



Review of the relationship between local government and local media: Focus on theory, history and reforms towards improving local level governance of Ghana

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Abstract

Both Media and local Government play important roles to affect the lives of citizens. It is noted that a well-formed media system, which teaches and informs its citizens enhances good governance and democracy. This might be the reason why Thomas Jefferson, former president of USA stated in a speech that he would prefer a press without government to a government without a press. There exists some research on the relationship between media and governments but it appears to be lack of interest in exploring the symbiosis between local media and local government. Meanwhile, literature shows a positive role of local government too: it promotes grassroots participation in governance, democracy and development like media. No wonder the twin has been a public concern in recent times. Hence, this study attempts to review the relationship between the two by exploring the theories of media and local government, history and reforms towards local government and media development in Ghana as well as the contribution of local government and local media to local level governance. This will help ascertain the merits of the proposal for integrating local media in local governance processes.

Keywords: municipal/district assembly, local governments, local media, good governance, information dissemination

1. Introduction

Both Media and Government play very important roles in community and nation development. These two institutions complement each other. While governments create the space for media survival, a free media in turn helps to promote good governance. Similarly, the decentralized forms: local governments and local media impact the lives of people in local communities through their activities and programs of Metropolitan/Municipal/District Assemblies (MMDAs) and Local FM Institutions (LFMI). Local FM media and MMDAs serve as major instruments through which governance is dispensed to the grassroots. No wonder local government and the media have received much attention in recent governance and democracy discourse. Although some foci have been given to relationship between media and government research, there seems to be lack of research interest in exploring the relationship between local media and local government. Besides the lack of research interest in this area, it appears LGs do not recognize the power and the influential role of the media, particularly, the (local) media and what it can do to help the MMDAs in the discharge of their functions.

The local media, although most of them are private and are for commercial purposes, they can help the LGs to pursue their vision and mission. The media can help the MMDAs in effective dissemination of information, shaping of public opinion and power, promoting participation and involvement of residents in decision-making (Sharma, 2002)^[50]. The good performance of the local government institutions, departments, officials and politicians can be highlighted and praised whereas their misdeeds can be equally criticized. Through the media, the LGs can quickly receive information from residents about their plights and concerns such as poor state and condition of certain

facilities and services. Because of the significance of the roles of media and local governments in society, placing them in center stage should be considered seriously. With this background stems the proposal that both media and local governments should join hands and serve the peculiar needs of citizens (Agagu, 1997) and by this, local governments can also receive extensive attention through the media (Bergh, (2004) in the interest of grassroots governance.

To this end, we agree with (Karikari, 2000)^[35] that 'whether and how the media are discharging their role should be an important subject of research interest'. This statement constitutes a major inspiration and motivation for this piece of work. The statement posits that media's role in society is very critical to community development and therefore warrants research interest and attention. In lieu of this, this study is conducted to review the relationship between the two by exploring the theories of media and local government, history and reforms towards local government and media development in Ghana as well as the contribution of local government and local media to local level governance. This will help ascertain the merits of the proposal for integrating local media in local governance processes with the justification that local media and local governments make local citizens the focal point of good governance in local government administration (Okafor, 1982; MMC, 2011)^[38].

2. The media and good governance

The need to promote governance, democracy, transparency, accountability, press freedom and economic development are key challenges confronting the globe in modern times. A responsive government aiming to offer good governance is necessary for every nation's long-term and sustainable

development. The media described as ‘forth realm of the state’ and ‘information power house’ play a crucial role in fostering good governance and building a healthy democracy. In this section, literature related to local government and media will be discussed. The review will help us to comprehend the issues revolving around the study and more important identify where gaps exist in literature to be filled. The following themes are reviewed: meaning of local government, purpose of local government, meaning of media and purpose of Media.

2.1 Meaning of local government

In order to clearly understand the meaning and history of local government in Ghana, the study sets the background by first discussing governance. In an attempt to conceptualize governance, players such as scholars, government officials, civil society and international development organizations find themselves in a quandary and are confronted with such challenges as defining and analyzing governance to align with their interests and scope of work. Consequently, several definitions of governance have emerged and a few of them shall be considered in this work. For example, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) explains governance as the application of political, economic and administrative power to manage a country's business. The UNDP explains that governance involves complex institutions, structures and processes whereby residents and groups exercise their rights and responsibilities as well as express their interests (www.ifpri.org). From the viewpoint of the UNDP, good governance, in conjunction with democracy and the rule of law is crucial for sustainable development, social development, sustainable and inclusive economic growth, environmental protection, hunger and poverty eradication (UNDP, 2014) ^[54].

The World Bank defines governance as ‘the traditions and institutions whereby authority in a country is exercised’. This includes the processes of selecting, monitoring and replacing authority as elements of governance and adds that governance concerns ‘the capacity of a government to effectively manage its resources and implement sound policies’ (www.ifpri.org). Fukuyama (2013) ^[25], also adds that governance is a government's ability to make and implement rules, and to deliver public services, irrespective of the governing style (authoritarian or democratic). The above discourse indicates that governance involves authority, processes, procedures, managing, citizens, resources and purpose. This means that governance is a system which requires authority (exercising power of right and responsibility) from citizen to manage (control with prudence) resources through processes and procedures (structure) for public good or interest (purpose). Components of governance point to the goals of public management (Dubois & Fattore, 2009) ^[23].

The type of governance that focuses on local or small areas is referred to as local governance. According to Totikidis, Armstrong & Francis (2005) ^[53], local governance as an emerging model of governance is becoming popular within the public and community sectors. According to them, local governance refers to grassroots involvement and decision-making in public issues. They explain that local governance can also be referred to as community governance, social governance, network governance and participatory governance. By this principle, local governance may be

viewed as a system of governance where local people organize themselves and their resources for their own development. It is a type of governance which has a direct touch with the people without any mediation. It is governance for the people by the people with the people. Local governments are governments established in districts or municipalities directly under the national governments. Often, their activities are coordinated by regional or sub-provincial governments (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2010) ^[7]. All local governments receive authority, power and resources from the central government. Local governments are located within demarcated administrative jurisdictions and function as grassroots governments in urban or local areas. Local governments ensure local administrative system (Guo, 2013) ^[29].

In this sense, the term may be described as a community decision-making and management body that aim at addressing challenges and building capacity and ensuring well-being of the grassroots. It concerns involving community members in decision-making, resource mobilization, ensuring transparency and accountability. In this case, the study shares the opinion that if indeed, local governance was an emerging one; it will require backing and strengthening. Hence, Article 240, Clause 2(e) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana established local government like other legal frameworks in other jurisdictions across the globe. As a law, it seeks to ensure that local governments become accountable to its residents and demand that these residents be given the opportunity to participate effectively in their administration. The clause makes it clear that ‘local governance concerns people in particular local areas’ and their active participation or involvement in decision-making should be paramount. Local governments ride on the wheels of decentralization, which forms include political, fiscal and administrative.

In political decentralization involve transfer of political power or authority to local governments. The clear manifestation of this form of decentralization is identified with the election of some residents to the sub-national governments and their empowerment. This may range from community area councils to state level bodies. Administrative decentralization requires the transmission of resources, decision making authority and responsibilities from the central to local governments for the delivery of certain public services while fiscal decentralization cuts across all forms of decentralization. It involves transferring financial resources from the central to local governments including grants and ceded revenue. This amount of resource allocation may help local governments to function properly. However, such engagements for asset distribution are usually arranged between central and local governments. The arrangements often depend on many factors such as availability of local and central resources, considerations for interregional equity, and local fiscal management capacity. In Ghana all three forms of decentralization are practiced but not to the fullest.

2.2 Purpose of local government

LG is considered a unit of government worldwide; it exists in different forms and in different political systems with different contextual and conceptual perspectives. According to Appadorai, (1975) ^[12] local governments are charged with administrative and executive responsibilities. To achieve full democracy, local government should be seen as a form

of political and administrative body which promotes a sense of belonging at the grassroots (Agagu, 2004) ^[5]. No matter the form, the local government system has been accepted as the key to efficiency in administration, effectiveness in service delivery, and participatory development (Arowolo, 2005) ^[14]. Gboyega, (1987) ^[26] stresses on local government as a critical level of government that is close to the people and appeals to both the people and government as a feedback institution that puts forward the opinions and demands of the grassroots to a higher government (Adejo, 2003) ^[3]. Watt (2006) ^[56] on local government theory states that the duty of local government is perceived in the setting of the overall role of government.

Local governments render many services at the grassroots level, but with varying degrees of authority and responsibility. Such services may include health care, water and sanitation, primary education, provision of museums, libraries, refuse collection, environmental protection and making of by-laws, community security and more. However, some of the services that local governments deliver may vary from one nation to another depending on the form of decentralization practiced, given that the concept of governance means different things to different actors. The challenge often associated with local governments is that the sub-district structures are vague and malfunctioning as in the case of Ghana and most developing countries. Next is a brief discussion on the meaning and purpose of the media.

2.3 Meaning of media

'The media' as a phrase started in the 1920s and was limited to the print media until after World War II, when television, video and radio were introduced. Currently, the media is defined to include the Internet which has made information free (to some extent) and easily accessible through websites by search engines (www.mtvteens.com). Just like governance, media has several definitions but some common components permeate through them. For instance, the collinsdictionary.com defines media as 'the means of communication that reach large numbers of people, such as television, newspapers, and radio', while the oxforddictionary.com defines media as 'a means of mass communication especially, television, radio, newspapers, and the internet regarded collectively'. Like the aforementioned, the businessdictionary.com points out that media are 'channels of communication through which news, entertainment, education, data or promotional messages are disseminated'. It explains further that media include every broadcasting and narrowcasting medium such as newspapers, television, radio, magazines, billboards, direct mail, telephones, fax and internet.

On the above definitions, the expressions 'means of communication' and 'reaching a large number of people' are stressed to project media as agent or a medium through which communication is achieved and its target (purpose) respectively. By comparison, the businessdictionary.com definition is broadest. It states further which items are featured or disseminated and widens the scope. It also states roles such as entertainment, education, and promotion. The Dictionary Reference definition introduces the word 'influence'. This word suggests the power of the media. TV, radio and newspaper contents or programs wield a strong influence on the people they serve through the information they carry. The aura and the passion that surround them

perform the magic. They can generate positive or negative sentiments, good or poor perception, inform or misinform and promote interest or generate apathy. The media has been known as politically important since the beginning of mass literacy and the popular press in the late 19th century. McChesney and Nichols (2002) ^[36] note that in the 19th century introduction of democracy of America, the role of the press was seen as central to democracy. Therefore, scholars see the media as the fourth realm, conscience and watchdog of the nation: the body that provides information to the public about the actions of the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. The reverse is also true.

2.4 The purpose of media

It is also acknowledged that throughout global history, the media has always kept the fore-front of socio-economic and political changes. Media play a variety of roles in modern society. It helps to shape public opinions on a number of relevant issues, both through the disseminated information and through how people interpret this information. Media selects and shows a specific set of traditions, beliefs and values to shape culture. Sharma (2002) ^[50] discusses some roles of the media in India and these roles are prevalent across the globe. He identifies that the Media inform people about various challenges in society; media creates the platform for authorities to answer the people; media (radio and TV) help in the formation of public perceptions; media education supports the formation of an informed media public; and media play a role in the exertion of power and sharing of values. In a nutshell, media affect the overall quality of public life and also shape people's engagement in a specific policy decisions in democracy (www.india-seminar.com).

Also contributing to Media's role, Sen, in Mary Myers (2012) ^[39], established that the media has a major role of disseminating knowledge and allowing critical scrutiny. He explained that the duty of the media does not only relate to special reporting on scientific discoveries or cultural revolutions but to inform people about what and where something is going on (www.themediadow.com). Similarly, Amponsah and Bofo-Arthur, (2003) ^[11] observed that 'the Ghanaian media is a very useful medium through which the message of participatory governance can be carried deeper into the countryside and thus paving the way for democratic inclusion'. Having shed some light on the meaning and purpose of both local government and media, the study therefore introduces readers to the theoretical underpinnings of the subjects. This will not only help establish a foundation upon which the study is premised but also assist researchers, practitioners and policy makers to recognize the need to place attention on marrying local media to local governments. In other words, fully involving the media in local government organization and administration.

3.0 Local government and media theories

Theories require simplification and generalization. The type of abstraction involved in theorizing is problematic with respect to considering local government and media in Ghana. However, this part tries to present some theories of local government and media relating it to the Ghanaian context.

3.1 Local government theories

Local government rides on the concept of decentralization –

that power and assets are transferred from the central government to grassroots. This is often pursued through decongestion, de-concentration or devolution in relation to different contexts and different methodological approaches across the globe. Different environments and approaches have resulted in the fact that the meaning and practice cannot be generalized as the forms in developing and developed countries have proven. According to literature, the study discusses local government theory based on three schools of thought. The first category thinks that decentralization can make authorities more answerable to the local people by ‘tailoring levels of consumption to the preferences of smaller, more homogeneous groups’ (Wallis, *et al*, 1988 in Faguet, 2005) ^[55, 24]. They see decentralization as a way through which central governments can be more responsive to the locals and believe in it as a way of democratizing and ensuring good governance.

However, the second category agrees with the position of the first but thinks that the strength of the empirical evidence in favor of decentralization is not heavily substantiated (UNDP, 1993; World Bank, 1994; Piriou-Sall, 1998; Manor, 1999; Smoke, 2001; Sharma, 2002; Faguet, 2005) ^[7, 1, 2, 3]. Hence, they note that decentralization is no panacea to challenges of democracy and governance but it has many virtues and it is worth pursuing, though the evidence in favor seems incomplete – mixed and anecdotal (Manorendshi, 1999; Smoke, 2001) ^[1]. In disagreement with the views above, the third group argues that local governments lack the human, technical and fiscal resources to generate a mixed range of communal facilities that are both practically effective and receptive to the demands of residents. They claim that decentralization has hardly met its expectations and most emerging economies practicing decentralization go through serious administrative problems (Faguet, 2005) ^[44].

In the situation of local government of Ghana, the position of the third school of thought appears to be true. Local government institutions in Ghana lack the human, technical and financial resources that it requires to produce efficient and responsive public services to its people (Abbey *et al*. 2003; Akudugu 2013) ^[1, 9]. The inadequacies and the inefficiencies of technocrats and elected and appointed members of LGs appear glaring while residents seem more helpless. As a result, resources appear to go waste; the demands of the people appear not to be met and the works that are done appear shoddy. This may be the practical situation of local governments in most developing countries but must we give up decentralization? Never, all these challenges can be solved if more attention is given to pursuing decentralization in the fullest.

Decentralization requires the attention and commitment of governments and all: attention of researchers, attention of governments’ commitment to resource allocation, commitment to policy and regulations, training of staff, appointees and elected members of local governments. However, it should be noted that the merits of decentralization far outweigh its demerits. Decentralization creates the platform for democratization and good governance. Decentralization helps to open up to the grassroots for participation and decision making. In effect, this study agrees with the position of the second school of thought which recognizes the views of both the first and third schools of thought that local government is worth pursuing despite its challenges.

3.2 Media Theories

In relation to this study, the three theories describing the influence of media will be discussed. These are: limited-effects, class-dominant and the culturalist theories. The limited-effects theory states that individuals usually have the option to choose what media to interact with. They base their choice on what they already believe, and because of this, media exerts a negligible influence on them (drrajivdesaimd.com). The second to mention is the Class-dominant theory (drrajivdesaimd.com). This theory explains that the media mirrors and brings to light the views of the elite who are minority but control it. It notes that the elite (Curran and Morley, 2006) ^[20] form the people, who own and control the media stations (drrajivdesaimd.com). However, the third theory which is the Culturalist theory is what this study agrees with. The culturalist theory came into existence within the 1980s and 1990s. It combines the limited-effects and class-dominant theories. This theory claims that people create their own meanings out of the messages they receive through their interaction with the media. The theory means that audience’s perceptions are shaped by information received from the media (Curran and Gurevitch, 2005) ^[19]. In this sense, the point to drive home is that the press has immense influence to shape people’s opinion. Therefore, the media may lead the masses to support the wrong course when it receives inaccurate information.

Since the year 2000, media pluralism in Ghana has been outstanding as a result of the proliferation of FM media. Almost every district in Ghana has one or more FM stations. This situation is making information more accessible to the grassroots. More people are becoming informed about activities of government as programs are conducted in both English and vernacular. But as to whether the local FM media are consciously running programs and feeding the people with the right information which will inure to the development of the local area or just serving the interests of the owners and politicians or just running for commercial purposes is the issue that needs further research. However, it is observed that politics may be the major item that fills the airwaves of the local FM, hence, the class-dominant theory may apply so far as the current state of affairs of FM media matter in Ghana. In the next section, local government and media in Ghana are discussed.

4.0 Local government and media in Ghana

Both local government and media have seen much development throughout Ghana’s political history. Different governments from colonial times, democratic and undemocratic have all contributed differently to the growth of local government and media in Ghana today through several reforms and regulations.

4.1 History and reforms of local government

The practice of local government in Ghana predates the pre-colonial era. Before colonialism, the indigenes of the then Gold Coast, now known as Ghana lived in smaller communities. The people were headed by chiefs with their elders, who were in charge of governance and ensured that law and order was maintained (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2010) ^[7]. These chiefs and elders (government) encouraged communal spirit in their communities so that every citizen was involved or participated in the activities of the community (Gyekye, 1996). According to Gyekye, the ‘will

and choice' of the people of the community was crucial to expression of political authority. This system of governance was known as Traditional or Community Governance. Soon, this governance was greeted with interference of British rule. The British governor chose favorite natives as his agents through whom the colonialists ruled the people. This system of governance through favorite natives was known as the Indirect Rule. This period saw undemocratic local government units called Native Authorities, who helped the British to administer law and order (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2010) [7]. This situation was widespread across Africa (Ake, 1984).

In 1859, the colonial administration set up the Municipal Ordinance which established municipalities in Cape Coast and Sekondi-Takoradi. This remained until 1943, when a new ordinance was passed to create elected town councils for Cape Coast, Sekondi-Takoradi, Accra and Kumasi. In 1951, under the leadership of Sir Sydney Philipson, local governance in the then Gold Coast saw its first reform. This newly commissioned Local Government Ordinance passed in 1953 and in 1956 exhibited no great changes but addressed the inadequacies identified by the Watson and Sir Coussey Committees in 1949 (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2010) [7]. The report of the Greenwood Commission, who was charged to make suggestions to reform the structure of the local government system hardly saw day-light before the dawn of Ghana's independence in 1957 (Ahwoi, 2010) [7].

From 1957 to 1987 several local government reforms were initiated by the various governments that existed within the thirty year period, all aiming at improving the system. These efforts set up the foundations of the current local government model which is being practiced in Ghana today. For example, the Regional Constitutional Commission (1957) through the 1957 Constitution of Ghana grouped the nation into five administrative regions: Eastern, Western, Ashanti, Trans-Volta Togoland and Northern Regions. These regional areas were supervised by reps of the Regional House of Chiefs with the exception of Ashanti which had been headed by the Asantehene. This was the Regional Assembly (Parliament) system, which was tasked to oversee the full development of the regions. In this system, the Municipal, District, Urban and Local Councils were not touched but the challenge was that activities of the Regional Assemblies met great opposition because the Regional councils did not see their own importance in administering local level governance (www.fesghana.org).

Later, Act 54, a Local Government Act in 1961 divided the country into City, Municipal and Local Area Councils (Ahwoi, 2010; Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2010) [7]. This Act unlike what the Regional Constitutional Commission of 1957 posited identified the participation of village, town and area committees in local government but forbade the representation of local leaders. It introduced election of members of the various committees to form the councils. All these reforms took place under Nkrumah's government. After Nkrumah's overthrow in 1966, successive governments, some of which were military regimes never gave up efforts of commitment to the course of promoting local government and decentralization. For example, the Mills-Odoi Commission and the Constituents Assembly were set up in 1967 and 1969 respectively to make conclusive recommendations in order to devolve the central administrative authority to the local levels but these recommendations together with the Local Administration

Act 359 of 1971 were not rolled out until 1974 due to the change of government in 1972 (www.ilgs-edu.org).

The 1974 local government organization is labeled as a Single Hierarchy Model. It abolished the dissimilarity between central and local governments. It created a common uniformed structure which allotted duties to all governments at the grassroots. A plan was scheduled in an order to decentralize some areas of government such as agriculture, administration, education, survey and town planning, social welfare and community development, public health, engineering, fire service and sports to the district level. Some smaller local assemblies were merged to form bigger districts. This created 65 District Councils and warranted the appointment of 65 Commissioners (www.ilgs-edu.org).

The local government model of the current dispensation in Ghana was initiated in 1988 with the approval of PNDC Law 207. This law established Metropolitan/Municipal/District Assemblies. The MMDAs were given executive, legislative, budgeting, planning and rating rights (www.amcod.info). A provision was made for the representatives of the people to include appointed and elected Assemblies members. From 1988 to 1992, Ghana implemented a number of wide-ranging local government and decentralization reforms as alternative development scheme which rolled out on political, administrative and fiscal decentralization as well as decentralized planning (www.amcod.info) and public-private partnerships. In 1993, Local government and decentralization became a law in Ghana. Local government Act 462 was passed in 1993 and saw amendment in 2016 as Act 936. To demonstrate more commitment, a local government service Act 656 was also passed in 2003. Presently, Ghana has 296 MMDAs. It has held several successful local elections and hopes to run its first Chief Executives elections in 2020 (www.giz.de).

4.2 History and reform of media

Media history can be traced to the renaissance period in Europe. It started with newsletter to newspapers in the late 1490s through the 16th to the 19th centuries. Until the 1920s, the phrase 'mass media' was still limited to the print media. This continued until TV, video and radio were introduced after World War II. During this period, audio-visual facilities became very common, since it provided both entertainment and information. The sound and color captured interest of the audiences and soon the people in general began to watch television or listen to the radio than reading newspapers. Currently, the latest, fastest, easily accessible and the commonest mass medium is Internet. One can easily access information through websites (drrajivdesaimd.com) using search engines where distance is no more a hindrance. The invention of the internet has made the world a global village indeed (www.pbs.org).

The 'Gold Coast Gazette' and 'Commercial Intelligencer' were published in 1822 as the first media to emerge in the Gold Coast (en.wikipedia.org). Their role was to disseminate information to civil servants and European merchants. The newspapers promoted literacy and rural development among the local people (en.wikipedia.org). By the mid-19th century, there were numerous newspapers owned by Africans in the system and they were unrestricted by the colonial government. An example is the Ashanti Pioneer which featured in the 1930s. Regarding radio, Sir Arnold Hodson, the then Colonial Governor, opened the 1st radio station called Radio ZOY in 1935 (en.wikipedia.org).

From March 6, 1957, Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana took charge of all the press in the country and made it a medium of state authority which provided propaganda to encourage national unity. He set up the Ghana News Agency to feed the nation with local and international news (en.wikipedia.org). By 1965, TV was introduced to the nation and was put under state control. Nkrumah's government was toppled by the National Liberation Council in 1966. Kofi Abrefa Busia took the mantle of leadership after a democratic election in 1969. Busia repealed various acts of the media law and sacked the boss of the state owned Daily Graphic. Later, Ignatius Kutu Acheampong overthrew the Busia administration and became the head of state. He reorganized the media and put in place some strict control measures. He also stopped all the media activities that opposed him. The regime of Acheampong came to an end in May 1978 (en.wikipedia.org).

After Acheampong's overthrow, his successor, Gen. Akuffo overturned some of his predecessor's media policies. He freed some incarcerated pressmen and opposition members. In his time, two newspapers emerged and each belonged to a particular political party: 'the Star' spoke for the 'Popular Front Party' while the 'Gong-Gong' spoke for the 'People's National Party'. The Akuffo's government existed shortly and got crashed in a new coup which the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) masterminded (en.wikipedia.org). The AFRC, led by Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings revoked the press laws that were approved by Acheampong and changed the chief editor of the Daily Graphic (en.wikipedia.org) who criticized the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council executions. The AFRC handed over to the democratically elected People's National Party led by Hilla Limann on 24 September 1979.

Limann advocated for liberal media reforms. He established a twelve member Press Commission on 25th July, 1980 to investigate press complaints, uphold freedom of the press and offer essential guidelines and accreditation to media channels. Before the Commission could put their mandate to action, John Rawlings once again snatched power with the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) on 31st December, 198. His government repealed the free press reforms that Limann initiated. By his administration, the 3rd Constitution was abolished together with the Media Commission. This affected the media but with dismissals and premature retirement. In 1992, a new constitution was promulgated, and Ghana returned to democratic rule on 7 January 1993. This time, J.J. Rawlings, the leader of the National Democratic Congress liberalized the Press by revoking former laws of the PNDC. Subsequently, a fifteen - member National Press Commission was created to follow and collect complaints concerning the media (en.wikipedia.org). This commission was independent of government and was mandated with the duty to endorse and safeguard the autonomy and freedom of the press. By 1997, a number of private TV and FM stations had emerged to augment the work of the state-run GBC which solely controlled TV broadcasting from 1965 to 1994. The private TV stations which emerged include TV 3, Metro TV, Skyy TV, and TV Africa. By 2007, about 86 FM radio stations were on air (en.wikipedia.org). Ten years down the line, the number of accredited FM radio stations in Ghana has skyrocketed to a total of 505 out of which, 392 stations are currently functioning. For the 392 authorized media stations, 366 are commercial while 31 are public. Among these, 5 are

foreign, 8 are community while 22 are campus based radio (www.nca.org).

5. Relationship between local government and local media

There have been little progressive incursions to explore the empirical relationship between the local media and local governance. With the circulation of contemporary communication technologies and the survival of an unrestricted and free press, the local media should be considered a crucial tool for democratization and assuring good local level governance through right to expression, accountability, rule of law, transparency, and giving a common platform for the masses and the politicians to express themselves about important issues (Norris, 2010; Scholte, 2002).

Both Media and Local Governments play very important roles in community and nation development. These two institutions complement each other. While local governments create the space for media survival through good governance; free media in turn help to promote good governance. With this intercourse, Media and Local Government impact the lives of people in local communities through their activities and programs. In other words, media and local governments serve as major instruments through which governance is dispensed to the grassroots. No wonder both media and local government has received much attention in recent governance and democracy discourse. Although more attention has been given to media and central governments research, it is also needful to see research interest in exploring the media and local government interface. This proposal corroborates the call of Karikari (2000) ^[35] that the way and manner the media are executing their role should be an important subject of research interest to local government academics and practitioners. This shows that media's role in society is very critical to community development and therefore warrants research interest and attention. In essence, his call supports the position that the merit for integrating media in local governance processes is to make local citizens the focal point of good governance in local government administration (Okafor, 1982).

Based on this backdrop, it is believed that local governments can team up with the media to shape opinions and psyche residents to improve revenue collection, sanitation consciousness, community watch, policy education and more. Sharing in this view, Matthew P. McAllister in his book, *The Commercialization of American Culture* asserts that a well-formed system of media that informs and teaches its people also enhances democracy. Finnegan and Viswanath also explain that media exposures shape audience opinions over a period of time.

The study, therefore, notes that true local government requires a true collaboration with the media to consciously sell the activities of the Assembly, create residents awareness through media programs, make information readily available to residents, create platforms for discussion and participation in decision making and planning. The function of promoting peace, unity, transparency, accountability, good sanitation, safety and good local governance through media reportage and programs will help bring about positive impact on the lives of the people. When these are done very well, governance will be brought closer to the people.

Both local government and media in Ghana have seen many policy reforms and development in different facets. These two major elements of democratic governance are considered pivotal to the growth of several democracies which Ghana is no exception. Ghana's media is one of the freest and its local government, one of the best in Africa. Ghana's 1992 Constitution supports press freedom and media autonomy (en.wikipedia.org) as well as local government and decentralization (Local Government Act 642). Both local government and the media are faced with many challenges. In Ghana, people in media are often paid poorly, they are not adequately equipped with resources and some of them lack the requisite skill training (en.wikipedia.org). Assembly members in local governments are not even paid salaries. Some districts give poor allowances.

In effect, journalists in Ghana become vulnerable, falling victim to bribery and self-censorship (Ali 2018; Ashraf 2014). In addition, the value of radio and TV transmission has fallen low and with regard to newspapers, the pattern of ownership has become politically divided with most newspapers taking sides (en.wikipedia.org). It seems there are crises in the media due to their perceived affiliation with political parties and the so called powerful persons. Some people think that the media emphasize 'infotainment' over 'serious' reportage and political analysis. It is also often remarked by others that the quality of 'serious' journalism is steadily declining (Deane 2016) ^[21]. As a result, it makes some people think of the media without hope.

Similarly, local government in Ghana is suffering from vague local government laws, insufficient preparatory ground work for reforms, large-scale transfer of functions, untrained and inexperienced personnel, inadequate financial resources, corruption and other financial malpractices, lack of central government commitment, encroachment of partisan politics, dominance of central government influence, bureaucratic obscurantism and apathy. Due to these identified challenges, local governments are not functioning as expected. On major problem is that sub-district structures are not operational.

In spite of all the challenges facing local government and media in Ghana, both have grown very fast. With the growth of the Internet, not leaving out the phenomenal rise of satellite and cable networks, the Ghanaian media is soaring. More newspapers, radio or FM and TV stations have been opened at both regional and district centers. The numbers have increased dramatically. Hence, one can easily conclude that media is becoming more decentralized and getting closer to the people. Similarly, the number of local governments has increased to 296 some of which are metropolitan, municipal and districts.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

Ghana has a very rich history in terms of local government and media development. The contribution of central governments to the course of local government and media growth has been enormous. Governments, through colonialism to the present have initiated several reforms and supported programs for the growth of these important tools

of deepening democracy (though in conformity with their own interest). However, these two areas have not collaborated with themselves well enough to serving the people of Ghana. Rather, they tend to serve the bodies that created them than those they were created to serve. As a result, the media has suffered in the hands of politicians through different dispensations and regimes. Similarly, local government has suffered from manipulations causing the masses to remain in the abyss and doldrums of poverty.

However, both local government and media theories suggest that the two parties have great influence on citizens. Despite perception of media as an elitist bourgeoisie construct, which reflects essentially bourgeoisie interests and values and conditions of existence and the perception of local government as lacking resources, the study sees local government and media as critical instruments for deepening democracy. In this guise, the media should avail itself for positive information sharing and education while local government seeks to create space for media survival and empowerment of the people. To this end, the study recommends local governments to liaise with the local media in their respective jurisdictions, particularly, the local FM media to effect true decentralization, grassroots democracy and development in local government areas. The study also recommends social organizations and special interest groups to promote civic responsibility education such as peace, unity, sanitation, security, etc. through the media in various local governments. Finally, the media should help to ensure local government accountability and efficacy by bridging the information gap between officials and local areas and by mobilizing citizens to defend their interests.

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