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INTERROGATING DECENTRALISATION IN AFRICA

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Staff Quality and Service Delivery: Evaluating Two Ghanaian District Assemblies*

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Abstract This study examines the nature of staff quality and the extent to which it can explain variations in service delivery outcomes using two selected District Assemblies in Ghana. Staff quality is measured by the interaction of individual-level competences and public service motivation. Depending on intensity, the interaction of competence and public service motivation produced four types of staff quality with varied implications for service delivery outcomes. It is argued that the relationship between decentralisation and service delivery remains complex, and therefore the role of staff quality remains critical. This is important in the light of calls to implement full devolution in Ghana where all decentralised services will operate directly under the District Assembly. It is imperative for public administration and human resource experts to look more closely at attracting employees with the demonstrable public service motivation and skillsets needed for decentralisation, and to create favourable social conditions that support family life.

Keywords: decentralisation, Ghana, public administration, organisational culture, service delivery, public service motivation.

1 Introduction

Ghana's decentralised District Assembly system, which is funded primarily by central government transfers, uses a needs-based equalisation formula to distribute funds from the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF). In this sense, it can be characterised as a fair or balanced form of funding. Given this context, why do some sub-national units improve their levels of service delivery more than others? In particular, how do variations in staff quality explain differences in improved service delivery among sub-national units? There are substantial ongoing debates about the relationship between decentralisation and service delivery. Whilst some of the arguments demonstrate positive images of these relationships (Ghuman and Singh 2013; Mehrotra 2006), others show unfavourable relationships (Conyers 2007; Oyugi 2000; Robinson 2007). There is recognition in the current



debate that the causal relationship between decentralisation and public service delivery remains complex with multiple causal factors shaping the process (Conyers 2007; Ghuman and Singh 2013; Robinson 2007). Ghuman and Singh (2013), for example, indicated that full devolution has better chances of improving quality service delivery than a truncated system of devolution. They also acknowledge the role of financing and human resource management as important factors in improving service delivery. Similarly, Robinson (2007) and Conyers (2007) identified factors such as the nature of the service, the decentralisation process, the mode of implementation, the capacity of individuals in charge and the overall sociocultural and policy environments of decentralisation. Grindle (1997) and Crook and Ayee (2006) additionally proposed the context of organisational culture to explain differences in public service delivery across different organisations.

Whilst acknowledging the importance of all these factors, this current article is concerned more about the capacity of individuals managing sub-national units to shape service delivery outcomes.² In particular, the article explores the following questions: (1) What is the nature of staff quality in District Assemblies in Ghana? (2) To what extent do variations in staff quality explain differences in service delivery outcomes among District Assemblies?

The focus on staff quality for service delivery outcomes is important for two reasons. First, the debate over the years about the failure of decentralisation for service delivery in Africa has largely focused on financing difficulties (Banful 2009; Dafflon and Madiès 2012). For example, Schulze and Suharnoko (2014) noted that the level of fiscal endowment of a sub-national organisation explains variations in improved service delivery in Indonesia. Similar arguments were made by Bogere (2013) and Muriisa (2008) who stated that the challenge of Uganda's decentralisation is the issue of inadequate financing for improved service delivery. Again, Banful (2009) attributed the challenges of Ghana's decentralisation to financing difficulties. In effect, theoretical propositions for improving service delivery have centred on improving fiscal decentralisation (Martinez-Vazquez, Lago-Peñas and Sacchi 2015; Soto, Farfan and Lorant 2012) to the extent that there is very little discussion about how staff quality can affect the way decentralised institutions raise revenue independent of intergovernmental transfers, which in turn can affect service delivery.

The second reason is that discussions on staff capacity for decentralisation have largely been concerned about the number of people employed and their technical competences in managing sub-national units (Raga and Taylor 2012; Steiner 2007). Thus, the policy approach has always been to champion better conditions of service including higher salaries to induce performance (Grindle 1997; Paul 2010). The argument here is that in the wake of increasing country-level budgetary constraints on the capacity to provide higher salaries, and a decline in other external modes of motivation to improve the performance of employees in public service

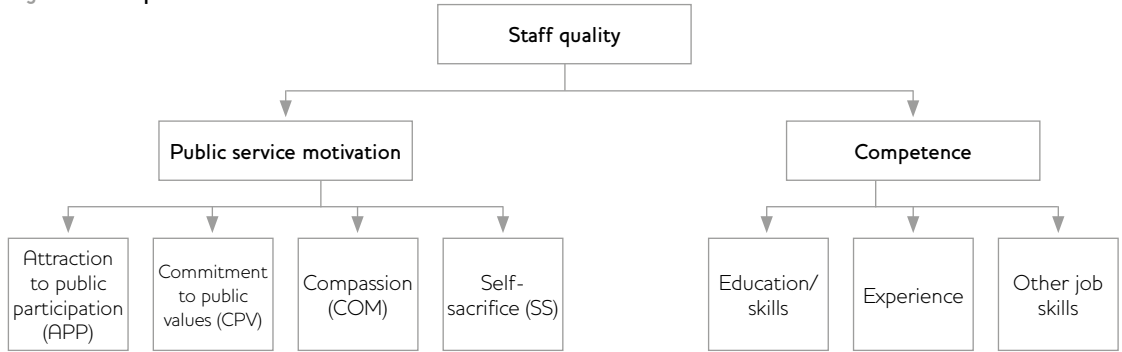
(Paul 2010), there is a need to seek alternative approaches to improving performance for service delivery. These should include examining staff quality within the context of technical or academic competences and individual-level internal motivation towards public service delivery (public service motivation, or PSM). There is also the need to examine how the interplay of staff competence (technical and or academic) and the level of PSM produce different types of staff quality, with implications for service delivery outcomes.

2 Staff quality and service delivery outcomes: a conceptual framework

The central concept under consideration is staff quality. Conceptually, staff quality means different things to different people. Although the concept is rarely used in contemporary human resource literature, its implication in everyday usage connotes the idea of efficiency and effectiveness of employees to achieve results in a given context. In this study, however, staff quality is conceived as a two-dimensional concept which includes competence on the one hand and PSM on the other. Competence has been defined variously (Fernandez *et al.* 2012; Garside and Nhemachena 2013). However, within the context of this study, competence is understood as the measure of the individual's knowledge and skills acquired through education and other job-related trainings, and the individual's experiences gained in years of work. This conceptualisation is in line with Rodolfa *et al.* (2005) who identified three dimensions of competence in professional psychology: a foundation dimension, a functional competencies domain and the stages of professional development (Fouad *et al.* 2009).

The concept of PSM as a dimension of staff quality in this study rests on the idea that people have an altruistic tendency to make an impact in society, irrespective of the level of rewards they gain (Perry 1996). As explained by Perry, Hondelghem and Wise (2010), PSM is considered as the orientation individuals have towards work in public life in order to do good things for others and society. Paul and Robinson (2007) referred to PSM as non-materialistic motivation which is made up of social, intrinsic and moral motivations. The theoretical assumption is that the nature of public service is different from private sector business, hence any proposition that seeks to induce staff performance based exclusively on external motivations, as characteristic of private sector business, will jeopardise the essence of public collective interest. For example, within the context of public service, Grindle (1997) observed that external motivation through higher salaries does not necessarily lead to better performance. Kim and Vandenberg (2010) further argued that PSM includes three main elements, oriented towards values, identity and those that are instrumental. Value-based motives for PSM relate to the extent to which individuals aspire to achieve public values through their actions and behaviours (Bozeman 2007). In addition, the affection and bonding the individual has towards a group of people that the individual intends to serve provides the identity motive for PSM. Crook and Aye (2006), for instance, recognised that in spite of low pay and demoralising work conditions among health and sanitation workers in

Figure 1 Conceptual framework



Source Author's own conceptualisation of staff quality.

Kumasi and Accra in Ghana, the effect of their organisational culture, induced to some extent by PSM, explained the relative success of service delivery. Their study demonstrates the important role of PSM in understanding staff quality and the extent to which they contribute to service delivery. In terms of measurement, as shown in Figure 1, PSM in this study is measured using four key indicators suggested by Kim *et al.* (2010) as derived from Perry (1996). The indicators include attraction to public policy issues, the extent of public values, the individual's level of compassion and a propensity for self-sacrifice.

The concept of service delivery as used in this study refers to basic social services provision which has implications for the wellbeing of people. In particular, the services discussed in this article are directly drawn from the 2015 Ghana District Ranking report (UNICEF and CDD-Ghana 2015). The District League Table (DLT) ranks all districts in Ghana in six key service areas with specific indicators for measurement.³ The purpose of the DLT is to understand the level of wellbeing of people in these districts. It is important to acknowledge, however, that since Ghana is not practising full devolution at present, some of the direct service delivery systems such as health and education fall under the purview of other decentralised (deconcentrated) institutions such as the Ghana Education Service and the Ghana Health Service. Nevertheless, by its mandate, the District Assembly, through its committee system and the District/Municipal/Metropolitan Coordinating Council (DCC/MCC), has significant roles to play in service delivery. Some of these include providing facilities and resources to support other decentralised institutions to carry out their services. Also, DCCs design and implement medium-term development plans which include activities to promote service delivery in all the aforementioned service areas. The DLT shows districts that are performing fairly well and those that are not performing very well. Why is this so and what is the role of the District Assembly in coordinating these services?

3 Research design

There are two specific questions of interest to this current study. The first question seeks to examine the nature of staff quality and the second question seeks to explore the causal mechanism through which staff

quality contributes to service delivery outcomes. Given the nature of these questions, an appropriate methodological approach is a concurrent mixed methods research design that combines medium-N cross-sectional surveys with in-depth interviews. As explained by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) and Creswell *et al.* (2003), concurrent mixed methods research is that which combines both qualitative and quantitative research approaches in a single project, giving equal priority to both approaches. In this instance, the survey is useful for describing the nature of staff quality, leading to the creation of a typology of staff quality. In addition, a qualitative analytical approach that draws on in-depth interviews with selected staff within the study districts and some regional officials is used to explore the causal relationship between staff quality and service delivery outcomes as currently described in the DLT, whilst paying detailed attention to all possible antecedent factors to staff quality and other confounding factors within the causal chain. Arguably, the notion of causality is complex and controversial (Sobel 2000); however, as suggested by Sloman (2005), there are a variety of ways to establish a causal mechanism as to how an event has occurred.

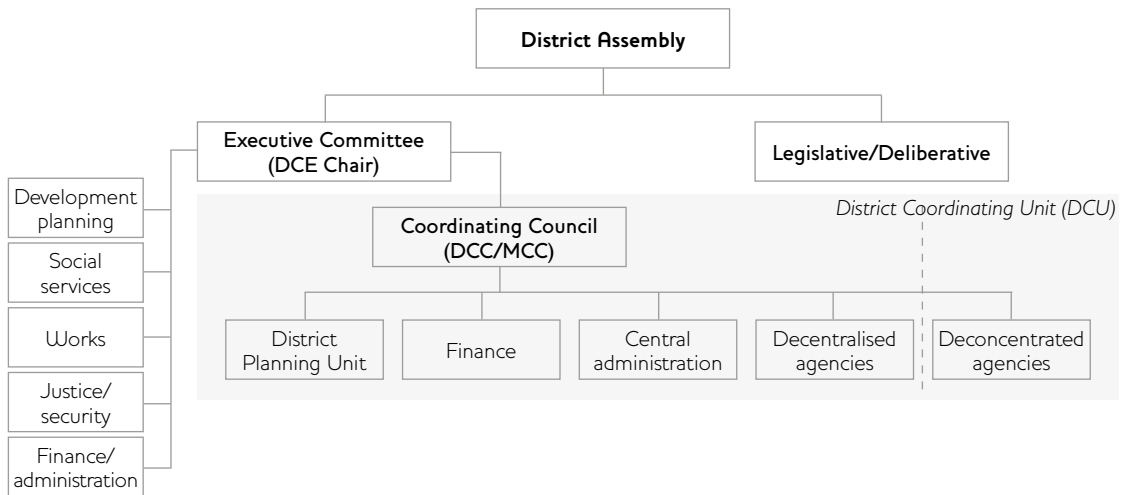
3.1 Sampling and data collection

A multi-stage sampling was used to select participants for this study. In the first instance, given the aim of the study, it was important to understand why service delivery outcomes were seen to have improved more in some districts than in others according to the DLT. On the basis of the 2015 DLT, two districts were purposively selected. They include the best performing district (Tema) and the worst performing district (Gomoa West). (See Figure 3 for district locations on the map of Ghana.) The second stage of the sampling involved simple random sampling of frontline staff of the two selected districts. In this instance, a sample frame was drawn from the two districts and random numbers were assigned to each staff member on the frame using Microsoft Excel formula (=rand).⁴ Using the random numbers generated, 25 staff were selected from each district, making a total of 50 participants.⁵ The 50 sampled respondents participated in a short survey that captured data on key socio-demographic variables and PSM. The PSM is a standardised measurement tool developed by Kim *et al.* (2010). It is a 17-item measurement index of PSM with four central dimensions.

A third stage of the sampling for in-depth interviews involved purposively selecting District Coordinating Directors or Chief Executives, Planning Officers and other senior staff to provide in-depth discussions on how the districts and service delivery have evolved since they were established. The process also involved undertaking in-depth interviews with purposively selected regional oversight officers, civil society institutions and an official from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development who also provided secondary data on human resource deployment for decentralisation in Ghana.

For the purposes of this article, the functional units of the District Assembly structure are considered. As shown in Figure 2, the District Assembly has

Figure 2 Functional units of District Assembly and other agencies for service delivery in Ghana

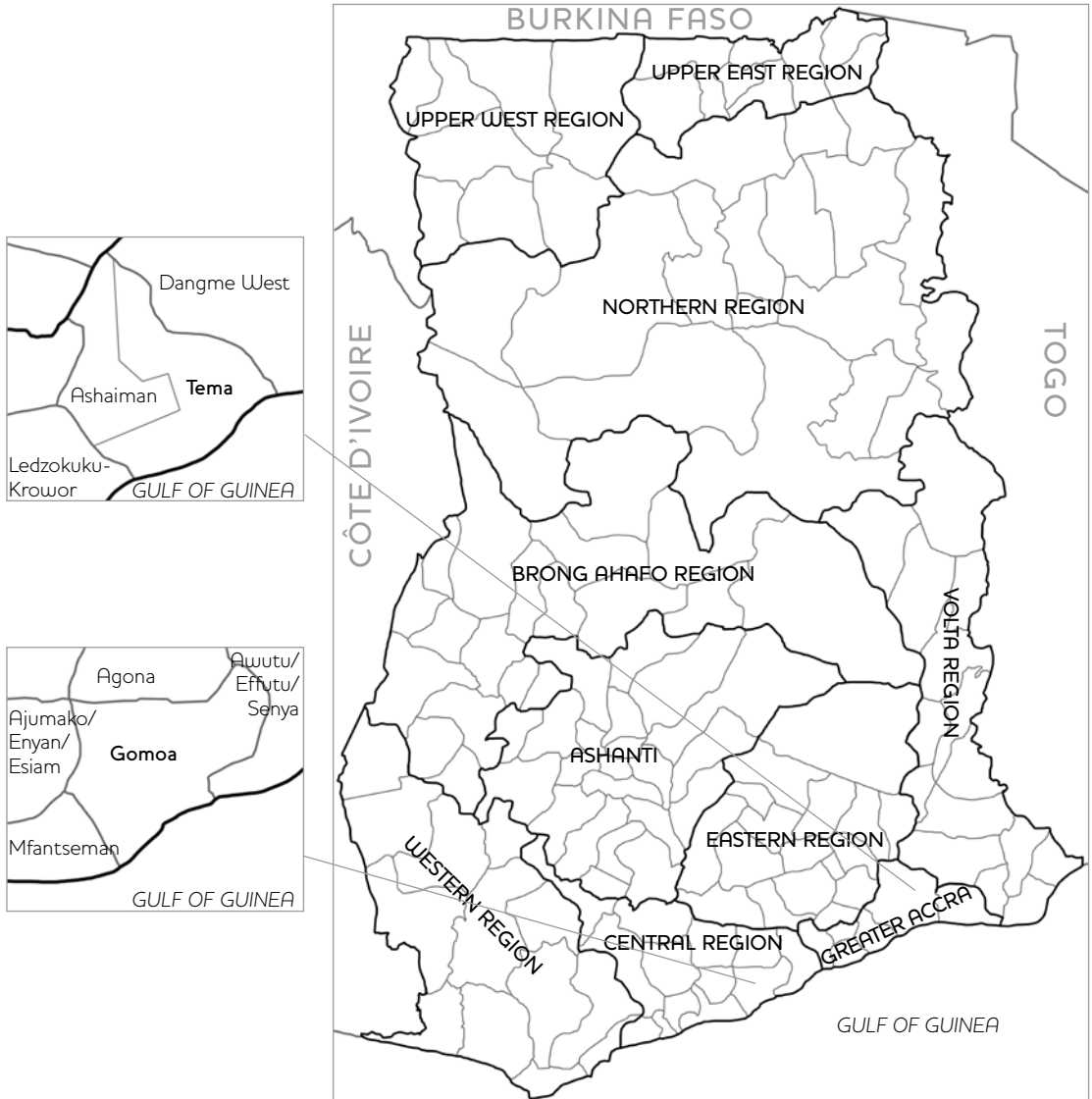


Source Constructed based on author's understanding of the structure of the District Assemblies in Ghana.

two central bodies. These include the legislative or deliberative body which is made up of 70 per cent elected members called Assembly Members, and 30 per cent government-appointed members. This is called the General Assembly. Through their periodic General Assembly sittings, they provide legislative and deliberative support to the entire system. The second unit is the Executive Committee. This body is the highest administrative decision-making body of the District Assembly. There are at least five functional committees within the Executive Committee. These include Development Planning, Social Services, Works, Justice and Security, and Finance and Administration. The Executive Committee is chaired by the District Chief Executive (DCE) who is appointed by the government and confirmed by at least a two thirds majority of Assembly Members. Other members of the Committee include the Presiding Member who is elected from the General Assembly, heads of respective decentralised agencies such as Health, Education and Agriculture and heads of other sub-committees of the Assembly. The District Coordinating Director who is an appointed civil/public servant is the secretary to the Executive Committee (Gilbert, Hugounenq and Vaillancourt 2012).

The central focus of study (shaded region of Figure 2) is the District Coordinating Unit (DCU) under the Executive Committee wing of the Assembly. The DCU provides the overall management of the Assembly's public services. Even though the District Chief Executive has the oversight of the DCU, the day-to-day management of the unit is led by the District Coordinating Director. He/she and all other staff of the DCU, including the planning, budget, finance and central administration staff, are employees of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. The DCU has total oversight of administration of the Assembly in terms of facilitating planning, budgeting and service delivery. It provides infrastructure and other service support to deconcentrated agencies such as health and education to function

Figure 3 Ghana: selected districts for comparative case analysis



Source Redrawn from selected maps on https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Districts_of_Ghana.

effectively (Gilbert *et al.* 2012). It also facilitates water and sanitation service provision throughout the district.

3.2 Data analysis

The first part of the study examines the nature of staff quality in the two selected study areas. In doing this, a descriptive analysis of key socio-demographic variables and PSM was conducted. The survey data on PSM was analysed using descriptive statistics. It also includes the aggregate score of each participant on PSM and competence. Competence was computed using three main sub-variables with dichotomous measures that include education, years of work experience and other job-related technical trainings. The scores were later used to construct a typological theory for the

Table 1 Public service motivation (PSM) score – Gomoa West (N=25)

PSM item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
APP1	25	3.00	5.00	4.36	0.907
APP2	25	2.00	5.00	3.88	1.092
APP3	25	3.00	5.00	4.44	0.651
APP4	25	3.00	5.00	4.40	0.764
APP5	25	3.00	5.00	4.24	0.723
CPV1	25	3.00	5.00	4.36	0.810
CPV2	25	1.00	5.00	3.56	1.083
CPV3	25	1.00	5.00	4.16	1.248
CPV4	25	2.00	5.00	4.32	0.900
COM1	25	2.00	5.00	3.72	1.021
COM2	25	3.00	5.00	4.12	0.833
COM3	25	3.00	5.00	4.36	0.810
COM4	25	2.00	5.00	4.64	0.810
SS1	25	2.00	5.00	3.92	1.077
SS2	25	1.00	5.00	3.60	1.258
SS3	25	1.00	5.00	3.32	1.145
SS4	25	2.00	5.00	4.00	0.957

Source Author's own, based on analysis of data in this current study.

Notes Overall mean PSM = 4.08. APP – attraction to public participation;

CPV – commitment to public values; COM – compassion; and SS – self-sacrifice.

classification of different qualities of staff based on the interplay between individual scores on competence and PSM. Descriptive statistics were used in this case to determine the proportion of staff that fell into each of the categories. The second part of the study constructs a causal pathway that leads from antecedent conditions to the eventual outcome, using qualitative data from in-depth, key informant interviews. A theory-based analysis of how each type of staff quality contributes to the outcome of service delivery is conducted using stories associated with such classifications.

4 The nature of staff quality

4.1 Analysis of public service motivation (PSM)

A central objective of this study is to measure the PSM of District Assembly officers and to examine how PSM interacts with staff competence to produce different staff quality types within the selected District Assemblies. As indicated earlier, PSM was measured on four general dimensions which include attraction to public policy, public values, compassion and self-sacrifice, with a total of 17 items.⁶ The mean score of each of the

Table 2 Public service motivation (PSM) score – Tema (N=25)

PSM item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
APP1	25	1.00	5.00	4.00	1.291
APP2	25	1.00	5.00	4.16	1.106
APP3	25	1.00	5.00	4.00	1.118
APP4	25	1.00	5.00	4.04	1.136
APP5	25	2.00	5.00	3.96	0.935
CPV1	25	1.00	5.00	4.20	0.913
CPV2	25	1.00	5.00	4.32	0.627
CPV3	25	1.00	5.00	4.08	1.077
CPV4	25	1.00	5.00	4.28	0.936
COM1	25	1.00	5.00	4.08	1.115
COM2	25	1.00	5.00	3.88	1.481
COM3	25	1.00	5.00	3.80	1.190
COM4	25	1.00	5.00	4.32	1.345
SS1	25	1.00	5.00	3.72	1.370
SS2	25	1.00	5.00	3.56	1.356
SS3	25	1.00	5.00	3.60	1.291
SS4	25	1.00	5.00	3.52	1.503

Source Author's own, based on analysis of data in this current study.

Notes Overall mean PSM = 3.97. APP – attraction to public participation;

CPV – commitment to public values; COM – compassion; and SS – self-sacrifice.

17 items⁷ on a five-point scale was determined. First, a descriptive analysis of public service motivation shows that overall, mean PSM score was 4.03, which is an indication of fairly high PSM in both cases. However, there are variations with respect to the different dimensions, with the self-sacrifice dimension scoring the lowest. Furthermore, in Gomoa West, overall mean PSM score was 4.08, which is slightly higher than the mean PSM score of Tema which is 3.97. Tema is slightly low on the self-sacrifice dimension of PSM as well. Tables 1 and 2 provide detailed information on the PSM scores of both Gomoa West and Tema. The implication of this analysis is that PSM is generally high among respondents but slightly higher in Gomoa. However, PSM score alone does not tell us much about the nature of staff quality, unless it is linked up with competence level.

4.2 Analysis of staff competence

Competence has been conceptualised as three sub-variables in this study in line with Rodolfa *et al.*'s (2005) conceptualisation of competency. The variables used in this study include level of academic knowledge and

Table 3 Descriptive analysis of competency variables

Measurement		District	
Variable	Category	Tema N=25 (%)	Gomoa West N=25 (%)
Academic qualification	Below degree	0	10
	Degree and above	100	90
Work experience	Less than five years	48	72
	Five or more years	52	28
Other job-related training	No	20	44
	Yes	80	56

Source Author's own, based on analysis of data in this current study.

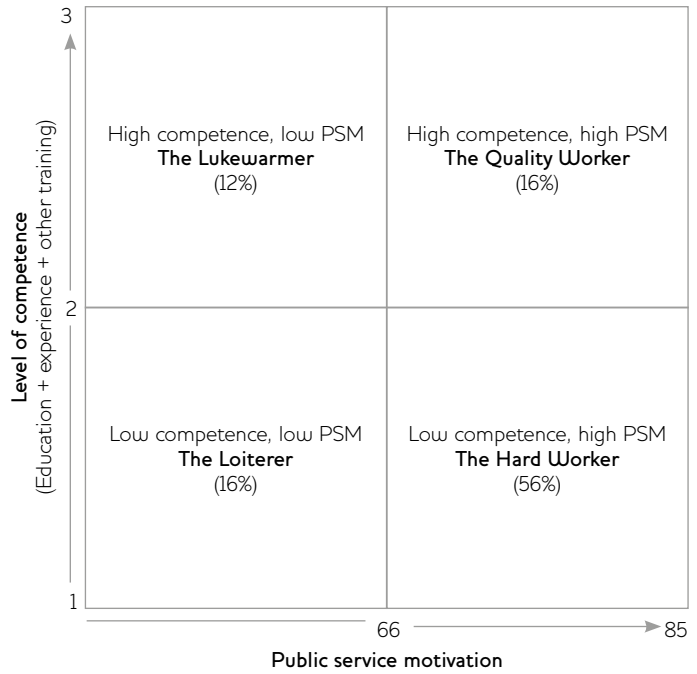
skills, years of work experience on the job, and other specific job-related technical skills acquired. These three variables were re-categorised from the data into dichotomous variables. Education was categorised as degree and above (2), below degree (1). Work experience was categorised as above average years of work experience (2) and below average as (1). Other job-related trainings received was categorised as Yes (2) and No (1). An average score of competence was then computed. For example, if a respondent scored 2 on education, 1 on years of experience and 1 on other training, the aggregate score is 4. In order to fit into the model, the average of the score was determined as $4/3 = 1.3$. A score below the midpoint of 2 was considered low.

As shown in Table 3, all (100) participants in Tema have attained a university degree or above. In Gomoa West also, almost all (90 per cent) had a degree and higher qualifications, except one participant. This was expected due to the nature of the sample (frontline officers). On-the-job work experience, however, varied significantly between the two cases. There are more experienced participants in Tema than in Gomoa, counting those with more than five years on the job. The mean work experience in Tema was 7.2 years with a maximum of 22 years, and in Gomoa was 5.1 years with a maximum of 13 years. In addition, the data show that there were more participants in Tema (80 per cent) who had received other specific job-related technical trainings than in Gomoa West (56 per cent). In summary, competency levels in Tema were much higher among participants than in Gomoa West. As indicated, competency alone without the right mix of PSM does not guarantee quality staff. Subsequent discussions will highlight the interactions between competence and PSM and the types of staff quality they produce.

4.3 Typological theory of staff quality

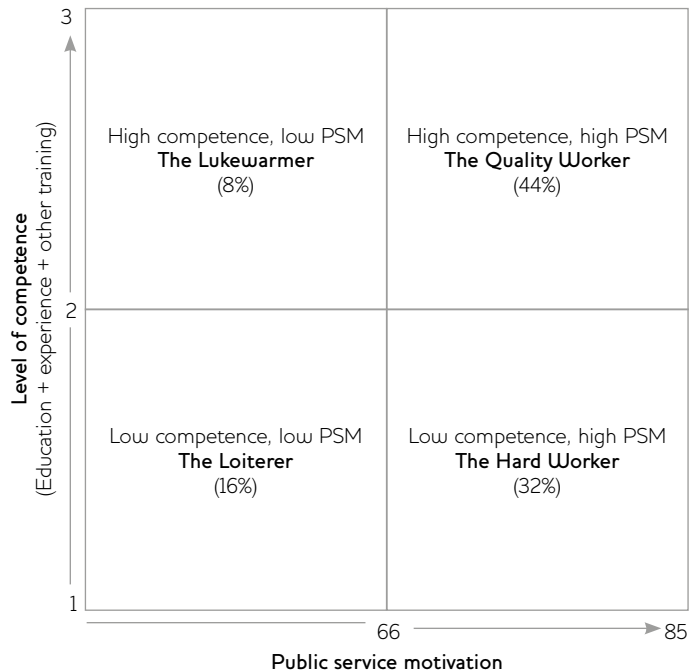
In determining variations in staff quality and its implications for service delivery, there was a need to classify research participants into subgroups based on their score on competence which is measured by the aggregate

Figure 4 Typology of staff quality in Gomoa West District (N=25)



Source Author's own.

Figure 5 Typology of staff quality in Tema Metropolitan Assembly (N=25)



Source Author's own.

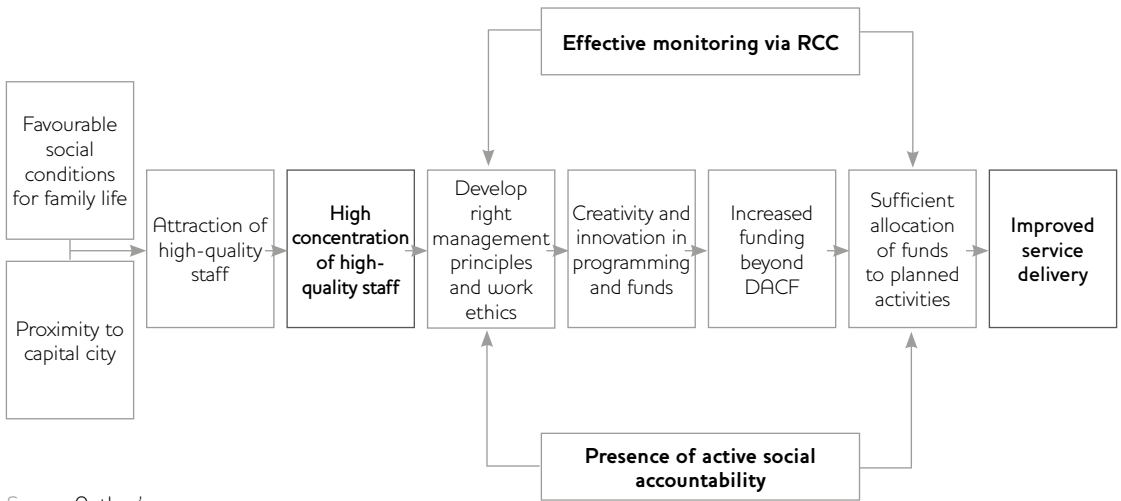
score on academic qualification, years of work experience on the job, and other related technical trainings, combined with individual scores on PSM. An appropriate analytic tool for this approach is typological theory (Bennett 2013; George and Bennett 2005; Cornelissen 2016; Fiss 2011). According to Bailey (1994), theory-based typologies can effectively be subjected to rigorous empirical testing using the quantitative models.

In this study, a two-dimensional figure with four different quadrants was developed to create types. As shown in Figures 4 and 5, the y-axis shows competence level, marked from 1 to 3 with a midpoint of 2, where scores below 2 were classified as low competence, and 2 and above were classified as high competence (academic qualification + years of experience + other technical training). The x-axis shows the PSM dimension marked from 0 to 85, with 85 as the highest possible score an individual can score on the scale of 1 to 5 for the 17 items, and 66 as the mean individual-level score in the distribution. All scores above the mean were considered high and those below the mean were considered low.

As shown in Figures 4 and 5, four different types of staff quality are noted in this study. These include those participants who were low on PSM and low on competence. This category is referred to as 'loiterer' staff in this study. Respondents in this category were very young staff with limited experience, knowledge and skills and who also did not demonstrate sufficient intrinsic motivation. Qualitative data show that many of them chose to work at the District Assembly as the last resort. There were 16 per cent (four each) of this type of staff in both Tema and Gomoa West. A higher proportion of such category of staff can jeopardise service delivery considerably. A second category of staff are those who were highly competent with all the requisite knowledge and skills, but with low PSM. This category is referred to as the 'lukewarmers'. These people were very apathetic towards their work with the Assembly and were not prepared to make sacrifices to see the work of the Assembly progress. There is a higher concentration of this category in Gomoa West (12 per cent) than in Tema (8 per cent).

A third category of staff are those who were high on PSM and low on competence. This category is referred to as the 'hard workers'. They have the drive, the energy and the heart to work to serve the people. Their scores on compassion and self-sacrifice were higher but they do not have the requisite experience and technical training to undertake activities that promote service delivery. There is a very high concentration of this category in Gomoa West (56 per cent) as compared to Tema (32 per cent). A fourth category of staff are those who were both high on competence and PSM. These were referred to as the 'quality workers'. In this study, this group are shown as the best quality of staff who can spur on service delivery at the sub-national level. They are individuals with the right mix of qualifications and experience and with a zeal for change in the respective District Assemblies. They demonstrated selflessness and willingness to improve performance, no matter the conditions under which they worked. As shown in Figures 5 and 6, Tema has a higher concentration of staff in this category.

Figure 6 Pathway from staff quality to better service delivery in Tema



Source Author's own.

In summary, analysis of the nature of staff quality in this study shows that there are four different staff types working currently in District Assemblies in Ghana. They are ‘loiterers’, ‘lukewarmers’, ‘hard workers’ and ‘quality workers’. The hypothesis is that a high concentration of quality workers with the right mix of competence and PSM will be more likely to move service delivery to an appreciable level. This proposition is discussed next, using process tracing to track the historical and proximate factors that might explain why Tema is believed to be performing better in service delivery than Gomoa West, according to the 2015 Ghana DLT (UNICEF and CDD-Ghana 2015).

4.4 Staff quality and service delivery: constructing a pathway

There is significant agreement among researchers that the type of human resource has implications for service delivery (Grindle 1997; Hoogendoorn and Brewster 1992; Robinson 2007). However, the process through which this occurs is vaguely discussed within the context of decentralisation and service delivery. The purpose of this section is to show the contribution of staff quality to the overall service delivery arrangements of District Assemblies and the extent to which different concentrations of distinct types of staff quality can partly explain why service delivery outcomes vary across District Assemblies.

It is acknowledged that the relationship between decentralisation and service delivery can be complex with several factors acting independently of each other or in conjunction to shape service delivery. However, the role of staff quality remains distinct and appears to be a major factor among the causal variables of service delivery in decentralisation. This can be demonstrated from our comparison of Tema and West Gomoa District Assemblies.

Tema Metropolitan Assembly was established in 2007 from the previous Tema Municipal Assembly. The current state of service delivery in Tema

Table 4 Internally generated funding streams of Tema Metropolis

Item	2015 Budget	Actual as at November 2015	2016 Projection
Rates	5,840,000	6,387,725.51	11,105,000.00
Fees and fines	7,197,400	3,898,473.38	7,340,973.00
Licences	5,788,500	5,304,806.64	8,297,500.00
Land	100,000	1,773,414.20	250,000.00
Rent	11,000	107,240.10	25,000.00
Investment	5,000	-	10,000.00
Misc.	279,584	110,797.96	305,000.00
Total	19,221,484	17,582,457.79	27,333,473.00

Source Tema Metropolitan Assembly (2016).

developed over a period of time. Historically, the commissioning of the Tema port in 1962, the Volta Aluminium Company in 1967 and other industries within the port enclave of Tema, and the activities of the Tema Development Corporation has led to the development of a modern social infrastructure. The presence of these social infrastructures such as schools, hospitals and recreational opportunities created favourable conditions for family life which are the basic issues people consider in accepting postings to different places. At the same time, Tema benefits from proximity to the capital city, Accra, which offers different official and personal activities. Thus, prior to becoming an autonomous district council in 1974, these two antecedent factors set Tema apart. The conjunctural effect of favourable social conditions for family life and proximity to the capital city made Tema attractive to job-seekers and highly competitive to get in. As shown in Figure 6, this has led to the attraction of high numbers of quality staff with the right mix of competence and PSM over time.

In this instance, the critical point for Tema was the high concentration of quality staff which led to the creation of the appropriate management principles and work ethics necessary for any productive activity. These management principles and work ethics are what Crook and Ayee (2006) and Grindle (1997) referred to as a positive organisational culture. Crook and Ayee (2006) argued that a positive organisational culture was an important factor in shaping service delivery among sanitation workers in Ghana. In the case of this study, it is argued that organisational culture is a creation of the right quality staff. Furthermore, it is observed that as a result of the development of sound organisational culture, some appreciable level of creativity and innovation was evident in the way the Tema Metropolitan Assembly developed its programmes and its fund-raising.

The District Medium Term Development Plan (DMTDP) of Tema and its Composite Budget for 2015 to 2017, for example, are valuable evidences of the extent to which creativity and innovation are

brought to bear on the planning process. As part of this creativity and innovation, Tema now has online services for many activities and a very functional website. In addition, even though Tema has several economic advantages to raise extra revenue beyond state transfers, the role of quality staff cannot be ignored in the process. There is evidence of diversified fund-raising activities which ordinarily many districts have ignored. To this extent, actual internally generated revenue for Tema for 2015 (GHS17,582,457.79) was more than five times actual government releases through the District Assembly Common Fund for the period. This represents more than 90 per cent of projected revenue for the period. See Table 4 for fund-raising streams of Tema Metropolis.

In addition to how staff quality contributed to improving fund-raising performance in Tema, the evidence also shows that the role of staff quality in harmonising sector level plans to provide support for other deconcentrated agencies such as education and health was critical. For instance, the Assembly's support for providing educational and health infrastructure is partly responsible for the improvement in basic educational outcomes and skilled deliveries. In effect, it is not surprising that a study of the DMTDP and actual service delivery activities of Tema shows that some appreciable level of funds has been made available for direct service delivery, and this has translated into the current state of service delivery outcomes within the Metropolis. However, it should also be noted that due to the proximity of Tema to the regional and national capital, Accra, there is consistent oversight supervision from the Regional Coordinating Council (RCC). The evidence suggests that Tema Metropolis is one of the most visited Assemblies in Ghana. This level of consistent oversight supervision also contributed to some extent in modifying the emphasis of performance towards service delivery. Similarly, the presence of different community-based organisations, faith-based institutions and other professional associations constantly puts some form of social pressure on officials to demand for quality services in the areas of water, sanitation and some road infrastructure services.

In Gomoa West, on the other hand, the district was only established in 2008 following the division of the erstwhile Gomoa District. This happened a year after Tema was elevated to a Metropolitan status. Unlike Tema, Gomoa West, with Apam as the capital, is largely a farming, fishing, mining and tourism district. The district lies almost equidistant between Accra (69km), the national capital, and Cape Coast (68km), the regional capital. The social infrastructure necessary for family life such as good schools for children of workers, good hospitals and other functional support systems is limited and this, coupled with the issue of proximity to both the regional and national capitals, made the district an unattractive destination. As a result, the concentration of high-quality staff was low. Some staff used the district as a conduit to better opportunities; many others have the right PSM but had limited competence in terms of experience and other technical training ('hard workers'). This resulted in a fairly weakly developed positive organisational culture, evident in the way development activities have been organised. In effect, the issue of

creativity in programme and fund-raising activities remained unresolved. For example, actual internally generated revenue for Gomoa stood at GHS291,612.80 in 2014, a situation that was blamed on staff capacity and the lack of sources of income. The following is an extract from the medium-term plan, which strengthens the argument about staff capacity and revenue mobilisation:

The problem has been mainly due to low collection of property rates which would need much attention. Some measures taken to mitigate the challenge include capacity building programmes by the district administration for all revenue staff, area council chairpersons and development planning, finance and administration sub-committee chairpersons and recruitment of revenue guards to supplement the effort of the revenue collectors and regular interface meetings with stakeholders to identify challenges and concerns (Gomoa West District Assembly 2014: 18).

As a result of the difficulties in generating sufficient revenue beyond the DACF, the district is unable to allocate sufficient funding to planned activities leading to the current state of weak service delivery outcomes. Furthermore, as a result of limited staff quality in Gomoa West, the process of harmonising sector plans for effective service delivery appeared uncoordinated resulting in service delivery gaps in basic education outcomes, skilled deliveries, water and sanitation, security and overall governance indicators.

5 Conclusion

Human resource deployment for public service remains critical for overall service delivery in sub-national institutions. Whilst there is substantive debate about human resource capacity for specific decentralised social services such as health and education (Channa and Faguet 2016; Couttolenc 2012; Frumence *et al.* 2013) there is little debate about the generally low quality of staff who coordinate overall service delivery mechanisms in Ghana's decentralisation system. Hence, although many of the failures of decentralisation have been blamed on inadequate financing for service delivery it is argued in this study that, while the level of financial endowment of a District Assembly may be important in explaining variations in service delivery outcomes (Schulze and Suharnoko 2014), it is important to look beyond funding. Overall, this study posits that given all possible antecedent causes, staff quality determines how the overall institution is structured, which in turn sustains flawless processes (organisational culture) capable of providing a creativity and innovation in programming and revenue mobilisation that goes beyond the DACF. Such a capability is also necessary for implementing those plans, based on carefully prioritised activities, and is more likely to result in better service delivery outcomes. However, the process is dependent on the presence of an effective oversight monitoring system and a functional social accountability system.

In the wake of the unflinching quest to implement full devolution in Ghana, where all decentralised service institutions will operate directly

under the District Assembly (Government of Ghana 2010), the subject of staff quality for decentralisation must preoccupy contemporary debate. Moreover, given recent concerns about the extent to which staff can be externally motivated to improve service delivery amidst the dwindling fortunes of country-level economic growth (Perry and Hondeghe 2008), it has become imperative for public administration and human resource experts to look more closely into attracting employees with the demonstrable PSM and skillsets for decentralisation. This is, however, dependent on creating the right preconditions to attract quality workers. In the case of Gomoa, for example, the need for technical capacity building is imperative.

This current case study, whilst inevitably limited in scope, provides important insights into how staff quality affects service delivery. There is, therefore, the need for a broader national-level study into human resource capacities and service delivery in the District Assemblies of Ghana, focusing on PSM and competences.

Notes

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- 1 School of Arts and Humanities, Edith Cowan University, Western Australia.
 - 2 *Cf.* Steiner's study of Uganda (Steiner 2007).
 - 3 The services and their indicators include education (pass rate for Basic Education Certificate Examination), sanitation (open defecation), rural water (rural water coverage), health (skilled delivery), security (police coverage) and governance (functional and organisational assessment tool minimum conditions) (see UNICEF and CDD-Ghana 2015 for details).
 - 4 This is an MS-Excel spreadsheet formula used to assign random numbers to a list of items.
 - 5 Given that this study is a pilot study and the nature of the population of frontline staff in the two districts, this sample size (approximately 35 per cent of the population), though relatively small, is considered appropriate according to the guidelines suggested by Hertzog (2008).
 - 6 See Kim *et al.* (2010) for details on PSM measurement.
 - 7 The items listed: APP1–5; CPV1–4; COM1–4 and SS1–4 in Tables 1 and 2 are PSM indicators based on questions in the questionnaire as shown in Kim *et al.* (2010). The acronyms stand for 'attraction to public participation', 'commitment to public values', 'compassion' and 'self-sacrifice', respectively.

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