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| Journal Name: | **British Journal of Economics, Management & Trade** |
| Manuscript Number: | **Ms_BJEMT_19793** |
| Title of the Manuscript: | **Twenty Years of Implementation of District Assemblies' Common Fund in Ghana - (1994-2013) An Assessment of Disbursement** |
| Type of the Article | |

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This journal's peer review policy states that **NO** manuscript should be rejected only on the basis of '**lack of Novelty'**, provided the manuscript is scientifically robust and technically sound.
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**PART 1: Review Comments**

| | **Reviewer's comment** | **Author's comment** *(if agreed with reviewer, correct the manuscript and highlight that part in the manuscript. It is mandatory that authors should write his/her feedback here)* |
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| **General** comments | This manuscript brings critical information on local governance in Ghana from the fiscal decentralization (FD) perspective. The article is scholarly and relevant to the advancement of knowledge in this governance model. The practice of fiscal decentralization is meticulously described, in comparison with the case study aimed at highlighting the Assessment of the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF).<br>Overall, the approach is very consistent: a good introduction with five questions relevant to the topic, the implementation and disbursement of the DACF. The author uses a solid unipolar theoretical framework that helps him swing on the concept of ''empowerment''. Good! The FD is fairly well-defined through pertinent referencing, including. C.M. Tiebout, R.A. Musgrave and W.E. Oates, and critically exploring the theme within the relevant literature. He appropriately choses the indicator and analysis factors, and clearly defines illuminating theoretical and empirical concepts such as ''equity'' and ''transparency''. These give rise to convincing demonstrations, with arguments that are well supported and constructed.<br>The documentation and pitch used are well suited to the author's approach, which makes his analysis credible and verifiable based on pertinent notions, experiences and studies.<br><br>There is a valuable balance between arguments advocated and the nuances provided, especially with the asymmetrical approach to analyzing and highlighting the image of local reality without neglecting the input of international support.<br><br>Selected references are properly chosen both for the theoretical and empirical perspectives.<br><br>The methodology is rigorous, applying a mixed-methods research integrating interview-based data collections and combined *quanti* and *quali*.data collections for verifiable results. | |

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| **Minor** REVISION comments | But (with a bit of a pause), I wish to highlight one limit. The data collection based questionnaires seem to have targeted mainly public servants. This can provide only institution-oriented points of view and perceptions, and therefore, may not reflect the expected results emanating from the methodology used to get these results. However, this limitation opens another subsequent field of study. It would be done working with the beneficiaries of projects, programs and policies; this would require the collection of data reflecting the perception of the population, including the various organizational components in the field, from local associations (cultural, ethnic, religious, tribal groupings) – youth, women – to interested participants or social groups, etc.<br><br>Even from a fiscal angle, addressing decentralization is a topic that primarily touches the local context but does not underestimate or ignore its global impact. It is from the community level that local dynamics begin to concretely contribute to socioeconomic development within the governance framework. By focussing more on and simply highlighting the administrators' responsibilities and underestimating or ignoring the role and contributions of local associations, civil society actors and structures, or not even consulting the beneficiaries who are being "governed'', makes this paper lose an important component of its grounding. The ''livelihood approach" mentioned (line 432) could have been articulated with better grounding and more depth, as the issues of poverty are crucial for local development among districts. Such an approach remains relevant, for example in the exploration of how to integrate proposed household recommendations. Being the primary victims of poverty-related service provision processes, their involvement will make a significant difference during all the project cycle phases, especially in the local actions ranging from design, planning, execution and monitoring, to post-implementation *ex-post* evaluation. This phase can not be entirely decided for them. To respond to critical community needs also requires their direct participation in order to identify local needs.<br><br>However, the author articulates for example that "A focus on poverty reduction should be one which takes a livelihood approach in which consideration of social and other analytic factors are placed at the forefront of decision-making" (lines 432-433). In addition, he continues, "Unused funds from the allocated 2% transferred to associations representing the vulnerable groups to use according to their own priorities". These are some of the exemplary indicators of implementation-phase domestic involvement (lines 524-525).<br><br>In the recommendations, the 'livelihood' contributions could be very useful directly. Basing recommendations mainly from the literature captions and from other cases (and probably | |

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| | from interviews) is interesting, but doing so directly from the local population, is actually more pertinent.<br><br>The author has to say why and how he justifies the transition from the presented methodology to the concrete recommendations, whereas, there is no palpable bridge between the planned governing mechanism and the practical implementation of the needs grounded in the targeted local communities. In fact, a real and clear interaction should govern the population's down-up vertical cooperation with their administration.<br><br>The author has also to say why there is no link between the theoretical framework talking about communities and the methodology targeting officials/administrators. Yet, on the one hand, the key concept is empowerment and "… empowerment entails learning, joining and mobilization of people, communities to take appropriate responsibility in the development process" (lines 193-195), and on the other hand, "the enhancement of local democracy and endowing communities are the cardinal values of fiscal decentralization translated as equipping local government units to deliver development to communities under their jurisdictions" (lines 186-188).<br><br>Otherwise, a geography study map highlighting local clusters may help establish the aforementioned blurred links. The author failed to define some acronyms such as MLGRD (line 559) and MMDA. Does DA, for example, stand for ''District Assemblies''?<br><br>Nevertheless, with the few highlighted changes, I recommend this article for publication. | |

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