of the political and administrative leadership of the MMDAs by the 934 respondents at the regional, district and community levels. Overall, 25.9 percent and 38.1 percent rated concern for others as very high and high respectively, integrity with 19.6 percent and 45.4 percent as very high and high respectively, and self-confidence with 34.6 percent and 36.5 percent as very high and high respectively. The ratings were also higher for the AMs at the community level, with 76.9 percent of the respondents rating AMs' concern for others as at least high. Integrity and self-confidence were rated by between 65.1 percent and 72.6 of the respondents as at least high. These ratings give a positive view of these aspects of the qualities of the MMDAs' leadership and would generate enthusiasm in the followers (Covey, 2004).

Leadership inter-relationship

The responses were mixed regarding the inter-relationship among leaders and followers as presented in Table 4. Across the regional and MMDAs levels, 25.6 percent, 36.6 percent and 34.6 percent of the 107 respondents perceived the inter-relationships as very strong, strong and neutral respectively. Similar perceptions were held by the 827 respondents at the community level about the interrelationships between the AMs and their followers with 37.5 percent, 36.9 percent and 18.8 percent perceiving the interrelationship as very strong, strong and neutral respectively.

Table 4: Regional and district level respondents' responses on the inter-relationships between leaders and followers at the various levels

Level	Interrelationships					Total
	Very strong	Strong	Neutral	Weak	Very Weak	
Assembly members	40(37.4)	40(37.4)	26(24.3)	1(0.9)	0(0.0)	107(100.0)
MMDCE	45(42.1)	45(42.1)	15(14.0)	1(0.9)	1(0.9)	107(100.0)
MMDCD	39(36.5)	50(46.7)	17(15.9)	1(0.9)	0(0.0)	107(100.0)
Heads of central admin.	24(22.4)	47(44.0)	30(28.0)	6(5.6)	0(0.0)	107(100.0)
HoDs	24(22.4)	45(42.1)	37(34.6)	1(0.9)	0.0	107(100.0)
Heads of SDS	10(9.4)	23(21.5)	68(63.6)	6(5.5)	0(0.0)	107(100.0)
Heads of CSO	10(9.4)	24(22.4)	66(61.7)	6(5.6)	1(0.9)	107(100.0)
Total	192 (25.6)	274 (36.6)	259 (34.6)	22 (2.9)	2 (0.3)	749 (100.0)

Percentages are in parentheses
Source: Field survey (2011)

In proportionate terms, the inter-relationships among the AMs, MMDCEs, MMDCDs, heads of central administration and HoDs and their followers were perceived as strong, ranging between 22.4 percent and 42.1 percent for very strong, 37.4 percent and 46.7 percent for strong, and 14.0 and 28 percent for neutral. However, the majority, 63.6 and 61.7 percent, perceived the interrelationships among the leaders of SDS and followers, and CSOs and followers respectively as neutral. The respondents attributed their perceptions to the non-functional SDS and CSOs in the three study areas.

The inter-relationships were further explored by eliciting the perceptions of the political and technocratic heads of the MMDAs on the scale of very cordial, cordial, neutral, not cordial or not at all cordial regarding the relationships between the central administration and other departments of the MMDAs. The majority (71.4%) of the 105 respondents perceived the relationship as at least cordial. Similar proportions perceived the relationships as cordial in the MMDA-specific situations with 71.43 percent of the 50 respondents in CCMA, 72.7 percent of the 25 respondents in Effutu and 80 percent of the 30 respondents in AOB indicating that the relationships were very cordial. Although the responses suggest that the relationships were cordial, challenges the respondents enumerated as confronting the districts in their working relationships pointed to the contrary. Most of the challenges were externally motivated, thereby reflecting the interactions between the internal and external environments and the multiple and complex factors in the leadership process.

The challenges included inadequate involvement of the decentralised departments in the planning and implementation of projects and inadequate resources to facilitate collaboration. Others were dual allegiance of the HoDs to the MMDAs and their headquarters at the regional and national levels, inadequate coordination, communication and information flow, as well as political interference. The respondents reported that the challenges had impacted negatively on the implementation of the decentralisation policy.

A respondent in one of the districts intimated that, “the inadequate integration of development plans, weak collaboration among departments, duplication of efforts and inadequate response to mandates had poorly affected local development”. These observations are consistent with those observed by Kendie and Mensah (2008) regarding the tendency for the other departments to defer to the headquarters for instruction and funding with their associated challenges. These challenges go contrary to the decentralisation theory as espoused by Oates (1972), the correspondence principle (Oates, 1972), Stigler’s menu (Shah, 2006), and subsidiarity principle (Carrington, Tymms & Merrell, 2008) as they do not adequately empower the MMDAs to reap the full benefits of decentralisation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A key objective of the decentralised LG system is to ensure equitable growth and development. However, this is dependent on effective leadership in LGs. The paper has demonstrated how leadership is perceived in the MMDAs in the Central Region by focusing on five key findings:

1. Leadership was perceived as a position and not an influence relationship and this has limited commitment and ownership.
2. Mixed leadership behaviours were exhibited by the leaders depending on the accountability expectations of the leaders and followers as well as the environmental context of the leadership process.
3. The respondents perceived the leadership competences in terms of the academic qualifications, professional experience and vertical accountability of the leaders and not how the leaders motivated followers in the leadership process.

4. The interrelationships between the leadership of the central administration and other departments were weak as a result of the dual allegiance of the departments to the MMDAs and their regional and national headquarters.
5. Leadership was not perceived as a key success factor in LGs. The focus was more on response to regulatory requirements as well as the demands of the political and administrative authorities.

Six recommendations emerging from the study are:

1. The LG institutions should build the capacity of the leadership of the Assemblies and heighten their awareness to see leadership not as a position but an influence relationship.
2. They should also create awareness among the leadership of the MMDAs to appreciate that leadership is an essential element in the LG system. They should also appreciate the interdependence among leaders and followers.
3. The MMDAs should employ appropriate mix of leadership behaviours in given contexts to strengthen effectiveness of the leadership processes.
4. The general public should be oriented towards seeing the competence of MMDAs' leadership in terms of their responsiveness to followers' expectations and motivation but not the qualifications, experience and allegiance to political and administrative authority.
5. The leadership of LGs should strengthen collaboration between the central administration and other departments through regular meetings, follow-ups, and involvement of HoDs in the decision-making, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes.
6. The leadership of the MMDAs should develop standard organisational structures with clear mandates and accountability requirements.

References

- Ahwoi, K. (2009). Management, leadership and administration: What type of Chief Executive does Ghana need? Paper presented at the Second ILGS/PA/GTZ Workshop on "Twenty Years of Decentralisation in Ghana" held at the Crystal Rose Hotel, Kumasi, 25-27, September 2009.
- Ahwoi, K. (2010). Local government and decentralisation in Ghana. Accra: Unimax Macmillan Ltd.
- Antwi, K. B. (2009). Leadership: The bane of Africa's underdevelopment. In J. V. Mensah, S. B. Kendie & F. Enu-Kwesi (Eds.), *Rethinking Development studies in Africa* (pp.113-132). Cape Coast: Marcel Hughes Publicity Group.
- Asante, K. P. (2009). Introduction. In Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana). *Reflections on Ghana's decentralisation programme: Progress, stagnation or retrogression? Papers from a symposium*. Accra: CDD-Ghana.
- Avolio, B. J., Walumbwa, F. O., & Weber, T. J. (2009). Leadership: Current theories, research and future directions. *Annual Review of Psychology* 60 (2009), 421-449.
- Beerel, A. (1998). *Leadership through strategic planning*. Berkshire House, London: International Thomson Business Press.
- Bennis, W. G. (1993). *An invented life: Reflections on leadership and change*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley.
- Carrington, B., Tymms, P., & Merrell, C. (2008). Role models, school improvements and the gender gap – do men bring out the best in boys and women the best in girls? *British Educational Research Journal*, 34(3), 315-327.
- Central Region Coordinating Council (CRCC). (2009). *Central Region Profile*. Cape Coast: CRCC.
- Chambers, R. (1997). *Whose reality counts? Putting the first last*. London: ITDG Publishing.
- Chambers, R. (2005). *Ideas for development*. London: Earthscan.

- Checkland, P. B. (1999). *Systems thinking practice: Includes a 30 year retrospective*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Cochran, W. G. (1977). *Sampling techniques* (3rd ed.) New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Covey, S. R. (2004). *The 8th habit: From effectiveness to greatness*. New York: Free Press.
- Daft, R. L., & Marcic, D. (1998). *Understanding management*. (2nd ed.). New York: The Dryden Press.
- Daft, R. L. (1999). *Leadership theory and practice*. New York: The Dryden Press.
- DuBrin, A. J. (1997). *Fundamentals of organisational behaviour: An applied approach*. Ohio: South-Western College Publishing.
- Fairholm, G. W. (1998). *Perspectives on leadership: From the science of management to its spiritual heart*. Westport: Quorum Books.
- Fiedler, F. E. (1987). When to lead, when to stand back. *Psychology Today*, 21(9), 22-25.
- Flynn, N. (1997). *Public sector management* (3rd ed.). Essex: Pearson Education Limited.
- Government of Ghana (1992). *Constitution of the Republic of Ghana*. Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation.
- Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2009). Political decentralisation: Achievements and challenges. In Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana). *Reflections on Ghana's decentralisation programme: Progress, stagnation or retrogression? Papers from a symposium*. Accra: CDD-Ghana.
- Heifetz, R.A. (1994). *Leadership without easy answers*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Hodgetts, R. M. (1999). *Modern human relations at work*. New York: The Dryden Press.
- Jung, D., & Avolio, B. J. (1999). Effects of leadership style and followers' cultural orientation on performance in groups and individual task conditions. *Academy of Management Journal*, 42(2), 2008-218.
- Kendie, S. B., & Mensah, J. V. (2008). Spatial analysis of power in Ghana's decentralised local government system. In S. B. Kendie, & P. Martens (Eds.), *Governance and sustainable development* (pp.80-94). Cape Coast: Marcel Hughes Publicity Group.
- Lewin, K., Lippitt, L., & White, R. K. W. (1939). Patterns of aggressive behaviour in experimentally created social climates. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 10(1939), 271-299.
- Litvack, J., & Seddan, J. (Eds.). (2002). *Decentralisation briefing notes*. Washington: World Bank Institute.
- Manning, G., & Curtis, K. (2007). *The art of leadership* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Irwin.
- Marriner, A. (1994). Theories of leadership. In E. C. Hein, & M. J. Nicholson (Eds.), *Contemporary leadership behaviour* (pp.55-61). Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company.
- MLGRD (2010a). *Functional and Organisational Assessment Tool operational manual*. Accra: MLGRD.
- MLGRD (2010b). *Functional and Organisational Assessment Tool assessment results*. Accra: MLGRD.
- Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Environment (MLGRDE). (2007). *Ghana decentralisation policy review*. Accra: Decentralisation Secretariat.
- Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) (1996). *The New Local Government System*. Accra: MLGRD.
- Mooney, L., Knox, D., & Schacht, C. (2002). *Understanding social problem* (3rd ed.). Belmont: Thomas Learning Centre.
- Oates, W. E. (1972). *Fiscal federalism*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Oates, W. E. (2006). *On the theory and practice of fiscal decentralisation*. Institute for Federalism & Intergovernmental Relations Working Paper 2006-05.
- Offei-Aboagye, E. (2009). Administrative decentralisation: Implementation, impediments and the way forward. In Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana). *Reflections on Ghana's decentralisation programme: Progress, stagnation or retrogression? Papers from a symposium*. Accra: CDD-Ghana.
- Osei-Ababio, J. (2007, November 8). Now I understand Prof. Frimpong-Boateng. *The Daily Graphic*, p. 14. Accra: Graphic Communications Group Ltd.
- Robbins, S. P. (2003). *Organisational behaviour* (10th ed.). New Jersey: Price-Hall, Inc.

- Rondinelli, D. A., & Heffron, J. M. (2009). Leadership for development: An introduction. In D. A. Rondinelli, & J. M. Heffron (Eds.). *Leadership for development: What globalisation demands of leaders fighting for change* (pp.1-24). Virginia: Kumarian Press.
- Rost, J. C. (1993). *Leadership for the twenty-first century*. Westport: Praeger.
- Saal, E. F., & Moore, S.C. (1998). Perceptions of promotion fairness and promotion candidates' qualifications. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 17, 105-110.
- Shah, A. (2006). A comparative institutional framework for responsive, responsible and accountable local governance. In A. Shah (Ed.), *Local governance in industrial countries* (1-40). Washington D. C.: World Bank.
- Starbuck, H. W., & Mezias, J. M. (1996) Opening the Pandora's box: Studying the accuracy of managers' perceptions. *Journal of organisational behaviour*, 17, 99-117.
- Stigler, G. (1957). The tenable range of functions of local government. In United States Congress Joint Economic Committee (Ed.), *Federal expenditure policy for economic growth and stability* (pp.213-219). Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Van der Lee, J. J. (2002). A decision-support framework for participative and integrated river basin management: An application of the triple bottom line. (PhD Thesis). New England: Centre for Ecological Economics and Water Policy Research, University of New England.
- Von Bertalanffy, L. (1968). *General systems theory*. New York: George Braziller