

Collaborations Between Local Government and Traditional Leaders in Ghana: Exploring Implications for Community Development

Andrews Jack Dotsey

Department of Adult Education and Human Resource Studies, School of Continuing and Distance Education, College of Education, University of Ghana

Corresponding Author Email: jadotsey@ug.edu.gh, <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-8965-7956>

Abstract

Chieftaincy is the oldest traditional institution of governance in Africa and has dovetailed into current democratic dispensation. Mirroring this, traditional leaders have become a key link between the central government and their people. Local government and traditional leaders collectively make decisions regarding development of their communities. Effective transformation of local communities calls for collaborations between the two governance leaders. This paper explores areas of collaborations between the local and traditional government leaders within three districts in Ghana. The study adopts a mixed-method approach, using survey, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. A total of 370 survey respondents and 140 qualitative participants were used. The study found the two governance leaders collaborate more in the area of land administration, development of by-laws, appointments, economic and business development, however collaboration is weak in the setting up of development agenda for communities, healthcare planning and development, dispute resolution, education planning and development. The study revealed high level of tensions between the two divides. For instance, the traditional leaders bemoan their level of empowerment in terms of authority and resources to drive the advancement of their communities. While the local Assembly leaders are concerned about the divisions amongst chiefs that affects effective collaborations for development. The solution to strengthening collaborations between the two governance leaders lies in providing material and symbolic resources to both side of the divide.

Keywords: Collaborations, Local, Traditional, Government Leaders, Community Development

1. Introduction

The development of local communities is fundamental and central to the discourse of governance and national development (Fuseini, 2021). The effectiveness of governance in driving the goals of community development depends on the structural model of governance (Adekola & Nwogu, 2015). Governance structures are demarcated into traditional and modern democratic governance (Ukaegbu, Idowu & Chekwuma, 2024; Nketsia, 2013; Nukunya, 2003). These two-governance system have legal and constitutional backing within the Ghanaian leadership space as provided in the Local Government Act, 2016, Act 936, and the Chieftaincy Act, 2008, Act 769. However, there are fundamental challenges regarding how existing governance structures impact on local community development (Ehrhardt, Alao & Umar, 2024; Adjei, Busia & Bob-Milliar, 2017; Afful, 2015). In Ghana, successive governments have struggled with the task of harnessing the potential of traditional and modern democratic governance systems for community development (Fuseini, 2021; Panyin, 2010). For instance, the new land Act, 2020 Act 1036 which seeks to enhance collaboration between democratic leadership and traditional leaders i.e., the chiefs for effective management of land resource has witnessed some desertion in its content from some leading chiefs such as the Asantehene. This is largely on account of the fact that while traditional governance have been part of the African story throughout its history (Acemoglu et al., 2014), there is a long-standing debate on the role of Africa's traditional leaders in contemporary democratic politics (Boateng, Owusu &

Baah, 2024; Holzinger, Kern & Kromrey, 2016; Logan, 2013). It has become very essential to accommodate the place of traditional leadership and its institutional structures either as a part of or alongside the democratization processes (Logan, 2013). Nonetheless, political scholars, observers and commentators remain uncertain about how the persistence of chieftaincy institutions will affect the prospects for modern democratic consolidation.

Secondly, there is no national policy document that provides a legal framework for participatory governance and community development (Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992, 2016). The only existing discourse on community development in the current governance system has been political promises in electioneering campaigns. For instance, the successive National Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Council (NDC) governments over the years promise community development for the people in their election manifestos in 2016 and 2020 elections (CODEO, 2016), with some of the vision being to ensure each district has a factory and dam for irrigation, to create more jobs, generate incomes, social inclusion and growth. Governments before this, had similar selling messages for community engagement and development.

The challenge of translating manifestos into concrete development projects and programs within the communities is a great setback to our current governance system. There are gaps in current research on community development, particularly when it comes to how traditional and modern democratic governance can work together to develop local communities. There is also limited understanding regarding where local governance capacity building and human capital development policies and interventions should focus, and the role adult education can play in such policy interventions.

This research is further justified by the varying discourse for and against the effectiveness of the two systems of governance in fostering effective community engagement for growth (Holzinger, Kern & Kromrey, 2016). Some schools of thought such as (Boateng et al., 2024; Logan, 2013; Panyin, 2010) believe the very presence of community leaders within the community such as the chief ensures that the needs of the community are better facilitated because of the important symbolic role they hold in the community (i.e., cultural identity, unity, continuity, and stability). Addo & Ussher (2024) point out traditional leaders can be catalyst to community development if they are sufficiently empowered through education.

The United National Development Program (UNDP, 2009) and Baldwin & Mvukiyeh (2015) on the other hand champion democratic governance as central to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They believe it provides the environment for the elimination of poverty given its capacity to improve collective action through the sense of community ownership and participation.

There are however new and emerging discourse which point to the inherent limitations within both traditional and democratic governance. Beall (2006) state that traditional governance is bedeviled with autocratic tendencies that does not encourage inclusive growth, largely because the office of the chief is obtained not by popular vote but is hereditary and usually for life. Similarly, democratic governance can metamorphosis into partisan, ethnic and parochial leadership that defeats its purpose of inclusive growth and development (Fosu, 2008). Nyathi & Ajani (2024) and Koter (2013) presents documented evidence to the fact that elections in South Africa, Ghana, Zambia Malawi and Kenya are dominated by ethnic politics, which poses some challenges for achieving the ideals of democracy. The question remains as to whether the two governance canons do collaborate in driving community development and what peculiar limitations exist in this process.

Community development in this study is conceptualized in terms of both material and symbolic progress of local communities such as health facilitation, security and education. This conceptualizations of community development is used due to their significance in transforming communities. Education brings emancipation, empowerment and serves as a catalyst to development of both the individual and community. Education is listed as United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 due to its critical role in facilitating overall development of economies. Also, health is key to development and growth as indicated in the local parlance 'health is money'. Health most especially for women and children is the key pointer of development as set out under the SDG 5 of the UN vision, 2020 and SDG Agenda, 2030.

This article therefore explores area of collaborations between traditional and modern democratic governance systems and the challenges therein to bridge local community development in Ghana. Specifically, we seek to address two key objectives, one to assess areas of collaborations between the local and traditional government leaders within selected districts in Ghana and secondly to explore the challenges that undermine collaborations between the local and traditional government leaders within the districts.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study Setting

The current study was conducted among three select districts in the Accra, Kumasi and the Tamale Metropolis. Each of these districts have strong representations of traditional and democratic systems of governance that work hand in hand in making developmental decisions within the districts. Therefore, Accra, Kumasi and Tamale offered good settings for conducting the current study and can provide lessons and insights into other districts in Ghana.

2.2 Data Source

The current study is extracted from a doctoral project that used mixed-method approach to explore Fusion of Modern Democratic and Traditional Governance System in Promoting Community Development in Ghana. The study specifically used cross-sectional survey, policy document review, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions to gather its data. In the demographics, questions were asked to elicit information about participant's background. The closed-ended items used a Likert scale for responses, which ranged from 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A) to 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). The open-ended items provided spaces for respondents to give further explanations where necessary. The qualitative data were gathered using key informant interviews and a review of the documents.

2.3 Study participants

The participants of the study were selected from various stakeholders within each of the three districts. These stakeholders encompassed key stakeholders from local governance and traditional rulership. For local governance, the population included leadership of the Metropolitan Assembly, assemblymen and assemblywomen, and unit committee members of each of the electoral areas. In terms of traditional governance, the population included the leadership of the Ga-Adangbe Kingdom, Ashanti Kingdom and Tamale Kingdom, local chiefs, queen mothers, and palace elders from each local town. The total participants for the study were 370 encompassing 132 participants from Kumasi, 108 from Tamale and 130 from Accra for the quantitative part and a total number of 140 respondents consisting of 51 respondents from Kumasi, 46 from Tamale and 43 from Accra for the qualitative components.

A non-probability-sampling technique was used in selecting the participants for the present study. The study specifically employed both purposive and convenience sampling strategy. The purposive sampling technique because key informants were selected based on the purpose of their roles, which were directly relevant to the problem under investigation. The convenience sampling was used for selecting participants for the survey data which constituted the quantitative component of the study. The convenience sampling was used since the targeted population for the survey was very mobile and very difficult to access all of them at one location. For this reason, the convenience sampling was used to select local and traditional government leaders who were accessible, present and were willing to respond to take part in the study. Those who willingly availed themselves were then given the questionnaire to fill and return or to be retrieved later.

2.4 Ethical Issues

Ethical procedures were duly followed in the data-collection process. An ethical clearance was sort from the Ethical Review Board of the College of Humanities, University of Ghana, to conduct the study. Secondly, the participants were guaranteed their confidentiality and privacy of the information they would provide. Thirdly, participants' informed consent was obtained before including them in the current study. Also, respondents' anonymity was ensured while storing and processing data.

2.5 Data Analysis

Quantitatively, the data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The descriptive statistics were presented using frequencies and percentages. Some inferential statistics was applied to analyse the data, Findings from the research are discussed with conclusions and recommendations given.

Qualitatively, data was analysed using thematic analysis following the procedures espoused by Braun & Clarke (2013) for analysing interview data. The scholars proposed a stage approach when analysing qualitative data thematically. Using the first stage of the thematic analysis, audio data was transcribed into transcripts. The next stage involved thoroughly reading and coding the transcripts. The third stage involved grouping the codes into minor themes. The last stage involved grouping the minor themes into major themes in ways that provided insight into the research question under study. The qualitative findings are presented using themes, codes, and quotes from participants' narratives.

3. Findings

The study investigated the dynamics of collaboration among local government and traditional leaders in championing development within their localities. Both the survey data and the qualitative data were drawn on to address this objective. The survey data was drawn on to examine areas of collaborations, while the qualitative data was used to explore challenges of collaboration. The quantitative findings are presented first, followed by the qualitative findings.

3.1 Quantitative findings

3.1.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of survey respondents

The socio-demographic profiles of the entire sample, as well as the traditional and local government respondents are provided on Table 1. In terms of regional distribution, there was a good representation of participants from all the three selected districts in the three regions. Specifically, Ashanti region (35.7%), Greater Accra region (35.1%) and Northern region (29.2%). In terms of type of government, 54.6% of the respondents were from local government, with the remaining 45.4% being traditional government. In terms of gender distribution, the sample was dominated by male respondents (76.2%) with the remaining 23.8% being females. The ages of the respondents ranged between 26 years to 67 years. Slightly more than half of them is between 40 – 49 years (51.4%),

followed by those between 30 – 39 years (22.4%), and those between 50 – 59 years (12.2%). In terms of educational level, 35.7% had high school education, 23.8% had Diploma/HND, 18.4% have bachelor’s degree, 14.9% have up to basic education, 1.1% have master’s degree and 1.1% indicated not haven attended any school.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Characteristics	Categories	Traditional (n = 168)		Local Gov’t (n = 202)		Overall (N = 370)	
		freq	%	freq	%	freq	%
Districts	Kumasi Metropolis	54	32.1%	78	38.6%	132	35.7%
	Accra Metropolis	57	33.9%	73	36.1%	130	35.1%
	Tamale Metropolis	57	33.9%	51	25.2%	108	29.2%
Gender	Male	136	81.0%	146	72.3%	282	76.2%
	Female	32	19.0%	56	27.7%	88	23.8%
Age	20 - 29 years	8	4.8%	16	7.9%	24	6.5%
	30 - 39 years	43	25.6%	40	19.8%	83	22.4%
	40 - 40 years	92	54.8%	98	48.5%	190	51.4%
	50 - 59 years	10	6.0%	35	17.3%	45	12.2%
	60+ years	15	8.9%	13	6.4%	28	7.6%
Education	No Education	4	2.4%	-	-	4	1.1%
	Basic Education	28	16.7%	27	13.4%	55	14.9%
	Vocational Education	6	3.6%	12	5.9%	18	4.9%
	High School	65	38.7%	67	33.2%	132	35.7%
	Diploma/HND	35	20.8%	53	26.2%	88	23.8%
	Bachelor's Degree	25	14.9%	43	21.3%	68	18.4%
	Master's Degree	5	3.0%	-	-	5	1.4%

Source: Survey data, 2022

Among the traditional government respondents, there was relatively equal spread among the three selected districts – Kumasi (32.1%), Accra (33.9%) and Tamale (33.9%). Significant majority of the traditional government respondents were males (81%), with 19% of them being females. Their positions within their traditional areas are Chiefs (26.3%), Queen Mothers (20.2%) and Community Elders (53.6%). Their ages ranged between 29 – 67 years. Their educational levels are high, with 42.3% having attained at least high school education and 38.7% haven attained tertiary education. Their occupations were predominantly informal sector jobs such as electricians, farmers, fashion designers, masons, lotto writers, traders and welders. Few of them indicated holding formal sector jobs such as teachers, sports journalist among others.

Also among the local government respondents, there was good representations from all three assemblies – KMA (38.6%), AMA (36.1%) and TMA (25.2%). The respondents included Elected Assembly members (42.1%), Appointed Assembly members (20.3%) and Unit Committee Members (37.6%). Within this sample too, majority of them were males (72.3%), with the remaining 27.7% being females. Their ages ranged between 20 – 67 years old. Their educational levels are relatively higher compared with those in the traditional government sample. Their occupations are dominated by formal sector professions such as teaching, surveying, civil service, public sector workers, accountants, and agriculturalists. Nonetheless, some still held informal sector occupations such as trading, electrician, driving, car dealership among others.

3.1.2 Collaboration of Local and Traditional Government Leaders

The assess the extent of collaboration between the local and traditional government leaders, the respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they work together in twelve domains of collaboration. This data was collected using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = least collaborative to 5 = highly collaborative. Mean scores and standard deviations were estimated for the total sample and for each of the three districts for comparative purposes. The results are provided on Table 2.

The study finds areas of strong collaboration in land administration (M = 4.44, SD = 1.11), development of by-laws (M = 4.28, SD = 0.84), appointments (M = 4.14, SD = 0.88), and economic and business development (M = 4.20, SD = 0.89). The areas where they identify least collaboration included setting development agenda for communities (M = 2.07, SD = 2.11), healthcare planning and development (M = 2.15, SD = 0.93), dispute resolution (M = 2.82, SD = 0.89), and education planning and development (M = 2.88, SD = 1.12).

To compare the dynamics of collaboration across the three districts, a bar graph was used to represent the total mean scores, as well as the mean scores for each of the three districts (see Figure 4.2). The bar graph shows strong collaboration in terms of appointments, which remains very high across all three districts.

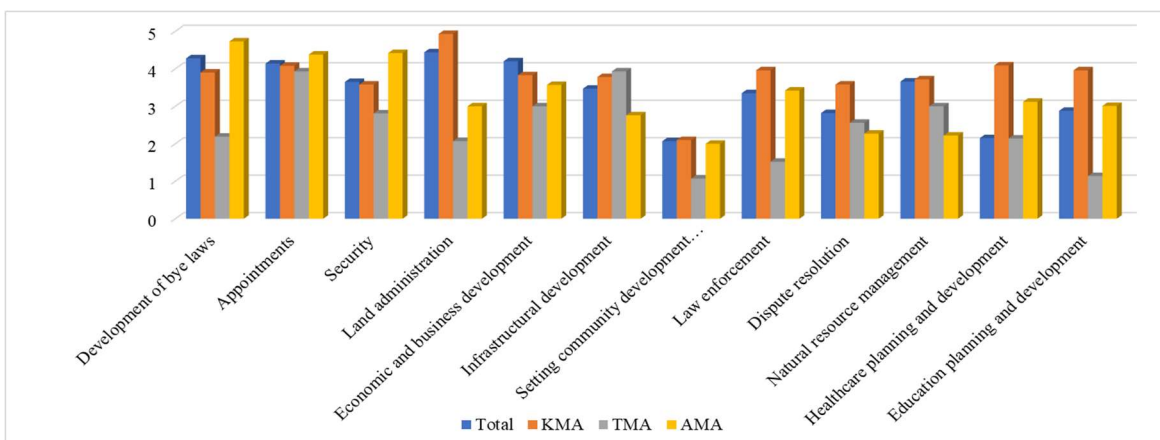
However, when it comes to development of by-laws, collaboration is highest in AMA and KMA, with TMA being the least. In terms of land administration, collaboration is highest within KMA, and low in both AMA and TMA.

Table 2: Areas of collaboration between local government and traditional leaders

Areas of collaboration assessment	Total M (SD)	KMA M (SD)	TMA M (SD)	AMA M (SD)
1. Land administration	4.44 (1.11)	4.93 (.87)	2.07(1.13)	3.00 (1.43)
2. Development of bye laws	4.28 (0.84)	3.90 (1.01)	2.19 (1.21)	4.73 (.63)
3. Appointments	4.14 (0.88)	4.08 (.97)	3.93 (.78)	4.38 (.46)
4. Economic and business development	4.20 (0.89)	3.83 (.88)	3.00 (1.43)	3.57 (1.43)
5. Security	3.65 (1.21)	3.58 (1.13)	2.81 (1.43)	4.42 (.68)
6. Infrastructural development	3.47 (1.11)	3.78 (1.11)	3.93 (1.22)	2.76 (1.21)
7. Natural resource management	3.66 (0.89)	3.72 (1.11)	3.00 (1.12)	2.22 (1.13)
8. Law enforcement	3.35 (0.88)	3.96 (.97)	1.52 (1.43)	3.42 (1.43)
9. Education planning and development	2.88 (1.12)	3.96 (1.11)	1.14 (2.11)	3.01 (1.43)
10. Dispute resolution	2.82 (0.89)	3.58 (1.22)	2.56 (1.12)	2.27 (1.21)
11. Healthcare planning and development	2.15 (0.93)	4.09 (.67)	2.14 (1.11)	3.12 (1.11)
12. Setting community development agenda	2.07 (2.11)	2.10 (1.23)	1.07 (1.13)	2.00 (1.43)

Source: Field data (2022)

Figure 1: Areas of collaborative between traditional and local government leaders



Furthermore, collaboration is consistently highest in KMA when it comes to land administration, law enforcement, dispute resolution, natural resource management, healthcare planning and administration, and education planning and development. Collaboration is higher in AMA for development of bye laws, security, and appointment. Consistently, collaboration has been low for TMA on all the indicators except infrastructural development.

The findings that emerge from the quantitative data are that there is collaboration between traditional leaders and local government leaders, nonetheless effective collaboration does not exist in the top priorities area as identified by this research for community development, such as health, education, security, roads and infrastructures and sanitation.

3.2 Qualitative Findings: Challenges to The Collaboration of Local Government and Traditional Leaders

3.2.1 Demographic characteristics of qualitative participants

The background profiles of the qualitative participants in the study are presented in table 3, comprising of individual interviews and focus group discussions. A total of 140 participants were captured in the entire study comprising of 42 local government members and 97 traditional leaders. The breakdown of the composition of this number in each district is presented.

Table 3: Demographic profiles of qualitative participants

Characteristics	Categories	Frequencies	Percentages
Data type	Individual interviews	32	22.9%
	Focus group discussants	108	77.1%
Region	Ashanti Region	51	36.4%
	Greater Accra Region	43	30.7%
Government Type	Northern Region	46	32.9%
	Local Government	48	43.3%
Gender	Traditional Government	92	65.7%
	Male	123	87.9%
Age	Female	17	12.1%
	20 - 29 years	3	2.1%
	30 - 39 years	13	9.3%
	40 - 49 years	21	15.0%
	50 - 59 years	42	30.0%
	60+ years	61	43.6%

	No Education	19	13.6%
	Basic Education	45	32.1%
	High School	18	12.9%
	Diploma/HND	12	8.6%
	Bachelor's Degree	40	28.6%
Education	Master's Degree	6	4.3%

Source: Field data, 2022

As shown on Table 3, the majority of the participants were from focus group discussions (77.1%) with 22.9% being individual interviews with the selected stakeholders. It is important to point out that for a qualitative study, a sample of 140 is quite high. In the current study, the focus group discussion, particularly among the traditional leaders pushed the sample to a high level.

Majority of the chiefs interviewed opted for discussion including all the council of elders in the palace. Such discussions were mostly scheduled to meet their usual council meetings, which had an average of 12 to 18 members in council per meeting, who all participated in the discussions in one way or the other which accounts for the sample. In terms of regional distribution, there was a good representation of participants from all the three selected districts in the three regions. Ashanti region posted 36.4% respondents, Greater Accra region (30.7%) and Northern region (32.9%). With regards to the type of government, majority of the participants were from the traditional government (65.7%) with 34.3% from the local government.

In terms of gender distribution, the sample was dominated by male participants (87.9%) with the remaining 12.1% being females. The ages of the respondents ranged between 29 years to 73 years; 43.6% were above 60 years, 30.0% were between 50–59 years, 15.0% were between 40 – 49 years, 9.3% of them were between 30 – 39 years, with 2.1% being in their late twenties.

In terms of educational level, 13.6% indicated having no education, 32.1% had basic education, 12.9% had high school education, 8.6% had Diploma qualification, 28.6% had bachelor's degree and 4.3% had graduate degree.

3.2.2 Challenges of Collaborative Local Leadership

The study finds limited collaborative work between the two governance systems in providing leadership for their local communities. Several challenges were identified that undermine the collaborative work between the local government and traditional leaders within the communities. The thematic challenges that emerged were issues of lack of empowerment for traditional leaders, power sharing, funding architecture and divisions among traditional chiefs.

3.2.2.1 Lack of Empowerment for Traditional Leaders

The participants indicated that there is no plan to empower traditional leaders for them to work collaboratively with the local government leaders. The lack of empowerment emerged both in terms of material and symbolic disempowerment.

In terms of material disempowerment, traditional leaders, particularly in the Northern region raised concerns about the deplorable states of their palaces and bemoans the lack of attempts to assist them to renovate them into a befitting status. The deplorable nature of their palaces gives them clear indication of the unwillingness of the assembly to empower them to work together:

Respondents speech: [“Okay. So I think that the critical issues, why I'm here, you've mentioned them, which is accountability, because I am talking about development and the resources enables communities to develop. Like you said, there's no ceiling here. There's no fun. There's no fun here. Um, so how would the chief and his elders sit down to discuss how to develop their community? The assembly is not collaborating with the chiefs” (Traditional Chief, Tamale)]

In terms of symbolic disempowerment, the participants raised the issue of being denied the requisite knowledge that will empower them. The traditional leaders indicated that there is lack of willingness on the part of the local government system to educate them on the powers allocated to the traditional leaders as provided in the constitution. By so doing, the traditional leaders feel disempowered on their political rights and how to work collaboratively:

Respondents speech: [“ But as they have taken the power to themselves, their politicians, they don't want to empower us to know our rights politically” (Divisional Chief, Accra)]

Another area of the symbolic disempowerment was the fact that there are no collaborative training programs that are organised for both leaders together.

Respondents speech: [“No concerted training programs. There's no point that both the traditional view that traditional authorities and the display assembly people come together for a training. We have never done that before” (Divisional Chief, Accra)]

“They don't run meeting and training sections for traditional leaders to be updated with current and significant issues as far as community development is concern” (Chief, Kumasi)]

3.2.2.2 Power sharing

Power sharing also emerged as a very strong challenge to collaborative working among the two government systems. The participants indicated that each of the systems comes with different kind of power and there are often confusions regarding how best to share the powers in working with local communities.

Respondents' speech: [“There is always a conflict between local government and the traditional leaders in terms of the power demonstrations, most of the times when the assembly instruct the members of the community to do something, the traditional leaders will ask them to stop” (Assembly Member, KMA, Kumasi)]

[“There is lack of community engagement between the local government and the traditional leaders on community development and future prospects in the community. No common grounds for meeting or training for community members” (Assembly Member, TMA, Tamale)]

[“See yes, we the government has to power their local security people” (Council of Elder Member, Tamale)]

Some of the traditional leaders, in particular, were of the view that the local government leaders try to appropriate all the powers, leaving no power to them

Respondents speech: [“We want them to leave our powers to us so that we will implement our powers and they will know that they are cheese in their community. That's all because they have taken over” (Divisional Chief, Accra)]

[“Although the traditional leaders open up and are ready to share the knowledge and ideas to help developing the communities but local government always neglect them in the course of their operations” (Divisional Chief, Accra)]

3.2.2.3 Funding Architecture

Funding also emerged as a strong theme that undermine collaborative work between the two governance systems.

Respondents speech: [“However, there are some aspects that the Community can be expected excellently without necessarily funding (Secretary to Traditional Chief, Accra) There is always a tension or conflict between the local government and the traditional leaders, this is because the assembly has total control over funds (both DACF and IGF) they operate without the consultation of the traditional leaders which they also think they have the ideas in building their communities” (Traditional Chief, Kumasi)]

[“The local government in their operations don’t allocate any resources to support the activities of the traditional leaders” (Traditional Elder, Tamale)]

[“The local government have control over all the assembly resources and uses it for what they think is important and don’t involve the traditional leaders” (Divisional Chief, Accra)]

3.2.2.4 Divisions among Traditional Leaders

Divisions among traditional leaders equally came up as a significant challenge in working together. The participants indicated that in many cases, there is no unity among traditional chiefs. Therefore, it becomes difficult to present a united front to push for collaboration.

[“That, um, one, uh, the chiefs themselves ignite. Okay. Unity, unity. They have one voice. Okay. It's already their eldest who is living them. Okay. Yes. Those who don't know. Okay. That she, they have one voice” (Council of Elder, Tamale)]

[“Most times, you see that there is no unity because of chieftaincy litigations. That makes working with them difficult” (Assembly Member, TMA, Tamale)]

[“No unity because of people background, the members of the community come from different ethnic groups and have different perspectives towards their communities” (Assembly Member, AMA, Accra)]

The ways of addressing the challenges to ensure collaborative work featured in the participants’ narratives. The identifies three main themes on how best to address the challenges. The three themes that emerged are; symbolic empowerment, material empowerment, and consensus building.

3.2.2.5 Symbolic Empowerment

The most dominant theme that emerged in ensuring collaboration was symbolic empowerment. Empowering local leadership with the requisite knowledge and skills. The participants indicated the need to develop adult education and training programs that ensure that the local leaders are empowered with the necessary knowledge and skills in critical areas of local leadership to be able to ensure that both sides are empowered equally. Among some areas of training that emerged were areas of security, political rights, policy development among others.

Respondents speech: [To train them on security, to train them on how to support their children to go to school, to train them on, how to help tidy up sanitation around in Jennings and something like that in the community” (Divisional Chief, Accra)]

“And they adult learning programs in the community for both traditional leaders and local government leaders” (Traditional Council Member, Accra)]

[“Yeah, and you see, the education will make people understand” [Assembly Member, Kumasi]

3.2.2.6 Consensus Building

Consensus building also emerged as a strong theme in addressing the challenges that characterize collaboration between local and traditional governance leaders. Participants from both sides indicated the need to development unity and sense of purpose for their local communities.

Respondents speech: [“We need unity and sense of purpose for community development. That is the only way to ensure that there are no misgivings. The ultimate is to develop the communities, so unity of purpose is important” (Divisional Chief, Accra)]

Having a sense of purpose requires mutual understanding. Some of the participants indicated that there is the need to promote mutual understanding among the leaders from both side:

[“Both have to understand themselves come to call for their meeting, but once they have you know why they are moving” (Traditional Council Member, Accra)]

The participants also indicated the need to organize meetings together between leaders of the two systems of government in order to provide a common platform for discussions and consensus building:

[“They try to organize a community meeting and discussion. There should be more such meetings where we both meet to deliberate on issues of our communities and build consensus” (Traditional Council Member, Accra)]

[“There should also be proper structures of engagement (meetings and training and capacity development programs) for traditional leaders to empower them (Traditional Council Member, Tamale”]

3.2.2.7 Material Empowerment

The traditional leaders indicated that there are some key responsibilities they play in their communities and therefore requested that some of the assembly funds should be allocated to them. Some of the duties they made mention of are festival celebrations, attending funerals, drinks for libation pouring, allowance for sitting for dispute settlement etc. They agitated for

Respondents’ speech: [“proper resource distribution or allocation to enable the traditional leaders to carry out their duties in the community.” The traditional leaders were also of the view that “if they cannot be considered in the district assembly common fund (DAF), they should at least be considered in the funds allocation of the internal generated fund (IGF.”]

4. Discussions

The study drew on mixed-method data to explore the dynamics of collaboration among the local and traditional government leaders in championing development within their localities. The survey data was used to examine in principle, areas where the leaders foresee strong collaborations and where they think collaborations will not work. The findings showed that there is the possibility of a strong collaborations in the areas of land administration, development of by-laws, appointments, and economic and business development. Weak collaborations were found in the areas of setting

development agenda for communities, healthcare planning and development, dispute resolution, and education planning and development.

When the three districts were compared, the findings showed that collaboration is consistently highest in KMA when it comes to land administration, law enforcement, dispute resolution, natural resource management, healthcare planning and administration, and education planning and development. Collaboration is higher in AMA for development of bye laws, security, and appointment. Consistently, collaboration has been low for TMA on all the indicators except infrastructural development. This means that in principle, there exist possibilities for collaborative local leadership for transforming development within the local communities. There is the existence of building blocks for collaborative partnerships, in the domains of land administration, development of bylaws, appointments, and economic and business development where these collaborations are likely to succeed.

The qualitative data however showed existing practical challenges that threaten achievement of fusion of local and traditional systems of government for local leadership. The qualitative data was drawn on to explore, in practice, how collaborations work within the three districts. The findings from the qualitative component showed that there is always a tension or conflict between the local government and the traditional leaders. This is because the assembly has total control over funds (both DACF and IGF) they operate without the consultation of the traditional leaders which they also think they have the ideas in building their communities. The local government in their operations don't allocate any resources to support the activities of the traditional leaders. There is lack of community engagement between the local government and the traditional leaders on community development and prospects in the community. No common grounds for meeting or training for community members. Although the traditional leaders are open and ready to share the knowledge and ideas to help developing the communities, but local government always neglect them during their operations. This places adult education as the rallying ground to building capacity and enhancing collaborations as reflected in Mayombe (2018).

Synthesizing the findings, the study points to the fact that the issue of tension is built around resource allocation, mobilization and management and power sharing. The findings from this study align findings from previous studies reported in other African countries such as Cameroon (Cheka, 2008), South Africa (Amoateng & Kalule-Sabiti, 2012) and Ghana (Adjei et al., 2017; Honyenuga & Wutoh, 2018) which all point to the fact that resource allocation, resource management and power structures undermine fruitful partnerships and alliances between traditional institutions and local government functionaries in grassroot development.

The qualitative data further unearthed four thematic challenges that fueled tensions in the collaborations between the local and traditional leaders. The drivers of the tensions are lack of empowerment for traditional leaders, power sharing, funding architecture, and divisions among traditional chiefs. On the issue of empowerment, the traditional leaders indicated that there is no plan to empower traditional leaders for them to work collaboratively with the local government leaders. The lack of empowerment emerged both in terms of material and symbolic disempowerment. The material disempowerment emerged mainly in the Tamale Metropolis where the chiefs bemoaned the deplorable states of the palaces and the unwillingness of the local assembly to assist them renovate to empower them.

The symbolic disempowerment emerged across all the three districts, where the traditional leaders indicated the unwillingness of the local government system to educate them on the powers allocated

to the traditional leaders as provided in the constitution. By so doing, the traditional leaders feel disempowered on their political rights and how to work collaboratively. Another area of the symbolic disempowerment was the fact that there are no collaborative training programs that are organized for both leaders together.

The other drivers of tensions within the collaborations were funding architecture, power structures and divisions among the chiefs. The traditional leaders raised the issue about the fact that no allocation of resources is made to them and therefore have no access to resources for local development. On the issue of power structures, all the powers executive and legislative powers are vested within the local assembly, with no constitutional power vested in the hands of traditional leaders. The local assemblies on the other hand also raised the issue of divisions within traditional chiefs which undermined collaborative work. This was very apparent in both Tamale and Accra metropolitan assemblies.

The concerns of the traditional leaders in terms of lack of empowerment or being disempowered to deliberately make them incapacitated to contribute are in line with the argument by Panyin (2010) on the cosmetic nature of the inclusion of chiefs in governance. The findings in this study contradict previous study by Mahama (2009) who reported personality differences undermine collaboration between local and traditional leaders in Ghana. The current study finds that the factors that mitigate against collaborative leadership are more systemic than individual differences in personality. There is systemic disempowerment, particularly among traditional leaders that limit their instrumental participation in local leadership.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has shown broadly that in principle there are opportunities for collaboration between the two systems of governance. However, in practice, there are several material and symbolic factors that undermine attempts at achieving a truly collaborative leadership at the local level. Ensuring proper collaborative leadership would require holistic material empowerment of traditional leaders and symbolic empowerment of both local government and traditional leaders to enable consensus building. This is underpinned by the quantitative findings which showed potential for strong collaborations in the areas of land administration, development of bye-laws, appointments, and economic and business development. Weak collaborations were found in the areas of educational and health planning and setting development agenda for communities. Also the qualitative findings points to lack of empowerment for traditional leaders, power sharing, funding architecture and divisions among traditional chiefs as key challenges to effective collaborations. Specific themes emerged as the key to resolving the above challenges, categorised into symbolic empowerment, material empowerment, and consensus building.

The findings have shown clearly that a dominant theme in ensuring collaboration is symbolic empowerment, that is empowering local leadership with the requisite knowledge and skills. We therefore recommend the development of adult education and training programs by Ghana Civic Education and University of Ghana, College of Adult Education in constitutional knowledge, security and development planning to empower both side of the divide with the necessary knowledge and skills in critical areas of local leadership.

In terms of local governance practice, the study finds consensus building emerging as a strong theme in addressing the challenges that characterize collaboration between local and traditional governance leaders. Participants from both sides indicated the need to develop unity and sense of purpose. We

recommended joint fora for deliberations on community development priorities particularly in ensuring alignment of development priorities for local communities.

Material empowerment of traditional authorities also came up strongly, which requires some re-adjustment of resource allocations for local development. In this regard there is the need to review the District Assemblies' Common Fund (DACF) to allocate some percentage to traditional leaders to support development of their local communities. This recommendation aligns with earlier calls by some civil society organizations such as The African Centre for Traditional Governance and Community Development which advocatess for 10% allocation of the DACF for Chiefs to support development in their localities.

Acknowledgements

My sincere appreciation goes to Professor Olivia A. T. Kwapong for supporting this vision and making valuable contributions to this work. Also, to Dr. David Addae and Dr. Issahaka Fusieni. To late Dr. Badu Nyarko for your valuable and insightful suggestions on Local Governance Administration in Ghana. I further extend my appreciation to the chiefs, elders and Assembly members of Accra, Kumasi and Tamale Metropolitan for their warm reception when approached to participate in this research survey.

References

- Acemoglu, D., Reed, T., & Robinson, J. A. (2014). Chiefs: Economic development and elite control of civil society in Sierra Leone. *Journal of Political Economy*, 122(2), 319-368.
- Addo, A. K., & Ussher, Y. (2023). An Evaluation of Local Leadership Training in Community Development: A Case of Birim North District in Ghana. *Science Journal of Education*, 9(2), 51-60.
- Adekola, G., & Nwogu, G. A. (2015). Challenges of community development in an emerging democracy: Implications for adult and non-formal education. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 3(6), 455-466.
- Adjei, P. O. W., Kwaku Busia, A., & Bob-Milliar, G. M. (2017). Democratic decentralization and disempowerment of traditional authorities under Ghana's local governance and development system: a spatio-temporal review. *Journal of Political Power*, 10(3), 303-325.
- Afful, K. (2015). Traditional Governance Influence on Democracy in Africa.
- Baldwin, K., & Mvukiyeh, E. (2015). Elections and collective action: Evidence from changes in traditional institutions in Liberia. *World Politics*, 67(4), 690-725.
- Beall, J. (2006). Cultural weapons: traditions, inventions and the transition to democratic governance in metropolitan Durban. *Urban Studies*, 43(2), 457-473.
- Boateng, K., Owusu, M. A., & Baah, A. (2024). Examining the roles of traditional leaders in promoting quality education in Ghana. *International Journal of Public Leadership*, 20(2), 132-143
- Cheka, C. (2008). Traditional authority at the crossroads of governance in Republican Cameroon. *Africa Development*, 33(2), pp. 67-89
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2013). Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *The psychologist*, 26(2), 120-123.
- CODEO. (2016). New patriotic party (NPP) manifesto for election 2016. <https://www.codeoghana.org/lib-manifestos.php>, accessed 23/04/2021
- Constitution of the Republic of Ghana (1992). constituteproject.org, <https://www.ilo.org>

- Ehrhardt, D., Alao, D. O., & Umar, M. S. (2024). Traditional Authority, Security Governance, and Nigerian Agency. In *Traditional Authority and Security in Contemporary Nigeria* (pp. 3-22). Routledge.
- Fosu, A. K. (2008). Implications of the external debt-servicing constraint for public health expenditure in sub-Saharan Africa. *Oxford Development Studies*, 36(4), 363-377.
- Fuseini, I. (2021). Navigating traditional and modern institutions in city governance: the role of chieftaincy in spatial planning in Tamale, Ghana. *African Studies*, 80(2), 230-248.
- Holzinger, K., Kern, F. G., & Kromrey, D. (2016). The dualism of contemporary traditional governance and the state: Institutional setups and political consequences. *Political Research Quarterly*, 69(3), 469-481.
- Honyenuga, B. Q., & Wutoh, E. H. (2019). Ghana's decentralized governance system: the role of Chiefs. *International Journal of Public Leadership*, 15(1), 2-18.
- Koter, D. (2013). King makers: Local leaders and ethnic politics in Africa. *World Politics*, 65(2), 187-232.
- Logan, C. (2013). The roots of resilience: Exploring popular support for African traditional authorities. *African Affairs*, 112(448), 353-376.
- Logan, J. D. (2013). *Applied mathematics*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Mahama, C. (2009). Local government and traditional authorities in Ghana: Towards a more productive relationship. *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance*, (4), 7-25.
- Mayombe, C. (2018). From social exclusion to adult education and training for community development in South Africa. *Community Development*, 49(4), 398-414.
- Nketsia N.K. (2013). African Culture in Governance and Development: *the Ghana Paradigm*. Ghana University Press.
- Nukunya, G. K. (2003). Tradition and change in Ghana: An introduction to sociology. Ghana Universities Press.
- Nyathi, P. A., & Ajani, O. A. (2024). Conflict and coexistence: analysing the dynamics between traditional leadership and democratic governance in Dukuduku, KwaZulu-Natal. *International Journal of Research in Business & Social Science*, 13(5).
- Panyin, O. A. O. (2010). Chiefs and Traditional Authorities and their role in the Democratic Order and Governance. Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA Ghana). Ghana. Retrieved from <https://coilink.org/20.500.12592/cp4xbm> on 30 Oct 2024. COI: 20.500.12592/cp4xbm.
- Ukaegbu, C. O., Idowu, A. O., & Chukwuma, O. E. (2024). Democracy in Africa: Theoretical models Towards Indigenous Governance. *Social Science Research*, 10(1).
- UNDP Annual Report (2009). <https://www.undp.org/publications/undp-annual-report-2009>