

POLICY BRIEF BY THE PUBLIC SERVICES COMMISSION

Title:

Aligning Administrative and Political Functions at the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in Ghana

Executive Summary

Ghana's decentralization policy is anchored on empowering local governments to deliver public services efficiently. However, a persistent misalignment between the administrative and political functions at MMDAs hampers effective governance. This brief outlines the current structure, identifies key challenges, proposes actionable solutions, and recommends reforms aimed at enhancing coordination and accountability between administrative and political arms of MMDAs.

Background

MMDAs serve as the primary units of local governance in Ghana. The Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Chief Executives (MMDCes) lead the political wing and are appointed by the President, while the District Coordinating Directors (DCDs) head the administrative machinery. The administrative and political units are expected to work collaboratively to deliver development outcomes, but overlapping roles and accountability gaps often disrupt effective local governance.

Key Challenges

1. Dual Leadership and Role Conflicts

- Blurred lines between MMDCes and DCDs often result in power struggles and inefficiencies.

2. Weak Accountability Mechanisms

- MMDCes are politically appointed, leading to upward accountability to central government rather than to the local populace.

3. Politicization of Local Governance

- Political interference undermines the neutrality and professionalism of the administrative staff.

4. Fragmented Service Delivery

- Poor coordination among decentralized departments weakens development planning and implementation.

5. Resource and Capacity Gaps

- Inadequate funding, weak data systems, and limited technical expertise undermine performance.

Proposed Solutions

1. Legal and Institutional Reforms

- Amend the Constitution to allow for the election of MMDCEs, improving downward accountability.
- Clearly define and separate the roles and responsibilities of political and administrative leaders.

2. Integrated Planning and Management

- Institutionalize joint planning and budgeting processes between political and administrative units.
- Harmonize development plans through the Medium-Term Development Planning Framework.

3. Administrative Capacity Enhancement

- Build capacity of staff through training, digital tools, and performance management systems.
- Empower MMDAs with control over recruitment, appraisal, and deployment of local personnel.

4. Accountability and Transparency

- Strengthen Internal Audit Units and Public Relations & Complaints Committees (PRCC).
- Develop performance contracts that bind both political and administrative heads to shared outcomes.

5. Citizen Participation and Oversight

- Facilitate active engagement of civil society, traditional authorities, and local communities in decision-making and oversight.

Policy Recommendations

Timeline	Recommendations
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Short-Term	-Create Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for inter-departmental coordination.- Organize joint training sessions for political and administrative actors.- Establish Performance Review Committees at the MMDA level.
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Medium-Term	- Review the Local Governance Act and initiate constitutional amendments.- Pilot the election of MMDCEs in selected districts.- Institutionalize performance-based funding mechanisms.
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Long-Term	-Fully integrate vertical (central-local) and horizontal (intra-MMDA) accountability systems.- Let an Independent Governing Board such as the Public Services Commission monitor the alignment and reform implementation.
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Conclusion

Realigning the administrative and political functions at Ghana's MMDAs is critical for deepening decentralization and improving service delivery. Legal reforms, institutional strengthening, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement are vital levers for achieving synergy and accountable governance at the local level. With committed implementation, these reforms can significantly enhance local development outcomes.