Administrative Decentralisation: A Framework to Improve Local Democratic Governance

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Abstract

Due to the inadequate redistribution of authority, responsibilities and financial resources for providing public services among the Local Government Councils and other Actors in the decentralisation process, the effectiveness of administrative decentralisation is assumed not guaranteed in The Gambia even though there have been the enactment of the different legal instruments and other efforts from 2002 to date. The objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness of administrative decentralisation in The Gambia. Primary data was collected by administering questionnaires, interview guide and observation. The questionnaire used structured questions and both open-ended and close-ended questions were also utilised and the data analysed using Comparison, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences and Excel. However, secondary data was also collected to augment the studies. A non-probability sampling known as purposive sampling was used to elicit data from 38 respondents. On the effectiveness of administrative decentralisation in The Gambia, 13.2 per cent of the respondents said administrative decentralisation in The Gambia is weak, 78.9 per cent indicates moderate while only 7.9 per cent said it is effective. In order to achieve an effective administrative decentralisation, the Central Government should support the decentralised structures in terms of training and proper enforcement of local government instruments for decentralisation and adequately redistribute authority, responsibilities and financial resources for providing quality public services to the populace by the Local Government Councils and other Actors in the decentralisation process.

Keywords: Administrative, Decentralisation, Democratisation, Decision-making, Democratic Governance, Effectiveness, Good Governance, Leadership, Management, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

Decentralisation is a widely accepted concept which can facilitate and ensure citizen participation in public decision-making and taking the lead role in their own development; devolution of powers, redistribution of responsibilities and adequate resources to the Local Councils/Governments; accountability and transparency at the local levels of government; and provision of quality services to the citizenry among others but needs to be handle with care. The idea of decentralisation is not new in this world especially in Africa and particularly in The Gambia. During the colonial period there were indirect rules (ruling through local authorities and chiefs) especially in the British colonised countries and today this became the main feature of the policy of decentralisation which is increasing gaining impetus as a means of ensuring democratic governance at the lower levels of the government. This paper is an extract from my main MSc Dissertation entitled “Effectiveness of Decentralisation in The Gambia”, November, 2015.

Today it is evident that policy-makers, decision-makers and development partners in many developed and developing countries are increasingly embracing decentralisation especially administrative decentralisation as a strategy for addressing a number of critical governmental needs for fulfilling demands of the citizens. Primarily among these are strengthened good governance,
increased transparency and accountability, and more effective and efficient production and delivery of quality public goods and services to the populace. Unfortunately, as of today available analytical frameworks, policies and guidelines on administrative decentralisation are not very much supporting the design of strategies and reforms aimed at promoting the principles of administrative decentralisation.

Disappointing progress in meeting national goals through centralised processes has induced many countries, especially in the developing world, to think beyond top-down development more seriously than in the past. In other authors view rapid political, economic, demographic, and technological changes have fuelled the trend to rely more heavily on lower levels of government for public sector activities. These arguments have shown that decentralisation is crucial in the development of local communities and nation at large.

Decentralisation has emerged as a highly popular strategy for improving quality service delivery and public sector effectiveness, efficiency, responsiveness, transparency and accountability in the developing world which was accepted by many countries all over the world. “The increased opportunities for citizen participation and ownership under decentralised systems are also claimed to contribute to social and political stability. There are continuous efforts to restructure governments to promote good governance, management of public resources and effective public administration, with participation of the people in the decision-making processes as well as in development activities.” Thus the concept of decentralisation is increasingly adopted and applied in many African countries, including The Gambia.

One of the main general approaches to decentralisation in The Gambia is the devolution of powers which stated that “Powers which may be exercised by local authorities must be clearly defined. It is taken for granted that the devolution of powers will be a gradual and on-going process. However, local authorities must assume ... some general powers consistent with their autonomous status. The process of devolution and distribution of competencies between Central and Local Government levels will be in response to local capacities and needs, according to the principle of subsidiary. This entails leaving at local level all powers and responsibilities to plan, initiate, co-ordinate, manage and execute policies in respect of all matters affecting the people directly within their areas, which concern their needs and which they have the capacity to manage” (National Policy on Decentralisation, The Gambia, 2007). The Vision 2020 document, under the Good Governance rubric, has also adopted the decentralisation strategy: “to encourage participatory government and balanced development, Government shall pursue an intensive political and institutional decentralisation process”.

In this study decentralisation means the transfer of power and authority and allocation of adequate resources from the central government to sub-national units/local councils, either by political, administrative, and fiscal means. Decentralisation is used in this study to understand the implementation of legislation on decentralisation, political, administrative, and fiscal decentralisation which involves shedding of power, responsibilities, functions and resources by central government to sub-national governmental institutions (Local Councils). While effectiveness means doing the thing right as expected by the legislation and international standards on decentralisation. In this study effectiveness looks at the degree or levels of the capability of producing the desired results in relation to the intended and expected outcomes of an effective decentralisation process. Additionally, in this study administrative decentralisation means the central governments creating and maintaining the "enabling conditions" that allow both local government units of administration, non-governmental organisations, citizens and civil society groups to be given sufficient authorities, responsibilities and resources in the decentralisation process.

Statement of the Problem

The inadequate redistribution of authority, responsibilities and financial resources for providing public services among the Local Government Councils and other Actors in
the decentralisation process, the effectiveness of administrative decentralisation is assumed not guaranteed in The Gambia even though there have being the enactment of the different legal instruments and other efforts from 2002 to date.

Research Question
How effective is administrative decentralisation in The Gambia?

Objective of the Study
To examine the effectiveness of administrative decentralisation in The Gambia

Hypotheses
The ineffectiveness of administrative decentralisation across local government councils and other actors is presumed to be as result of lack of total devolution of powers, responsibilities and provision of financial resources from the central government.

Significance of the Study
Local governance and decentralisation have continued to exist in Africa and the enactments of the decentralisation laws in various countries in Africa has proved not to be very effective. This is due to several factors ranging from inadequate citizen participation, devolution of powers and resources, and efficient management of the available resources. This study identifies the insufficiencies in the decentralisation process that would best understand how to address them in contributing to the effectiveness and efficiency in providing quality services and citizen participation among others in the decentralisation process in Africa with the case of The Gambia. In addition, the significance of this study is to improve literature on the concept of decentralisation in The Gambia to facilitate: the total devolution of powers from Central Government to the Local Councils, building the institutional capacity (human, finance, physical) of decentralisation structures and actors, adequate allocation of revenue sources to the Councils, the strengthening of downwards accountability of Local Councils to the citizens and knowledge sharing on decentralisation among the general public.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework
This section identifies and examines the theoretical and legal frameworks to be able to understand better administrative decentralisation and its importance in improving local democratic governance. The section further looks at some of the reasons for decentralisation in The Gambia and the specific International and National Instruments on Decentralisation such as the 1997 Constitution of The Gambia and The Gambia Local Government Act (2002) [1].

Literature Survey
Decentralisation in public administration is the basis for solving problems which is not done by officials appointed by the centre, but by those elected by the electoral body. More specifically, in the decentralised administrative system, the administration of the interests of local administration (municipal, town or county) is conducted by freely elected authorities from and by the mass of citizens of that community, which have, according to constitutional rules, their financial and autonomous decision-making power. In the case of decentralisation, the state does not assume the burden of administration alone, but splits it in certain levels, with other categories of persons such as local communities.

Administrative deconcentration is regarded as an intermediary between the centralised and decentralised organisation, being characterised by some independence of the local bodies in the forefront of which there are local officials who are appointed by the central bodies. Practically, however, centralisation in public administration exists at any time, because on the one hand, the agents are hierarchically subordinated to the central administrative power, and on the other hand, their decisions are solely attributable to the state. The close relation between deconcentration and decentralisation can be noticed from the appointment of local power holders by the centre, as they are not elected by the local electorate. What drives it closer to decentralisation is the fact that the local power holders have the power to solve local problems themselves without passing them forward to their hierarchic superior from the centre.
The decisions are within the jurisdiction of local bodies which have decision-making power, but remain subject to centralisation (ibid).

Technical decentralisation (in services), is whereby one or more public services are removed from the jurisdiction of central or local authorities and organised autonomously. Therefore, technical decentralisation means granting certain autonomy of a publicly determined service, which is given legal personality. In other words, the principle of decentralisation of public services lies in the transfer of powers from the centre to the local communities, in order to meet the general needs. Decentralisation allows public services to administer themselves, under state control, which confers them legal personality, enabling the establishment of their own authorities and providing them with the necessary resources. The decentralisation of public services ensures the retrieving of administrative and financial powers of certain activities by the local government (county councils, local councils) and is one of the objectives that public administrations have to do in the next period.

Pro-decentralists insist that decentralisation helps to achieve ethnic harmony and national unity. They argued that local democratisation is a prerequisite for building national unity in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies in both industrialised and developing countries. They argue that increased local autonomy can better accommodate the competing interests of diverse social groups, including ethnic and religious minorities. Unless the legitimate political claims of the local population are reasonably satisfied, national unity and harmony cannot be established. Local governments are in a better position than central governments to facilitate diverse claims by their populations. These considerations particularly apply to Africa, where the states are formed on the basis of colonial legacies [2].

The local actors should be downwardly accountable for their actions. However, in many instances around. World, decentralisation reforms do not attend to these elements and which affects the implementation of decentralisation legal frameworks and programmes in many African countries and beyond of which The Gambia is not an exception. The African Charter on Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development, which is very concerned with grassroots empowerment and participation, is one of the most important Charters of the AU that is yet to be signed and ratified by African Countries. The objectives of the Charter are to: Promote, protect and act as a catalyst for decentralisation, local governance and local development in Africa; Promote and champion local self-government and local democracy as the cornerstone of decentralisation in Africa; Promote resource mobilisation and economic development at the local level with the view to eradicating poverty in Africa; and Promote a shared understanding and a common vision of Member States on matters relating to decentralisation, local governance and local development.

Unlike similar experiences elsewhere in Africa, decentralisation in Cameroon has been characterised by the search for an original and locally-owned approach, taking into account the national and socio-political, cultural and economic realities, with an objective to place the country in line with constitutional and international requirements in the area of decentralisation. In this respect, the Cameroonian path to decentralisation is based on these major features: - the will to base reform on extensive, inclusive and participatory debates and analysis that combine academic approaches and practical experiences; this has actually helped in identifying and assessing certain local dynamics that a strictly technocratic approach would not have discovered the long term perspective, with the objective to achieve complete transfer of competences by the year 2015 the combination of classic mechanisms borrowed from Western models and local dynamics [2].

Section (91) of the Local Government Act [3] of The Gambia provides that every Council shall be the planning authority and may plan and implement any programme or project for developing the infrastructure, improving social services, developing human and financial resources to improve the
standard of living of the communities. Based on the Schemes of Service for the Local Government Service in The Gambia, the Schemes of service are to guide Councils in their recruitment of staff as well as in training and development of staff. As the activities of Councils expand, new job cadres will emerge and there will a need to develop more schemes for these cadres. This would of course be the responsibility of the personnel unit of the Department of Administration. These schemes of service will have to be approved by the Local Government Service Commission as per Staff Service Rule 0803. Local Government Service Act and Local Government Service Commission Regulations as cited in Section 7 stated that the Commission shall consider and decide all matters relating to (a) The appointments, confirmation of appointments, promotions and transfers of local government officers; (b) the selection of local government officers to undergo training courses related to departmental posts; (c) petitions by local government officers, submitted in accordance with the provisions of these regulations. Also Section 8 added that in order to discharge its duties under of these regulations, the Commission shall exercise supervision over and approve all schemes for admission to any local government office by examination, over arrangements for special training for the Local Government Service, and over all other methods of recruitment.

This section also basically focuses on the basic well known forms/types of decentralisation and tries to collaborate with the previous and future discussions in this study. The author also examined all these forms and developed a new concept/form of decentralisation to close the gap identified in the previous ones.

Decentralisation as a “process of shifting the focus of power from the centre towards the periphery. Decentralisation does not, however, imply that all powers come to reside at the periphery. One of the major challenges of decentralisation is getting the balance between the centre and the periphery in addition to the responsibility of coordination between the decentralised units and the setting of broad policy guidelines and goals.” The authors identified three different forms of decentralisation as follows:

Devolution is referred to as decentralisation within the law-making, legislative branch. It involves the creation of elected bodies at a lower level. Its success will depend on how far the state has ceded some control over resources from the centre to the elected bodies.

Deconcentration “refers to decentralisation within the appointed bureaucracy or executive. It involves a shift of operational power away from the central ministry to sub-units outside the capital. It may correspond with a redefinition of the scope of a central ministry. However, such a change alone could not in itself be enough for deconcentration to occur.” It should be noted that some proponents of decentralisation holds the view that deconcentration is different from decentralisation as discuss earlier. However, the author of this study holds the view that deconcentration can be treated as another form of decentralisation which can facilitate the process of devolution of powers from the centre to local units.

Deregulation is similar to liberalisation. Both terms are rather general, implying a loosening of government control coupled with increased competition. Like privatisation, deregulation can imply a need for greater formal regulation of newly competitive markets i.e. while new players would be welcomed in, their activities, pricing strategies and general customer relations may be subjected to significant governmental or quasi-governmental interventions.

Deconcentration is a mere reshuffle of state machinery in centralised states, while devolutions has been taken to imply fiscal decentralisation, where the power to raise some of the taxes and the responsibility of planning and implementation of development interventions is handed over to the locally elected. Delegation has been explained to mean the decentralisation of some of the powers to lower levels of government. Privatisation as part of decentralisation connotes the handing over of increasing responsibility to NGOs, voluntary organisations and community
groups to plan and implement development schemes and provide social services.

The proponents of the different forms of decentralisation mentioned earlier fails to address another form/type which can evolve in a situation where the government is approaching decentralisation in different ways and this form of decentralisation we can call it Triangulation. As a form of decentralisation triangulation simply refers to as the implementation of more than one approach/form of decentralisation in a particular country.

In triangulation, the government tries to transfer some of its powers, authority, responsibilities and resources to the local government units but at the same time it take in charge of appointing some senior local council bureaucrats, ensuring the local structures directly answerable to the centre, embarking on public-private partnership at the central level on behalf of the local councils, servicing as the approving and authorisation body for expenditures and financial borrowings of the local councils, and having stronger influence on the decision-making process of the local units in the decentralisation process.

Theoretical Framework

System Theory, on the other arguments of other authors, “a long-standing problem of political science has been to describe and account for the internal structure of the political system. Structure is generally applied to patterns of power and authority that characterize the relationships between the rulers and the ruled. These relationships are enduring and thus predictable. In system theory the unit of analysis for these power relations is role a concept developed in social psychology and applied to sociology. Political roles deal with decision-making on behalf of society and with performing actions that implement the decisions and allocate scarce resources.”

Traditionally, the main approach to classification has been "the distribution of power" among the members of the system. Because the one dimension of roles has inadequately described political systems, systems analysts have developed more inclusive variables that lend themselves better to measurement (ibid). A set of variables that he called pattern-variables. Classifying structures based on (a) the degree of differentiation between structures, (b) the extent to which the system is "manifest" or "visible, "(c) the stability of the functions of the various roles, and (d) the distribution of power. A fifth dimension, concerning the "sustainability of roles."

The theory very much best suit issues of concern in both administrative and fiscal decentralisations and it has also brought out some issues related to political decentralisation. The author used this theory to make strong emphasis on redistribution of authority, responsibilities and resources to the Local Councils. Both administrative and fiscal decentralisations deals with the allocation of adequate resources, decision-making on finances, redistribution of powers/authorities, the transfer of responsibility for the planning, financing and management of certain public funds from the central government and its agencies to units of government agencies, subordinate units or levels of government especially to the Local Levels.

Methodology

This section mainly focuses on the methodology used in this study. The research methodology looks at the research design, the study population and sampling and sampling techniques. Basically a purposive sampling is done as the main target of the author is those who are taking active part in the decentralisation process of The Gambia.

Research Methodology

Although the Cabinet of the First Republic of The Gambia did approve a policy paper on decentralisation in April 1993, it is the 1997 Constitution that laid down a sound foundation for the formulation of policy objectives and Action Plan on Decentralisation and Local Government Reforms in The Gambia. Therefore, the Scope of this study covers the effectiveness of administrative decentralisation in The Gambia from 2002 to date which was the period when the Local Government Act (2002) as the Principal Act and other laws and policies were also enacted to facilitate the decentralisation process. The Research has covered all the Seven Regions/Municipalities of The Gambia which consist of Eight Municipal/Area Councils but
the availability of the target population particularly some of the Senior Local Government Authorities and the lack of sufficient reference documents on earlier comprehensive studies in relation to decentralisation in The Gambia was the major challenge during the process of the data collection. Also lack of honest responses on some questions by few target participants/respondents were observed during the data collection but the author was able to minimise errors during the data collection and analysis as a follow-up interview with the key target respondents and further literature review was conducted to verify the opinions in the questionnaires.

Research Design

The study involved eliciting data on the processes and challenges of decentralisation; power sharing, actors and accountability mechanisms on the decentralisation process; participation of the citizens and civil society in the decentralisation process; and examining the effectiveness of administrative decentralisation in The Gambia. Consequently, the research was designed to enable the author to achieve the objective set out in this study and tests the hypothesis and the relationship between some variables. Descriptive research is typically identifiable as having the following characteristics: researchers conducting descriptive research typically use a pre-established instrument to collect data; also, while survey responses can vary from quantitative (quantitative research is research in which numerical data is collected) to qualitative (qualitative research is research in which narrative or visual data is collected to describe social settings. In nature, they are typically quantitative and are summarised in accordance to quantitative analyses; finally, in order to complete descriptive research, researchers use a sample representative of a larger population to collect data in an attempt to generalise findings to a population [4]. These characteristics are followed and guided this study.

Furthermore, the descriptive survey method was adopted because this involves a systematic collection and presentation of data to give a clear picture of a particular situation, it can either be carried out in a small group or a large scale and its use makes it possible to gather sufficient data that can be used to describe and interpret what exists at a particular time. Since in the study, we are interested in the conditions and practices that existed in the past, points of view popularly held in the past, processes that were going in the past, as well trends that have been developing up to this time [5] we had to adopt this research design in this study. The descriptive survey design has two major shortcomings. First, unless pains are taken to clearly word questions, clarity cannot be guaranteed [5]. Second, unless the respondents are people who can articulate their thoughts well and sometimes even put such thoughts in writing, the method becomes unreliable. The first shortcoming was addressed using feedback from the earlier study and literature on the subject matter, while the second was addressed by using the questionnaire and a follow-up interview to collect data exclusively from the well-educated samples actively taking part in the decentralisation process in The Gambia.

Study Population

The decentralisation process in The Gambia requires the involvement of different actors and those actors can play a very important role in providing the necessary data the author intents to gather from this study. Therefore the target population for the study was forty-five respondents to be drawn from: Ministry of Lands and Regional Government, Office of the Governors, Office of the Mayors, Chairpersons of the Local Councils, Chief Executive Officers of the Local Councils, Finance Directors/Managers of the Local Councils, National Women’s Bureau, The Gambia Association of Local Government Authorities, National Youth Council, Civil Society Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, Local Government Councillors, Department of Community Development, Technical Advisory Committees (TAC) in the Regions, National Council for Civic Education, Community Leaders, Multi-Disciplinary Facilitation Teams (MDFTs) and individuals based on their participation and experience on the decentralisation process in The Gambia. This study population is a sample representative of the whole country and stakeholders involved in the current decentralisation process in The Gambia.
Sampling and Sampling Techniques

It is obvious from the definition of the study population above that a national census targeting the whole population is not feasible in this study. Accordingly, the author adopted the survey type of research in which a sample from the target population was used for the study. Based on the topic of the study, a Non-probability Sampling known as Purposive Sampling was used to elicit data as the author’s main target is to get reliable data from the target group or structures taking active part in the decentralisation process of The Gambia. In total, a sample size of thirty-eight respondents were interviewed from the study population and while 5 other respondents are invalid cases as there was inconsistence in the respondents or they never return their questionnaires on time. Out of the total respondents of 38 only 5 were female while 5.3% are between the ages of 21-30, also another 5.3% are between the ages of 31-35 and 89.5% are all at the age of 36 and above. This can be attributed to the low participation of women and youths in contesting for councillorship and holding high profile positions at the local government level.

Data Collection

The main focus of the study was on attitudes and perceptions of the people and authorities on the effectiveness of administrative decentralisation and its implementation in The Gambia. Therefore the importance of primary data cannot be over emphasised in this research work. However, secondary data (books, journals, articles, policies, legislation, reports, working papers, and websites among others) were also collected to augment the studies. Before the actual data collection the author was given an Introductory Letter from the Pan African University to the sampled institutions particularly the Ministry of Lands and Regional Government responsible for the decentralisation programme in The Gambia. Also another permission letter was obtained from the same Ministry to facilitate data collection from its structures and partners/stakeholders in the decentralisation process. The said letters of permission facilitated the research process and helped the author to seek the informed consent of all the respondents interviewed in this study. The purpose of the study was spelt out in the introductory part of the questionnaire and in addition to which a consent form was developed which accompanied the self-administered questionnaire to further seek the informed consent of the respondents.

Data Collection Instruments

The data was collected by administering questionnaires, interview guide and observation. The questionnaire used structured questions and both open-ended and close-ended questions, consisting of about 12 major questions related to administrative decentralisation. The questionnaire focuses on answering the research question and testing the hypothesis and other variables. All the options/answers to the close-ended questions were coded and the codes were used during the data entry for analysis using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Also each of the questions is given a name code and a label for the variables which are used during analysis. Furthermore, another tool used for data collection was the interview guide. A follow up Interview guide was used to verify some of the information provided by the respondents in the questionnaire in order to reduce unnecessary errors. In addition, all the target respondents were found to be literate enough to independently respond to the questionnaire but some of them lack the time to answer the self-administered questionnaires distributed earlier, so data were collected from them through the face-to-face interview method.

Sample Investigative Questions

Part of the structured questions was close-ended type and respondents were asked to mark the appropriate box/line matching the correct answer/opinion and were given opportunity to explain or give reasons to their chosen options. Other open-ended questions, however, required respondents to give opinions in detail.

Hence various methods were adopted in the form of triangulation method in order to collect as much relevant data as possible so that the methods can complement each other and make the data comprehensive.
Table 1: Sample investigative questions for the data collection/field study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section/Part</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Key Investigative Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'A'</td>
<td>How effective is the administrative decentralisation in The Gambia?</td>
<td>How effective is the legal-administrative framework in decentralisation/local governance in The Gambia?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In your opinion how effective are the powers, authorities and resources redistributed from the centre to the Local Councils?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>How easy is it to acquire and retain technical human capacity in Local Councils?</td>
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<td>How effective is the involvement and participation of civil society in the decentralisation process?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What are the contributions of the civil society organisations in the development process of the country particularly within the decentralization framework?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Do the CSOs and citizens participate as observers in Council meetings of the Local Councils? If No, Why? And what do you recommend?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How are the youths and women represented in Local Councils? And in practice how is the process done?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How do the communities participate in the decentralisation programme/process?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Are the accountability mechanisms/systems put in place sufficient to hold the Local Councils more accountable and transparent to the citizens?</td>
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<tr>
<td>'B'</td>
<td>What are the specific actions required to facilitate the successful implementation of administrative decentralisation in The Gambia?</td>
<td>What are the major challenges faced by The Gambia in its decentralisation process?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What would you recommend in order to realise a very effective administrative decentralisation in The Gambia?</td>
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</table>

Source: Author’s Field Work, September, 2015

Data Analysis

The responses to the structured close-ended questions are rated in percentages and numbers. The percentage of respondents for each alternative is provided and critically analysed. The data collected was analysed using the computer softwares known as Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The data was also analysed through comparison among the various operational documents on decentralisation in The Gambia and the actual organisational behaviour/practice in the implementation of those laws and policies and tying them to international/acceptable standards in realising effective and well-functioning administrative decentralisation processes.

The data were in both qualitative and quantitative forms. Therefore, they were analysed using qualitative or quantitative methods where appropriate. Data in both qualitative and quantitative forms were analysed and presented using frequency and percentage distributions and the results presented in tables and bar chart with interpretations and explanations. In addition qualitative data were analysed by grouping similar and most frequently occurring ideas or variables under the relevant themes. The main issues of the discussions were thus derived thematically.

Using the Chi-Square Tests the author also tried to establish the correlations between effectiveness of decentralisation and effectiveness of administrative decentralisation. In establishing a relationship between variables, the Null hypothesis checks there is no relationship between the variables in which we reject and while the alternative hypothesis checks there is a relationship between the variables in which we accept. Furthermore, if the P Value (Asymp. Significance (2 sided)) is less than 0.05 (5 per cent) it indicates that there is a relationship between tested variables and the relationship is significant and whereas the P Value (Asymp. Significance (2 sided)) is more than 0.05 (5 per cent) it means that there is no relationship between the tested variables.
Table 2: Chi-Square tests on effectiveness of decentralisation* effectiveness of administrative decentralisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>19.575a</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>14.906</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 11 cells (91.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .08.

Those who viewed effectiveness of decentralisation from the absence of good local governance and sound decentralisation programme are that the relationship is very strong and it shows that relationship between these variables is very significant.

Table 3: Chi-Square tests on effectiveness of decentralisation* absence of good local governance and sound decentralisation programme will there be any meaningful development in local communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>9.686a</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>6.737</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

a. 6 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .11.

Furthermore, the chi-square tests indicates that the effectiveness of decentralisation have a significant relationship with the type/form of decentralisation existing in The Gambia. Meaning if the current form of decentralisation existing in The Gambia is not effective then decentralisation will be ineffective. Therefore, for decentralisation to be effective in The Gambia or any other country the type/form of decentralisation the country chose to follow must also be effective.

Table 4: Chi-Square tests on type/form of decentralisation currently existing in the gambia * effectiveness of decentralisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>22.622a</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>18.971</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>.089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 18 cells (90.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.

Presentation of Results and Discussion

This section explores and examines the legal frame works to facilitate the implementation of administrative decentralisation and its effectiveness in The Gambia, and Institutionalisation Structures of Decentralisation. The findings were that The Gambia has put in place the following mechanisms and organs to steer the decentralisation process: Demarcation of Municipalities, Regions, Districts, Constituencies and Wards, Election of Mayors and Ward Councillors, Inclusion of nominated members from special interest groups into every Local Council, Establishment of Village Development Committees, Ward Development Committees, Office of Paramount Chief (National Council of Seyfolu promoting traditional rule), Technical Advisory Committees (TAC) in all the Regions, MDFTs, Local Government Service Commission in every Local Council, Districts,
Tribunals run by Chiefs, Municipal/Area Councils, Office of Governors and a Directorate for Local Governance in the Ministry of Lands and Regional Government. Also there are established Physical Planning Units in all the Local Government Authorities (LGAs) with a view to relinquish authority from the Central organ to the Local Councils pertaining to the designing, planning and development of their respective communities. In addition there exist The Gambia Association of Local Government Authorities (GALGA) and this body promotes the welfare of the Local Councils among others.

Decentralisation becomes necessary when the central power finds it increasingly difficult to fully and properly administer a country and respond efficiently to the aspirations of its peoples. It is evident that the Central Government of The Gambia cannot address and meet the development needs of the populace and therefore there is a need for decentralisation which requires a stronger partnership. These structures, if only strengthened and utilised can fully facilitate the realisation of the Vision of the Central Government (MoLRG) which is “To Be the Platform for Effective and Efficient Land Resources Management, Local Governance, Rural (Community) Development and Poverty Reduction.” In addition the structures can also facilitate the achievement of its Mission “… strengthen the existing development control policy and systems; ensure properly structured Local Government Authorities Administrative systems and effective Local Governance; ensure access to development resources by the people to facilitate socio-economic development for poverty reduction; and improve the capacities of groups/organisations at local levels to ensure sustainable development.”

To understand the level and nature of interaction between the Central Government and the Local Government Councils, about 94.8 per cent said the relationship is either Very Cordial or Cordial but needs improvement. The respondents said Central Government decisions are filtered to Councils through their line Ministry and the Ministry at the central level channels Council’s demands to the Central Government. Thus, Central Government directives are also channelled to Councils through the Governors or the Ministry responsible for Regional Administration. However, they added that the interaction is centralised and issues and decisions are dictated from the Centre to the LGAs/Region. Interestingly about 5.3 per cent of the respondents said the relationship is weak. The point of view of the respondents who said the relationship is weak argued that because the LGAs do not seem to have much initiative to drive the development process of the Regions/Communities as envisaged by the Local Government Act [3] rather key initiatives originate from the Centre and at the same time the Centre is also hijacking all the sources of Councils’ Revenues.

The views of the respondents were sought on the effectiveness of administrative decentralisation in The Gambia and 13.2 per cent said administrative decentralisation in The Gambia is weak, 78.9 per cent indicates moderate while only 7.9 per cent said it is effective. The respondents who said it is weak or moderate, holds the view that there is inadequate redistribution of authority, responsibilities and financial resources for providing quality public services among the Local Councils and other actors. They also added that the Chief Executive Officers and Directors of Local Councils are mainly appointed and transferred by the Ministry of Lands and Regional Government (MoLRG) and this also contributed to the ineffectiveness of administrative decentralisation. The table below shows the frequency (number of respondents) and valid per cent (the total actual per cent) on the views of the respondents on the effectiveness of administrative decentralisation in The Gambia.

It should be understood that administrative decentralisation seeks to redistribute authority, responsibility and financial resources for providing quality public services among different levels of government. It is the transfer of authority and responsibility for the planning, financing and management of certain public functions from the central government and its agencies to field units of government agencies, subordinate units or levels of government, semi-autonomous public authorities or corporations, or area-wide,
According to Jennie Litvack and World Bank Decentralisation Thematic Team, the three major forms of administrative decentralisation are deconcentration, delegation, and devolution and each has different characteristics. Deconcentration which is often considered to be the weakest form of decentralisation and is used most frequently in unitary states, redistributes decision-making, authority and financial and management responsibilities among different levels of the central government. It can merely shift responsibilities from central government officials in the capital city to those working in regions, provinces or districts, or it can create strong field administration or local administrative capacity under the supervision of central government ministries.

Delegation is a more extensive form of decentralisation. Through delegation central governments transfer responsibility for decision-making and administration of public functions to semi-autonomous organisations not wholly controlled by the central government, but ultimately accountable to it. Governments delegate responsibilities when they create public enterprises or corporations, housing authorities, transportation authorities, special service districts, semi-autonomous school districts, regional development corporations, or special project implementation units. Usually these organisations have a great deal of discretion in decision-making. They may be exempted from constraints on regular civil service personnel and may be able to charge users directly for services.

A third type of administrative decentralisation is devolution. When governments devolve functions, they transfer authority for decision-making, finance, and management to quasi-autonomous units of local government with corporate status. Devolution usually transfers responsibilities for services to municipalities that elect their own mayors and councils, raise their own revenues, and have independent authority to make investment decisions. In a devolved system, local governments have clear and legally recognised geographical boundaries over which they exercise authority and within which they perform public functions. It is this type of administrative decentralisation that underlies most political decentralisation.

In relation to the human resource situation of the Councils, 100 per cent of respondents accepted that it is very difficult to acquire and retain highly qualified technical human capacity/resources in the Municipal/Area Councils. The reasons they advance were that recruiting and retaining qualified technical human capacity is no easy task for any organisation let alone for the LGAs; there should be better incentives and motivations which quite often is lacking. The respondents added that the salaries and other benefits offered by the Local Councils are small that it makes it very difficult to acquire and retain qualified personnel and as a result many qualified personnel are easily targeted by the private sector. There is no doubt that if all the Regional Directorates of Education, Agriculture and Health etc. are transferred to the Local Councils then human capacity will not be a problem because the Local Government Act (2002) clearly states that transfer of institutions from the Centre to Local Governments should go with all the resources (human, finance and material).

On the creation of the Local Government Service Commissions (LGSC) responsible for...
recruitment, discipline and management of the human resource based in all the Municipal/Area Councils, 68.4 per cent of the respondents said it is a duplication of efforts and resources as there are already Establishment Committees in all the Councils as mandated by the Local Government Act [3] even though the two have different mandates to perform. The respondents also argued that the existence of the Personnel Management Office at the central level and then creating a LGSC in every Local Council is a duplication of efforts and putting more financial burden on the Local Councils. All the respondents agreed that LGSC are ineffective and inefficient as some of the members selected are not qualified and experienced enough in performing such sensitive duty and also the guidelines provided by the MoLRG were not properly adhered by most Councils/Regions during the composition of the Commissions. Other respondents added that the creation of the LGSC may not necessarily be a duplication of efforts but certainly having LGSCs in each Local Council is a waste of resources and time and the likelihood of influence, patronage and incompetence cannot be rule out. A person with high integrity in the community to be a member of the LGSC is vague which needs definition and in the absence of which selecting unqualified and inexperience people into the Commissions will continue to happen.

However, “decentralisation has not always achieved the desired results of its proponents. Indeed, decentralisation has often been associated with political clientelism, corruption and mismanagement [6]. Appointment of staff is an important ingredient of local autonomy. However, extensive local government control over local staffing without the central impetus of ensuring sound personnel practices can lead to corruption and nepotism. This was pointed out as far back as the 1960s by the United Nations (1962). Appointment of staff is an important area for patronage. Often newly empowered city politicians want to hire their own employees, for political as well as efficiency and loyalty reasons [6].

Based on Article 2 Letter I from the framework Law, decentralisation in public administration are the bases for solving problems which are not done by officials appointed by the Center, but by those elected by the electoral body. More specifically, in the decentralised administrative system, the administration of the interests of local administration (municipal, town or county) is conducted by freely elected authorities from and by the mass of citizens of that community, which have, according to constitutional rules, their financial and autonomous decision-making powers. In the case of decentralisation, the state does not assume the burden of administration alone, but splits it in certain levels, with other categories of persons such as local communities. Decentralisation is the transfer of administrative and financial powers from the central government to the local government or private sector required to meet local interests. It is necessary to retain that decentralisation is a principle of organisation and management of the state based on broad autonomy of the local management of the administrative territorial units (ibid). This is the spirit of devolution of power, authority and resources from the centre to the periphery, in the absence of which we may call the process as deconcentration and not complete decentralisation.
Based on the stated views on devolution, Fifty (50) per cent of the respondents viewed the form(s) of decentralisation that currently existing in The Gambia as Deconcentration while 13.2 per cent, 2.9 per cent, 28.9 per cent and 5.3 per cent said the form of decentralisation in The Gambia is Devolution, Deregulation, Delegation and None (mix form which we can refer to as triangulation in this work) respectively. In The Gambia key State/public institutions are having their offices/sub-stations in the regions to reduce pressure on the Central office but in all sectors for example Education, Agriculture, Health, Local Government, Youth, and Women among others the main decisions without or little consultation with the Local Councils are still being taken at Central level and passed on to the Regional Offices for implementation.

Deconcentration is the division of powers and administrative and financial responsibilities between different levels of central administration. Decentralisation law defines deconcentration as redistribution of administrative and financial powers of the ministries and other bodies of central public administration structures to their own specialty structures in the territory. What drives it closer to decentralisation is the fact that the local power holders have the power to solve local problems themselves without passing them forward to their hierarchic superior from the centre. The decisions are within the jurisdiction of local bodies which have decision-making power, but remain subject to centralisation (ibid). Furthermore, One Hundred (100) Per cent of the respondents said it is true that the inadequate implementation of the Laws and Policies on Decentralisation in The Gambia has affected the realisation of both administrative and fiscal decentralisations which are key elements in measuring the effectiveness of decentralisation in a country. If the Central Government is not very much committed and ensure the full implementation of the laws, policies and programmes on decentralisation in order to realise the vision of the country then migration in all its forms and underdevelopment will continue to affect the country.

In addition, the PAGE 2012-2015 has indicated that Local Governments play a critical role in overall governance in The Gambia and are key players in economic development, growth and employment. By interacting with Local Government Authorities, the Government of The Gambia is able to provide valuable insights for policy development. Since the early 1980s, the Government of The Gambia has been rethinking development approaches with a view to ensuring greater citizen participation in national socio-economic development activities. Therefore this can supports the relevance of implementing an effective decentralisation programme in The Gambia. It was also observed that if not all but most Local Councils have in place a five year strategic plan which covers among others issues on Health, Education, Agriculture and Community Development but requires technical and financial resources for its accomplishment.

The author sought the opinions of the respondents on the current accountability mechanisms and over 73.7 per cent of the respondents agreed that the accountability mechanisms/systems put in place are sufficient to hold the Local Councils more accountable and transparent to the citizens but the awareness among the citizens on how to exercise those rights are lacking. They also accepted that even though the accountability mechanisms/systems put in place are sufficient, there is still room for more improvement in making the mechanisms more efficient and practicable. “Citizens can only legitimately authorise representatives and hold them accountable if there are many avenues and institutions through which they engage with both each other and their representatives”.

**Conclusion**

Democracy at central level cannot be functional and cannot become properly operative if it is not supported by democracy at grass-roots level. A spirit of mutual respect and complementary support as well as the acceptance of the legitimacy of the role of each participant in the decentralisation process are essential components of building partnerships between government and civil society in decentralised structures. One of the outcomes of decentralisation should be the enhancement of intimate and productive relations between electors and the elected
Administrative Decentralisation in The Gambia is not implemented as expected by the citizens. A standard decentralisation also requires well-functioning structures, a developed human capacity, ensuring a very conducive environment and attractive motivation facilities to fully realise the target goals set.

A number of factors determine the success of decentralisation, among them well-trained administrators, an adequate infrastructure at sub-national level, sufficient financial means and resources, proper coordination of decentralisation at national level, a political will and moral commitment among all the stakeholders in the decentralisation process. Deteriorating economic and social conditions favour unethical conduct. Unethical conduct is also influenced by the awareness and adherence to moral standards and ethical values in society. Decentralisation will not succeed if unethical behaviour should prevail at national level. The consequence would be the decentralisation of unethical conduct and behaviour. Ethics is concerned with both individual and collective morality. Ethics as a collection of moral principles and views is about a collection of acceptable and unacceptable actions in public. It involves motive and action. In moral philosophy it deals with values relating to rightness or wrongness of certain actions, and to the goodness or badness of the motives and the ends of such actions.

The Gambia being a developing country is important to devolve power to the grassroots which will encourage higher involvement and participation of the citizens. Without the participation of citizens in the development process then development will be ineffective and meaningless and without effective decentralisation it will be difficult and slow to realise both human and sustainable development in The Gambian Communities. Surely there can be development but at a snail’s pace and other parts of the country will be more developed than other areas.

Much of administrative decentralisation has taken place for development purposes. This has been about sharing of powers between central ministries and their field units to enhance project design and implementation. DD (Democratic Decentralisation) without wider institutional, political and economic reform is a contradiction [7-12]. In conclusion, this study is incomplete as there are more opportunities for further research due to the fact that decentralisation is a continuous process which requires continuous studies.

**Recommendations**

The Central Government should support the decentralised structures in terms of training and proper enforcement of local government instruments for decentralisation.

The Central Government should adequately redistribute authority, responsibilities and financial resources for providing quality public services to the populace by the Local Government Councils and other Actors in the decentralisation process.

The implementation of Local Government Act [3] and other legislation on decentralisation should be adhered and Local Councils to lead in the process to ensure citizens and groups active involvement and participation in Council issues.

There is a necessity to put in place a comprehensive Decentralisation Code of Ethics for public administrators and political office bearers at Municipal/Regional and Local Governance levels and should also reflect expectations and commitments.

The Gambia should also develop and implement a Communication Strategy for the smooth implementation of a decentralised Local Government.

The Gambia should make efforts to sign and ratify the African Charter on Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development which is very concern with grassroots empowerment and participation.

The Gambia Government should put in place a well-functioning National Steering Committee and also a Cabinet Steering Committee on Decentralisation to smoothly facilitate the decentralisation process in The Gambia.

There should be a National Assembly Select Committee on Decentralisation which can also take care of Local Governance issues.
The Gambia Government should endeavour to establish an autonomous National Decentralisation Secretariat for easy implementation, coordination and monitoring of the decentralisation and local development policy and programme of action/implementation plan.

Building the institutional capacity (human, finance, physical) of The Gambia Association of Local Government Authorities (GALGA) cannot be over emphasised as it can play an important role in the smooth facilitation of the decentralisation process, advocate for the empowerment of Municipal/Area Councils and sharing/learning best practices/success stories among Local Councils in The Gambia and beyond (a joint force can be better than one).

To ensure effectiveness, efficiency and avoid conflict of interest looking at the nature of the social, economic and cultural settings under which the Local Government Service Commission (LGSC) operates, the Central Government (MoLRG) should work out the modalities in having one institutionalise National Local Government Service Commission with well experienced and competent people. This will also reduce the financial burdens on every Council and ensure accountability and transparency in the recruitment and management of Local Government Officials/personnel.

There is the need to reaffirm commitment as far as decentralisation is concern by involving all the stakeholders namely: - Central Government, Citizens, Development Partners, Bilateral Partners, LGA, CSOs, CBOs, NGOs and the Private Sector among others.

The National Assembly to follow up the progress of the Local Government Act [3] and other Legislations on decentralisation to ensure their real/actual implementation.

The Central Government to be more committed and ensures the full implementation of the Laws and policies on decentralisation in order to realise the vision of the country.

References