

UGBS 105

Introduction to Public Administration

Session 5– Decentralization of Public Administration

Lecturer: Dr. Daniel Appiah, UGBS
Contact Information: dappiah@ug.edu.gh



UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

College of Education

School of Continuing and Distance Education

2014/2015 – 2016/2017

Session 5

Decentralization of Public Administration

Session Objectives

✦ At the end of the session, you should understand

- i. The meaning of the concept of decentralization in the context of Public Administration
- ii. The forms of decentralization of Public Administration
- iii. The reasons for decentralization of Public Administration
- iv. The ubiquity and challenges of decentralization of Public Administration

Public Administration is Huge and Complex

- Public Administration is the process in which state officials use their legitimate monopoly of final authority to make, implement, and evaluate public decisions, policies, and programs to achieve social, economic, and political development
- Total centralization of Public Administration in a single individual is not feasible:
 - It is unfeasible for even the most efficient autocrat in the most smallest state (or micro-state) to concentrate in himself all the Executive, Managerial, Legal and Occupational authority, knowledge and resources for making, implementing and evaluating all public decisions, policies and programs. This would amount to total centralization of Public Administration in a single individual. This is practically impossible

Centralization of Public Administration as a Problem in Developing Countries

- According to Turner and Hulme (1997), a major obstacle to the effective performance of public bureaucracies in most developing countries is the excessive concentration of decision-making and implementation authority within central government
- The popular remedy for such centralization of Public Administration is decentralization. What then is meant by the concept of decentralization?

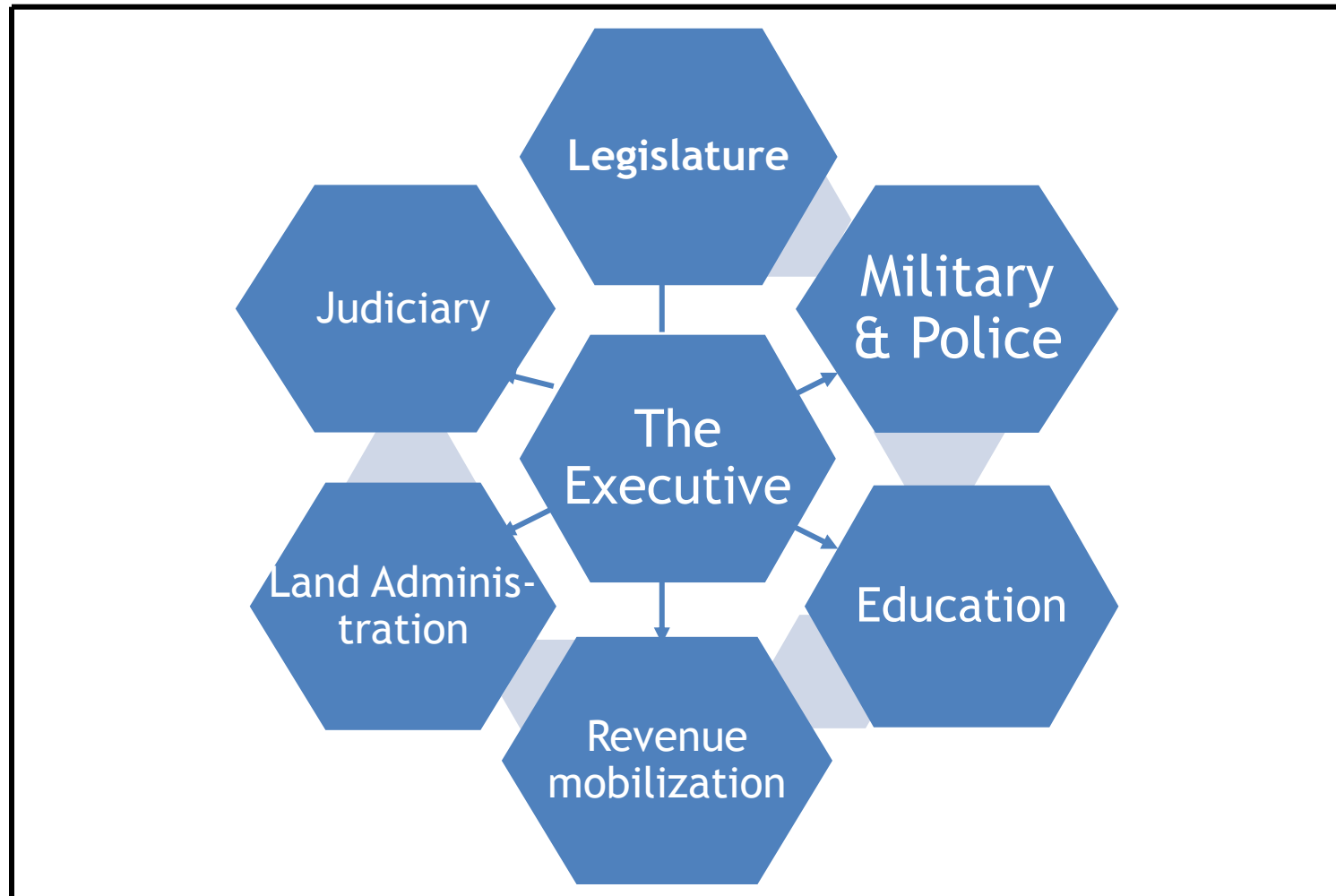
What is Decentralization?

○ **Definition:** Decentralization of Public Administration *refers to various forms of structural arrangement* by which public decision-making authority, policy implementation, policy evaluation, and administrative resources are delegated to agencies within and outside the state to ensure effective and efficient administration

→ **Delegation is NOT a type of decentralization:** It is important to emphasize here that all forms decentralization of involves delegation. Delegation is NOT a type of decentralization; but, delegation is the nature of decentralization. Decentralization cannot occur without delegation

○ The concepts of decentralization and delegation are sometimes used interchangeably by some scholars

Decentralization involves transfer of Authority and Resources from the Executive to Other Agencies



Total Centralization of All State Functions in the Executive or the President is Unfeasible



Forms of Decentralization

- Decentralization of Public Administration can occur in three forms, namely:

1. Devolution

2. Deconcentration

3. Privatization

- These three forms or types of decentralization of Public Administration are explained in the next slides

Devolution

- Devolution is the delegation of political decision-making authority, responsibilities and resources from central government to semi-autonomous or independent state agencies. Devolution is also referred to as political decentralization or democratic decentralization
- Devolution occurs within the formal political structures of the state and NOT outside the state. Example of devolution is the delegation of political decision-making authority, responsibilities and resources to Local Governments
- Devolution is usually intended to ensure the proximity of decision-making and interest group representation. Other reasons for devolution are discussed below

Reasons for Devolution of Public Administration

→ B.C. Smith identified about six reasons why governments embark on devolution of public administration:

1. Promote political education of the population in a democracy
2. Training grounds of local leaders for national political leadership
3. Ensure political stability in heterogeneous states, especially those with ethnically and religiously antagonistic populations
4. Ensure political equality of poor, rich and disadvantaged populations in political decision-making
5. Enhance the accountability of local political representatives
6. Improve the responsiveness of government to local needs

Deconcentration

- Deconcentration is the delegation of policy implementation responsibilities to the field administrative branches of a public agency. Deconcentration is also referred to as administrative decentralization by some scholars
- *Deconcentration occurs within the state:* Deconcentration occurs within the public administrative structures of the state but, unlike devolution, it does not involve the delegation of policy-making authority. Example is the delegation of policy implementation responsibilities by the Ministry of Agriculture to its district level offices
- Deconcentration is usually intended to reduce transaction cost and time in policy implementation

Privatization

- Privatization is the delegation of policy making, implementation, and evaluation responsibilities of the state to private entities
- Privatization occurs through the complete contracting out of state functions to private entities or through public-private partnership schemes of service delivery
- Privatization is usually intended to roll back the responsibilities of the state in the delivery of public goods and services
- Many economic liberalization programs sponsored by the World Bank and IMF in developing countries have included privatization policies

Important Clarifications about the Concept of Decentralization

- The concept of Decentralization is not equivalent to, or a substitute for, the concept of local government. Unfortunately, some “decentralization ‘purists’” regard devolution to local governments “as the only authentic form of decentralization” (Tuner and Hulme, 1997:154)
- All forms of decentralization of Public Administration involve delegation. Delegation is not a type of decentralization, but it is an inherent feature of decentralization in all its forms
- No country has relied on only one form of decentralization. All countries have used combinations of the three forms of decentralization of Public Administration

Central Government Trade-Offs in Decentralization

→ Every Government that embarks on decentralization must realize that the process would lead to the following:

- i. Government sharing of political, fiscal, material and human resources with the decentralized units
- ii. The thinning out or shrinking of the size of Central Government responsibilities and authority
- iii. Information processing simplicity will now become complex across numerous decentralized units

Conclusion: Decentralization of Public Administration is Ubiquitous

- Total centralization of Public Administration in a single individual is impossible: In consequence, all systems of Public Administration involve decentralization
- The forms of decentralization include devolution, deconcentration and privatization
- Decentralization is carried out by governments for diverse reasons depending on the problem intended to be addressed
- No modern government has relied on a single form of decentralization but on a combinations of devolution, deconcentration and privatization