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Development Priorities of Local and Traditional Government Leaders in Ghana: Exploring Implications of Convergences and Divergences for Local Community Development

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Abstract

Development of local communities in Ghana is led by local governance leaders and traditional authorities. The development priorities of local and traditional governance leaders play a crucial role in shaping local community development outcomes. This reflects the fact that community development is achieved through the collective management and allocation of group resources. We investigate the development priorities of local and traditional government leaders to inform context-specific strategies for improving local leadership for the advancement of local communities. The study uses cross-sectional survey to gather data from 370 participants consisting of 132 respondents from Kumasi, 108 from Tamale and 130 from Accra. The research finds the topmost development priorities of traditional government leaders are educational facilities (94.6%), health facilities (49.4%), security (49.4%), road infrastructure (48.8%) and sanitation and waste management (45.2%). On the other hand, local government leaders identify infrastructure (57.2%), educational facilities (50.5%), electricity and street lighting (49.5%), and security (42.1%) as their topmost priority areas for development. Why are these amenities still an essential need of the community? The research believes the divergence in the weight of development priority as presented by the two governance institutions affects the collaborative effort that is needed to drive the advancement of the local community. We thereby call for a synchronisation of development objectives that blends differing interests to arrive at a collective agenda that can speed up growth and development in the community. The fact that there is some level of alignment in development priorities gives room for dialogue and the possibility of creating that synergy of ideas and skills for growth.

1. Introduction

Governance and community development constitutes the bedrock of national development globally. Development is achieved through collective management and allocation of group resource and expressed within the umbrella of the community (Mayombe, 2018). The development of local communities is thus fundamental and central to the discourse of governance and national development (Fuseini, 2021). Community development paradigms are framed within governance structure in which "the community can be thought of as an intermediate level of social reality in which people collectively experience both the possibilities of human agency and the constraints of structure" (Shaw & Crowther, 2014: p. 392). Governance structures are demarcated into traditional and modern democratic governance (Nketsia, 2014; Nukunya, 2003). Whiles traditional governance is embedded and evolved out of the community and social structures of the people, democratic governance ideals are constructed out of past leadership canons focused on generating more inclusive growth. These two governance systems have legal and constitutional backing within the Ghanaian leadership space as given by the local governance Act, 2016, Act 936, and the chieftaincy Act, 2008, Act 769. However, there are fundamental challenges regarding how existing governance structures impact local community development. First, successive governments of Ghana have struggled with the task of harnessing the potential of both traditional and modern democratic governance systems for community development (Fuseini, 2021; Panyin, 2010). For instance, the land Act, 2020 Act 1036 which sort to enhance collaboration between democratic leadership and traditional leaders i.e., the chiefs for effective management of land resources witnessed some desertion in its content from some leading chiefs such as the Asantehene. This was largely because of traditional governance has been part of the African story throughout its history however, there is still no clearly defined role of Africa's traditional leaders in contemporary democratic politics (Acemoglu et al., 2014). According to Logan (2013), it has become very essential to accommodate the place of traditional leadership and its institutional structures either as a part of or alongside the democratization processes. Also, Beall (2006) points out political pragmatism demands that African governments seek some co-existence with chieftaincy if the goal of shared growth is to be achieved. Nonetheless, political scholars, observers and commentators remain uncertain about how the persistence of chieftaincy institutions will affect the prospects for modern democratic consolidation.

There is also varying discourse for and against the effectiveness of the two system of governance in fostering effective community engagement for growth. Pa-

nyin (2010) believes the very presence of community leaders within the community as given by the chief and the shared common welfare, ensures that the needs of the community are better facilitated when traditional leadership dominates policy for community development. Other scholars hold contrary view by presenting arguments to the fact that the moral of democratic leadership which seeks to encourage and enlarge participation in both the selection of leadership and the decision-making processes to development would better achieve community development ideals (UNDP, 2019).

Thus, effective governance at the community level requires the participation of both leadership groups. Despite this fact, their development priorities frequently diverge, resulting in opposing approaches to development initiatives (Mawere & Mayekiso, 2014). Convergence of development priorities among local and traditional authorities can improve the effectiveness of development projects and benefit local communities (Koenane, 2018). According to Cookey et al. (2010), traditional leaders frequently prioritize the preservation of cultural and spiritual values, whereas local government leaders prioritize physical infrastructure and economic development. This disparity in priority can cause conflict and competitiveness between the two groups, impeding their capacity to pursue common development goals.

There are gaps in current research on community development in Ghana, particularly when it comes to how traditional and local/democratic governance leaders can collaborate to develop local communities. There is no current research that investigates the development priorities of governance leaders in Ghana aimed at identifying areas for effective collaboration to drive community change and growth in the three key municipal assemblies of the country. This study thus seeks to first identify the topmost development priorities of governance leaders and identify developmental priorities areas that both parties can align with to guide policy discourse and effective governance at the community level.

We thereby investigate development priorities of local and traditional government leaders for their local communities. In this light, the rest of the study will proceed as follows, Section 2 will present a review of some related literature to the study, while Section 3 will present the methodology adopted to gathering and analysing the data. Following which section four will present the result for the study with some discussions. Conclusion and recommendations will be provided in section five.

2. Review of Literature

In Ghana, local governance is provided for in Article 240 (1) of the 1992 Constitution, which creates a framework for decision-making, through the decentralized local governance system. The local Government Act (ACT 936) of 2016 and other constitutional instruments make provision for and regulate the framework within the decentralized local governance system should operate. Local governance is seen as the most efficient means of channelling and administering developments

to local areas due to its proximity to the people.

Governance in local communities in Ghana is not only in the hands of local government appointees and those elected, but more critically, traditional leaders as well (Busia, 1968; Nketsia, 2014). This situation is not only in Ghana but other parts of the world, where democratic governments work closely with the traditional authorities. In the United Kingdom for instance, the Prime Minister works for the monarch the Queen, who has been succeeded by King Charles in a mutually collaborative manner (Wring, 2019). Similar forms of local governance where power systems are in the hands of both traditional authorities and local assemblies are working in several parts of Asia (Cummins & Leach, 2012).

Local governance is critical to community development and has been defined as governance that exist within local neighbourhoods and communities that are meant to bring vitality and development within the local areas (Wilfahrt, 2018).

Local governance starts in individuals' neighbourhoods and local communities working together, to deliver a better development outcome for the communities. Local leaders may include different portfolios such as traditional leaders, religious leaders, political leaders, leaders of community social groups, well-known community figures, and local school authorities. Local governance therefore acts as the link that bridges the gap between national governance and communities in the deployment of resources and policies at the local levels. In the current dispensation, local governance entails representatives of both modern and traditional governance in communities and neighbourhoods. Through this, local governance bridges the gap between community members, government officials and traditional leaders (Honyenuga & Wutoh, 2019),

Local governance is critical to community development. Local governance, regardless of whatever form it takes, is argued to be an essential and absolute necessity for the development of local communities (Kopsieker, 2016).

In Ghana, from the colonial and pre-independence era when chiefs and traditional authorities exercised political, military and social power to the current era of democratic and traditional governance systems (Adjei et al., 2017), traditional authorities have been instrumental in local administration and development (Owusu-Mensah, 2014). Traditional institutions by design performed similar functions alongside elected local authorities. Chiefs with their rich indigenous knowledge represent the culture and tradition of their locality (Busia, 1968; Nukunya, 2003). Their representation begins at the community, village or town level to the paramountcy then to the regional house of chiefs and ends at the national house of chiefs (Busia, 1968; Nukunya, 2003). They administer land and people through the enactment of rules and resolution of internal disputes among their subjects. Therefore, governance in local areas in Ghana works through government and traditional authorities (Adjei et al., 2017; Amoateng & Kalule-Sabiti, 2011).

For local governance to work effectively, there is a need for productive collaboration between traditional authorities and local government appointees (Busia,

1968; Mahama, 2009). Anytime there is tension between these two governance systems, governance at the local level becomes ineffective, which negatively affects community development (Mahama, 2009).

Local Governance and Community Development

Research on the effectiveness of local governance in ensuring community development and the participation of community members in support of that process has seen appreciable research interest. Biljohn and Lues (2020) draw on a case study approach to assess the extent to which citizen participation underpins social innovation during the governance of local government service delivery in South Africa. The findings of the study revealed that open governance systems would not automatically result in sustainable, quality, and quantity service delivery, as this depends heavily on who participates in devising solutions as well as on the delivery and governance of services.

In Ghana, democratic decentralization and local governance policy was implemented in the late 1980s (Nyendu, 2012). However, the utility of decentralization and local government in promoting local participation has been questioned (Abdul-Gafaru, 2017; Bawole, 2017). Some researchers have argued that local governance in Ghana is just an extension of central governance, rather than empowerment of local community members (Agomor et al., 2019; Bawole, 2017).

Tanle et al. (2016) have examined the effectiveness of decentralization and local governance in reducing conflict in the Kassena-Nankana West District of the Upper East Region of Ghana. The researchers used mixed method and took their data from the District Assembly staff and community members. The findings showed that while the heightened conflicts necessitated the creation of separate districts to bring peace, the creation of these districts has not really promoted participation in local governance among community members. The local district assemblies themselves are found to be filled with internal conflicts. Some of the causes of conflict between the District Assembly functionaries and citizens at the local level include low participation of citizens in decision-making, poor dissemination of information from Assembly members to community members and inadequate financial resources for the District Assembly to undertake development projects needed by the people (Tanle et al., 2016).

A study conducted by Abdul-Gafaru (2017) sought to address the reason why after several decades of decentralization reforms have had limited impact on improving access to quality basic services in Ghana, with a particular focus on urban areas. The researcher used gathered qualitative data through focus group discussion with budget and planning officers of three Municipal Assemblies in the Greater Accra region. Findings indicated that local governance in these municipalities are still controlled by politicians from the central government, which makes it virtually impossible for community members to participate in leadership processes within their local areas. The study finally revealed that given the importance of the nature of central-local power dynamics in making decentralization work for the poor, a fuller understanding of the political constraints to service

delivery in urban Ghana would require going beyond an exclusive focus on local power dynamics within cities to examine wider structures of power within which subnational authorities are embedded. These findings aligned with what have been observed in Nigeria (Oyeleye et al., 2018), Senegal (Wilfahrt, 2018) and South Africa (Biljohn & Lues, 2020; Marango et al., 2018) where structural powers hijack local governance.

Structural control of local governance has been linked to apathy from community members in engaging in decision-making processes in their local communities. This assertion has been buttressed with empirical evidence from a study conducted by Bawole (2017), which examined the facilitators and the limitations of pro-poor decentralization using data from 10 selected districts in Ghana. The findings showed that while participation and representation, transparency, and accountability remain important facilitating factors, the capacity of district assemblies, apathy of citizens, resource constraints, political interference, and the absence of collaborating nonstate actors, among other factors, have limited the effectiveness of decentralization in reducing poverty in Ghana.

Rasmussen et al. (2019) have examined the dynamics of communities and local government partnerships in facilitating climate change adaptations in Ghana. Data for the study was drawn from fieldwork done in East Mamprusi and Garu-Tempane, in the Northern and Upper East regions of Ghana. The results of the study show that the communities involved have achieved positive outcomes from the approach. Capacity building and advocacy training have made the involved communities more proactive, which has increased the collaboration between the communities and local governance. Climate change adaptation has now become one of the key priorities on the political agenda of the local district assemblies. However, lack of funding hinders the achievements to be expanded to the rest of the district.

In synthesizing these studies together, empirical evidence points to the fact that decentralization and local governance is a means of involving community members in the leadership processes of their communities. In the developing world however, local governance has become a conduit or avenue for central governments to extend their influence into local communities. This has created a situation where structural bottlenecks limit active involvement of community members in the leadership and decision-making processes in their local areas. In this regard this study will attempt to discover some of the limitation to effective community governance in Ghana by narrowing down to some of the root causes which may lie in differences in development priorities between local government and community leaders. The lack of synchronization of such differences could account for abysmal development outcomes.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Setting

The setting for this current study was selected with the objective of providing insights and lessons for the country as whole. In this vein the study was situated

within three districts i.e., Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA), Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA), and the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly (TMA) The north-south framework informed these district choices for analysing and assessing development issues in Ghana (Vanderpuye-Orgle, 2007). Kumasi and Accra Metropolis serve as the districts from Southern Ghana and Tamale Metropolis serves as the district from Northern Ghana. Both districts have strong representations of traditional and democratic systems of governance that work hand in hand in making developmental decisions within the districts. Therefore, Kumasi, Accra, and Tamale offered good settings for conducting the current study. The survey period spanned from January to October 2022.

3.2. Data Source and Sampling

The present study is extracted from a doctoral project that used mixed-method approach to explore Fusion of Modern Democratic and Traditional Governance System in Promoting Community Development in Ghana. The study selected its sample using a published sample size table from Israel (1992). In the estimates, a sample of 370 is representative of a population of 5000 at a 5% level of significance. Similarly, a population of 6000 at 5% level of significance should have a sample of 375 respondents. The total population of local government members and traditional leaders in the three metropolises of Accra, Kumasi and Tamale was 5680. Hence the research used a sample of 370 respondents for the survey since the population of governance leaders was not up to 6000.

The sample for the qualitative component was informed by suggestions from qualitative methodologists such as Morse (1994) and Creswell & Clark (2017). For example, while Morse (1994) recommended 30 - 50 participants for thematic, ethnographic or grounded theory research, Creswell & Clark (2017) recommended 20 - 30 participants. In this study, for the qualitative component, the researcher chose an estimated number of 32 key informant interviews and 6 focus-group discussions in the three districts. The study specifically used questionnaire with a combination of closed and open-ended questions to gather its data. The closed-ended questions used a Likert scale for responses, which ranges from 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A) to 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). The open-ended items provided spaces for respondents to give further explanations where necessary. The questionnaire was drafted to reflect the objectives of this research.

The participants of the study were selected from various stakeholders within each of the three districts. These stakeholders comprised of key stakeholders from local government and traditional rulership. For the local government, the population included leadership of the Metropolitan Assembly, assemblymen and assemblywomen, and unit committee members of each of the electoral areas. In terms of traditional governance, the population included the leadership of the Ga-Adangbe Kingdom, Ashanti Kingdom and Tamale Kingdom, local chiefs, queen mothers, and palace elders from each local town. The total participants for the

study were 370 consisting of 132 participants from Kumasi, 108 from Tamale and 130 from Accra. Table 1 provides the study's participants from the various cities. Non-probability-sampling technique was employed in selecting the participants for the present study. The study specifically employed purposive sampling strategy to the key informants based on the purpose of their roles, which are directly relevant to the problem under investigation.

Table 1. Survey respondents.

District	Local Governance	Traditional Governance	Total
KMA	69	63	132
TMA	61	47	108
AMA	72	58	130
Total	202	168	370

Source: Survey data (2022).

The data of the study was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics via Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The descriptive statistics were presented using frequencies and percentages to estimate the data patterns. The data was then interpreted for meanings from which conclusions and recommendations were drawn.

3.3. Ethical Issues

Ethical considerations were duly followed in the data-collection process. We first applied for an ethical clearance from the Ethical Review Board of the College of Humanities, University of Ghana, to conduct the study. Secondly, the participants were guaranteed their confidentiality and privacy of the information they would provide. Thirdly, we attained participants' informed consent before including them in the current study. Also, we ensured respondents' anonymity when storing and processing data.

4. Results

4.1. Demographics

A total of 370 respondents were used for the study. The socio-demographic profiles of the traditional and local government respondents are provided in Table 2. For the entire sample, Ashanti region represented 35.7% of the respondents, Greater Accra region 35.1% and Northern region 29.2%. With reference to the governance profile of respondents, local government respondents were 54.6% while 45.4% of respondents were from the traditional leadership. In terms of gender distribution, the sample was dominated by male respondents 76.2% with the remaining 23.8% being females. The ages of the respondents ranged between 26 years to 67 years. Slightly more than half of the survey participants were between 40 - 49 years (51.4%), followed by those aged between 30 - 39 years (22.4%), and

those between 50 - 59 years (12.2%). In terms of their educational level, 35.7% had high school education, 23.8% had Diploma/HND, 18.4% have bachelor's degree, 14.9% have up to basic education, 1.4% have a master's degree and 1.1% have not attended any school.

Table 2. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Characteristics	Categories	Traditional (N = 168)		Local Gov't (N = 202)	Overall (N = 370)	
		Frequency	% age	Frequency	Frequency	% age
Districts	Kumasi Metropolis	54	32.1	78	132	35.7
	Accra Metropolis	57	33.9	73	130	35.1
	Tamale Metropolis	57	33.9	51	108	29.2
Gender	Male	136	81.0	146	282	76.2
	Female	32	19.0	56	88	23.8
Age	20 - 29 years	8	4.8	16	24	6.5
	30 - 39 years	43	25.6	40	83	22.4
	40 - 40 years	92	54.8	98	190	51.4
	50 - 59 years	10	6.0	35	45	12.2
	60+ years	15	8.9	13	28	7.6
Education	No Education	4	33.9	0	4	1.1
	Basic Education	28	81.0	27	55	14.9
	Vocational Education	6	19.0	12	18	4.9
	High School	65	4.8	67	132	35.7
	Diploma/HND	35	25.6	53	88	23.8
	Bachelor's Degree	25	54.8	43	68	18.4
	Master's Degree	5	6.0	0	5	1.4

Source: Field data (2022).

Table 3. Occupation of traditional leaders.

Job Category	Numbers	Percentage
Arabic instructor	4	2.5
Businessman/woman	49	30.4
Butcher	4	2.5
Car dealer	2	1.2
Cinematographer	5	3.1
Welder	4	2.5
Driver	6	3.7
Electrician	3	1.9

Continued

Event's organizer	1	0.6
Farmer	4	2.5
Fashion designer	5	3.1
Trader	32	19.9
Lotto writer	4	2.5
Maison	5	3.1
Musician	4	2.5
Retiree	4	2.5
Sports journalist	1	0.6
Teacher	24	14.9

Table 4. Occupation of local governance leaders.

Job Category	Numbers	Percentage	Job Category	Numbers	Percentage
A ssembly member	7	3.6	Student	5	2.6
Agriculturalist	4	2.1	Surveyor	5	2.6
Accountant	8	4.1	Teaching	21	10.8
Businessman/woman	35	18.0	Trader	39	20.1
Car dealer	4	2.1	Security officer	3	1.5
Civil servant	9	4.6	Sports journalist	4	2.1
Contractor supervisor	4	2.1	Driver	3	1.5
Electrician	10	5.2	Lotto writer	4	2.1
Event's organiser	4	2.1	Construction	7	3.6
Food vendor	4	2.1	Worker	4	2.1
Government worker	10	5.2	Radio presenter		

Source: Field data (2022).

Among the traditional governance leaders, Kumasi Metropolis accounted for 32.1% of the sample, Accra 33.9% and Tamale 33.9%. Significant majority of the respondents were males 81%, with 19% of them being females. Their positions within their traditional areas are Chiefs (26.3%), Queen Mothers (20.2%) and Community Elders (53.6%). Their ages ranged between 29 - 67 years. Their educational levels were high, with 42.3% having attained at least high school education and 38.7% haven attained tertiary education. Their occupations were predominantly informal sector jobs such as electricians, farmers, fashion designers, masons, lotto writers, traders and welders. Few of them indicated holding formal sector jobs such as teachers, sports journalist among others (see Table 3).

Among the local government respondents, respondents from KMA were 38.6%, AMA 36.1% and TMA 25.2%. The respondents included Elected Assembly members 42.1%, Appointed Assembly members 20.3% and Unit Committee Members

37.6%. Within this sample too, majority of them were males 72.3% with the remaining 27.7% being females. Their ages ranged between 20 - 67 years old. Their educational levels are relatively higher compared with those in the traditional government sample. Their occupations are dominated by formal sector professions such as teaching, surveying, civil service, public sector workers, accountants, and agriculturalists. Nonetheless, some still held informal sector occupations such as trading, electrician, driving, car dealership among others (see Table 4).

4.2. Reliability Analysis of Scales

The reliability of the questionnaire used in gathering the data has been consistent in measuring the outcomes of the study. The Cronbach alpha which measures the internal consistency of scores on each of the indicator variables, which must be greater than 0.70 ($a > 0.70$) according to Tabachnick et al. (2013) was used. In all variables measured in the study using different items, the alpha was above the threshold. The number of items for each measure and their associated reliability levels are provided in Table 5. All the measures recorded high reliabilities with the Cronbach alpha ranging between $a = 0.750$ to $a = 0.943$ supporting questionnaire reliability and internal consistency. The reliability of the questionnaire in eliciting the required response as supported by the alpha values allows for the study to make inferences out of the data gathered. The research sort to evaluate the level of community development and the areas of collaboration of the two sides of governance which was effectively measured. Also, the work sort to evaluate the level of community engagement and participation, here also the alpha values show that was achieved within the setup of the questionnaire as given by the data obtained from the field.

Table 5. Reliability levels of the measures.

Variables	No of items	Reliability (a)
Community engagement	5	0.766
Level of community development	4	0.834
Social participation	8	0.854
Areas of collaboration	12	0.853
Competencies and proficiency	10	0.833

Source: Field data (2022).

4.3. Development Priorities of Local and Traditional Government Leaders

The respondents were asked to list the topmost development priorities within their local communities. The essence was to examine the extent to which development priorities of local and traditional governance leaders align. The list generated by each of the two groups are analysed using frequencies and percentages. The number of respondents in each category who mentioned development prior-

ities was computed as a percentage of the total respondents for each group. Table 6 shows the frequencies and percentages of development priorities of the local and traditional government leaders with further emphasis given in Figure 1.

Table 6. Community development priorities of governance leaders.

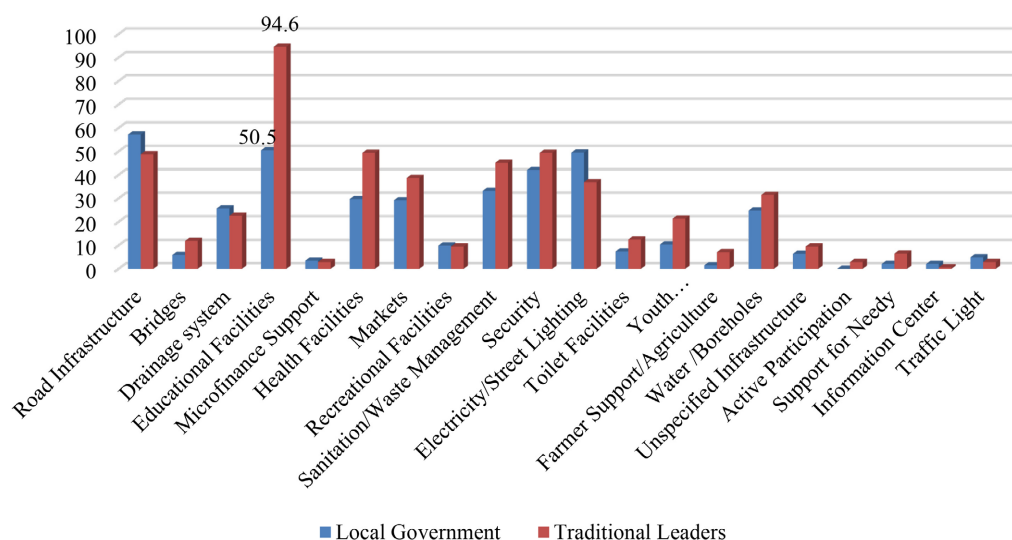| Development Priorities	Local Government		Traditional Leaders	
	f	%	f	%
Road Infrastructure	116	57.2%	82	48.8%
Bridges	12	5.9%	20	11.9%
Drainage System	52	25.7%	38	22.6%
Educational Facilities	102	50.5%	158	94.6%
Microfinance Support	7	3.5%	5	2.9%
Health Facilities	60	29.7%	83	49.4%
Markets	59	29.2%	65	38.7%
Recreational Facilities	20	9.9%	16	9.5%
Sanitation/Waste Management	67	33.2%	76	45.2%
Security	85	42.1%	83	49.4%
Electricity/Street Lighting	100	49.5%	62	36.9%
Toilet Facilities	15	7.4%	21	12.5%
Youth Employment/Empowerment	21	10.4%	36	21.4%
Farmer Support/Agriculture	3	1.5%	12	7.1%
Water/Boreholes	50	24.8%	52	31.5%
Unspecified Infrastructure	13	6.4%	16	9.5%
Active Participation	0	0	5	2.9%
Support for Needy	4	2.1%	11	6.5%
Information Centre	4	2.1%	1	0.6%
Traffic Light	10	4.9%	5	2.9%

A total of twenty (20) development priorities emerged from the two groups. For the local government respondents, the topmost community development priorities were: road infrastructure (57.2%), educational facilities (50.5%), electricity and street lighting (49.5%), and security (42.1%). On the other hand, the traditional authority's topmost community development priorities are educational facilities (94.6%), health facilities (49.4%), security (49.4%), road infrastructure (48.8%), and sanitation and waste management (45.2%).

To further appreciate how the development priorities of the two groups compare, a bar graph is used to give a pictorial representation of the development priorities identified by the local and traditional government leaders across the three districts. In Figure 1, we see that almost all the traditional leaders rated educational facilities as their topmost development priority (94.6%) however, only half of the local government respondents identified educational facilities as priority

development area (50.5%). The traditional government leaders also rated health facilities, sanitation and waste management, and access to water/boreholes as key development priorities, which was higher than the rating by local government leaders. On the other hand, the local government leaders rated road infrastructure and electricity and street lighting as higher priorities more than how the traditional leaders rated these amenities.

Though one can infer from the data that there is some alignment of top priorities with regards to education and security, the level of prioritisation differs. For instance, while traditional leaders' place education as the highest development agenda for the community with over 90% selecting that, the local government places education at 50% of its priority list. Also, sanitation is key to the traditional leaders but not a top priority for local government. Mawere & Mayekiso (2014) also find that development priorities of governance leaders in the community often diverge. This calls for a more concerted effort at fusing differences in development priorities in Ghana under a global blue print for a more effective and sustainable community development and engagement.

For least priorities areas, the study finds traditional leaders prioritizing less active participation in the community, support for needy, farmer support, provision of traffic lights and microfinance. While local governance leaders also prioritize less support for needy, farmer support, information centres and provision of traffic lights. The study finds that some critical pillars to development in the community such as access to finance and social support is not a key priority area for community leaders across government and traditional authorities. These findings call to question the leadership priorities of governance leaders in the Ghana often reflected in poor community development outcomes.

Figure 1. Community development priorities.

4.4. Collaboration of Local and Traditional Government Leaders

In section 4.3 we find that governance at the community level in Ghana does align

somewhat in their development priorities even though there are significant differences in the weight each attach to their topmost priorities. Subsequently, the study tries to discover specific areas of development coordination, that is the extent of collaboration between the local and traditional government leaders in the three selected districts. The respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they work together in twelve domains of collaboration on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = least collaborative to 5 = highly collaborative. Mean scores and standard deviations were estimated for the total sample, and for each of the three districts, for comparative purposes (Dotsey, 2024). The results are provided in Table 7. The data reveals strong collaboration in land administration (M = 4.44, SD = 1.11), development of by-laws (M = 4.28, SD = 0.84), appointments (M = 4.14, SD = 0.88), and economic and business development (M = 4.20, SD = 0.89).

Areas of least collaboration included setting development agenda for communities (M = 2.07, SD = 2.11), healthcare planning and development (M = 2.15, SD = 0.93), dispute resolution (M = 2.82, SD = 0.89), and education planning and development (M = 2.88, SD = 1.12).

Table 7. Areas of collaboration between local and traditional governments.

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

Source: Field data (2022).

These results resonate with the development priorities of governance leaders in the local communities. The study had earlier mentioned that traditional leaders were more interested in education, health and security while local government was more interested in roads and other infrastructural facilities. These two sections therefore collaborate each other and further supports a call for the fusion of ideas, development agenda and strategies between the two leaders to allow for the full realisation of the socio-economic potential of the local communities. The re-

search findings collaborate Cookey et al. (2010) who find local government leaders often prioritize physical infrastructure and economic development which is not in sync with the prioritization of traditional leaders. Despite such differences, research such as Koenane (2018) and this current study believes convergence of development priorities among local and traditional authorities can improve the effectiveness of development projects and benefit local communities

4.5. Discussions

The objective of this research is to map out similarities in development priorities which can point to some level of unity of purpose and therefore the possibility of the two groups working together in the community. There is enough empirical evidence to show that governance can truly transform local communities if development agenda resonate with the needs of local communities (Harris & Murphy, 2012; Das & Chattopadhyay, 2020; Kim & Lee, 2019; Manaf et al., 2016). Given that leaders from both local and traditional governance systems are concerned about the community, the extent to which their development priorities align is important to bring transformative development to their communities, as proposed in the shared meaning assumption of the structuration theory (Giddens, 1991).

The traditional leaders were therefore asked to list their topmost development needs within their local communities, while the local assembly leaders were asked to list their topmost development priorities within their assemblies. The priorities were then compared to find the extent to which they align or misalign.

The research identifies twenty (20) development priorities from both the local and traditional leaders. Frequency analysis was then used to classify the development needs into high priorities and least priorities. The topmost development priorities of the traditional government leaders are education at 94.6%, followed by security and health at 49.4% then sanitation and waste management at 45.2%. Equally important priorities were road infrastructure (48.8%), sanitation and waste management 45.2% and markets 38.7%. Local governance leaders' priority areas are road infrastructure 57.2%, education 50.5%, electricity and lighting 49.5% security 42.1% sanitation and waste management 33.2% and finally health facilities 29.7%. The results while identifying the top key priorities, also emphasis the point that there exist major gaps in terms of development of the community. A development agenda remains a priority if its objectives have not been fully realized, implying that the community has not fully met their major development needs. What then can we say is preventing such a realisation? The research belies it might emanate from the divergence in the weight of priority as presented by the two governance institutions and the limited collaboration in development agendas as identified earlier. As much as both governance leaders may share some similarities in development priorities, they differ in the level of importance they attach to each area of development reflected in the areas in which they largely collaborate. This then calls to question the level of collaboration that may exist between

the two. This is reflected in the fact that effective collaboration can only take place if the two parties share similar ideals. There is therefore the need for further synchronization of development objective that blends or fuses the differing interest to arrive at a collective interest that can speed up growth and development in the community.

The findings align with some previous studies that show that traditional authorities focus more on the livelihoods and well-being of their communities (Dapilah et al., 2013; Myers & Fridy, 2017; Yaro, 2013). However, as has been shown in this study, the local assemblies focus more on the development agenda of the central government at the structural level, compared to their focus on local needs. Even though both share similar development priorities, at differing levels, there is no alignment of such priorities, hence, the real needs of the people are not being met. This supports the argument that when there is lack of shared meaning among stakeholders to drive community development, projects rarely address the needs of the communities, and therefore local leadership is unable to transform the development of communities (Freire, 1998; Taylor, 2000). Until development priorities are aligned to bring clarity and shared meaning in the development needs of local communities among the local and traditional leaders, accelerated and sustainable community development will remain a façade.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has shown that development priorities of local and traditional leaders do not closely align. In principle, there are opportunities for collaboration between the two systems of governance given that they collaborate somewhat in some areas of community development agenda. However, in practice, there are several material and symbolic factors that undermine attempts at achieving a truly collaborative leadership at the local level. While the development agenda of the local Assemblies is driven by the central government's agenda that focuses on infrastructure development, the traditional authorities' development priorities focus on skills empowerment such as education and health improvement for their local communities. Efforts at overcoming potential bridges for proper community engagement and transformation would require some material empowerment of traditional leaders since a greater portion of state and community resources such as market tolls and common fund allocations are in the hands of local government. Local government leaders need symbolic empowerment since they are viewed as mere political agents without deep community roots. Nonetheless, the fact that there is some level of alignment gives room for dialogue and the possibility of creating that synergy that this study prescribes.

The essence of effective local leadership should be reflected in the development of local communities. The following recommendations are therefore made for the purpose of better facilitating the development of local communities in Ghana. The two systems of governance must focus on aligning their development priorities for the communities so that projects within the communities can resonate with

the real needs of the local people. The alignment of development priorities would enhance the engagement and participation of all stakeholders in the development of a strategic plan based on local resources and indigenous knowledge to drive sustainable development of the local community.

Secondly, the findings showed that local infrastructure emerged topmost developmental needs of the communities. The infrastructure needs included educational facilities, roads, health facilities, markets, sanitation, and streetlights. It is therefore recommended that there should be equitable distribution of infrastructure provisions to the local assemblies that meet the peculiar needs of communities.

Limitation of the Study

There are some limitations to this study that need to be pointed out. For instance, there were some political activities taking place within the three districts selected during the period of the data gathering, which limited the depth of engagement. Secondly, the study did not focus on exploring ongoing projects within the districts to ascertain the perspectives of the local and traditional leaders on those projects. Future studies should focus on exploring the tensions between traditional leaders and how the tensions can be dealt with to facilitate the collaboration of local government leaders for wealthier and healthier local communities.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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