

Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action and Ghana's Local Government System

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Abstract

The current local government system of Ghana make provisions for the participation of a wide range of local stakeholders in policy making process at the local assemblies. While this is commendable on paper, the implementation has been difficult since some assembly members, especially those who may be sympathetic to the ruling party and even competent professionals and technical officers serving in the Assemblies had often been unable to share their real convictions as a result the fear of facing the punitive consequences of disagreeing with their party and those who wield political power. Employing the method of literature review and the narrative account of the author's personal experience as insider in Ghana's local government for almost a decade, the author discusses the current state of Ghana's local government system in the context of Habermas' theory of Communicative rationality. He recommends that instead of using power to influence what decisions are made and which of these get implemented, Ghana's local government system will deliver better results for the general good if Habermas' Communicative Action is adopted as key principle of action and decision making. The implication is that, all the local government actors will seek to reach common understanding and to coordinate their actions through reasoned argument, consensus and cooperation rather than by strategic action that pursues limited interests of the powerful.

KEY WORDS: Ghana, Local Government, Habermas, Communicative Action

1 . Introduction.

Ghana begun her decentralization programme a century and a half ago, in 1859,(Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development,1996) source ,when it was still under the British colonial government with the passage of the Municipal Ordinance Act that created municipalities for the coastal areas of the Gold Coast. In 1943, a new Ordinance set up elected town councils for Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi - Takoradi and Cape Coast." In 1953 ,the Municipal Councils Ordinance was passed. This was followed, after independence, by the Local

Government Act, 1961,Act 54. Since these pioneering efforts, the country had made several other attempts involving the passage of myriad of laws and setting up of many Committees and Commissions with the hope of proving the country with the best model of local government. The latest of these efforts was in 1988 when Ghana under the former military junta, Jerry John Rawlings, undertook another round of reforms for a new decentralized form of governance. Despite the numerous efforts, Ghana's local government system is still plagued with many challenges bothering on weak participation of key stakeholders, lack of accountability on the part of local politicians, encroachments by central government, and issues with funding among others(Boone,2003;Awhoi,2010;Awortwi , 2011). In 2010, the government once again, outdoored another medium term National Decentralization Policy Framework , with the hope of addressing most of the challenges facing the country's decentralization. Five years into the implementation of the framework, one wonders whether anything had changed on the local government scene for the better. In the midst of all these efforts, the author discusses some of the challenges and the role that Habermas' Communicative rationality could have in solving some of the challenges.

The author begins with some definitions of decentralization, some theoretical basis for an effective local government system, historical evolution and background to Ghana's current local government system, the current local government system of Ghana, a review of Habermas'theory of communicative action and the concept of liveworld, Summary of Habermas' four Types of Social Action, discursion and conclusion.

2.The Concept of local government

Local government refers to specific institutions or entities created by national constitutions to deliver a range of specified services to a relatively small geographically delineated area. Thus it encompasses the direct and indirect roles of formal institutions of local government hierarchies, as well as the roles of informal norms, networks, community organizations, and neighbourhood associations in pursuing collective action by defining the framework for citizen - citizen and citizen - state interactions, collective decision -making, and delivery of local public services (Shar , 2006 p.1,2). Local government is the lowest tier of government. It is closest to citizens and the community and therefore known as' local. It has extremely important role to play in society as an agent of change and development (Alam, and Nickson, 2006). The domain of local councils encompasses virtually every problem and affairs that a common person comes across in his day to day life. From

birth to death, from water supply, sanitation and education, to marriage, health, refuse disposal, roads, town planning etc. For the sake of brevity, suffice to say that most of the utilities and services necessary for life in contemporary society are provided by local governments. (Alam, 2011). Furthermore, local government is a form of public administration which in a majority of contexts, exists as the lowest tier of administration within a given state. The term is used to contrast with offices at state level, which are referred to as the central government, national government, or (where appropriate) federal government and also to supranational government which deals with governing institutions between states. Local governments generally act within powers delegated to them by legislation or directives of the higher level of government. In federal states, local government generally comprises the third (or sometimes fourth) tier of government, whereas in unitary states, local government usually occupies the second or third tier of government, often with greater powers than higher-level administrative division (Wikipedia).

3. Some theoretical Basis for an Effective Local Government System

The need for effective local government has been justified on several grounds including empowerment of local people, efficiency of resource utilization, accountability and manageability. For example according to Awhoi (2010) local government is seen as an efficient method of administering certain services. This is because democratic local government consist of members who are drawn from local communities and who therefore have local knowledge and commitment to the local area and its people. It enables responsibilities from central government departments and the civil service which would otherwise be overburdened with work to be offloaded to the local authorities. As multipurpose bodies, local governments are able to secure a greater degree of coordination, at least theoretically. For example, since the same local authority has responsibility for planning, roads and housing, the liaison between these different services and departments is easier and closer. Local governments have a far greater degree of autonomy and therefore can take initiatives and make experiments. In this way, they can innovate and pioneer new services and methods of administration, and successful ideas may spread to other local government authorities. Participatory local government encourages responsible citizenship and local democracy and promotes political education in its widest sense. It does this by involving large numbers of people in the political decision making process.

Theoretically, local benefits of effective local government have been conceptualized, through the *principle of fiscal equivalency* (Olson, 1969); the *correspondence principle* (Oates, 1972), the *decentralization theorem* (Oates, 1972) and the *subsidiary principle* (Pope Leo XIII, 1891) among others (in Shar, 2006, p.4). According to the principle of fiscal equivalency for example, Olson (1969) argues that if a political jurisdiction and benefit area overlap, the free-rider problem is overcome and the marginal benefit equals marginal cost of production, thereby ensuring optimal provision of public services. Equating the political jurisdiction with the benefit area is called the principle of fiscal equivalency and requires a separate jurisdiction for each public service. In the correspondence theorem, Oates (1972) asserts that the jurisdiction that determines the level of provision of each public good should include precisely the set of individuals who consume the good. Likewise, the decentralization theorem of Oates (1972, p.55) postulates that "each public service should be provided by the jurisdiction having control over the minimum geographic area that would internalize benefits and costs of such provision". This is because, local governments understand better the concerns of local residents; that, local decision making is responsive to the people for whom the services are intended, thus encouraging fiscal responsibility and efficiency, especially if financing of services is also decentralized. Furthermore, interjurisdictional competition and innovation are enhanced. Furthermore, the subsidiary principle (Pope Leo XIII) which originated from the social teachings of the Catholic Church argues that the responsibility of taxing, spending and regulatory functions should be exercised by lower levels of government unless a convincing case can be made for assigning them to higher levels of government.

Finally, Awhoi (2011) asserts that effective decentralisation also has important political implications. For example, it has an important impact on the structure and institution of political power within a country, and may be contrary to the established interests of institutions and individuals. Thus, in many countries, there is a tendency to pay lip service to decentralisation while actually working to make the process ineffective. Many national experiences show a tendency to revert to centralisation after a period of power transfer from the centre to the lower levels.

4. Historical Evolution and Background to Ghana's Current Local Government System.

Before the colonialists arrived in Ghana (Gold Coast) there was a traditional form of administration (which has persisted even till now) in place with clan heads, Omankrado's, sub Chiefs, local Chiefs, divisional Chiefs and paramount Chiefs among other traditional governance institutions that govern the affairs of the various communities and states. On the arrival of the British colonizers, indirect rule was established in which the British governed through traditional leaders. According to Awhoi (2006) the earliest forms of organized local government in the then Gold Coast was in the nature of 'indirect rule' or 'paternal government', featuring native authorities which were corrupt and inefficient and which sustained largely undesirable people in power. Since the days of indirect rule, local government has gone through several stages of reforms

with mixed results. In 1859, the Municipal Councils Ordinance established municipalities in the major coastal towns of the Gold Coast, with each municipality represented by seven representatives who were elected by the inhabitants. These representatives latter elected mayors for the councils. The established councils dealt mainly with public health and preservation of peace and order. The elective principle was abandoned in 1861, after which attempts two more unsuccessful attempts at reintroducing it were made in 1878 and 1872. Later, Town councils, consisting of eight members, all of whom were government nominees, were established in 1894 for Sekondi and Cape Coast. In 1943, a new ordinance set up elected Town Councils for Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi - Takoradi and Cape Coast with the District Commissioner serving as President of the Council. In 1953, the Municipal Councils Ordinance was passed following the release of the report of the Coussey Committee. The ordinance set up Municipal councils which comprised of five- sixth members elected by the electorate and one- sixth nominated by the State Councils concerned. This ordinance established Municipal councils for Accra, Kumasi, Cape Coast and Sekondi - Takoradi. At independence, in 1957, a new constitution was drafted that made a number of provisions for local government, some of which were that the country was divided into five regions each of which was to be headed by persons chosen by the regional houses of Chief. Each of the five regions was to have a Regional Assembly established by an act of parliament; the Regional Assemblies were to exercise functions relating to Local Government; Agriculture; Animal health and Forestry; education; Communications; Medical and Health Services; Public Works; Town and Country Planning; Housing; Police and other matters to be determined by Parliament. Besides the above, there were many other legislations and ordinances and Committees reports all of which were aimed at fashioning out an effective and efficient local government system for the Country.

5. Key Features of the Policy Provisions for Ghana's Local Government System.

With the foregoing context, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) governments of the Rawlings' military regimes found the need for an effective local government system to be very central in advancing their policy and slogan of '**Power Belongs to the People**'. These led to the promulgation of the latest of these legislations which were passed and contained in Chapter 20 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana (Article 240), titled *Decentralization and Local Government*, that provided for the type of local government that Ghana was to adopt from hence. Among these were the provisions in the constitution that :

as far as practicable, persons in the service of local government shall be subject to the effective control of local authorities (subsection 2, clause d.); and to ensure the accountability of local government authorities, persons in particular local government areas shall, as far as practicable, be afforded the opportunity to participate effectively in their governance.

Ensuing from this basic law was the promulgation of Act 462, which makes elaborate provisions for the type of local government that should be operational in Ghana. The policy guiding the current local government system of Ghana, which also gave rise to the foregoing constitutional and legal provisions aims, among others : *to promote popular grass roots participation in the administration of the various areas concerned from the stand points of planning, implementation, monitoring and delivery of those services which go to improve the living conditions of the people and the orderly, air and balanced development of the whole country.* According to the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (1996) *this policy forms the basis of the new local government system which is premised on the assumptions that :*

- a) *Development is that which responds to people's problems and represents their goals, objectives and priorities;*
- b) *development is a shared responsibility between central government, local governments, parastatals, non-governmental organizations and the people - the ultimate beneficiaries of development - all of which must be closely linked;*
- c) *virile local government institutions are necessary to provide focal points or nuclei of local energies, enthusiasm, initiative and organization to demonstrate new skills, and leadership.*

To emphasize the key principles of the policy, it went even further to add that District Assemblies, are the human institutions created to give expression to these assumptions. They are in effect aimed at creating a forum at the district (local) level where a team of development agents, the representatives of the people and other agencies will agree on the development problems of the district or area, their underlying causative factors and decide on the combined actions necessary to deal with them.

These (principles) were given legal form by the Local Government Law, 1988, PNDCL.207, now superseded by Chapter 20 of the 1992 Constitution and with details in Local Government Act, 1993, Act 462.

From the foregoing presentation, which aimed at providing a background to the current local government system of Ghana, one may deduce that the local government system as is currently operationalized in Ghana is driven by a philosophy of divulging power from the politicians at the national level to those at the local level and the ordinary citizen. Related to this

philosophy is to decentralize or transfer decision making which affect the local people to local inhabitants. Local participation was therefore to become the key feature of Ghana's current local government system.

6. A Review of Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action, the Concept of Liveworld and the four Types of Action.

Habermas is a contemporary philosopher with a worldwide reputation. One of his best-known ideas is *communicative action*, in which actors in society seek to reach common understanding and to coordinate actions by reasoned argument, consensus, and cooperation rather than strategic action strictly in pursuit of their own goals (Habermas, 1984, p. 86). From the theory of Communicative Action, Habermas provides a theoretical basis for a view of decision making and planning that emphasizes widespread public participation, sharing of information with the public, reaching consensus through public dialogue rather than exercise of power, avoiding privileging of experts and bureaucrats, and replacing the model of the technical expert with one of the reflective planner (Argyris and Schön 1974, Schön 1983, Innes 1995, Lauria and Soll, 1996, Wilson, 1997). In this view, the legitimacy of democracy depends not only on constitutional processes of enacting laws, but also on "the discursive quality of the full processes of deliberation leading up to such a result," as Stephen White (1995, p.12) puts it. John Dryzek notes Habermas prompts the policy analyst to work on conditions of political interaction and design of institutions rather than merely the content of policy proposals, and Habermasian ideal institutions rule out "authority based on anything other than a good argument" (1995, pp. 108-110). Communicative action is individual action designed to promote common understanding in a *group* and to promote *cooperation*, as opposed to "strategic action" designed simply to achieve one's personal goals (Habermas 1984, especially pp. 85-101, 284-8).

Another phrase often associated with Habermas is the "**public sphere**" (Habermas 1989). In the public sphere citizens engage in rational discussion, and Peter Hohendahl notes that in doing so they resist the encroachments of the state and the economy on their private lives; the public sphere "is an essential part of the lifeworld in which people interact and make sense of their lives.... political discourse is understood as a form of communication that is not exclusively defined in terms of interests". Habermas distinguishes four kinds of action by individuals in society (pp.85-86): These are teleological action, with strategic action as a subset; normatively regulated action; dramaturgical action; communicative action.

Teleological Action. The actor makes a "*decision* among alternative courses of action, with a view to the realization of an end, guided by maxims, and based on an interpretation of the situation" (p. 85). In the subset called *strategic* action the actor anticipates what other actors directed by goals will do, and a model that lies behind decision theory and game theory (ibid.). However, while here strategic action is a subset of teleological action, later in the book Habermas uses "strategic" as more or less synonymous with teleological.

Normatively Regulated Action. Actors in a social group pursue common values or norms of the group, "fulfilling a generalized expectation of behaviour" (ibid.; "expectation" is in the sense of entitlement). This model of action underlies role theory in sociology (ibid.). Elsewhere, Habermas suggests that often this action is performed almost automatically, in rote fashion, from second nature, out of deeply entrenched shared habits and regarded as unproblematic by the actors, rather than in a calculated instrumental way. One significant remark on this model helps us to understand *teleological* action better: normatively regulated action "does not refer to the behaviour of basically solitary actors who come upon other actors in their environment, but to members of a social group who orient their action to common values" (p. 85). That suggests teleological action is by "basically solitary actors," but obviously the phrase refers not to solitary behaviour per se but to the formation of goals and values.

Dramaturgical Action. Sometimes an actor is neither solitary nor a member of a social group, but is interacting with people who "constitute a public for one another, before whom they present themselves. The actor evokes in his public a certain image, an impression of himself" (p. 86). He has privileged access to his own intentions, desires, etc. but can monitor or regulate public access to them. There is a "*presentation of self*" (ibid.), not spontaneously but stylized, with a view to the audience. Habermas says dramaturgical action in one sense is an extension of teleological action, but teleological action in a certain style, a remark perhaps confusing because it casts doubt on why we should distinguish dramaturgical action as a separate model.

Communicative Action. Here two or more actors establish a relationship and "seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement. The central concept of *interpretation* refers in the first instance to negotiating definitions of the situation which admit of consensus. ..." (ibid.). Habermas credits George Herbert Mead (1934) and Harold Garfinkel (1967) for helping give paradigmatic significance to communicative action. The phrasing clearly opposes "communicative" to "teleological," but isn't *all* action really "teleological" in some sense? Habermas anticipates this criticism some pages later by admitting that yes, all action, even communicative action, has some teleological structure, since all actors pursue particular aims of their own. But the

mechanisms of *coordination* are different. The teleological specifies coordination as the "interlacing of egocentric calculations of utility" (p. 101), so that the relative importance of conflict and cooperation depends on the self-interests. But it's the only kind of action that "*rests content* with an explication of the features of action oriented directly to success...." (ibid.). The other three actions are different: Normative specifies coordination as the "socially integrating agreement about values and norms instilled through cultural tradition and socialization " (p. 101), dramaturgical specifies coordination as consensus between "players and their publics" (ibid.), and, most important for present purposes, in communicative action "the interpretive accomplishments on which *cooperative* processes of interpretation are based represent the mechanism for *coordinating* action .Again on this theme of coordination, he says, "The concept of communicative action is presented in such a way that the acts of reaching understanding, which link the teleologically structured plans of action of different participants and thereby first combine individual acts into an interaction complex, cannot themselves be reduced to teleological actions" (p. 288).Instrumental action is oriented to success; strategic action is the special case when the actor tries to influence the decisions of a rational opponent. In contrast, "a communicatively achieved agreement has a rational basis; it cannot be imposed by either party, whether instrumentally through intervention in the situation directly or strategically through influencing the decisions of opponents what comes to pass manifestly through outside influence ... cannot count subjectively as agreement. Agreement rests on common *convictions*" (p. 287).

Habermas spends a great deal of time on language, and how the use of language differs in the different models of action. The very word "communicative" right away signals concern with language. In 1986 he said: "I am of the opinion that social pathologies can be understood as forms of manifestation of systematically distorted communication" (1991, p. 226), and went on to say that if that is the case then one must be able to use a theory of communication to analyze the normal patterns of undistorted communication. Nevertheless, he takes pains to emphasize the communicative model do not equate *action* with *communication* in the mere sense of speech. Language is a medium of communication, but communication is a broader concept, and "communicative action designates a type of interaction that is *coordinated through* speech acts and does *not coincide with* them" (p. 101). Habermas attempts to understand society from the vantage point of language....society is to be explained by referring to the structures of discourse" (Taylor 1991, p. 23).Some philosophers say Habermas is so concerned with language because he wants to use modern philosophy to support his views on democracy and participation, and to put the latter on a firmer scientific basis than can be provided by theories of instrumental rationality. David Rasmussen says Habermas's strategy is to "retrieve the project of modernity through a highly specialized form of the philosophy of language"(1990, p. 17), his project is to show that "language as communicative discourse is *emancipatory*" (p. 18,), and "his task is to rehabilitate the project of modernity by reconstructing it *vis-à-vis* the theory of communication, i.e., communicative action, communicative reason" (p. 4). Certainly one needs to understand that a concern for emancipation is consistent with Habermas's brand of critical theory. Maeve Cooke notes Habermas's picture of everyday communicative action thus has important implications for critical social theory. In presenting social order as network of cooperation involving commitment and responsibility, it opposes models of social order that take interactions between strategically acting subjects as fundamental. For example, models grounded in decision or game theory.. it situates reason in everyday life. (1998, p. 5)It is not surprising other philosophers criticize Habermas for the emphasis on language. Lenore Langsdorf (2000) argues his theory is not sufficiently applicable to real-world communication, because communication is much more than language, and she questions whether the theory really can be the basis for communicative rationality. She believes it is unfortunate the theory privileges language as a form of communication and privileges discourse (argument in which the speaker must give good reasons for his/her claims) as a use of language (pp. 31-32). The emphasis on language "disables the usefulness of Habermas's theory for theorizing actual communicative activity in its own right ... rather than as equated with language use for epistemic [seeking knowledge] goals" (p.32).Whatever one concludes about the value of such a concern with language,Habermas's many comments on how language differs in the action models help show us how communicative action differs from teleological action. He argues that in the first three models language is "one-sided" (, p. 95).In teleological action it's aimed at"getting someone" to do something, and the action is "communication of those who have only the realization of their own ends in view" (ibid.); the speech act is what is called perlocutionary. In normative action it's a medium to transmit cultural values and a consensus "that is merely reproduced with each additional act of understanding," and the action is "consensual action of those who simply actualize an already existing normative agreement" (ibid.). In dramaturgical model it is the medium of self representation to an audience. By contrast to such one-sidedness, communicative action "is a medium of *uncurtailed* communication that takes all the functions of language equally into consideration" (ibid.).Also, he says communicative action use of language is, in some sense, primary,and strategic or instrumental use of language is parasitic on the communicative action use. When a speaker uses language strategically, he or she manipulates language and instrumentalizes the listener for his own advantage; "... the use of language with an orientation to reaching understanding is the *original mode* of language use, upon which... instrumental use of language ... [is] parasitic" (p. 288). Habermas repeated the argument in later writings. For example, if a speaker achieves success by concealing information from the hearer—"leaves the hearer in the dark" (1998a, p.224)—it is parasitic because the hearer is

assuming the speaker is using language for the purpose of reaching understanding (Habermas's phrasing at 1998b, pp. 301-302 is very similar).

7. The Concept of lifeworld

Another major subject of *The Theory of Communicative Action* is the "lifeworld" and the relationships between lifeworld and communicative action. Habermas makes fairly clear what the lifeworld is in traditional societies and how it is changed - how it is *rationalized* - during the course of modernization and capitalist development. The term "lifeworld" comes from the philosopher Edmund Husserl and was elaborated by Alfred Schutz. Habermas says: Subjects acting communicatively always come to an understanding in the horizon of a lifeworld formed from more or less diffuse, always unproblematic, background convictions which serve as a source of situation definitions that are presupposed by participants as unproblematic. The lifeworld also stores the interpretive work of preceding generations. (p. 70). A vital argument for Habermas is that in the course of history the lifeworld must be "rationalized." Rationalization is part of social evolution and necessary for an emancipated society (p. 74). As usual, rationalization is a process in which claims of validity increasingly are exposed to criticism and discussion rather than accepted merely on faith. When the cultural stock of knowledge is strong it may be that the "need for understanding is covered *in advance* by an interpreted lifeworld *immune from critique*". For Habermas, communicative action is crucial in the rationalization process: socially integrative and expressive functions that were first fulfilled by ritual practice pass over to communicative action; the authority of the holy is gradually replaced by the authority of an achieved consensusa freeing of communicative action from sacrally protected normative contexts. The disenchantment and disempowering of the domain of the sacred (goes along with) a release of the rationality potential in communicative action. The aura of rapture and terror that emanates from the sacred, the spellbinding power of the holy, is sublimated into the binding/bonding force of criticizable validity claims (p. 77). That is why the theory of the lifeworld is complementary to the theory of communicative action. The "lifeworld can be regarded as rationalized to the extent that it permits interactions ... guided by ... communicatively *achieved* understanding" (pp. 337,340). Now, rationalization does not mean inevitably that the life world loses its power. It might remain a powerful force even as rationalized, with communicative action the predominant model of social action. But the actual result in modern capitalist societies is different: the lifeworld loses power at the expense of powerful forces Habermas calls "system." Examples are the monetization of transactions, markets, law, and bureaucracy. Originally designed to reproduce the lifeworld materially, these grow increasingly complex, uncoupled from the lifeworld, and accomplish more and more of the coordination necessary in society. The lifeworld "gets cut down more and more to one subsystem among others" (p. 154). In earlier stages of rationalization, it is communicative action that has the functions of "cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization" (p. 374).

8. DISCURSION

Participation in this context means members of the public taking part in any of the processes of formulation, passage and implementation of public policies (Stoker, 1997). In discussing the issue of participation at Ghana's Local government units, as rightly provided by law, one has to be very concerned with the effectiveness of the processes of participation by stakeholders and therefore the quality of participation and hence the outcomes there of. For the typology of participation in policy and decisions making see Arnstein (1969); Wilcox (1999) Stewart and Taylor (1995) and Burns et al(1994). The concern is that if all stakeholders in the process do not participate effectively, either for reasons of capacity defects on the part of some participants or through the manipulation of the process by politicians, the weaker side may be co-opted by the stronger side to accept or legitimize ill intended decisions of those who wield power. To avert such fears, the author is of the conviction that the understanding and application of some aspects of Habermas' theory of Communicative Action will be relevant in making and implementing decisions at the local government level which involves multiple stakeholders. This does not only hold the promise of better decisions for local governments, but more importantly such decisions could lead to the acceleration of development for the enhanced social conditions of the people including serving the collective interests of all the stakeholders and their constituencies.

8.1. Key Participants in Ghana's Local Government System and their Possible Action Orientations.

Local government units in Ghana, where local policy are made, will either be the District Assemblies (where population is at least 75,000); Municipal Assemblies (where one community of settlement has population of at least 95,000) and Metropolitan Assembly (settlements that has population of at least 250, 000). Whether a Metropolitan, Municipal or District Assembly, the unit is made up of two categories of Assembly Members. One category who must constitute 70% of the total membership of the Assembly are elected on non partisan basis(though many such candidates could clandestinely be assisted by political parties to get elected). The second group of Assembly Members are appointed by the President who, by law, should be made up of professionals, local civil society representatives and Traditional Leaders(in practice majority of these category are made up of members of the political party in power). The other members of the Assembly include the Member(s) of Parliament whose constituency coincides with the Assembly area and finally ,the District Chief Executive

who is nominated by the President and has to be approved by the Assembly Members(they have been approved by Assembly members in over 99% of cases).By this arrangement and provisions, Ghana's local government system is made up of a marriage of convenience between two groups of purely partisan and political members and those members who do not represent any party, at least in principle. Besides, the work of the Assemblies are supported by a technical team made up of administrators, development planners, engineers , accountants and officers of decentralized and non decentralized central government departments. From the above, one may observe that the major stakeholders in Ghana's Local Government units, who also play a key role in policy making and implementation, are a mix of personnel with different kinds of backgrounds and motives hence, with a high possibly of diverse interests. These social actors include technocrats, political representatives, such as the DCE and government appointed Assembly members, elected Assembly Members, Traditional Leaders and other professionals. Judging from the background of stakeholders of such diverse liveworlds and situations, it is not difficult for one to guess that achieving consensus over a specific policy and a course of action may not be easy. This is because, for example, by their training, the technical officers such as the development planners may favour **teleological action**. According to Habermas , teleological actors make decisions among alternative courses of action with the aim of an end guided by maxims and based on an interpretation of the situation(p.85). The planner, having collected all kinds of baseline data from the field, and after subjecting same to intense analysis of the geophysical and environmental, demographic, socio - economic and many other characteristics of the spacial unit of interest , seeks to understand the existing social and economic situation of the specific place. Such an analysis will reveal the existing development potentials, opportunities, constraints and challenges and the general state of social and economic development of the place. The planner then develops different development scenarios or alternative courses of action from among which a particular course of action is chosen based on a number of factors including a focus on government policy, development priorities of the district, and other considerations such as the availability of funds. On the other hand, the District Chief Executive and the other political appointees may want decisions to happen in a different direction which will yield higher political dividends for him, his party members and his political masters and appointees. After all, why were such people appointed to the Assembly by political authorities in the first place? Though not explicitly stated, such appointees were sent to the Assembly to serve the political interests of their party - the reason why people of different political party than that of the ruling party were never appointed to such positions. This situation has marred the effectiveness of the district assembly concept. Reports abound from all corners of the country concerning party boys and girls; popularly called "**Foot Soldiers**" whose agitations had led to the revoke of the appointments of many competent DCE's whose only charges were that they were not taking care of party members in the district whose alleged efforts led to the electoral victory of the party that had appointed them into office. Many a DCE and the other political appointees would therefore take and also support decisions that are of the nature of normatively regulated action. Such decisions are for the benefit of the members of their political party. According to Habermas, normatively **regulated actions** are often taken by actors in a social group who pursue common values or norms of the group "fulfilling a generalized expectation of behaviour". Such expectations are in the sense of entitlements. Decisions and policies resulting from such motivations may likely serve only the interest of the members of the group at the expense of the general community. This had, for example ,led to the award of contracts and giving of positions to party members even if such contractors and appointees did not have the relevant qualifications.

On the other hand, the other officials of the Assembly, such as the District Coordinating Director, District Budget Officer, Finance Officer and others, who are all Public Servants adopted Dramaturgical Action.Habermas explains that dramaturgical action is involved when sometimes an actor is neither solitary nor a member of a social group, but interact with people who are "constituting a public for one another , before whom they present themselves. The actor evokes in his public a certain image, an impression of himself". He has privileged access to his own intensions; desires etc. but can monitor or regulate public access to them. There is a "presentation of self" not spontaneously but stylized, with a view to the audience (p.86).These administrators do not often want to see themselves as opposing the wishes and decisions of their political boses (DCE,s).In fact, such an attempt could, and had led to tension, conflict and even the transfer of Officials from one district to another . For this reason most of the civil and public servants would like to "play it safe" by acquiescing to the decisions of the DCE .Under such circumstances, most public and civil servants fail to make their training and professional experience become useful to the Assemblies .

From the foregoing discursion, it is obvious that none of the foregoing types of action holds the potential for the development of the district. It is for this reason that Habermas's Communicative action becomes an important approach to resolving the problems inherent in the all the four types of action : what the author may describe as stalemate of interests. In Communicative action, as propounded by Habermas two or more actors establish a relationship and seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement. The role of using convincing and logical arguments and facts to justify one's position is very crucial in this model. When all the local government partners, including the Assembly Members(both elected and appointed),the District Chief Executive, the Technical Officers and the Civil Servants are in one accord and equally committed to finding effective solutions to the

socio - economic problems of the district, it must be possible for them to establish a genuine discourse amongst themselves where they understand the need to seek to coordinate their actions by way of agreement. But in order to come to a common understanding between participants with such diverse backgrounds which include politicians, political party members, public and civil servants, technical officers , professionals and the general residents, there will be the need for rationalization of the life worlds of participants. According to Habermas, such a rationalization process is very crucial for modernizing capitalist systems .Within this process, some of the participants especially the DCE, the political appointees, Assembly Members as well as members of the public will need to rationalize their expectations. This means appointments and contracts for example must be based on prescriptive rather than ascriptive considerations; they must be ready to engage each other through the use of plausible arguments, which also draw on facts and figures to persuade other participants. This will also enable the professionals and technical officers serving in the assemblies to deploy their skills and competences for the benefit of the Assemblies. Communicative action will also enable them to work with the full range of the local government laws and other rules which most of the Assemblies have often disregarded with impunity in pursuance of the parochial interests of individuals and party members. Such a practice involving the application of communicative action in decision making will bring development to the people than where those in office use power as the main tool for action."At the end of the day, what Ghana's decentralization programmes must be aiming at must be less control and less central government interferences;less Presidential interventions ; more popular participation and more popular say in the decision- making processes and in the system of checks and balances at the district level"Ahwoi, 2011).

9. CONCLUSION

From the discursion, the author wish to conclude that Ghana's decentralization and local government may continue to experience the current weaknesses and also continue to deliver very little for only few people, unless key actors activate the platforms already provided by law and also adopt communicative rationality in which logical presentation of arguments, discursions, debates and genuine consensus building are given pre-eminence over the use of power by politicians in the determination of specific courses of action. This is more likely to lead to the pursuit of moderated interests of all actors as a result of greater participation of both the economically and politically marginalized groups for the attainment of better responsive and responsible local governance.

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