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Making the Functional Organisational Assessment Tool Work for Local Governments in Ghana: Evidence from the Central Region

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Abstract:

Effective assessment of the performance of local governments (LGs) enhances responsiveness to the tenets of decentralisation and good governance. Various tools have been used to facilitate the assessment of LGs. However, the responsiveness of these tools to leadership and accountability to citizens remains a challenge. The paper examined how the Functional Organisational Assessment Tool (FOAT) can be made an effective tool for assessing the performance of LGs in the Central Region of Ghana. Mixed-methods approach was used. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select a sample of 989 respondents from three local government areas namely: Cape Coast Metropolis (CCM), Effutu Municipality and Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa (AOB) District. Data were collected from regional, district and community actors using interview schedules and an interview guide. Descriptive statistics and content analysis were used to analyse the data.

The study found that the FOAT paid less attention to leadership in the performance assessment of LGs. Mechanisms for holding leaders accountable were not provided in the FOAT and there was very low awareness about FOAT, especially at the community level. The study recommends that the FOAT should cover assessment of the leaders in responding to performance requirements and the FOAT administrators should create awareness about FOAT.

Keywords: *Decentralisation, local governments, performance assessment, functional organisational assessment tool, district development facility*

1. Introduction

The benefits of decentralisation, including efficiency, participation, accountability, manageability and autonomy have led to the belief that decentralisation results in better performance of local governments (LGs). The quest for greater efficiency in the performance of sub-national governments (SNGs) has provided considerable impetus for decentralized system of local government (Villadsen & Lubanga, 1996). Decentralisation is a set of policies that encompasses fiscal, political and administrative changes, which can impact all aspects of development. It enhances performance by removing development constraints and laying strong foundation for involvement of all actors to achieve accelerated growth, equitable and sustainable local development (Litvack & Seddan, 2002). Consequently, both the donor community and governments of developing countries increasingly link development programmes to decentralised structures (Shah, 2005).

Local governments are increasingly required to play larger roles in providing services, alleviating poverty and facilitating development (Mitlin, 2000). Shah (2005) has argued that effective assessment of the performance of decentralised LGs goes a long way in responding to the tenets of decentralisation. Response to the tenets of decentralisation in turn provides the framework for responding to the tenets of good governance. Therefore, central governments, civil society and development organisations find it imperative to assess the performance of LGs in responding to their mandates and the development aspirations of the people to inspire confidence in them (Sandbakken, 2006). Rondinelli (2007) asserts that the pressures of globalisation, coupled with widespread access to communication have resulted in citizens in many countries demanding more of their governments, with these rising expectations leading to growing dissatisfaction with, and lack of trust in governments.

The decentralisation programme introduced in Ghana in 1988 devolves political, administrative and fiscal authority to LG structures: the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies [MMDAs] (Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Environment [MLGRDE] 2007). In an effort to bring governance to the doorstep of the people, the number of MMDAs was increased from 110 in 1998 to 138, 170, 216 in 2004, 2008 and 2012 respectively (Aye, 2012). Apart from routine progress reports that were demanded of the MMDAs, performance assessment of MMDAs was not consciously done (MLGRD, 2009). Consequently, the ministry introduced the Functional Organisational Assessment Tool (FOAT) in 2008 to assess the performance of the MMDAs 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). The results of the assessments over the two-year period indicated that some MMDAs performed creditably while others failed to respond to performance requirements.

It is against this background that the study examined how the FOAT can be made an effective tool for assessing the performance of the LGs in the Central Region of Ghana. The region has featured prominently in Ghana's decentralisation process. Its regional capital (Cape Coast) was the capital of Ghana (the then Gold Coast) until 1877, and it was one of the regions in which the Municipal Council Ordinance of 1859 regulated LGs in their municipalities (Ahwoi, 2010). Despite its historical potential in the decentralised LG system in Ghana, the region is still grappling with performance challenges. It was the second poorest performed region after Greater Accra, with only two out of the 13 districts qualifying for the DDF in the first FOAT administration in 2008, and the third best in the second assessment in 2009 with 16 out of the 17 MMDAs qualifying for the DDF (MLGRD, 2010b).

2. Theoretical Perspective

Several theories inform decentralised decision making and strong role for LGs. The decentralisation theory argues that each public service should be provided by the jurisdiction having control over the minimum geographic area that would internalise benefits and costs of such provision (Oates, 1972). The theory is premised on the grounds that LGs understand the concerns of local residents and local decision making is responsive to the people for whom services are intended. This encourages fiscal responsibility and efficiency, especially if financing of services is also decentralised. In addition, unnecessary layers of jurisdiction are eliminated and inter-jurisdictional competition and innovation are enhanced.

Shah (2006) has argued that an ideal decentralised system should ensure a level and combination of public services consistent with voters' preferences while providing incentives for the efficient provision of such services. However, some degree of central control or compensatory grants may be required in the provision of services when spatial externalities, economies of scale and administrative and compliance costs are taken into consideration. He further argues that the practical implications of the theory require considerable overlapping jurisdictions.

Accordingly, Stigler's (1957) menu identifies two principles of jurisdictional design, namely the closer a representative government is to the people, the better it works; and people should have the right to vote for the kind and amount of public services they want to ensure accountability of the leadership to the citizens. In Shah's (2006) view, the principles suggest that decision making should occur at the lowest level of government consistent with the goal of allocative efficiency. Thus, the optimal size of a jurisdiction varies with specific instances of economies of scale and benefit-cost spill-overs.

The correspondence principle, a related concept to the jurisdictional design proposed by Oates (1972), states that the jurisdiction that determines the level of provision of each public good should include precisely the set of individuals who consume the good. However, the principle requires a large number of overlapping jurisdictions. Frey and Eichenberger (1999) have extended this idea to define the concept of functional, overlapping and competing jurisdictions. They argued that jurisdictions could be organised along functional lines while overlapping geographically, and that individuals and communities could be free to choose among competing jurisdictions through initiatives and referenda. The jurisdictions have authority over their members and the power to raise taxes to fulfil their tasks.

The subsidiarity principle complements the correspondence principle (Shah 2006). It also states that taxing, spending, and regulatory functions should be exercised by lower levels of government unless a convincing case can be made for assigning them to a higher level of government. One way of achieving this is to decentralise authority of service provision to the lowest possible level of government. Kisseih (2007) has argued that, in accordance with subsidiarity, true democracy is a product of local institutions and self-reliance and, therefore, there is the need to empower the local structures to deliver.

According to Litvack and Seddan (2002), empowerment for decentralised local government, planning and management of development interventions is about handing down authority. It is also about increasing the efficiency, enhancing the effectiveness and ensuring sustainability of development interventions by passing on responsibility to those people, communities and enterprises to whom efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability matter. Thus, when local people participate in local governance, they tend to abide by decisions taken more than when decisions are handed down to them. It is, therefore, important to see local people as assets rather than merely beneficiaries, and allow them the opportunity to apply their skills, gifts, capacities and abilities to improve their well-being.

Shah (2006) asserts that improving the institutions of LGs requires agreement on three basic principles. First, there should be responsive governance aimed at ensuring that governments do the right things by delivering services consistent with citizens' preferences. Second, governments should be responsive, requiring that the government manages its fiscal resources prudently, earn the trust of residents by working better and costing less, and by managing fiscal and social risks. Third, government should be accountable to its electorate and adhere to appropriate safeguards to ensure that it serves the public interest with integrity.

The importance of assessing the performance of LGs could be viewed from the micro-theory and macro-theory paradigms. Micro-theory aims to understand social life at the intimate level of individuals and their interactions while macro-theory appreciates the big picture of institutions, whole societies and the interactions among societies (Babbie, 2007). Micro-theory underscores the importance of enabling LGs to function well to achieve sustainable local development. Macro-theory, on the other hand, emphasises the need for the SNGs to function well to enable the country to perform well in achieving equitable and sustainable development. Building on this, Ahwoi (2010) asserts that since the central government is held responsible for the management of the national economy, it must be concerned about the performance of its micro-components.

In response to the tenets of the decentralisation theory and the need to assess the performance of LGs, the Government of Ghana and its development partners introduced the DDF as a performance based grant system for MMDAs in 2008. The aim was to ensure efficient provision of basic community infrastructure and service delivery through prudent use of resources. The DDF is to mobilise additional financial resources for MMDAs, provide incentives for complying with policy and legal mandates, establish a link between assessments and capacity building support, and ensure harmonised systems for investment funding to MMDAs (MLGRD, 2010a). The assessment which was designed to be conducted annually uses the FOAT as a set of indicators covering five thematic areas, namely management and organisation, planning and budgeting, human resource management, financial management and administration, and accounting and auditing. Implicit in the tool are the opportunities for participation, transparency and accountability to the General Assembly (GA), the final authority of the LGs.

3. Performance Assessment of Local Governments and FOAT

Performance involves managing, controlling, supporting and continuously improving the success of organisations. It establishes the systems and processes to support assessment, review and evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of organisations (United Nations, 2007b). Different criteria and indicators have been used by different authorities, including the FOAT (MLGRD, 2009), United Nations (2007b), Ouchi (1981) and Waterman et al. (1980) to assess the performance of LGs. The elements include leadership, strategic management, public participation, transparency, openness and accountability as presented in Table 1.

According to Oyelaran-Oyeyinka (2006), studies have shown that leaders make the difference in the performance of organisations. An effective leader translates resources to production, which ultimately defines the success level of that organisation. The overall organisational effectiveness and performance may not be due to poor administrative system, but poor organisational leadership. The United Nations (2007a) explains that the strategic management of organisations deals with the identification of the mission and purpose of the organisation, its main policies and plans to achieve the mission, and activities affecting its products and services in the interest of stakeholders. According to United Nations (2007b), the interdependence of mission, policies and activities helps the organisation to position itself within its environment, build an identity, and use its strengths to enhance performance. Public participation at all levels of government is essential to promote policies that will better focus on growth with equity, sustainable human development and poverty reduction.

Performance criteria	Indicators
Leadership	Style, quality and responsiveness
Strategic management	Strategy, planning system and shared goals
Public participation	Decision-making, vision/ goal formulation, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation
Transparency, openness, accountability	Reporting, feedback, processes, procedures, accessibility to information, holding individuals and organisations responsible for access to and quality of services, and results measured objectively: financial, political and administrative accountability
Human resource management	Staffing (quantity and quality), skills, organisational structure and culture
Revenue and expenditure management	Revenue generation capacity, financial management and accountability system
Internal and external environmental relationships	Inter-organisational, inter-governmental and environmental relationships

Table 1: Performance criteria and indicators

Source: Adapted from MLGRD (2009), United Nations (2007b), Ouchi (1981) and Waterman et al. (1980)

Cheema and Rondinelli (2003) submit that transparency promotes openness of the democratic process through reporting and feedback, clear processes and procedures, and the conduct and actions of those holding decision-making authority. Accountability is a key pillar of good governance that compels the state, the private sector and civil society to focus on results, seek clear objectives, develop effective strategies, and monitor and report on performance (United Nations, 2007a).

Human resource management includes organisational structure and culture, personnel selection and placement, training and development, job design, and performance appraisal. In many developing countries, human resource management continues to focus on administering rules and regulations instead of taking a proactive approach to improve performance (Armstrong, 2006). United Nations (2007a) has noted that the shortage of skilled, well-trained managers is a major constraint to effective public sector management. Hence, the need for investment in management training and development.

According to Shah (2006), revenue and expenditure management involves ensuring that more resources are available for use in expanding and improving services to make service delivery efficient and cost-effective. If there is increased transparency and less corruption, fewer scarce resources will be misdirected, and instead used for service provision. Likewise, improvement in tax administration and collection of user charges assist in mobilising more resources to expand and improve service provision.

Kendie and Mensah (2008) have argued that inter-organisational and intergovernmental relations influence the performance of public organisations. It involves central-local government allocations of responsibilities and relationships among ministries, parastatal organisations, state enterprises and external development partners. Effective partnerships among different levels of government require streamlining and clarifying areas of primary and secondary responsibilities for each level of government and administration. Lack of coordination among government organisations results in duplication and multiplicity in service provision, inefficiency and wastage in the use of public resources.

In Ghana, the first FOAT was conducted in 2008 to assess the performance of the 138 MMDAs in 2006. The second assessment was conducted in 2009 to assess the 2008 operational responsiveness of 169 out of the 170 MMDAs. One of the new districts in the Volta Region, Biakoye District Assembly, had not been inaugurated at the time of the assessment and was, therefore, not included in the assessment.

Under the FOAT, MMDAs are assessed against their legal obligations and other mandates. The indicators focus on the legal, political, administrative and fiscal environment in which MMDAs operate and capture both the technocrats and elected representatives in the MMDA structure. In order to minimize discretion in the assessment process, the indicators are made objectively verifiable and the assessment evidence-based (MLGRD, 2010a). The assessment is categorised into two main requirements, namely, the minimum conditions (MCs) and performance measures (PMs). The MCs are those conditions that an MMDA needs to fulfil in order to qualify to access the basic grant component of the DDF. The MCs are fulfilled under five sub-themes, namely development planning, financial management and accounting, public procurement, implementation capacity and functioning of the General Assembly (GA) as indicated in Table 2.

The PMs are those conditions that would be used to determine each MMDA's allocation of DDF's performance grant. The PMs involve detailed indicators that build on the MCs to measure performance. The PMs are classified and scored under nine sub-themes: management and organisation; transparency, openness and accountability; planning system; human resource management; relationship with sub-district structure (SDS); financial management and auditing; fiscal capacity; procurement and environmental sanitation management as indicated in Table 3.

Minimum condition	Indicators to fulfil
1. Development planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functioning District Planning Coordinating Unit • Annual Action Plan (AAP) formulated
2. Financial management and accounting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual statement of accounts prepared. • No adverse audit comments bordering on dishonesty
3. Public procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement plan prepared
4. Implementation capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress reports submitted on AAP implementation
5. Functioning of the GA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum number of GA meetings held

*Table 2: Minimum conditions of performance and indicators to fulfil
Source: Adapted from Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (2010a)*

The preparation of procurement plans ensures transparency and accountability by avoiding indiscretion on the part of the administrative and political leaders and ensuring compliance with approved plans and budgets by the GA are implemented. The GA approves the plans, budgets and other key decisions of the district and it is required to have a minimum of four meetings in a year in order to respond to these requirements. Failure to meet the requirements has the potential of preventing the Assembly members from exercising the mandate of their electorates in the decision-making processes.

The elements under the thematic areas in the PMs complement one another. For example, effective management and organisation could facilitate transparency, openness and accountability, which in turn would contribute to a responsive planning system. Together, they would contribute to providing the enabling environment for effective human resource management (HRM), good working relationships with the SDS, responsive financial management and auditing (FM&A), fiscal capacity (FC), procurement and sound environmental sanitation management (United Nations, 2007a, 2007b).

Performance Measures	Indicators	Maximum Score
1. Management & organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory meetings and follow ups, accessibility of offices to the physically challenged, etc. 	10
2. Transparency, openness and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functionality of Public Relations and Complaints Committee, publication of accounts, budgets, availability of external auditor's report, submission of monthly financial statements, etc. 	12
3. Planning system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involvement in plan implementation and monitoring, level of plan implementation, linkage between planning and budgeting, socio-economic data management, gender mainstreaming, etc. 	15
4. Human resource management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall vacancy level, staff development, training and capacity building. 	7
5. Relationship with SDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revenue sharing and extent to which SDS have been mandated to perform mandated functions. 	6
6. Financial management and auditing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functionality of Budget Committee, compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, responsiveness to audit requirements, etc. 	15
7. Fiscal capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absolute size of Internally Generated Fund (IGF), efforts to improve IGF, collection cost, share of IGF used for development, operation and maintenance plan, preparation of assets register. 	15
8. Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings of procurement entities, record on procurement processes, quarterly updates, contract mobilisation, management and retention. 	12
9. Environmental sanitation management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of Environmental Sanitation Sub-Sector Strategy and action plan, data on environmental and market facilities, etc. 	8
Total score		100

Table 3: Performance measures, indicators and maximum score

Source: Adapted from Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (2010a)

Table 4 presents the regional distribution of districts fulfilling the MCs in 2008 and 2009. In 2008, 36.2 percent of the 138 MMDAs in Ghana fulfilled all the MCs and thus qualified for the basic grant component of the DDF as well as the capacity building grant. In the Central Region, only two districts, Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa (AOB) and Gomoa District Assemblies, out of the 13 MMDAs qualified. The performance nationwide improved in 2009 with 79.3 percent of the eligible 169 MMDAs qualifying for the basic and capacity building grants, while in the Central Region, all the 17 MMDAs, but Effutu Municipal Assembly qualified. In all cases, the failure to fulfil the MCs was due to the MMDAs' inability to respond to the policy, legal and regulatory requirements under the thematic areas. The mandatory meetings to ensure participation in the decision-making and implementation processes were also intended to ensure responsiveness to legal and regulatory requirements and not the self-motivated inclinations of the leadership to put in place mechanisms to facilitate participation in responding to the assessment requirements (MLGRD, 2010a).

The conceptual framework for the study (Figure 1) is viewed from a systems thinking perspective and provides a holistic and integrated framework for the assessment of MMDAs' performance. The perspective is that although the individual elements provide basis for assessing specific aspects of the MMDAs, on their own and by themselves, they cannot provide sufficient basis for assessing performance (Fletcher, 1997). The elements are interconnected, interrelated and interdependent. They feed into each other in a multi-dimensional manner (Checkland, 2000; Waterman et al., 1980). For example, to achieve transparency, openness and accountability, the systems and structures need to be in place, leadership provided and the goals shared. In addition, strategies should be adopted to determine the staffing and skills requirements to operationalise the systems and structures. The model conveys the notion that there is no starting point or implied hierarchy amongst the elements. Each element in the criteria is as important as the other elements and provides the basis for understanding the responsiveness of the other elements. The conceptual framework is consistent with the FOAT framework.

Region	2008			2009		
	No of districts	No of districts fulfilling all MCs	% of districts meeting MCs	No of districts	No of districts fulfilling all MCs	% of districts meeting MCs
Ashanti	21	9	43.0	27	22	81.5
BrongAhafo	19	10	53.0	22	8	36.4
Central	13	2	15.0	17	16	94.1
Eastern	17	7	41.0	21	14	66.7
Greater Accra	6	0	0.0	10	9	90.0
Northern	18	6	33.0	20	17	85.0
Upper East	8	4	50.0	9	9	100.0
Upper West	8	4	50.0	9	8	88.9
Volta	15	5	33.0	17	14	82.4
Western	13	3	23.0	17	17	100.0
Total	138	50	36.2	169	134	79.3

Table 4: Regional distribution of districts in Ghana fulfilling the minimum conditions of performance in 2008 and 2009

Source: Adapted from Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (2010b)

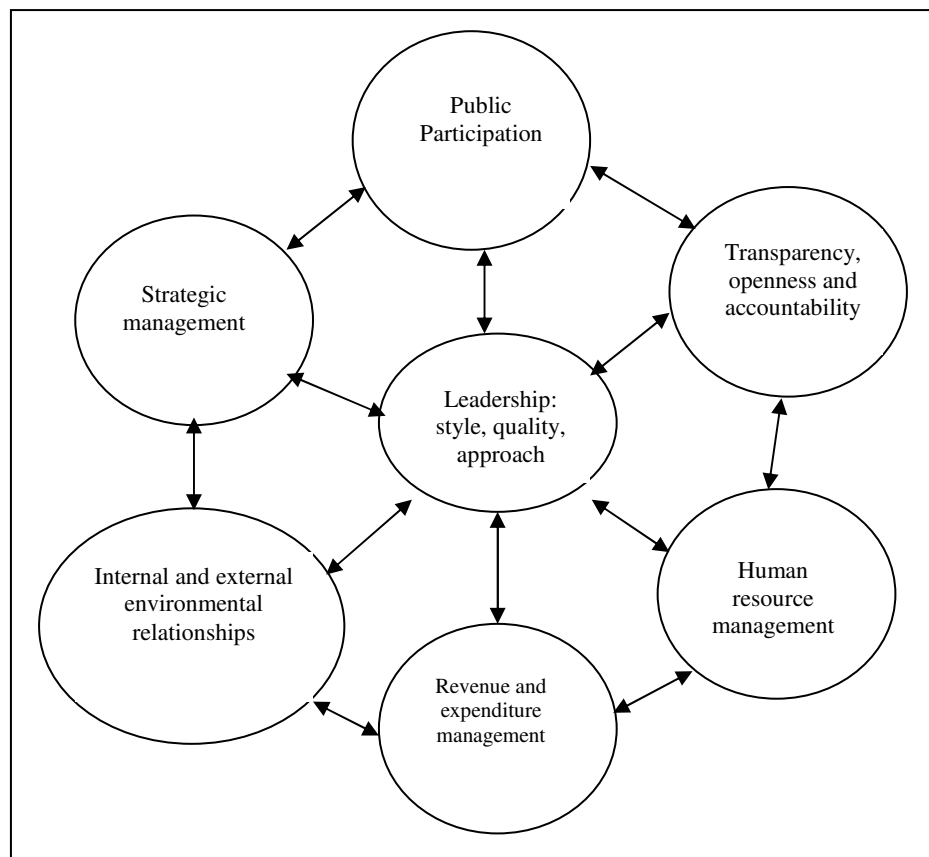


Figure 1: MMDAs' performance assessment model

Source: Adapted from Waterman et al. (1980)

4. Research Methodology

This study adopted the mixed-methods design which involved collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Descriptive survey study design as well as in-depth and contextualized insights were used to obtain information concerning the current status of the issues addressed and to describe what exists with respect to the variables or conditions (Robson, 2002). Three areas selected for the study were Cape Coast Metropolis (CCM), Effutu Municipality and AOB District (Figure 2). The study population was 53,506 out of which 989 respondents were sampled for the study. This comprised the Regional Coordinating Director and Regional Economic Planning Officer 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.

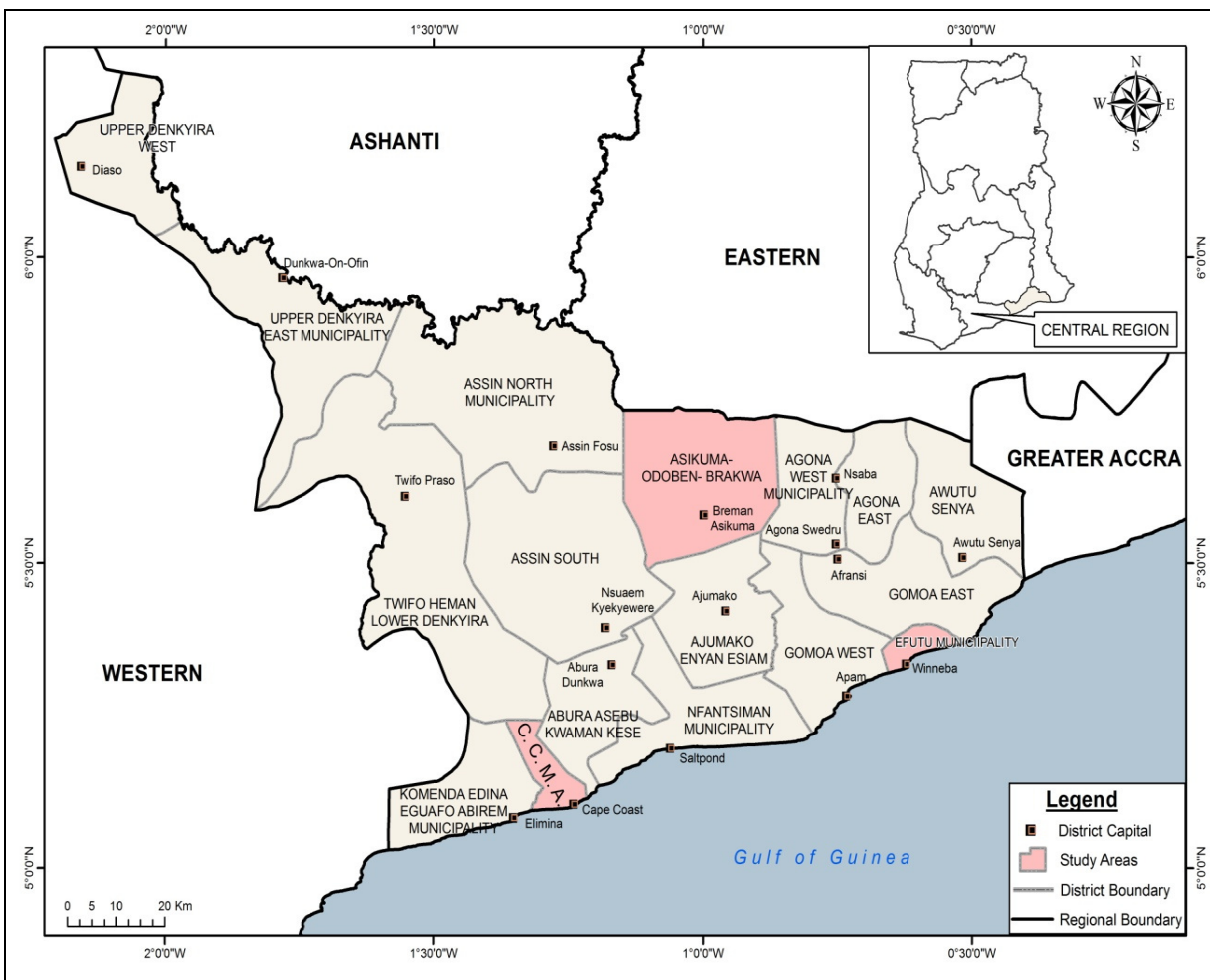


Figure 2: Central Region with the study areas in regional and national context
 Source: Central Regional Coordinating Council, 2009

Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to sample the respondents at the regional, district and community levels. The sampling procedure involved five main stages. This was to ensure that the different categories of regional actors, MMDAs, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs), Metropolitan, Municipal and District Coordinating Directors (MMDCDs), heads of departments (HoDs), Assembly members 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.

The first stage involved purposive selection of the regional level respondents, namely the Central Regional Coordinating Director and Regional Economic Planning Officer. Since the study was situated within the context of the FOAT performance assessment framework, the regional actors who provided policy, monitoring and coordinating support were purposively sampled to enable them share their perceptions on pertinent issues relating to leadership and performance in the MMDAs.

At the second stage, the three MMDAs were purposively selected. Since only two FOAT had been administered as at January 2011 and to ensure representativeness, the 17 MMDAs in the Central 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. One district was purposively selected from each of the three categories. This resulted in the selection of the only one Metropolitan Assembly (CCMA) which qualified for the DDF in the second assessment; one Municipal Assembly (Effutu) which did not qualify for the DDF in both assessments; and one District Assembly (AOB) that qualified for the DDF in both assessments.

The third stage involved purposive selection of all the three MMDCEs and all the heads of departments (16 in CCMA, 13 in Effutu Municipal Assembly and 11 in AOB District Assembly) due to the key roles they play in the leadership and performance processes in their Assemblies. In addition, all the Assembly members (60 in Cape Coast, 24 in Effutu and 33 in AOB) who ended their term of office in October, 2010 were purposively selected. This was to ensure that the Assembly members in office at the time of the FOAT assessments were interviewed. They constituted the leadership of sub-committees of the Assembly and were better placed to respond to the decentralisation and performance issues that were investigated.

At the fourth stage, the number of elected Assembly members that were available for interview was established in order to ensure that their constituents are located to assess their performance. As the term of office of the elected Assembly members had expired, some had relocated outside the area and could not be contacted. Those that could be contacted were used as the basis for selecting the community level respondents.

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

At the fifth stage, the list of the 2008 registered voters by constituency, were obtained from the Electoral Commission of Ghana. This was used to establish the adult population in each of the electoral areas of the elected Assembly members that were contacted. The registered voters were used as the basis for selection of respondents for this study. This was based on the assumption that at the voting age of 18 one was capable of making informed decisions on the responsiveness of the political, economic and socio-cultural issues in their locality (Government of Ghana, 1992). They were, therefore, seen as those who would be able to make informed judgements on the leadership of the Assembly members and how they influenced performance in responding to their mandates and development aspirations of their constituents.

Stratified sampling method was used to select the registered voters. Each selected district formed a stratum from which the registered voters were selected. The sample size of the registered voters from the three selected districts was calculated using Cochran's (1977) sample size estimation formula. The study adopted a margin of error of 0.05, which indicates 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 generated a sample size of 295, 280 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 distributed among the various communities.

An important factor that was considered in sampling respondents at the community level was the need to ensure that only persons who had adequately experienced the regimes of the elected Assembly members qualified for inclusion. A minimum of five years stay in the community was, therefore, considered. Accordingly, a snowball sampling approach was used until the required sample sizes were exhausted in each community.

Both primary and secondary data were collected for the study. Primary data (both quantitative and qualitative) was collected from 989 respondents from regional, district and community levels by the use of interview schedule and interview guide. Secondary data was gathered from published documents, journal articles, books and reports. Data was analysed using Statistical Product and Service Solution 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.

5. Results and Discussion

The results and discussion focus on the performance of the study MMDAs; leadership, participation and accountability; challenges of local governments in responding to performance requirements; and improving the FOAT framework.

5.1. Performance of the Study MMDAs

The results of the performance measures in 2008 and 2009 derived from secondary sources are presented in Table 5. The performance in 2009 was also better than 2008 with corresponding improvements in the performance of CCM, Effutu and AOB Assemblies. The least performing thematic area in 2008 was the relationship with sub-structures, with each of the three study areas scoring zero out of the maximum score of nine, while the best performing area was procurement with each of the study areas scoring six, higher than the national average score of 5.7 out of 10.

The results were similar in 2009 with the relationship with SDS as the worst performing thematic area and a national average score of 1.6 out of four. The Cape Coast Metropolis scored zero while Effutu Municipality and AOB District scored two each. The best performing thematic area in 2009 was environmental sanitation management with each of the three study areas scoring higher than the national average score of 9.8 out of 14. The CCM scored 12, Effutu Municipality 14 and AOB District 11. In procurement, CCM and Effutu Municipality scored seven and six respectively, higher than the national average score of 5.4, while AOB District scored four. The three districts scored higher than the national average of 4.1 out of nine in HRM.

Performance measures	Maximum Score*		Average Scores		Actual scores of study districts					
	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008			2009		
					CCM	Effutu	AOB	CCM	Effutu	AOB
1. Management and organisation	15	14	6.1	8.0	10	7	6	13	6	10
2. Transparency openness and accountability	10	10	5.1	7.0	5	10	9	6	8	7
3. Planning system	16	15	7	8.5	1	5	5	11	7	8
4. Human resource management	10	9	4.1	4.5	3	1	5	6	6	3
5. Relationship with SDS	9	4	2	1.6	0	0	0	0	2	2
6. Financial management and auditing	20	18	10.2	10.8	2	7	7	13	8	9
7. Fiscal capacity	10	9	4	5.4	6	4	1	6	6	6
8. Procurement	10	8	6.8	5.7	6	6	6	7	6	4
9. Environmental sanitation management	0	14	0	9.8	0	0	0	12	14	11

Table 5: National average and study districts' scores on performance measures (2008–2009)

*The maximum scores increased from 100 in 2008 to 110 in 2009, but the final results were adjusted to 100 to conform to the current base.

Source: Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (2010b)

5.2. Leadership, Participation and Accountability

The focus of FOAT is largely on responding to policy, legal and regulatory mandates as well as efficiency and effectiveness requirements (Sandbakken, 2006). The performance requirements deal with relationships in the decision-making and implementation of development interventions in the areas of mandatory meetings and the extent of participation of required actors in the planning process. The meetings include the mandatory meetings of the GA, Executive Committee and Sub-committees of the Assembly, District Planning Coordinating Unit, and management meetings including heads of departments (Government of Ghana, 1993).

About 80 percent of the MMDA level respondents indicated that outcomes of these meetings stay with the leaders and do not filter through to their constituents. Although Act 462 mandates the Assembly members to elicit views of their constituents before Assembly meetings and to feed outcomes of meetings to their constituents, this was not the case as confirmed by the majority (75%) of the 827 community level respondents. A respondent remarked that: "the Assembly members hardly met with their constituents before and after Assembly meetings". Similarly, the majority (80%) of the MMDA level respondents indicated that they failed to give feedback on meetings to their staff. The FOAT framework fails to sufficiently include indicators that elicit compliance as there were no indicators requiring inputs and feedbacks from constituents.

The majority (72% and 70.7%) of the regional and district level respondents indicated that the framework elicited participation and accountability respectively. However, its operationalisation pointed to the contrary. Responses from the regional and district actors suggested that there is no provision for the constituents to demand accountability for the performance of their MMDAs in the FOAT. Information sharing, communication and publicity about the FOAT to the general public were very low as only 27.8 percent of the district and community respondents indicated that they were aware of the FOAT administration.

About 95 percent of the respondents at the regional and MMDA levels also indicated that apart from publication of the results in the national newspapers, not much was known about the FOAT to serve as basis for the public to demand accountability for the performance of the leadership. Those aware of the FOAT administration were the leadership of the central administration, HoDs and the Assembly members. Six of the Assembly members (two each of the three study districts) and all the 827 community members interviewed indicated that they were not aware of the FOAT and its results.

The two regional level respondents indicated that accountability for the assessment outcomes seemed blurred, as neither the leadership nor the followers felt fully responsible. They noted that the followers looked up to the leaders to provide direction, while the leaders looked up to the followers to perform as expected of them. As noted by Covey (2004), this disposition has the tendency to perpetuate the dependency and co-dependency inclinations in the leadership process. The blurred nature of accountability for the FOAT performance was compounded by the views of 70 percent of the district level respondents that the two assessments had been based on actions and omissions of actors outside the regime of the leadership.

The two regional and about 70 percent of the MMDA level respondents indicated that the 2008 assessment had 2006 as its base year, while the 2009 assessment was based on 2008. The leadership in each of the MMDAs under whose regime the Assemblies experienced the performance were not at post due to transfer in the case of administrative leadership, or had been relieved of their post as a result of change in government in the case of the political leadership. The Chief Executives, Coordinating Directors, Finance Officers and other officers were reshuffled as soon as there was a change of government and or change in MMDCE (Ahwoi,

2010). This did not make the real actors accountable for the MMDAs' performance. It has the tendency to alienate leaders and followers from the accountability process as both are likely to accept responsibility for good performance, but shun responsibility for poor performance (Beerel, 1998; Covey, 2004).

The two regional level respondents indicated that the good performance of the three MMDAs in procurement, openness and accountability, as well as environmental sanitation management and other related thematic areas was not surprising as these served as preconditions for the MMDAs' access to funds from the District Assemblies' Common Fund (DACF) and other funding from the central government and development partners. Responses to the factors accounting for improvements in performances from 2008 to 2009 across the three MMDA level respondents included enhanced response to legal mandates, increased involvement of staff of the Assemblies, as well as the motivation of the leadership to access additional funding. These factors further confirmed the focus of FOAT framework on legal and regulatory mandates as well as efficiency and effectiveness requirements with less attention to the performance of the leadership (Sandbakken, 2006).

5.3. Challenges of Local Governments in Responding to Performance Requirements

The key challenges included inadequate awareness about the FOAT and the inability of the LGs to optimize gains from the FOAT. The study revealed little knowledge about the FOAT process and the DDF across the three study areas, particularly at the community level. The majority (72.2%) of the respondents across the three LGs and their respective communities indicated that they were not aware of the FOAT administration and its results. About 75.9 percent of the 345 respondents in CCM, 70.7 percent of the 255 respondents in Effutu and 66.7 percent of the 332 respondents in AOB were not aware of the FOAT assessment. This undermines transparency, openness and accountability in the leadership and performance process (United Nations, 2007b).

Additionally, the lack of awareness may not enable the FOAT framework to optimise its inherent benefits of participation, transparency, accountability and enhanced performance of MMDAs in responding to mandates and development aspirations of constituents. Owing to the interdependence and interconnectedness among the criteria in the performance assessment model, the lack of awareness has the potential of limiting the benefits that could accrue to the MMDAs as advanced by the decentralisation theory (Oates, 1972).

District level responses on the challenges confronting the MMDAs in responding to the performance requirements were similar across the three study areas as shown in Table 6. The key challenges cited by over 70 percent of the respondents in each Assembly included inadequate commitment of actors, politicisation of issues and non-functional Sub-district structures. In the Effutu Municipality, chieftaincy disputes was one of the key challenges, while in AOB District, inadequate accountability on FOAT was not perceived as a challenge because the leadership provided feedback on the FOAT to the General Assembly and Heads of Departments. The two regional level respondents corroborated the responses of the MMDA level respondents regarding the key challenges. These challenges have the potential of making the decentralisation, leadership and performance nexus dysfunctional (Mooney, Knox & Schacht, 2002).

5.4. Improving the Functional Organisational Assessment Tool Framework

Suggestions elicited from the respondents at the MMDA level to improve the MMDAs' responsiveness to the FOAT requirements were quite similar across the three study areas as presented in Table 7. The major suggestions made by over 70 percent of the respondents in each study area focused on strengthening education and sensitisation of leaders and followers on their roles and responsibilities, avoiding politicisation of issues to enhance commitment of leaders and followers, strengthening accountability, strengthening commitment of leaders and followers, empowering the followers to demand accountability, and establishing, resourcing and making the sub-district structures functional to provide opportunities for participation and accountability at the local level.

Challenges	Assembly			
	CCM n=50	Effutu n=25	AOB n=30	Total n=105
Non-functional Sub-district structures	45 (90.0)	23 (92.0)	28 (93.3)	96 (91.4)
Politicisation of issues	45 (90.0)	23 (92.0)	26 (86.7)	94 (89.5)
Inadequate commitment of actors	40 (80.0)	22 (88.0)	22 (73.3)	84 (80.0)
Inadequate communication and information flow	35 (70.0)	19 (76.0)	20 (66.7)	74 (70.5)
Inadequate central government funding	32 (64.0)	18 (72.0)	22 (73.3)	72 (68.6)
Low revenue base	32 (64.0)	18 (72.0)	22 (73.3)	72 (68.6)
Inadequate accountability	47 (94.0)	23 (92.0)	0 (0.0)	70 (66.7)
Inadequate understanding of the FOAT requirements	32 (64.0)	17 (68.0)	18 (60.0)	67 (63.8)
Poor documentation and record keeping	28 (56.0)	13 (52.0)	15 (50.0)	56 (53.3)
Chieftaincy disputes	0 (0.0)	24 (96.0)	0 (0.0)	24 (22.9)

Table 6: Challenges in responding to the FOAT performance requirements by Assembly

Percentages are in parentheses

Source: Field survey (2011)

The two respondents at the regional level corroborated the responses at the MMDA level and further suggested the need to strengthen involvement of the RCC in addressing the capacity gaps of the MMDAs in the FOAT administration. These suggestions have the potential of enhancing the responsiveness of the decentralised local government system to leadership, participation and performance as noted by Kendie and Mensah (2008), United Nations (2007a; 2007b), Oyelaran-Oyeyinka (2006) and Shah (2006).

Suggestions	Assembly			
	CCMn=50	Effutu n=25	AOB n=30	Total n=105
Strengthen education and sensitisation of actors	45 (90.0)	23 (92.0)	28 (93.3)	96 (91.4)
Avoid politicisation of issues	45 (90.0)	23 (92.0)	26 (86.7)	94 (89.5)
Strengthen accountability	47 (94.0)	23 (92.0)	22 (73.3)	92 (86.6)
Strengthen commitment of leaders and followers	40 (80.0)	22 (88.0)	22 (73.3)	84 (80.0)
Empower followers to demand accountability	40 (80.0)	18 (72.0)	22 (73.3)	80 (76.2)
Establish and make sub-district structures functional	35 (70.0)	19 (76.0)	26 (86.7)	80 (76.2)
Assess utilisation of FOAT capacity building interventions	32 (64.0)	18 (72.0)	22 (73.3)	72 (68.6)
Assess the ability of leaders to motivate followers	32 (64.0)	17 (68.0)	18 (60.0)	67 (63.8)
Assess the impact of the RCC and national level support to MMDAs	32 (64.0)	17 (68.0)	18 (60.0)	67 (63.8)
Involve MMDAs in reviewing FOAT criteria and indicators	28 (56.0)	13 (52.0)	15 (50.0)	56 (53.3)

Table 7: Suggestions for improving the FOAT framework by Assembly

Percentages are in parentheses

Source: Field survey (2011)

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The primary objective of the decentralised system of local government is to ensure development with focus on growth and equity. This largely depends on the performance of the local governments. This paper has provided evidence of how the FOAT could be improved to assess the performance of MMDAs in the Central Region of Ghana. The study provided three key findings. First, the FOAT put little focus on leadership issues regarding accountability for performance of the MMDAs. Mechanisms and opportunities for holding the leaders accountable had not been provided. Second, awareness about the FOAT, especially at the community level was very low. This limited the inherent benefits of transparency, openness and accountability of the FOAT. Third, there was general inadequate appreciation of the interrelationships, interconnectedness and interdependence between leadership and performance in the study areas. Leadership and performance issues were pursued independently without addressing them holistically.

It is therefore, recommended that first, leadership issues should be well captured in the FOAT. The Decentralisation Secretariat of MLGRD in collaboration with the Central Regional Coordinating Council and the MMDAs should review the FOAT to include assessment of the performance of the leaders in evolving mechanisms to increase citizen's participation. Second, the Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS), Local Government Service Secretariat (LGSS) and the Decentralisation Secretariat of MLGRD should create awareness among the leadership of the MMDAs to appreciate the interdependence, interrelationship and interconnectedness between leadership and performance of MMDAs.

Third, the core staff MMDAs, Heads of decentralised departments, and Assembly persons should undertake capacity building, awareness creation and sensitisation of followers at all levels to enable them appreciate the interdependence, interrelationship and interconnectedness among leadership, decentralisation and performance. This would enable both the leaders and followers to pursue development interventions holistically. Fourth, the ILGS, LGSS and Decentralisation Secretariat of MLGRD in collaboration with the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE), the media and governance related CSOs should design mechanisms such as awareness creation and capacity building of the general public to hold leaders accountable for MMDAs' performance in responding to their mandates and the FOAT administration.

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