Youth Participation in Local and National Development in Ghana: 1620-2013

by

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Abstract

While there has been a long tradition in development studies on analyzing types of participation and their effectiveness, the idea that participation is not stationary, but that it can evolve with variegated experiences is relatively unexplored. This paper takes up the challenge of showing how participation in development planning can change, the role of underlying institutions, and the implications of evolutionary participatory development for policy making. It uses a critical postcolonial approach and focus on the role of the youth in development planning in Ghana. It knits together the diverse processes and dynamics of youth participation in postcolonial Ghana since the pre-colonial era, and teases out implications of these 'participation moments', particularly, current moments, for national development in Ghana.

Introduction

'Participation' is one of the buzz and fuzz concepts in development studies today (Cornwall and Eade, 2010). The concept is crucial in identifying who does what, when and how in the process of economic development (Sharkansky, 1972; Bryant and White, 1982:126; Gavin, 2007), so writers on development planning have paid considerable attention to questions of participation, particularly types of participatory development, ways in which participation can be effective, participation by women, and scaling up (e.g., Finsterbusch and Wicklin, 1987; Warner, 1997; Corneille and Shiffman, 2004; Kim, 2011). Within these themes, it is the the debates between the two main types of participation, namely Top-Down Perspective (TDP) and Bottom-Up Perspectives (BUP) that have received the most attention (Berman 1978; Elmore, 1978; Palumbo and Donald, 1990; Matland, 1995; Winter, 1990; 2003; May, 2003; Paudel, 2009: 39; Apostol et al., 2013). To-date little is known about evolution in participatory development and its implications for governance and national planning in particular settings. This neglect may have risen because writers on participation are mainly theorists or empiricists, not economic historians, and tend to be particularly interested in issues of techniques of ensuring effective participation, such as participatory rural appraisal, community based needs assessment, participatory learning and action, and using ICT to enhance participation (Apostol et al., 2013). Indeed, the root meaning of 'participation', according to Paolo Friere, eminent Brazilian philosopher and critical theorist, was the transformation of social structures (Leal, 2010). Thus, right from the beginning, it seems that questions of evolution have not been central to the study of participation. Yet, such a historical perspective is important because it can shed light on how participation worked (or not) during different political economic times, and the nature of the institutions which shaped, proscribed, or constrained particular modes of participation, and hence how to better shape contemporary policy to enhance participation for national development.

This paper tries to fill this gap. It does so by using a critical postcolonial narrative of the role of the youth – defined as people in the 15-35 age brackets[1] - in development planning in Ghana from the 1620s to the present. The focus on Ghana is justified because of its reputation as one of Africa's leading experiments in governance (Naudé, 2011). Using the 'youth' as the unit of analysis is also justified because it has been neglected in studies on development planning, In Ghana, studies on participation tend to focus on women (see, for example, Apusiga, 2009; Britwum, 2009) or the vague descriptor, 'the people' (e.g., Boyd and Slaymaker, 2000). For this reason and because the youth constitutes the bulk of the labour force (60 per cent) and voting population (76 per cent) – two groups crucial to development planning - in the country (Ghana Statistical Service, 2000; Electoral Commission of Ghana, 2008), the emphasis on the youth is apposite. The paper answers the following questions in turn: How did the youth participate in policy implementation in the periods prior to, during, and after the institution of Western governance? What are the implications of these 'participation moments', particularly, current moments, for the youth and national development in the post-colonial era?

The paper argues that the institution of Western form of [2]governance has led to an obliteration of participatory development – contrary to popular discourses that it is 'good governance' which has gifted Africa with participatory development. Yet, contemporary, post-colonial governance has taken a whimsical view of the role of the youth in national development. In turn, in spite of their demographic weight, the youth do not have a formal participatory role in the policy[3] implementation process in modern day Ghana. Even in implementing policies and programmes intended to benefit them, the youth are marginalized. Indeed, state institutions that have no or little expertise about youth work are tasked to implement youth programmes for the youth to the neglect of the youth themselves. In some cases, such as the case of the Youth in Agriculture Programme (YIAP), government ministries with no expertise in working with the youth are tasked to implement the programme instead of the National Youth Council (NYC) or representatives of the youth groups. It seems that the only formal avenue for the participation of the youth is recruitment into the government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) which offers employment to only 2 per cent of the youth population (ISSER, 2010). Thus, the role of the youth in policy implementation is purely accidental and unintended. This experience with Western governance stands in sharp contrast with the experiences of the youth during the precolonial era during which the youth were effectively mobilized to implement 'government' policies. So, while youth participation within indigenous systems was integral to national development in the pre colony; it is accidental in the postcolony.

First Phase: The Youth in Traditional Governance

African political systems in the coastal, forest and savannah regions of contemporary Ghana were diverse. However, it is now firmly established that it was common practice as far back as the 1620s to have youth associations usually called the *asafo* taking active part in national development planning (Datta and Porter, 1971). Admittedly, there were more formal arrangements for youth associations among the southern Akans and especially among the Fantis of the coastal areas (Chazan, 1974). Although every individual was tied in a vertical relationship to a hierarchy of chiefs in their political unit, horizontal ties among individuals in different units were established mostly on clan basis (Finalay et. al., 1968). Within each political entity, the horizontal relationship which balanced the kin-political ties and linked members together was the *asafo* or, as they were sometimes calledage associations or war people. The *asafo* relationship counteracted, internally, the strength of kinship ties and gave individuals of different lineages a common interest which assisted in fostering the solidarity of the state. Membership of the *asafo* age associations was compulsory for the youth (mainly male but sometimes with female membership) (Chazan, 1974:168). Every Akan belonged to an *asafo* group on their father's side, just as every person belonged to an *abusua* or matrilineage, on their mother's side (Owusu, 1970:41). Each *asafo* group was divided into companies and among the southern Akans, it was further sub-divided according to age, that is, into senior *asafo,* (called *dontsin*) and junior *asafo* (called *twafo*).

Within each *asafo* group, roles such as taking charge of discipline, ammunition, defense, public works and political activities were allotted (ibid: 42-43). The position of the leader of the *asafo* was either elective or hereditary. In the case of the latter, the leader was required to be approved by the whole group prior to assuming the role (Shaloff, 1974; See Ffoulkes, 1908 and Datta and Porter, 1971 for the origins and detailed description of the activities of the asafo). Therefore, the *asafo* organised along democratic lines. The Fantis perfected the *asafo* relationship to such an extent that this associational link had assumed an importance equal to that of family ties (Chazan, 1974:165). Further to the north, in Ashanti, the *asafo* companies were less advanced, although membership was required and all the youth participated in their activities (Manoukian, 1971:50). In the centralized savannah areas too, the *asafo* or age association never fully developed, although the youth were co-opted for military and economic duties associated with the obligations of the young adult towards their polity (ibid).

The *asafo* companies were not part of the decision making about the policies to be formulated for the traditional community. The elders and the chief formed the government and were jointly responsible for policy making (Busia, 1968:10). The role of the *asafo* in the policy process was mainly to implement policies formulated by the chief in consultation with his council of elders. As noted by Busia (1968), after the meetings of the chief and his elders, decisions about which the people, particularly the youth had to be informed, were made public by the beating of *gongong* (talking drums) in the evenings when all the people would have returned from their work on the farms. The youth were called out in this way to provide communal labour in the construction of roads, public toilets, markets, lorry parks, hospitals, schools or to work on the chief's farm. Generally, the *asafo* companies were responsible for public works and town development schemes but the decision to undertake these development projects was the sole preserve of the chief and his elders (Christensen, 1954:107). Moreover, during the celebration of festivals where departed rulers were celebrated, their names and deeds recalled and favours and mercy solicited, several activities that bring about development were undertaken by the youth after esoteric rituals had been performed by the chief with only a few people present (ibid:18).

The indirect role played by the youth and the nature of the traditional power structure were accepted by the youth themselves because of the African cultural and traditional values that place a higher premium on respect for the rule, views and counsel of traditional institutions (Austin, 1964). More importantly, the council of elders, who were the respective clan or family heads, represented and promoted the interest of the various clans or families to which the youth also belonged in the chief's palace. The elders in the chief's palace were so powerful that the chief could not ignore their advice. In turn, there was a strong sense of participation via representation. The youth felt that they owned the decisions formulated by the chiefs and their council of elders (Chazan, 1974). Whenever these channels of participation were either broken or corrupted, the chiefs and their elders stood the risk of losing their positions. In some cases, the *asafo* companies disobeyed and openly criticized chiefs and elders and eventually removed some chiefs from their position (Austin, 1964).

Second Phase: The Encounter with Colonialism

While some contend that the participation of the youth in national planning was a function or feature of colonialism (Datta and Porter, 1972), this view ought to be more nuanced. During the colonial era (1874 – 5th March 1957), there was the development of cross-ethnic youth organizations whose membership cut across all the ethnic groups of Ghana. Examples were the Boy Scouts, the Girl Guides, and the Red Cross Society - all of which were modeled after similar organizations in the UK – which colonized Ghana (Kimble, 1963:471). The earliest youth organizations established in the Gold Coast were created by the educated elites in the Gold Coast (as Ghana was then called) who relied on the models handed down to them by the British and were intended to translate the *asafo* relationship and youth roles into forms compatible with the coloniser's vision of participation (Chazan, 1974:172). The churches too, were active in the organization of the youth in this phase. Youth organizations in the Methodist Church, for example, included the Girls and Boys Brigade. Thus the involvement of the youth, especially the *asafo,* predated colonialism but colonial influences greatly transformed youth participation in national development.

Colonialism, and in particular the indirect rule system, unilaterally conferred extra powers on the chieftaincy institution in a way that made chiefs authoritarian. In turn, the hitherto generally cordial relationship between the chiefs and the youth became strained. The respect accorded the chiefs by the youth that compelled them to abide by chieftaincy rules and instructions dramatically diminished. This discord was good for the colonizer as it further created divisions within the potential force for resistance. To the colonizer, chiefs were mere conduits through which colonial policies were transmitted to the neglect of the youth in the development process (Boahen, 1979). Under the coloniser's system of indirect rule, the British Governor and his District Commissioners made policies and the role of chiefs was reduced to implementing them using their people, particularly the commoners or youth. But the youth who had no formal role in the policy implementation process during the colonial period also did not co-operate with their chiefs for allowing themselves to be used as a conduit for the transmission of colonial policies. The colonial administrators, in turn, deliberately sidelined the *asafo* as the group seemed too radical (Chazan, 1974). According to Shaloff (1974, p.592), they even called the activities of the *asafo* 'democracy gone mad' (Shaloff, 1974, p.592).

With the growing antagonism between the colonizer and the *asafo* and between the asafo and the chiefs, ome members of the *asafo* companies left the group and went into trading, Some became very rich, powerful and independent people who would not tolerate chiefs who abused their powers such as taxation, making of by-laws, granting of mining and timber concessions etc in their local communities (Chazan, 1974). Between 1913 and 1919, the *asafo* companies and other successful young cocoa farmers teamed up to destool several chiefs including the "strong ones" for abusing their powers in a manner that injured their economic and social status. (Kimble, 1963:467).

For example, some chiefs in the Eastern Region, precisely Kwahu and Akim Abuakwa suffered this fate. In Akim Abuakwa for example, the young wealthy commoners took part in several attempted destoolments, culminating in an attack on the position of the Omanhene for abusive rule and other acts of arbitrariness in 1918 (ibid: 471). In sum, the changes in the socio-economic structure during the colonial encounter benefited the youth some of whom had become educated as well as prosperous cocoa farmers and traders. They were denied a formal role in the policy implementation process and they refused to carry out or heed colonial policies transmitted through the chiefs.

Third Phase: The Youth and Political Independence

During this period, the youth were mobilized to serve as the fulcrum around which the demand for independence revolved and they regained their role as policy implementers soon after independence had been achieved. The youth who had been alienated from the intelligentsia, were looking for radical leadership, which Kwame Nkrumah, who was later to become Ghana's first president, was amply qualified to provide. Young, radical, impatient and ready if necessary to use unconstitutional and even violent means, Nkrumah all too clearly could not work with the older, conservative and lawyerly attitude of the of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) of which he was the general secretary. He therefore resigned to form the Convention People's Party (CPP) on June 12, 1949 with the aim of "fighting relentlessly by all constitutional means for the achievement of full self-government now for the chiefs and people of the Gold Coast" (Boahen, 1979:167). Nkrumah mobilized the *asafo* and other youth groups to form the nucleus of the CPP. The youth got attracted to the CPP by Nkrumah's radical ideas and simple way of living contrary to the moderate views, snobbery and conservatism of the leaders of the UGCC (ibid). The youth supported Nkrumah's declaration of Positive Action in 1950 to back the demand for independence (Boahen, 1979:171). This contributed to shoring up the popularity of Nkrumah and the CPP, culminating in the electoral victory of the party in the 1951 elections and the subsequent attainment of independence in 1957 (ibid:172).At independence, Nkrumah established state-controlled youth organizations and ensured that all youth groups became integral part of the CPP. Those that did not, were not recognized by the government and could not operate freely (Austin, 1964). The traditional *asafo* companies were transformed into CPP vigilante groups (Goody, 1968; Chazan, 1974:23). The most important youth organization formed by the government was the Young Pioneers which grew rapidly as the regime's instrument for policy implementation and became a dominant force among youth organizations in the country (Goody, 1968). The purpose of youth mobilization by the Nkrumah regime was to engage them in the development of the country, address the problem of unemployment and encourage the youth to venture into agriculture to produce food and industrial raw materials (Shillington, 1992:6). The quest for rapid industrialization during this phase could not have materialized without the toil of enthusiastic young people who worked on the farms to produce the raw materials needed by industry (Hodge, 1964).

The role of the National Workers Brigade, Nkrumah's programme to address the unemployment problem of young people in Ghana, and other youth organizations in the Ghanaian economy, in particular agriculture, provides a remarkable example of how the youth were engaged in the development of the country (Goody, 1968; Chazan, 1974). The role of the youth in the development process in this phase was therefore similar to their role in the traditional system during the period before the encounter with colonialism. The youth, especially the *asafo* groups, were an integral part of the power structure in the traditional, 'socialist' political system but acted rather as "instruments" than as "agents" of governance and development in the post 1966 era.

Fourth Phase: The Youth and Political Liberalization

During the post 1966 era, when Nkrumah was no longer president, the youth organizations that were identified with the CPP were disbanded or suppressed by the military government (1966-69). A major effort of the Busia regime in the youth field was the establishment of the National Service Scheme (NSS), bringing to fruition an idea that had first been mooted in 1948-9, in response to the poor economic conditions at the time (Hodge, 1964; Chazan, 1974:198). The NSS had barely began operation when the regime was overthrown and the organization disbanded (ibid). The Acheampong-led military coup of 1972 that ousted the Busia regime pursued a nationalistic policy which was partly intended to boost its legitimacy among the youth. In particular, the military government introduced the "Operation Feed Your Self" - a defiant self-reliant national agricultural policy by which it was required that everyone be involved in agriculture. According to Obosu-Mensah (2000; 2002) most of those involved in formulating national agricultural policies were the youth who, in turn, helped the country to attain food security (Hansen, 1989:205). As a result of the regime's effective mobilization and inculcation of the spirit of patriotism and voluntarism in the youth, the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) for instance, mobilized students from the country's universities and the Komenda Teacher Training College (KTTC) to demonstrate their patriotism and support by spending several hours harvesting sugarcane to feed the Komenda Sugar Factory. Similar activities by students were carried out in all parts of the country as their contribution towards the government's efforts at revamping the economy (Oquaye, 1980:12). The state gave Agricultural Development Bank more money to enable it give loans to industrious and needy young farmers (ibid). From the middle of the 1970s, however, NUGS began to criticize the military government because of deteriorating conditions on the university campuses, corruption in public affairs, poor management of the economy and the regime's unwillingness to hand over power (Shillington:1992:22). The sustained protests by students and other youth activists contributed to the fall of the Supreme Military Council (SMC) (I) regime in a palace coup led by General F.W.K. Akuffo who presided over the SMC (II).

The new SMC (II) regime's attempt to continue some of the programmes of Acheampong, particularly the Union Government idea, by which civilians had to unite with the military to govern, was vehemently opposed by the NUGS and other youth groups until it was overthrown by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) in 1979 (ibid:25). NUGS and other youth were ardent supporters of the AFRC's efforts to deal with corruption and control prices for the benefit of ordinary Ghanaians. They were also active critics of the Limann regime, which won the 1979 general elections organized by the AFRC, for being indecisive and unable to tackle the economic and social problems of the country in a radical manner. They therefore supported the PNDC (1982-1992) regime that toppled the Limann administration on 31st December 1981 (Boahen, 1992:126).

The PNDC regime also mobilized the youth to implement development programmes. In demonstrating their support for the regime, youth groups and students briefly abandoned their studies to offer voluntary labour to evacuate locked up cocoa and other farm products in the rural areas. Indeed, apart from building popular support to legitimize its seizure of power, the immediate practical task of the PNDC regime was to evacuate the cocoa harvest, coffee and foodstuffs which had become locked up in the rural areas for want of proper transport, decent roads and energetic leadership (Shillington, 1992:85). Students and other youth groups availed themselves as volunteers with enthusiasm and over the next six weeks, hundreds of thousands of bags of cocoa were successfully evacuated to the ports of Tema (ibid:86). This happened much to the surprise of world market dealers based in London who had raised the price of cocoa by £75 a ton on the assumption that the new revolutionary government in Ghana would fail to get its crops to market (ibid). The youth and student task force also actively participated in road construction and repairs, cleaned choked gutters, assisted in enforcing price controls and undertook several self-help projects (Boahen, 1992:129). The success of the youth and student task force who were also engaged in many other rural rehabilitation tasks, gained the PNDC regime a lot of credibility and support in its first crucial months in office (Shillington, 1992: 86). The most significant attempt to mobilize youth for development that occurred under the PNDC was the establishment of Workers Defence Committees (WDCs) and Peoples' Defence Committees (PDCs) immediately it seized power for the purpose of transferring power to the masses and mobilizing young people to carry out development projects initiated by the regime (Graham, 1989:48). However, by 1984, the NUGS and other youth groups as well as the Trades Union Congress (TUC) had re-asserted their autonomy and become critical of the PNDC in the light of the regime's authoritarianism; kidnapping and brutal murder of three high court judges and a retired army officer; its inability to solve the nation's economic problems; economic hardships arising from the introduction of the Economic Recovery Programme; deteriorating university facilities; declining value of student allowances; and the re-introduction of the Student Loan Scheme (SLS) (Shillington, 1992). They were part of the internal pressures that forced Jerry Rawlings to usher the country to its Fourth Republic in 1992, albeit claiming that the PNDC had been consistent in living according to principles of participation, namely probity and accountability (Ayee, 1994).

Fifth Phase: The youth and Intensifying Western Governance

The fifth phase of the evolution of participation in Ghana occurred during the fourth republic. That is, the post 1992 era being the fourth time that the country is running a constitutional democracy. The First, Second and Third Republics commenced in 1960, 1969 and 1979 respectively.

The story began in May 1992 when politicians started forming political parties, following the lifting of a ban on politics. In turn, the youth started to once again congregate but, this time, under the banner of political parties. Indeed, the various political parties formed youth wings in order to mobilize the youth for the pursuit of political power. It is the youth wings of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and New Patriotic Party (NPP) that are the most vibrant. These two political parties have even extended youth organization to the tertiary institutions in the country. The Tertiary Institution Network (TEIN) and the Tertiary Education and Students Confederacy (TESCON) represent the student wings of the NDC and NPP respectively. The smaller parties that have no representation in parliament do not also have active youth wings (Asante, 2006: 222). Do these developments suggest a return to the *asafo* days? The evidence suggests not. In terms of policy implementation, the youth have neither been engaged as "instruments" (as they were in the regimes prior to the Fourth Republic) nor "agents". Policy implementation, just as the formulation process, is crucial for turning the fortunes of the nation as it strives to overcome the state of under-development. However, in Ghana since 1992, it has become the preserve of government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) as well as Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) (Tweneboah-Kodua, 2010). Sometimes, the activities of the MDAs and MMDAs in the implementation process are augmented by the private sector, donors or development partners and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) (ibid).

Policy implementation is also monitored by agencies interested in the achievement of macro-economic targets such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and inflation management (Ghana Vision 2020, 1997:274). Through Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) schemes, an additional impetus is provided in ensuring policy, effectiveness, accountability, responsiveness and transparency in the allocation of resources for the implementation of development policies (Tweneboah-Kodua, 2010). DPCUs/MPCUs have the responsibility to advise District/Municipal/Metropolitan Planning Authorities on the implementation of projects in their respective jurisdictions. Regional Planning Co-ordinating Units (RPCUs) also advise Regional Co-ordinating Councils (RCCs) on the implementation of district development plans while MDAs are required to monitor the implementation of approved development policies through their Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Departments (PPMEDs) (ibid). Annual Progress Reports (APR) are prepared by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) after it has collated various reports from all the Districts/Municipalities/Metropolitan areas, Regions as well as the MDAs at all levels.

The APR enables the NDPC to evaluate the progress and achievements made regarding the implementation of development policies. It enables stock-taking and allows the government through the NDPC to effect changes that are necessary in order to achieve set development targets (ibid).

For effective implementation of development policies, the NDPC with assistance from a number of Cross-Sectoral Planning Groups (CSPGs) responsible for macro economies and plan financing, economic production, private sector development, social development, urban and rural development, infrastructure, etc ensures a proper co-ordination of the activities of all MDAs, in order to promote better appreciation of national requirements. This understanding is particularly important with regard to areas such as the determination of priorities among various development programmes and the allocation of central government funds for overall development (Azasoo, 2010). Clear-cut directives and guidelines are issued by the NDPC to the MDAs for guidance in implementing their respective projects under the broad national development plan (ibid).Generally, in implementing development policies, the NDPC designates key organizations as lead agencies responsible for implementing particular programmes under specific thematic areas of the policy to be implemented. It is however significant to note that no youth group out of the almost 4000 registered youth groups in Ghana is represented on the lead implementing agencies (Tweneboah-Kodua, 2010). Again, key agencies responsible for implementing policies intended to benefit the youth like the NYC and the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP) Secretariat are not represented on the lead implementing agencies. Table 1 for example is a matrix of the agencies responsible for the implementation of the various programmes of the broad thematic areas of the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II):

The experience in phase 5 differs radically from the situation in the traditional setting (Phase 1), as conceded by the chairman of the National Development Planning Commission (Obeng, 2011). In other words, the structural arrangement for the implementation of national development plans down-plays the role of young people. Significantly, the youth are not part of the development policy implementation process. This has been the bane of development plans in Ghana since the inception of the Fourth Republic (Madilo, 2010). A recent survey (McDonnell and Fine, 2011) carried out among a section of the youth in Accra (political science students at the University of Ghana) to guage pride and shame on different aspects of Ghanaian society shows that most of the respondents are ashamed by how the country is currently been governed. The year 2006 saw the launch of the National Youth Employment Policy which promised to correct the marginalization of the youth in national development. However, as we shall see, there are structural and implementational deficits that undermine the effectiveness of the scheme in the short term and over the *longue dureé*.

The National Youth Employment Policy: Rhetoric Versus Existing Participation

On face value, the National Youth Employment Policy (NYEP) which was launched in 2006 seems to be participatory and a return to the 'good old *asafo* days'. The Youth Employment Implementation Guidelines (2006) states that

there shall be established a National Youth Employment Task Force (NYETF) which shall have representation from the following state agencies as well as some relevant Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): Office of the President (Micro-Finance and Small Loans Center); Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment (MMYE); Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MoFEP); Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD); Ministry of Private Sector Development and Presidential Special Initiatives (MPSD&PSI); Ministry of Food and Agriculture; Ministry of Trade and Industry; Ministry of Communications; Ministry of Education and Sports; Ministry of Health; Two Members of Parliament; Ministry of Mines, Lands and Forestry; Ministry of Environment; Ministry of Interior; National Security Council Secretariat; National Disaster Management Organization; National Employment Task Force Co-ordinator; and Two representatives of the youth groups in Ghana (NYEP Implementation Guidelines, 2006:12).

The functions of the NYETF include providing guidelines for the formulation of Short and Medium Term Strategic Plans for the NYEP; including: designing guidelines for implementing the NYEP; approving programmes and projects; sourcing and allocation of funds and other resources; sensitizing and training of programme managers at all levels; monitoring and evaluating the programmes' activities; and setting targets and signing performance contracts with Metropolitan/Municipal/District Employment Task Forces (MMDETF); developing policy recommendations for government's consideration through the Ministry responsible for employment to strengthen employment programmes; and undertaking any other functions assigned it by the Ministry of MMYE to ensure the success of the programme (ibid:13).The implementation of the NYEP at the district level is to be monitored at the regional level by a Regional Monitoring Team (RMT). This Team has the responsibility only to monitor, evaluate and report on the implementation and progress of the programme (NYEP Implementation Guidelines 2006:14). It is chaired by the Regional Minister or in his absence, his Deputy. A Regional Liaison Officer was to serve as Secretary to the Team (ibid). The RMT comprises: the Regional Minister or the Deputy Regional Minister; the Regional Co-ordinator for the NYC; the Regional Labour Officer; the Regional Cooperatives Officer; the Regional Director of Agriculture; the Regional Director of Education; the Regional Director of Health; and the Regional Liaison Officer (ibid).

At the metropolitan, municipal and district level, MMDETF chaired by the Metropolitan/Municipal/District Director Chief Executive (MMDCE) is to assist in the successful implementation of the programme. This district body is entrusted with the responsibility of identifying, mobilizing and sensitizing the unemployed youth to participate in the programme; identifying potential economic and social activities in the districts for sponsorship; seeing to the timely disbursement of funds to the beneficiary groups and be accountable for the recovery of such funds; submitting monthly, quarterly and annual reports to the National Employment Task Force with copies to the RMT by the 10th day of the following month; and undertaking costing of programmes and projects (ibid:15). The MMDETF consists of the MMDCE; the Metropolitan/Municipal/District Employment Coordinator; the Metropolitan/Municipal/District Director of Agriculture; the Metropolitan/Municipal/District Director of Health; the Metropolitan/Municipal/ District Director of Education; two other members appointed by the MMYE; and two representatives each from youth groups at the district, one of whom must be a female (ibid:14).

However, in practice, the composition of the NYETF of the NYEP can be described as lopsided and ambiguous as far as youth participation is concerned. Given that almost 4,000 registered youth groups exist in Ghana, it is inadequate to have only two representatives from the youth groups in Ghana on the Task force. Moreover, there is no clarity regarding which of the youth groups is to be selected to represent the youth on the NYETF. This ambiguity has the tendency to allow politicians to co-opt or hand-pick their favorite youth groups to serve as members which, in turn, may work to champion partisan and not necessarily youth interest.

On the average, there are about 180 registered youth groups in every region of the country (Etsibah, 2010). However, no youth group is represented on the RMT. Even though this situation poses a challenge to youth participation, Attipoe-Fittz (2010) has argued that "the role of the RMT is not to implement but merely monitor the implementation of the NYEP at the districts where the chunk of the beneficiaries are located." Perhaps, this explains why the Regional Co-ordinator for the NYC is made a member of the RMT and not the youth groups themselves. At the district level, selecting two representatives from each youth group to represent young people on the MMDETFD would have brought views of the youth to bear on the implementation of the programme. In reality, however, none of the Task Forces to be established at the national, regional and district level has been set up and made operational. It is the national secretariat of the NYEP that co-ordinates all activities relating to the implementation of the programme. The Deputy National Coordinator of the NYEP observed that "the Employment Task Force at the National, Regional and District Level have not been established and Regional offices of the NYEP merely exist in name. Everything about the NYEP and its implementation is done at the national secretariat" (Attipoe-Fittz, 2010). In effect, while the youth are not only sidelined in formulating the programme,their stated role and representation in the implementation process of the programme, as per the NYEP Implementation Guidelines (2006) is not performed by them. Instead, other institutions including the national secretariat of the NYEP play the role expected to be played by the youth themselves. Moreover, even though the NUGS were directly represented in formulating the GPRS I&II, they were not part of the implementation scheme of the two plans. According to Azasoo (2010), implementation of development plans is undertaken by established and trustworthy state institutions as well as CSOs and DPs with legitimacy. NUGS may have been sidelined, following Azasoo (2010), because it lacks 'legitimacy' despite being the largest group that represents the views of the youth in national policy discourses. NUGS legitimacy problem is blamed on its internal strife and lack of stability. Its leaders are also alleged, and sometimes proven to have embezzled Union dues (ibid).The youth play no role in the policy implementation process because as depicted by Table 1, structurally, they have no formal role in the process. Neither the youth groups themselves nor the direct agencies responsible for youth activities are given the opportunity to serve on the lead agencies responsible for policy implementation. In turn, the youth have sometimes reacted by taking the laws into their own hands, as is evidently the case with party 'footsoldiers' who demand of their party officers and even national agencies to hear them out or to give them space to participate (Bob-Milliar, 2011). Also, there has been a proliferation of youth groups whose activities are uncoordinated and sometimes chaotic. According to one officer at NDPC, the proliferation of several youth groups almost on a daily basis is a crucial hindrance to youth participation in implementing development policies in Ghana as the youth are seen as lawless or not level headed. In his words, "[t]here seem to be too many youth groups in Ghana with no serious effort to bring them together under one umbrella. It therefore becomes difficult to identify and select which of them to participate in the official implementation scheme". According to Uphoff (1978:11), engaging the youth in policy implementation has a notable counter -insurgency quality.

To Gavin (2007:73), the strain of analysis that sees the youth bulge as a fundamentally threatening phenomenon often points to research that suggests a strong relationship between the likelihood of civil conflict and the existence of an urbanized and idle youth bulge. Indeed, in the 2001 U.S Central Intelligence Agency report on global demographic trends in Africa and parts of the Middle East, it was argued that failure to adequately integrate the youth into the development process is likely to perpetuate the cycle of political instability, ethnic wars, revolutions and anti-regime activities.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to reverse the narrative that it was the West that brought participatory development to Africa using the case study of the youth and participation in Ghana. Through the use of a critical postcolonial narrative, it shows that participatory development was the main moment of participation until colonial expansion obliterated it and replaced it with 'modern' – read 'Western'- system, which, as the evidence in the paper shows, has substantially contributed to the making of unresponsive and unaccountable leadership and marginalizing development planning. Attempts to remedy the current Western system have been whimsical, often in the form of paying lip service and papering over cracks than considering the structural failings in actually existing participation. In turn, youth conflict, or more appropriately, the expression of discontent by the youth in the form of conflict has become a common feature of Ghanaian political economy.

The implication of this perspective on participation – an evolutionary and postcolonial outlook - is that the benign or total neglect of the youth in policy implementation has grave implications for the youth and national development. It has the tendency to create a cohort of dormant young people whose potential for national development may go untapped. This tends to destroy and undermine their initiative, zeal, enthusiasm and self-confidence which are positive attributes required by every developing nation in its quest to extricate itself from the quagmires of poverty and under-development. Another crucial implication of the marginalized position of the youth in policy implementation is that it poses a grave threat to the peace, tranquility and the democratic gains of the country. Not engaging the youth in policy implementation implies that they would tend to be idle, particularly when they are not in school or when they are not in gainful employment.

Africa has a rich pool of wisdom from which to draw in respect of participation and national development, so there is no need for the all too familiar mimicry of the West – a dynamic reproduced by notions of development planning that use 'Westernisation' as a short cut for 'development'. The question is how to return to the proverbial 'roots', but that is a story for another time.

TABLE 1: Implementing Agencies of Development Policies- GPRS (Ii)

Key Areas of Focus	Implementing Agencies
1. Private Sector as Engine of Growth	Min. of Private Sector Development (MPSD), Ghana Investment Promotion Center (GIPC), Min. of Trade and Industry (MOTI), Min of Justice. (MOJ), etc
2. Modernizing Agriculture and Fishing Methods, Restoration of Degraded Environment and Natural Resource Management	Min. of Food and Agric. (MoFA), Lands Commission, Chiefs, Min. of Health (MoH), Min. of Lands, Forestry and Mines (MLFM), Min. of Fisheries, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), etc
3. Support Services such as Road and Rail Construction, Water and Air Transport, Energy Supply, Science and Technology	Ghana Harbor Authority, Dept. of Urban Roads, Min. of Transport and Communications (MOTC), MOFA, MMDAs, Volta River Authority (VRA), Electricity Company of Ghana, Development Partners (DPs), Ghana Atomic Energy Commission (GAEC), MOTI, etc.
4. Developing New Sectors to Support Growth in the areas of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Tourism and Music Industry	National Communication Authority (NCA), MTC, MPSD, Min. of Tourism (MOT), GIPC, MOJ, National Media Commission (NMC), DPs, Musicians Union of Ghana (MUSIGA), etc
5. Employment Generation, Expansion of Safety Nets	Min. of Manpower, Youth and Employment (MMYE), MMDAs, etc.
6. Vulnerability and Exclusion Related to Employment, Life Cycle and Environment	MMYE, MOE, Min. of Women and Children Affairs (MOWAC), Ghana Employers Association (GEA), Head of Civil Service, Public Services Commission (PSC), Dept. of Social Welfare (DSW), Ghana National Commission on Culture (GNCC), MMDAs, Insurance Companies, MOFA, MOFI, Energy Commission,

	National Disaster Management Commission (NADMO), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), etc
6. Education, Skills, Manpower and Sports Development	MOE, Ghana Education Service (GES), Min. of Finance and Economic Planning (MOFEP), DSW, Private Sector, Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools. (CHASS), Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), MMDAs, Tertiary Education Council (TEC), Private Enterprise Foundation (PEF), National Sports Council, (NSC), Ghana Football Association (GFA), etc
7. Improved Health Delivery, Population Management, Water and Sanitation	Min. of Health (MOH), MOE, GES, Ghana Health Services (GHS), National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), MMDAs, Min. of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), Ghana Medical Association (GMA), Plan Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG), Malaria Control Programme, Midwife Council, Min. of Information (MOI), National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), NDPC, MDAs, Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC), Water Resource Commission (WRC) etc
8. Urban Development	MMDAs, Town and Country Planning, MOT, Private Sector, MLGRD, etc
9. Governance, Human Rights, Public Safety and Security, Fighting Corruption, Women Empowerment, etc	Office of the President, Parliament, MOJ, Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Serious Fraud Office (SFO), NCCE, NDPC, Institute of Democratic Governance (IDEG), Center for Democratic Development (CDD), Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), MOWAC, Judicial Service, Ministries of Interior and Defense, National House of Chiefs, etc

Source: National Development Planning Commission: GPRS (II), November 2005

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