UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN

GHANA: THE EXPERIENCE OF UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

MOOMIN SOLAHUDEEN TANDO

2015

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UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN GHANA: THE EXPERIENCE OF UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

BY

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(UDS/MIC/0047/13)

THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER STUDIES, FACULTY OF AGRIBUSINESS AND COMMUNICATION SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTERS OF PHILOSOPHY IN INNOVATION COMMUNICATION

2015

DECLARATION

Student

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has

been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere:

Candidate's Signature .... Date:

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Supervisor's

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis was supervised in accordance

with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University for Development Studies.

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ABSTRACT

University for Development Studies (UDS) introduced the Third Trimester Field Practical Program (TTFPP) in 1993 in pursuance of its mandate to blend academic work with practical community engagement. This comes in handy as a resolution to most of the challenging expectations of development planning amid the newly adopted decentralization program Ghana embraced prior to the TTFPP in 1993. More than 20 years into the TTFPP, there is very little scientific work on the realization of its potential and mission. This study investigated the potential of the TTFPP towards development planning at the district level. It is a qualitative study that analyzed the relationship between the district assembly as a development planning and implementing institution and the university as a knowledge producing institution. Using qualitative data, secondary materials, a case study approach and a grounded theory design, unstructured interviews with twelve respondents, subjective insights limited to the lived experience of the researcher and the respondents were analyzed. The study found that, there has been robust consensus on the program's impact on the students and the University. However, it was hard to find similar evidence of the program's impact on the local communities and for that matter how it was shaping development concerns for these local communities through the district assemblies. Other findings also include weak or no working relationship between UDS and the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) or the District Assemblies and capacity building. It was also discovered that the relationship between the assembly and the university had weakened over time. For instance, Students were also no longer submitting field report copies to the assemblies and communities. The study therefore recommends a formal recognition of the program in the working guidelines of the NDPC. The TTFPP directorate should also be transformed to a functional institute.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My greatest gratitude goes to the Almighty Allah who made all things possible for me. I am sincerely grateful to my Supervisor, Prof. Amin Alhassan for his guidance, inspiration and stimulating discussions throughout the writing of this project. I particularly appreciate the time and patience he granted me when I lost my laptop and had to start all over again. I acknowledge Godfred Seidu Jasaw (PhD) for the inspiration and support from the beginning of the work to the end. I also acknowledge Prof Agnes Apusiga for her encouragement, financial and motherly support. She is a solid pillar in my life. Lastly, I am grateful to the District Development Planning Officers, staff of UDS and the community members who collaborated to make my field work a success.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beautiful wife, Mrs Amina Tando.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AUCEA	Australian University Community Engagement Alliance
CAP	Community Action Plan
CBO	Community Based Organization
CDP	Community Development Plan
CHP	Community Help Project
CSIR	Center for Scientific and Industrial Research
DA	District Assembly
DCE	District Chief Executive
DDPC	District Development Planning Committee
DDPO	District Development Planning Officer
FBO	Faith Based Organization
HIV/AIDS	Human Immune Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ICEIR	Institute of Continuing and Interdisciplinary Research
LA	Local Attraction
LOGODEP	Local Governance Development Program
MDTP	Medium Term Development Plans
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SNV	Netherlands Development Organization
TTFPP	Third Trimester Field Practical Program
UDS	University for Development Studies
UniSA	University of South Africa
UWR	Upper West Region

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

There seem to be a gradual but steady maturing of a "research to action" paradigm in the social sciences whereby the applicability of research is a central feature. This emerging paradigm recognizes that people in communities can define the nature of social problems and offer credible solutions (Frankish et al., 1997; Green et al., 1995). Steven and Jennifer (2002) observed that "research to action" paradigm calls for collaboration among academic disciplines and between sectors, and inclusive approaches to research in which the ideas and viewpoints of people in communities are brought together with academic and government perspectives. For this reason, the link between research and policy in development is of increasing interest to both researchers and development planners (Court & Young, 2003).

Evidence from the United States of America shows the land grant universities system was an important case for her development history (McDowell, 2001). There has therefore been growing interest in evidence-based development planning and in how research influences development planning in developing country context.

In Ghana, decentralization provides space for community engagement and people-centered development. District Assemblies undertake their development agenda through Medium Term Development Plans (MTDPs) which contain yearly action plans. It is observed that these MTDPs are actually drafted with guidelines from the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) which is guided by aspirations of the prevailing government. Ghana currently lacks a national long term development plan.

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A further understanding of the actual mechanisms (data collection and engagement processes) by which the NDPC ensures that local realities inform the Assemblies' Development Plans (DPs) is contextually useful. The literature indicates that, District Assemblies in Ghana are encouraged to facilitate the preparation of Community Development Plans (CDPs) having found them to be sources of valuable data for planning and decision making. It is expected that each district gathers data from at least 50 percent of their communities and where Plans prepared by Sub-District Structures (SDS), through participatory processes exist, they should be considered as representing community perspective on current needs and aspirations. If the need arises, such plans should be reviewed and used. In a situation where the plans do not exist, the community perspective on current needs and aspirations should be compiled through consultation with the people in the Sub-District levels. Community needs and aspirations should be captured in the form of issues which can then be harmonized with the issues identified in the performance review and district profile (NDPC, 2013).

The UDS has since its inception as a university for pro poor scholarship, challenged itself to facilitate a new thinking agenda. Following along paths that can be likened to John Dewey's and Paulo Friere's conceptions of Education, The University was modeled along Friere's conception of praxis and Dewey's highly recognized Service Learning Theory (SLT). It has multi-campuses located in the northern savannas of Ghana. It was established in 1992 by the Government of Ghana (PNDC Law 279) to "blend the academic world with the community in order to provide constructive interaction between the two for the total development of northern Ghana in particular, and the country as a whole" (PNDC Law 279, Section 2). Thus, the University by law had to develop curricula that focused on community engagement and development and on poverty alleviation strategies, since its major area of operation are the poorest part of Ghana.

The commitment of UDS to poverty alleviation and the empowerment of poor and marginalized communities have resulted in a successful blend of academic programs with intensive, practical and demand-driven training (UDS, 2014). Community engagement is compulsory for all students involved in all the first degree programs. This program is called Third Trimester Field Practical Program (TTFPP). Student groups stay in communities and research with community members to profile communities and learn together. Recognizing that sometimes the answers to a rural community's concerns may lie within the community itself, the program has given priority to documenting and teasing out the traditional knowledge systems of communities.

Over the years, the focus for the program's benefits has always been the students and the university (Clark & Jasaw 2014). This study however wishes to delve into the community aspect too. What opportunities, challenges, agreements and disagreements are there to demonstrate linkages for the community to benefit in areas of development programing, support or direct benefits?

A review of the of the guidelines for local government development planning by the NDPC indicates that whether a CDP exists or not, the TTFPP (the program) and its output could serve as facilitative tools for the development of these MDPs and Development Planning for three main reasons. The program serves as an empowering process, building the capacities of community members through observations and interactions with students and staff, giving the communities a blueprint of their voice (the program output) which they could use to influence any Development Planning process involving them, and then also pointing the various data categories to watch out for incase of review where less than 50 percent of communities in a particular District benefited. A former Vice Chancellor of the UDS caps the program as;

"At UDS we believe that the impact of the TTFPP on rural people, including rural women and their girl children as well as on students and staff of the University and

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the nation as a whole will be phenomenal. The mandate, vision and mission of the University for Development Studies enjoins it to work closely with communities and grassroots institutions to ensure that poverty alleviation measures are worked in a participatory problem-solving manner. That means both staff and students must be able to interact intimately with community members to identify with them their problems and again with them proffer solutions. It is the TTFPP that ensures that this is achieved" (Kaburise, 2006:3).

The extent to which reforms in educational policy (the UDS model) is articulated to create linkages between the university on one hand, development policy and practice on the other hand for possible uptake of knowledge remains unknown. It is a challenge locating UDS space in development planning guidelines and agencies mandated to execute development of local communities. What does the objective of supporting the decentralization program mean to the UDS? How is UDS realizing the above objective of the program? Has the UDS made any practical attempts to be recognized and regarded in development planning spaces at the District Assemblies? What were the experiences for both Assemblies and UDS? Is there any coordination between UDS and District Assemblies to ensure that community engagement, like the experience of Al-Ahfad University, inform development planning? Could this UDS case be one of those conceptual cases Pain (2006) observed?

"....how much does governments' actually welcome academic involvement? Do academics feel sense of responsibility to effect change on the ground as well as suggesting it? Do academics seetheory and activism, or research and praxis as separate or linked? How does one choose where to focus one's efforts – the minister's ear or the grassroots, either or neither of which might be effective?"

The preceding sections provides responses to the above questions by investigating the UDS experience and exploring potentials of community engagement and development planning at the local government level in Ghana. Adopting a qualitative approach and a case study, using purposive sampling to select three Districts from the Upper West Region as cases of investigation, this study is therefore a search for new connections and possibilities for action by the University and policy makers.

1.2 The Third Trimester Field Practical Program (TTFPP)

The Third Trimester Field Practical Program (The Program) is a unique type of University-Community engagement pursued by the UDS. The university operates on trimester basis and a whole third trimester of every year is dedicated for community work. The Program requires small teams of students to live in often remote communities and to work on a community-defined project over an extended period, trying to solve a real quality-of-life issue (Clark & Jasaw, 2014).

1.2.1 The TTFPP in Perspective

UDS was established in 1992 and the TTFPP began in 1993. The statutory mission of UDS is to "blend the academic world with that of the community in order to provide constructive interaction between the two for the total development of Northern Ghana, in particular, and the country as a whole" (UDS, 2014).The Program aims to give every UDS undergraduate student a period of intensive academic and practical engagement with rural and deprived communities in northern Ghana and beyond. Assessments of students on the program contribute towards their final class of degree. The aims of the Program (UDS, 2014) are:

1. Promoting active and constructive interactions of both students and staff with the local communities to facilitate socio-economic transformation;

2. Exposing both students and lecturers, practically, to the nexus of development problems of deprived communities in Ghana and particularly in Northern Ghana;

3. Fostering favorable attitudes in students towards working in deprived communities;

4. Supporting the district assemblies, local communities and other development actors to implement and sustain the government's decentralization and other pro-poor programs;

5. Placing the University in a better position to provide useful services through the exchange of knowledge and its application to address the intractable development needs and aspirations of these communities;

6. Informing the ongoing research, teaching and learning activities of the University, which are designed to meet the development needs of local communities.

By all standards, the TTFPP is an efficacious experience and students work out of deprived communities without potable water, electricity, health facilities and motorable roads after eight weeks, totally changed in their perceptions and thinking about rural development in Ghana.

Clark and Jasaw (2014) reported that, Students in Year 1 are organized into teams of eight to ten (male and female), and since the 2002–2003 academic year each team has comprised students from a wide range of faculties and departments within the University. The number of teams sent out each year has varied with the university's intake and is currently around 460. The program has so far covered all districts in the three Northern regions, as well as the Brong-Ahafo Region, with seven in Ashanti Region, five in the Volta Region and one in the Eastern Region.

Addressing the students before the 2011 TTFPP, the Vice Chancellor, Professor Haruna Yakubu re-emphasized the importance of the TTFPP to the academic training at UDS when he said "the

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TTFPP is a must do academic program. No student can successfully graduate from this University without full participation in the TTFPP" (UDS, 2012).

The teams are chosen by UDS staff to ensure a broad mix of disciplines, campuses (UDS has four) and sex. The students are mostly between 18 and 20 years old and normally straight from secondary school. These multi-disciplinary teams are allocated to a community that they visit for seven weeks each third trimester (May to July) in each of (originally) three years. The students may stay with local families or in community buildings and take personal responsibility for meals and health. Forty per cent of UDS students come from other regions of Ghana (with their very different cultures and environments) and, for the 60% who are from northern regions, the wide range of northern languages (49) across 70% of the country's landmass means that these small, remote villages are still a new cultural experience in terms of traditions, language, economy and, for some students, religion (ibid).

As future policy makers, the program is structured in a manner that students may feel the natural conditions of local people. The villages are usually much less well-endowed than the students' home areas in terms of the provision of water, electricity and health facilities. The communities chosen to host the students are selected mostly from the Brong Ahafo, Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions. The need for so many communities means that only those clearly unsuitable (no accommodation, inaccessible, unsafe or unwelcoming) are not approached. Staff liaises with the community leaders to get agreement to host a student team and check the accommodation and ensure no risks such as conflicts or disease outbreaks. Some communities have hosted several teams over a number of years.

First, there is a period of orientation for the students, held on campus, before each visit. The first year's visit comprises training in community studies, field and analytic methods and in how to

develop a community profile. The students get to know the local people, issues, geography and culture. During the second year's visit, the students and communities use participatory methods to identify the communities' problems and potentials, and so isolate one or more development issues requiring work and a holistic approach. The third year's visit sees the students apply their skills to helping the community solve her development problems. All the student teams are given a template of activities that comprises a protocol for community entry, setting up village and individual meetings and community exit procedures including presentations to the village of their work so far.

In the thinking of Kaburise (2006), a former vice chancellor of UDS, the form of engagement adopted by the UDS is an intensive and iterative process that introduces students to community studies in the first year. In the second year, the students, together with the communities, identify the development problems and challenges in their respective communities; and on that basis work together with the community members to formulate specific interventions. Some examples of the topics chosen by the communities are: waste management; trade-offs between food and cash crops; illegal gold-mining's effects; culture and health care; irrigation and poverty reduction. All the topics require an interdisciplinary approach from the multidisciplinary teams that often involves economics, management, education, health and cultural sensitivity. Each team is visited in the field by a supervisor who tries to deal with difficulties the students or communities would be having as well as giving support to the academic work.

1.2.2 Changes to the Program: The new approach

In 2011, there was a change. The year three task was added to year two work with each faculty deciding how the Third Trimester should be spent in year three. Some arranged

industrial attachments or internships, and others returned to the communities to continue their first- and second-year work.

The contribution made by each student is assessed each year. The teams' joint proposals, worked up with the community, are presented orally in and with the community and in written form to the University. It however still remains bleak whether the communities and District assemblies are made to witness the oral presentations. The format of the reports is specified by the University, and year two requires an introduction, methods, results, conclusions and recommendations. The assessors of the reports are multi-disciplinary. The distinctive features of the Program are (Clark & Jasaw, 2014)

1. The longitudinal element (the repeated visits to the same community);
2. The multidisciplinary teams and interdisciplinary topics and reports;
3. The University-wide scale;
4. The participative intent of the student/community discussions;
5. The long-term teamwork required from the students;
6. The emotional intelligence required of the students to negotiate the continuing relationship with their host communities;
7. The aim of real-world applicability and problem solving for the benefit of the communities.

Students are assessed at all the levels or phases of the program. These include orientation, field site, seminars/workshops and written reports. Staff members closely supervise the activities and students are scored on the field. They make oral presentations at their respective communities.

The Orientation component is aimed at introducing students to what they are expected to accomplish on the field and includes workshops/lectures on the application of appropriate research techniques for data collection and use. Students are taken through community entry techniques and protocols and on how to interact with communities, keeping in mind the different ethnic characteristics as they work in communities. This builds confidence in both the students and the communities. The orientation also includes lectures on safety precautions. Assessing students' participation in the orientation compels students to be punctual and responsive to the training. At present the orientation phase lasts one week. The orientation phase is assigned 10 percentage points. First year students are given orientation on the campus nearest to the region in which they would go for field placement. Second and third year students are taken through the necessary orientation during the second trimester on their respective campuses.

Under community placement, students are sent to communities in groups to undertake their field practical training program. Each student is expected to keep a field notebook to record his/her daily activities, which is countersigned by a field Coordinator (Supervisor) or a community-based immediate supervisor at the end of each day. These field notebooks are collected at the end of students' stay in the communities and assessed by the Supervisors. The field notebooks are assigned 15 percentage points. As part of the assessment, the immediate supervisors of the students, who are largely community-based, complete and submit pre-designed Field Evaluation Forms (FEF) on each student. This is assigned 15 percentage points. The physical presence of students on the field (Community entry) throughout the field work, which includes effective participation in field activities, also attracts 10 percentage points. (TTFPP manual, 2014)

Seminars are held in the respective communities for student groups to present their findings. These seminars provide an opportunity for the community and development planners to make inputs into

the students' work. Previously also, student groups used to submit comprehensive District reports to the host district assemblies but currently, evidence is hard to find.

1.3 Research Problem

Historically in African development planning circles, there has been an underutilization of cutting-edge knowledge by those making decisions and this is a puzzle to academics and policy researchers alike. There is an apparent gap between researchers and development planners in Africa (Jones 2011).

The UDS risks such an experience despite numerous potentials of producing knowledge that could facilitate better understanding and tackling of growing challenges of rural communities. From housing, water and sanitation, health, education, domestic violence, teenage pregnancy, child labor, local community organization, town planning to environmental protection, the UDS stands to be practically useful to local communities. It has a mandate to "blend the academic world with that of the community in order to provide constructive interaction between the two for the total development of northern Ghana, in particular, and the country as a whole" (UDS, 2011a). This informs its Problem Based Learning methods. The University has designed pedagogical mechanisms to facilitate policy through community study. However, not much can be said of the practical benefits of this academic exercise to local communities that collaborates as third parties. With several research reports produced over the last two decades exclusively for and with most hard to reach communities and deprived District Assemblies, specific information on the use of this knowledge by policy makers such as the district assemblies and other stakeholders in development, is very limited. Could this be a consequence of the fact that researchers and policy-makers operate with different values, languages, time-frames, reward systems and professional ties on nearly mutually exclusive platforms? Also, Jasaw and Clark (2014) forecasts the future of

the program and reports how challenging it will be to work with public authorities to allow TTFPP reports to yield relevance to affect real-world conditions especially in setting agenda for development planning at the Assembly level. Their study identified timing, research processes and reports quality, and accountability as issues contributing to such a challenge. However, they saw a possibility of working with NGO's, Activist groups and others as workable but could not demonstrate how or with any examples as shown in other universities (cf. Hart, Northmore, Gerhardt & Roger,2009: Krog, Nel & David, 2014: McDowell, 2001: Reardon, 2000). "..... However, work with charities, NGOs, activist groups and social enterprises might be easier" (p.13). Could this also explain why for over the past two decades the program has been running, no systematic attempts have been made to ascertain the program's experience in helping the District Assemblies to effectively implement the decentralization concept as intentioned by the program and its framers?

The study therefore wishes to explore the promising role of TTFPP as a model for evidence-based and participatory baseline research towards informing policies that address the real needs of local people and that will equally serve as data pool for other development actors.

Taking experiential evidence from actors within the District Assemblies, the study seeks to assess ways in which the TTFPP could be relevant to development planning at the assembly level. By so doing, the study also intends to build consensus on what can be done to make TTFPP relevant to Development Planning in Ghana.

1.4 Research Question

The general research question is: in what ways can TTFPP be more relevant to development planning at the Assembly level? Specifically, the study intends to address the following questions:

1. How is the UDS actualizing the program's objective of supporting District Assemblies to implement and sustain Government's decentralization program?

2. What is the relationship between the program and host Assembly's work plans?

3. What aspects' of the program promises relevance to development planning at the assembly level?

4. What can UDS and District Assemblies do after the program to make it relevant to policy?

1.5 Research Objectives

The general objective is to examine the ways that TTFPP can be more relevant to development planning at the Assembly level. The specific objectives are:

1. To examine how the UDS is realizing the program's objective of supporting District Assemblies to implement and sustain Government's decentralization program?

2. To assess the relationship between the program and host Assembly's work plans?

3. To discover aspects of the program that can complement development planning at the assembly level?

4. To recommend what UDS and District Assemblies can do after the program to make it relevant to development planning.

1.6 Study Significance and Contribution to Knowledge

The contribution of any academic work is seen in the light of its linkage "to larger, important or theoretical problems, social policy issues, or concerns of practice" (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). The University for Development Studies started its community engagement program in 1993. More than 20 years into the program, there is very little work on its actual impact on the communities it has served so far. For this reason, there is a very big vacuum in terms of measuring the program performance and lessons for the future. This study fills that void or set the agenda.

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The study offers some insights that will generate dialogue among Ghanaian policy makers, Development Partners and the UDS on how institutional innovations such as the TTFPP can facilitate policy that reflects the real needs of rural people. The study also exposes gaps in the actual information gathering processes of local government units as required for national development planning by the National Development Planning Commission and as a result, brings the program output to the lime light for scrutiny on how it can serve as both a lead to the kind of primary data to collect and a data source as well. The work also contributes to or serves as a reference for discourses that seek to investigate how academic institutional innovations like this one from the UDS can have direct bearing on development planning.

1.7 Structure of thesis

This first chapter highlighted the background of the study, the research problem, research questions, objectives and significance of the study. The second chapter is on literature review and the conceptual and theoretical frameworks upon which the study is built. The third chapter discusses the methodological approach informing the study and the fourth chapter analyses, discusses and reports the narratives from the respondents' whiles the fifth chapter presents recommendations and concluded the work.

1.8 Study Limitations

There were inhibiting factors in carrying out this research. Merriam (1998, p. 20) states: "the human instrument is as fallible as any other research instrument." The researcher as human instrument is limited by being human – mistakes were made, opportunities were missed, personal bias interferes. McMillan and Schumacher (2001, pp. 23 - 24) observed that undertakings such as school initiatives (TTFPP) are public enterprises and are influenced by the external environment.

The institutions themselves change: legislative mandates and judicial orders change, the structure of schools change and programs or other activities are added or deleted continuously.

Different respondents processed ideas differently and the situational elements were also considered indicating the complexity of the research. The respondents without realizing may use particular words to express their ideas that are used as an indication of their attitudes towards TTFPP integration in policy agenda setting at the local level. This study did not test the different leadership and management styles either at the Assembly or Directorate of TTFPP or even the UDS. It was also difficult getting information from the directorate for any purpose. Whether for academic or development planning purpose, the current structures at the directorate inhibits information seeking hence the study failed to include verbatim responses from the directorate. However, some observations were made at the directorate and reported.

Also, the sample is low on purpose, (Time, finance, logistics) making generalization of study findings of less interest.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 Literature Review

This chapter reviews related literature on university community engagement and its impact on students and community. Review of related literature is essential as it explains a cross section of views and possibilities on the subject matter and contextualizes the study (Oquaye, 2004). This chapter is in two sections; the theoretical framework and the conceptual framework. It looks at the concepts of Community, Development Planning at the assembly level in Ghana, University-community engagement and covers other topical issues that relate to the subject of the study.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

When research questions explore new territory, previous literature and theory may be inadequate for constructing frameworks for the study (Marshal & Rossman, 1999, p. 46). This clearly depicts the situation at hand as there are very limited resources to explicate this study. That notwithstanding, situating the legitimacy of the study is very important and therefore the topic under investigation and for that matter the problem, must find expression in a theory or model. Earlier known work on the TTFPP (Clark & Jasaw, 2014) treated it as one belonging to the Participatory Action Research (PAR) tradition. However, per the design of this study and upon careful review of literature, it stands clear that the program per its current orientation and outlook, lacks one of the most important principles of PAR and that is "action" itself. There is yet no known evidence on any action that emanates out of the program to affect real-world benefits to communities. Granted that this holds at least for now, the program is more of the Service Learning Theory (SLT) tradition championed by John Dewey. This study therefore adopts it as the theoretical framework.

A theoretical framework forms a point of reference against which new empirical findings can be analyzed and discussed (Tanghoi, 2007). Consistent with this, the investigation of the problem, seeks reference to the Service Learning Theory advocated by John Dewey, which sees students and community engaged in activities as primary beneficiaries. The primary goal is to provide community service as well as to enhance student learning. Community service is integrated with scholarly activities such as learning, teaching and research. It therefore takes into consideration, whatever services, however little students render the community or vice versa during periods of engagement. Though yet to be systematically proven, my experience as a former student of the program discounts any attempt to rule out student services to communities. Services in the form of teaching, community group organization, capacity building, change advocacy such as for girl child education, hygiene and sanitation, youth activism, among others, are always visible.

2.1.1 Service Learning Theory: The dichotomy

Service-learning entails a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development (Jacoby, 1996, p. 5). Service learning proposes the development of high education in relation to the needs of the community. Specifically, students engaged in service-learning will contribute to the community, while at the same time receiving valuable education from the community members. Service-learning is different from traditional pedagogy in several areas, including the role of the student, the role of the instructor, the kind of learning that is valued, and the emphasis on societal rather than individual responsibility (Howard, 2003). According to the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning (2008), this is done in ways which are connected to and consistent with the core academic mission of universities and colleges. In these situations, students are immersed in and work with, rather than for, the

community (Neururer & Rhoads, 1998). It is a holistic, student-centered pedagogy aimed at creating an engaged and participatory environment rooted in dialogue and collaboration. In simple terms, Service-learning is a form of experiential education, linking academic content with community service. Those that readily come to mind are the USA, Germany, Canada, South Africa, Sudan, Nigeria and Ghana.

As a form of experiential education, service-learning has its roots in John Dewey's theory of experience and education, which encompasses the interaction of knowledge and skills with experience as key to learning (Jacoby, 1996). Dewey's writing informed service learning through a philosophy of education, a theory of inquiry, a conception of community and democratic life, and a means for individual engagement in society towards the end of social transformation. While Dewey never specifically addressed the conceptualization of service-learning, his writings do analyze five specific areas of relevance to it. These include linking education to experience, democratic community, social service, reflective inquiry and education for social transformation.

Together, these principles form pedagogy aimed at the development of democratic values and engaged citizenship (Saltmarsh, 1996). Service-learning therefore provides students with the opportunity to engage in structured activities that are intentionally designed to enhance student learning and civic responsibility, while addressing community needs (Jacoby, 1996).

2.1.2 Principles of Service Learning

Service learning model recognizes that student engagement with community members is based on inquiries. According to John Dewey, it is the reflection on these inquiries that constitute experience not the mere activity of community engagement. Service learning should provide students with an opportunity to reflect critically on the meaning of their service experience (Jacoby, 1996, p. 15). Reflection, well-established as a pedagogical tool (Boud & Walker, 1998; Cowan, 1998), creates

"situations in which learners are able to make their own meaning rather than have it imposed on them" (Boud & Walker, 1998, p. 199). Reflection happens when learners "analyze or evaluate one or more personal experiences, and attempt to generalize from that thinking. They do this so that, in the future, they will be more skillful or better informed or more effective, than they have been in the past" (Cowan, 1998, p. 17). Furthermore, reflection allows students to analyze not only what has taken place, but also why it is taking place. Reflection encourages students to move beyond the focus on the individual to look at systems and structures (Keller, Nelson, & Wick, 2003). This principle of the model affords UDS students the opportunity to reflect on the dilapidating conditions of local communities and compare with theory to identify where and what failure emanates from and attempt to confront these issues either through sensitization or advocacy while also enhancing their knowledge and experience as potential policy makers.

According to the Canadian Alliance for Community Service Learning (2008), service learning must be linked directly to the mission and philosophy of educational institutions. This position is shared by the University of South Africa in their core values for Community engagement. Service learning, when linked to the mission and philosophy of educational institutions, allows for legitimacy and control in all student engagements with local communities. UDS was established with a clear mandate to champion this direction and hence its mission is rooted in the statutory books of Ghana along such lines. The model provides for students to legitimately lead community members to seek action from duty bearers along the lines of what they perceive as development as this study seeks to establish.

Service learning provides for students to interact with diversity (Jacoby 1996). Students are taken out of their familiar zones to less privileged communities. This aspect of the model also defines the UDS program. In this case, students get the chance to meet other students from different

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faculties with different backgrounds at different communities for the first time at quite unfamiliar locations. The philosophy is that different ideas and viewpoints are blended with that of the community for concrete knowledge sharing. It affords students to experience in practical terms, the ups and downs of pluralism or tolerance in development planning.

Service learning advocates for educational institutions to structure curriculum in ways that students can have the opportunity to experiment knowledge learned in the classroom when at the community (Jacoby, 1996). This enhances experiential learning. The model aims to give students a practical hands-on experience as part of their academic training. The UDS program does nothing different from this.

Through service-learning, students acquire valuable skills and also increase their competence and confidence as learner practitioners in their field in a way that nurtures their abilities and provides minimal risk to the community members (Howard, 2003). This is because the students work under the guidance and supervision of faculty. This makes it possible for students to confidently lead a course for social transformation. It equally stands in to judge the credibility of student reports. Such focus defines education as the doings or actions of the human hands as a result of empowerment or knowledge re/production.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of a study is the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that support and inform research. Miles and Huberman (1994) state that a conceptual framework "explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied—the key factors, concepts, or variables—and the presumed relationships among them" (p. 18). Consistent with this, the conceptual framework seeks to provide conceptual meaning to the

following concepts; Community, Community engagement, Third Trimester Field Practical Program (TTFPP) and Development Planning.

2.2.1. Conceptualizing Community

Community, as described by Hall (2010:25) is " a cluster of households or an entire region, as an organization ranging from a provincial government department to a Non-Governmental Organization, a school, a clinic, a hospital, a church or a mosque or as a part of the university itself". Baradei and Amin (2010:109) state that because the word "community" has many implications, it could be referred to as "a network of shared interests and concerns". Communities can be based on different criteria such as geographic, ethnic and religious or even in relation to schools. In this study, the term community will mean a group of people as in households with distinct history and shared beliefs and located geographically within a District Assembly.

University-Community engagement can take on many forms such as distance education, community based research, participatory action research, professional community service and service-learning. It is a two-way interaction between the university and the community with which the university forms partnerships that yield beneficial outcomes for both the community and the university (Unisa, 2008:8). Community engagement takes place by means of service learning, institutional engagement with local communities and is linked to teaching, learning and research. In this study, community engagement is defined as an initiative which provides for teaching and learning as well as for academic staff, students and local community members to engage as they work to identify issues of relevance for human and community development in mutually beneficial collaborations.

2.3. Principles of University Community Engagement

According to the University of South Africa's Community Engagement and Outreach Policy (UnisaCE, 2008), an effective University Community Engagement should be rooted on the following principles:

1. It finds expression in the strategic recognition of the entire University.

2. It is purely an academic affair, involving both students and lecturers.

3. It entails active involvement of local community members. University community engagement is based on a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and expertise between universities and communities.

4. It involves the attention of duty bearers and service providers.

5. It takes the form of helping communities identify their problems in a systematic manner and helping them find solutions.

For the Australian University Community Engagement Alliance (AUCEA, nd), the critical difference and distinguishing characteristic of community engagement through service-learning is its reciprocal and balanced emphasis on both student learning and addressing unmet community needs. The goal of Community Engagement should therefore be to facilitate informed debate and dialogue in the community on issues of local and global importance; and to design and deliver high quality teaching and learning that responds to community needs and produces graduates who are ethical, employable and engaged citizens (Garlick and Langworthy, 2008).

2.4 Development Planning in Ghana

The literature suggests certain thematic areas for local government units to consider in their line of development work as provided for by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) in the commission's regular guidelines to the District Assemblies. The NDPC is the state institution

responsible for the coordination of national development plan (*see* ACT 487). The National Development Planning Commission is responsible for the coordination of national development in Ghana. Normally, the commission issues guidelines in accordance to the medium term development objectives of the ruling government. Through the regional coordinating councils, the NDPC is able to monitor and coordinate the work of all Districts in Ghana.

By the approach, District Assemblies in Ghana are encouraged to facilitate the preparation of Local/Community Development Plans (CDPs) having found them to be sources of valuable data for planning and decision making. It is expected that each district gathers data from at least 50 percent of their communities and where Plans prepared by Sub-District Structures, through participatory processes exist, they should be considered as representing community perspective on current needs and aspirations. If the need arises, such plans should be reviewed and used. In a situation where the Plans do not exist, the community perspective on current needs and aspirations should be compiled through consultation with the people in the Sub-District levels. Community needs and aspirations should be captured in the form of issues which can then be harmonized with the issues identified in the performance review and district profile. (NDPC, 2013).

Upon a review of the current planning guidelines (NDPC, 2013) for meeting the objectives of the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSDA), the current national medium term development plan in Ghana which is not too different from the previous ones in terms of methodology and approaches to development planning, the thematic areas to consider by the district assemblies include; Physical and Natural environment, culture, settlement systems, Food security, Governance, Social services. HIV & AIDS, Gender, Population, Water Security and Disaster risk. These are very reminiscent of the dimensions of UDS Community engagement Program.

This study therefore regards development planning as the process by which data and issues raised by UDS through its community engagement program influences development work at the District through to the regional level. Figure 2.4 below compares the policy issues exposed by TTFPP and the thematic issues required by assemblies to formulate policy.

Figure 2.4 Dimensions for local Government Development Planning in Ghana**.**

TTFPP   **District Assemblies**
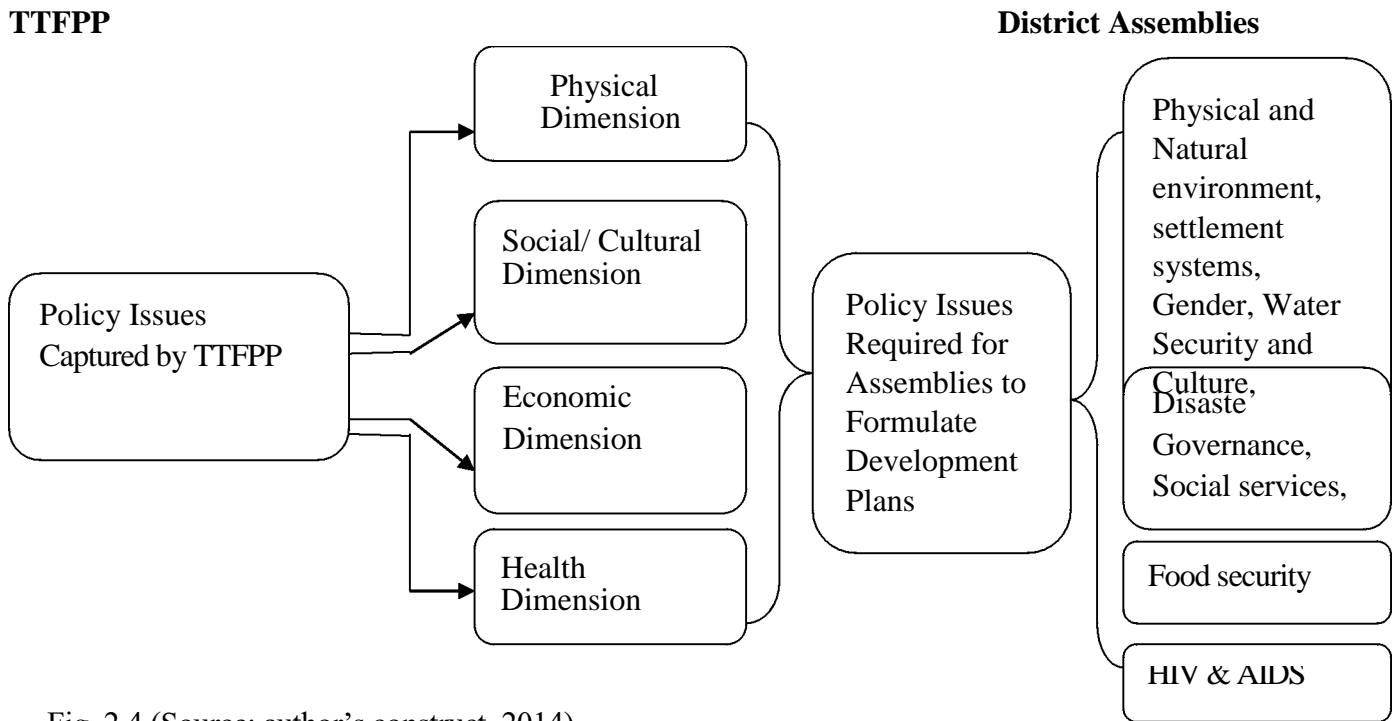
Fig. 2.4 (Source: author's construct, 2014)

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2.5 Conceptual Framework for Development Planning through TTFPP

To achieve the objective of this research, a framework has been developed to enable the researcher compare the dimensions of TTFPP on the policy issues required by Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies to formulate development plans. The policy issues captured by TTFPP act as mirror, reflecting policy issues required for assemblies to formulate Development Plans in the framework. The idea is to visualize a funnel situation; filtering refined information from the communities through TTFPP intervention to the assemblies for planning decisions that relate closer to what communities say they need.

UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Students collaborates with communities to identify development issues

TTFPP

Community

District Assemblies refine and consider student recommendations for Development policy

District Assembly

Action taken to affect real world benefits through policy

Socially and scientifically informed policy
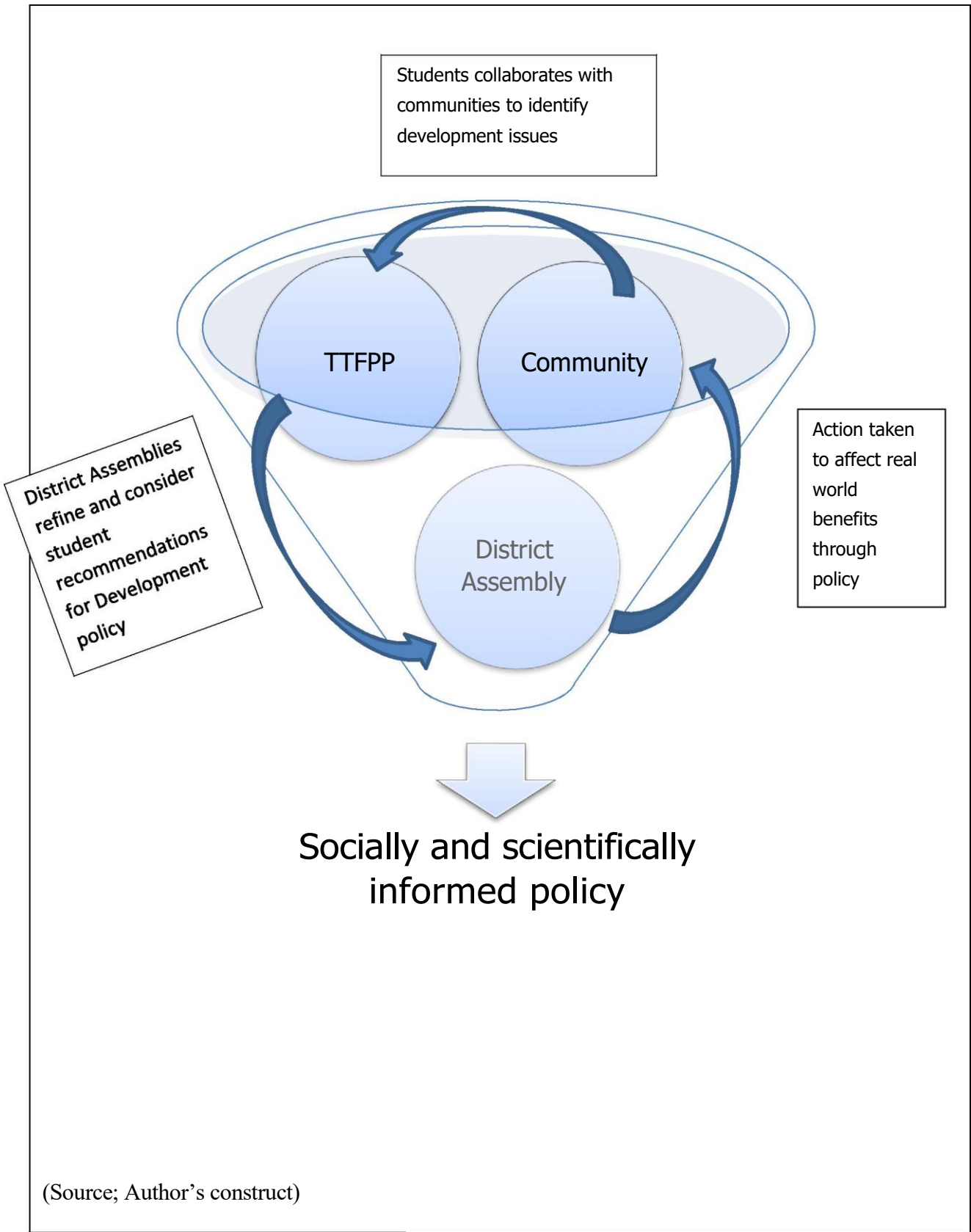
(Source; Author's construct)

Fig. 2.5 Conceptual framework

The above funnel illustrates the conceptual relationship assumed (by the study) between the Program, Communities and District assemblies.

2.6 Summary of Chapter Two

This chapter looked at various theoretical and conceptual underpinnings governing the study. A distinction was made between participatory action research and Service learning theory proposed by John Dewey. With such a distinction, TTFPP was appropriately regarded as a practice under the service learning theory than participatory action research tradition. Key concepts were also clarified and a conceptual framework established for the study.

The next chapter discusses the methodological procedures employed in the conduct of the study.

`CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Research Methodology

Recent literature puts the accent on the critical role of universities in propelling development within communities in which they are found (Clark & Jasaw, 2014; Angie, Simon, Chloe & Polly, 2009; Steven & Jennifer, 2002). The conceptual framework and the literature review presented in chapter two together with the research design and methodology outlined in this chapter indicate the approach used to address the research questions listed in chapter one.

The literature on methodology recognizes two main paradigms for research – qualitative and quantitative (Creswell, 1994). While the quantitative method is related to the traditional, the positivist, the experimental, or the empiricist paradigm (ibid), the literature divides the qualitative paradigm into 'the constructivist approach, the naturalistic' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the interpretative (Smith, 1983), or the post-positivist or post-modern perspective (Quantz, 1992). Although this research uses the qualitative approach, it does not consider itself post-positivist or post-modern. While acknowledging the significance of the individual and the subjective, it tries to be disciplined in seeking evidence and analyzing their correlations.

More so, the choice for qualitative methodology to investigate the phenomenon under discussion stems from the fact that if enough is known of an area to sustain a priori patterning, hypothesis formation, or even theory explication, then the positivist approach with its more quantitative methods might be used. If so little is known of an area such that the simple identification of that which is not known becomes problematic then the naturalistic approach with its more qualitative methods is preferable (Westbrook, 1994).

Additionally, qualitative methodology seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of respondents and this is particularly ideal given the issue under investigation. The perspectives of key institutions and persons with institutional memories were investigated.

The methodological design is the logic through which a researcher addresses the research questions (Mason, 2002, p. 30), and gains data for the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 157). Research methodology encompasses the complete research process: the research approaches, procedures and data-collection or sampling methods used (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 74). Therefore, the aim of research methodology is to understand the processes and not the product of scientific inquiry (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 39). According to Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 22), social research paradigms can be classified in the four categories indicated below:
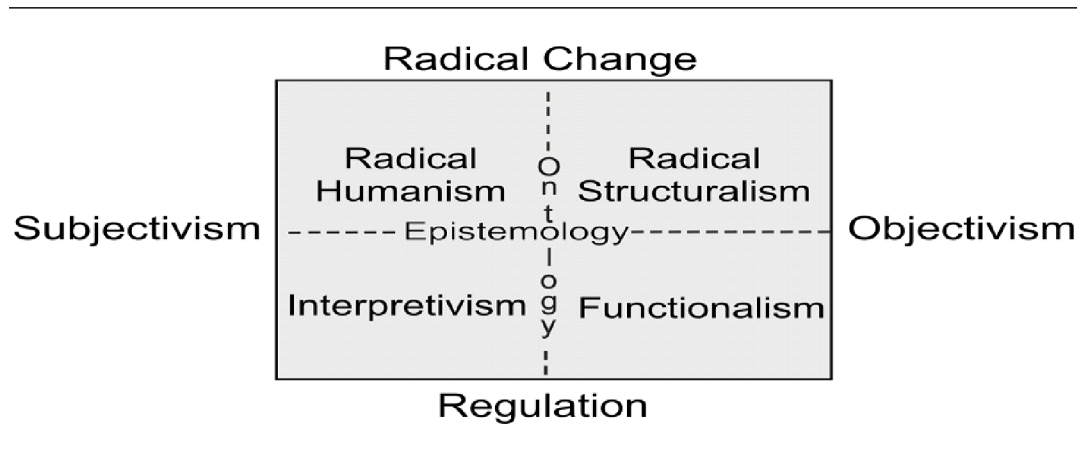
Fig. 3: Paradigms of Social Research: Adopted from Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 22)

The study followed an interpretive approach to explore, explain and describe the UDS role in influencing development plans of District Assemblies through its Community Engagement Program. Mason (2002, p. 56) indicates that the interpretive approach not only sees people as primary sources of data but also seek the meaning and interpretation that people give to their social world. Cohen and Manion (1994, p. 36) state: "Efforts are made to get inside the person and to

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understand within." According to Flick, Von Kardoff and Steinke (2004, p. 5) the qualitative research approach: "Is more open and thereby, more involved than other research strategies and forms the starting point for the construction of a grounded theoretical basis." Cohen and Manion (1994, p.37) maintained that: "Theory should not precede research but follow it" as the "theory becomes sets of meanings which yield insight and understanding of people's behavior." The interpretive approach is therefore grounded in a philosophical position that is broadly interpretive in the sense that it is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced and constituted. Methods of data generation that are used are flexible and sensitive to the social context in which data are produced. Emphasis therefore is placed on holistic forms of analysis and explanation (Mason, 2002,).

3.1 Research Design

The research design is the researcher's plan of enquiry that puts paradigms of interpretation into motion on how to proceed in gaining an understanding of a phenomenon in its natural setting (Bogdan & Knopp, 2006, p.54). The purpose of a research design is to provide, within an appropriate mode of inquiry, the most valid and accurate answers possible to the research question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 22). An effective research design outlines the defined purpose in which there is coherence between the research questions and the methods or approaches proposed to generate credible and verifiable data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 74).

As indicated in Chapter one, the perceptions of respondents relative to their personal experiences owing to their status and level of knowledge in their respective institutions are investigated. This indicates that the research design is exploratory, explanatory, descriptive and emancipatory in nature (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, pp. 79 - 81; Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 33).

This exploratory research investigates the under-researched phenomena and the prime purpose is to develop understanding in an area that is little understood. This research can generate ideas for further research and lead to the identification and/or determination of categories of meaning and justifiably so, this study has identified ways that shapes UDS TTFPP as a decentralization planning program pursuant to another scientific study, probably in the future, to investigate and establish quantitatively, weights and relationships of the identified ways so that priority in terms of reforms can be appropriately apportioned. This adds to identify plausible relationships shaping the phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 33).

The study is also descriptive in nature as it documents and describes the complexities of the phenomena, the influence of personalities and institutions, the differences of opinions on issues and how the difference influences the results (Merriam, 1998, pp. 30 - 31), as well as the process and use of data that was collected (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 33).

The explanatory side of this research is mainly concerned with causes. The focus is on seeking, providing and evaluating the influence that two or more phenomena have on each other, explaining a fundamental relationship that is important or meaningful. In this particular case, the study explored possibilities for the UDS to influence development planning at the District Assemblies through TTFPP.

The study is also emancipatory in nature because it seeks to generate a deeper understanding from the perspectives of stakeholders that will reflect on opportunities for engagement in social action. From the perspective of participants, the manners in which they define circumstances for action, are set out.

Consequently, the study is a case study as findings are limited only to the experience and perspectives of the respondents. Generalization was therefore not the goal but to further support the believe that, the lived and geographical experience of the study participants, however quantitatively small, counts and is worth attention for shaping the program or looking further into the issues raised.

3.1.2 Case study as a Design and Approach

Taking guidance from Merriam (1998) who maintained that case study can be further described as particularistic, heuristic, or descriptive. Particularistic is defined as relating to the specific focus of the case. In this case, the study's focus is only one particular aspect of TTFPP, the use of the outcome.

A heuristic case study is able to shed light on the phenomenon, allowing the reader to extend their experience, discover new meaning, or confirm what is known. It explains the reasons for a problem, the background of the situation, what happened, and why.

A descriptive case study is complete and very literal in its reporting of findings of research and references the "thick description" (p. 29) of investigations. The descriptive case illustrates the complexities of the situation and presents information from a wide variety of sources and viewpoints in a variety of ways as done in chapter four of this study.

Merriam (1998) provided significant direction for the researcher using a case study research design. This supported the theoretical framework as the definition of the research problem. She also discussed the concept of sampling in case study, where unlike other types of qualitative research, there are two levels of sampling inherent in the design. The first is the selection of the case to be studied; the second is the sampling of the people within the case. Sampling of people

may be purposeful sampling -- typical, unique, maximum variation, convenience, snowball, chain, network, or theoretical, each with its own features -- or random sampling. In the case of this study, the TTFPP as the topic, Upper West Region as the case study area and District Planning Officers, assembly members and staff of UDS were purposively sampled. Extending Merriam's explication of case study, one can only arrive at one conclusion and that is to say in a case study, the case becomes the sample.

Regarding data collection, Merriam (1998) noted that interviews are the most common source of data in case study research. She commented that observations are also an important but highly subjective data source whose use must be carefully considered. Merriam cited Gold's (1958) description of four stances that the observer might take: complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant, and complete observer. Merriam extended this analysis to include a fifth perspective, that of the collaborative partner, where the researcher and participant are complete partners in the research process. She noted that at the other end of this continuum is the researcher participant, where the researcher may participate socially but at arm's length. The last category is what the study assumed as the researcher was situated as a former student who experienced the phenomenon and still managed to hold bias at arm's length.

However, the relationship of the researcher with the setting will change as the research is undertaken. Merriam (1998) provided commentary on data analysis strategies within a case study, such as ethnographic, narrative, phenomenological, constant comparative, content analysis, and analytic induction. She commented that "historically, data analysis in qualitative research has been something like a mysterious metamorphosis".

Levels of data analysis include construction of categories or themes, naming the categories and sub-categories, and developing systems for placing the data into categories. Through this process

of data analysis comes the thinking and theorizing about the data that provides the richly interpretive narrative that is the heart of the case.

In summary, Merriam (1998) provided a highly accessible approach to case study research that is organized and thorough. She offered a firm grounding in the philosophical paradigm of qualitative research, while also covering the mechanics of conducting a qualitative case study in a straightforward manner. As an educator, she revealed her approach as a seasoned practitioner of the research strategy.

Ritchie and Lewis (2003, p. 83) indicated that "qualitative samples especially case studies are usually small because a phenomenon has to appear only once to be part of an analytic map". There is no point increasing the sample size when no new evidence is obtained. The sampling would have been terminated when a point of saturation or redundancy is reached (Mason, 2002; Merriam, 1998). This explains why this case study elicited responses from Development Planning Officers of three district assemblies that have previously benefited from the program, six respective district assembly members and the program's former and current Directors.

3.1.3 Selecting Research Respondents

Like Merriam (1998) noted above, the respondents were handpicked on the basis of their typicality. Cohen and Manion (1994, p. 89) state; "in this way the researcher builds up a sample that is satisfactory to her specific needs." In this approach, the selection of respondents was criterion-based (Mason, 2002). The respondents were chosen because they have "...particular features or characteristics that will make possible detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles that the researcher wishes to study" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 78).

Traditionally, what you bring to the research from your background and identity has been treated as "bias," something whose influence needs to be eliminated from the design, rather than a valuable component of it. However, the explicit incorporation of one's identity and experience (what Strauss (1987) calls "experiential data") in research has recently gained much wider theoretical and philosophical support (cf. Berg & Smith (1988); Denzin & Lincoln (2000)). To this end, my personal experience as a former student who has gone through the program, for two years, provided guidance in the choosing of respondents.

Pursuant to the above, the study employed the purposive sampling strategy. This provided the opportunity to identify appropriately, past and present Directors of the program. After taking their views, the researcher enquired from them, the next avenue they think further answers could be generated for the research questions.

Also, consideration was given to time and cost of travels before purposively sampling Wa municipal, Nadowli and Wa West districts. Their planning officers were contacted for responses from the development planning units. I then requested the assistance of the development planning officers to choose assemblymen who are active and can supply material data relevant to the objectives of the study. In total, all the three development planning officers suggested about forty three assembly members so I once again gave consideration to time and finance before sampling out two assembly members from each of the three districts. Whiles my initial thought was that each assembly member represents a community, it turned out that they represented more than just a community, some were representing as much as eight communities dispersedly located within their respective electoral areas.

On the case of UDS staff, a former director to the program, the current director, two faculty deans and the Pro-vice chancellor (now Vice chancellor), were purposively sampled to assess superior

submission about the program as well as its history. The views of these key informants from the UDS at best represent the general perception of the TTFPP within the entire university community because they are in positions of leadership and direction.

Merriam (1998) emphasizes that: "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned. The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study." Respondents were therefore selected non-randomly for a particular reason (McBurney, 1994, p.203), to generate meaningful and relevant data that will enable the researcher to address the research questions and form grounded arguments to support the findings (Mason, 2002).

The two types of purposive sampling used in this study include; maximum variation sampling, as well as snowball sampling. In maximum variation sampling, units are included that represent diverse variations of specified characters and important common patterns are identified (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 33; Merriam, 1998, p. 63).

Respondents were selected because they have particular features or characteristics that enabled detailed description and exploration in this research study. Diversity was included so that the impact of the characteristics can also be explored (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Snowball sampling was also employed by asking respondents to point out other members of that population whom they know. Snowball refers to the process of accumulation as each located subject suggests other subjects whom they know are information rich (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Merriam, 1998). A summary of the profile of the respondents is presented below:

PROFILE OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

RESPONDENT	EXPERIENC	REMARKS
Development Planning Officer 1	12 Years	Remarkable experience in development planning and social Development Planning
Development Planning Officer 2	10 Years	Remarkable experience in development planning and social Development Planning
Development Planning Officer 3	7 Years	Remarkable experience in development planning and social Development Planning
TTFPP Director 1	6 years	Remarkable experience in development planning and social Development Planning
TTFPP Director 2	1 year	Proposed but was not available for the
Assembly Member 1	5 years	Remarkable experience in development planning and social Development Planning
Assembly Member 2	13 years	Remarkable experience in development planning and social Development Planning
Assembly Member 3	9 years	Remarkable experience in development planning and social Development Planning
Assembly Member 4	8 years	Remarkable experience in development planning and social Development Planning
Assembly Member 5	7 year	Assembly Member 5 7 years Remarkable experience in development planning and social Development Planning
Assembly Member 6	13 years	Remarkable experience in development planning and social Development Planning

Fig. 3.1 Profile of Respondents

3.1.4 Sources of Data and Data Collection Activities

Since this is a qualitative study, the researcher anticipated multiple methods and multiple sources of data and this resulted in a wealth of textual data. The study used two techniques to collect data:Documentary evidence consisting of primary source materials relating to TTFPP and local government Development Planning in Ghana. Student TTFPP reports and other documents relating to the University policy on community engagement were read and analyzed. All these were sourced from the University's directorate of TTFPP and website section on TTFPP. Also, documents on development planning, medium term development plans of selected districts and several other published resources on development were explored.

a) Unstructured interviews with participants in development planning at the assembly level and experts or stakeholders related to community engagement activities and Development Planning. About one hour long, each, is spent on elucidating primary data from respondents with both experiential and academic knowledge on TTFPP and local governance in Ghana. This generated volumes of transcribed data in the form of narratives.

In all, the perspectives and expectations of TTFPP program directors (present and past), six assembly members and three District Assemble planning officers were investigated using an

interview schedule and an audio tape recorder to support accurate capturing of data. The recorded audios were transcribed into textual data from which interpretation and analysis were made.

3.1.5 Qualitative Data Collection Tools and Methods

Mills (2003, p. 4) indicates that: "Qualitative research uses narrative and descriptive approaches for data collection to understand the way things are and what they mean from the perspective of the research respondents.' Mason (2002) points out in order to use the above mentioned approaches, it "requires a data collection instrument that is sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting them." The qualitative research methods used to generate data in this study for all the four objectives were in-depth interviews and field notes.

3.1.5.1. Interview

Interviews are one of the most common forms of qualitative research methods (Silverman, 2004) and involve the construction or reconstruction of knowledge (Mason, 2002, p. 63). The interview is an intense experience for both parties involved. An interview is a flexible, interactive and generative tool to explore meaning and language in depth (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 142). The interview generates much information that can be used to provide insight of the respondents' experiences.

Qualitative interviewing refers to in-depth, semi-structured or loosely structured forms of interviewing (Mason, 2002) and requires asking veritably open ended questions in a natural setting (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 141) in order to make analytical comparisons (Mason, 2002, p.65). Other forms include structured interview and unstructured interviews. Structured Interview is the mode of choice when the interviewer knows what he or she does not know and can therefore frame appropriate questions to find it out, while the unstructured interview is the mode of choice when

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the interviewer does not know what he or she doesn't know and must therefore rely on the respondent to tell him or her (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, in the study, the unstructured interview method was used. Since qualitative interviewing is based on the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful and knowable; entering into their perspective becomes a major objective for the qualitative researcher.

3.1.5.2 In-Depth Interview

The in-depth interview was also used in this study. McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 42) state that the "in-depth interview merely extends and formalizes conversation and is often characterized as a conversation with a goal." The open-ended nature of this research method allows the respondents to answer the questions according to their own frame of reference (Bogdan & Knopp, 1992). The in-depth interview focuses on the individual. It provides an opportunity to address complex experiences and investigates each respondent's personal perspective using a range of probes and other techniques to achieve in-depth understanding of the personal context within which the research phenomenon is located. This type of data collection method generates data that adds richness, depth and roundedness to a study. The researcher and respondents interacted intensely; allowing for detailed subject coverage, clarification and understanding of motivations and decisions; and also generative in the sense of creating knowledge or thought. Structure was combined with flexibility and data was captured in their primary form. The data was tape-recorded for accurate transcription and analysis.

Ritchie and Lewis (2003), as well as Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002) indicate various advantages for using in-depth interview as a data collection method. These include;

1. Providing undiluted focus of the respondents.

2. Providing opportunity for detailed investigation of respondents' perspectives and experiences.

3. In-depth understanding of the personal and research context.

4. Providing detailed subject coverage.

5. Clarification and detailed understanding of respondents' motivations and decisions.

6. Combining interview structure with flexibility.

7. Encouraging respondents to talk freely; allowing exploring of impacts and outcomes.

8. Generating information through interaction between researcher and respondent.

9. Achieving depth in responding; opportunity to explore and explain

10. Generating new knowledge and thoughts.

11. Capturing data in its natural form.

12. Audio recording of data and taking note of changes in the format when transferred to text.

13. Obtaining much data in a short period.

14. Providing insight to respondents 'perspectives.

15. Allowing for immediate follow-up and clarification of respondents' responses.

16. Developing personal relationships in interacting with respondents.

3.1.5.3 Field notes

Field notes present additional opportunities to collect data during in-depth interviews. Notes were taken during the in-depth interviews then later expanded to constitute extensive field notes. Field notes provide an opportunity for the researcher to record and comment on thoughts about the setting, the respondents and activities. Such data can contribute to further steps in subsequent fieldwork and issues relevant during the analysis phase (Merriam, 1998, p. 106; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 133). Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002, p. 431) indicate that field notes have two

components: "The descriptive part which includes a complete description of the setting, the people and their reactions and interpersonal relationships, and accounts of events", and the second as the: "Reflective part which includes the observer's personal feelings or impressions about the events, comments on the research method, decisions and problems, records of ethical issues, and speculations about data analysis."

3.1.6 Focus of Analysis

The focus of this analysis was the UDS role in ensuring that student field reports bring some real world benefits to communities through the various District Assemblies. The interviews and the researcher's field notes were analyzed to identify the UDS role in influencing the MTDPs of District Assemblies.

3.1.7 The Study Area

This study was conducted in three districts of the Upper West Region of Ghana. The study area include the Wa Municipality, Wa West and the Nadowli Districts of the Upper West Region. The area covers the south-western parts of the region, stretching from longitude 1 ° 40'N to 2° 45'N and from latitudes 9° 32'W to 10° 20'W, thus covering an area of approximately 5,899.30 square kilometers. The area shares boundaries with the Northern Region and Wa East district to the South and North–East respectively, and to the North by Jirapa District and West with Burkina Faso (MTDP-UWR, 2004). The study communities fall within the Guinea Savannah Zone of Northern Ghana. The rainfall regime is the uni-modal type with mean annual rainfall intensity of 1000 - 1150 mm. The rain water drains rapidly into the Black Volta leaving the area without standing water bodies in the dry season thus making the water situation in the study area always precarious. The average temperature of the study area is about 32.◦C with a relative humidity ranging between 70 - 90% but falling to 20% in the dry season. (Ghana Meteorological Department, Wa - UWR,

2010). Agriculture is the main economic stay as about 80% of the population is engaged in it and all three districts are blessed with vast lands and youthful population.

The 2010 census indicates a population of 107,214 people in the Wa municipality, representing 26.6% of the region's population. Also, the Nadowli district which lies within the tropical continental zone, has a population of 94,388 people representing 13.4% of the region's total population. The Wa West district is located in the Western part of the region. The 2010 census results put the district's population at 81,348 people representing 11.6% of the region's population.

3.1.8 Selection and Justification of Study Area

All Districts were purposively selected. Upper West Region is made up of 10 districts and a municipality. Wa is the only Municipality and being the largest and the oldest for that matter was selected. The two others, Wa west and Nadowli districts were selected based on the fact that they have benefited from the program in multiple but different times and that they could provide some variations in terms of geography and years or experience in development planning

Of all the districts sampled in the study, Wa is the oldest, followed by Nadowli and Wa West. The strategy was to see whether years of establishment and relationship with UDS will have any effect in terms of consistency in usage at planning spaces.
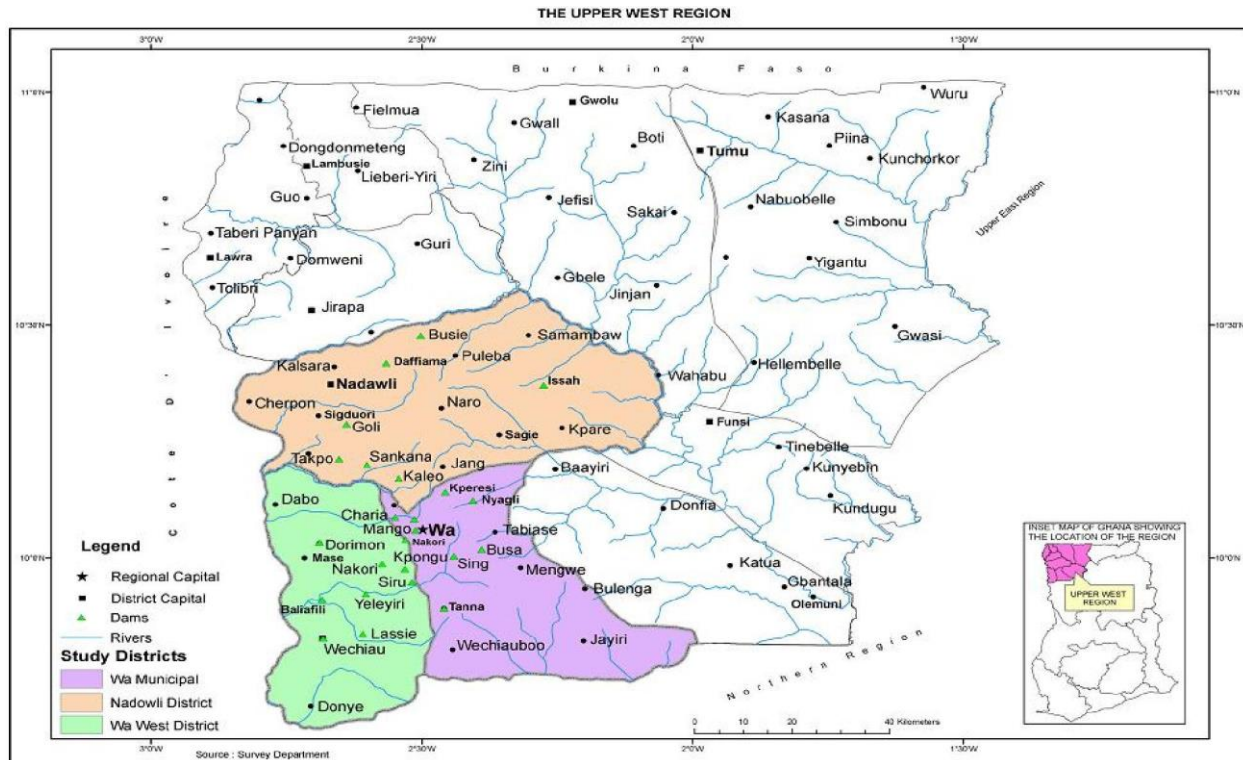
Figure 3.1. Map of the Upper West Region Showing the Study Area. Source: Ghana Survey Department, 2010

3.2 Why a Qualitative Approach is Appropriate for this Particular Study

Qualitative research is an umbrella concept that includes several research strategies (Bogdan & Knopp, 2006, p. 2). Research strategies are flexible combinations of techniques to obtain valid and reliable data. Qualitative methods emphasize aspects of meaning, process and context: the 'why' and the 'how', rather than the 'how many' (Cohen & Manion, 1994). Qualitative research has an unraveling capacity to generate data that have richness, depth, nuance, context, multi-dimensionality and complexity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 10).

Research questions are formulated to investigate topics in all complexity (Bogdan & Knopp, 2006). "As the respondents' perceptions direct their actions, thoughts, and feelings, it is necessary to analyze the contexts and narrate the meaning they attach to particular processes, situations and 45

events" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p.396). The meaning of research can be heightened by the contextual data that qualitative research can lend to capture the deep meaning of experiences in the participants' own words.

The research questions to this study demands pragmatism and cannot be answered by the quantitative approach. This is because they are largely exploratory in nature and also, the aim is to gain general insight into a topic on which little literature exists. In fact the spirit of this study requires access to profound expert and insider information on the concept of University-Community engagement for policy which cannot be acquired through a standard questionnaire with predetermined answer categories as used in a quantitative research. The aim of this study is not to quantify anything but to improve understanding of a phenomenon by obtaining information from experts on their personal experiences and critical incidents.

3.3 Qualitative Research Approaches

Qualitative research enables the researcher to produce cross-contextual generalities (Mason, 2002, p.1). Merriam (1998, pp. 11 - 18) describes five types of qualitative research: generic, ethnographic, phenomenology, grounded theory and case studies.

Generic refers to the discovery and understanding of a phenomenon, a process, perspective and view of people. The study partly reflects certain aspects of the Generic tradition as it digs deeper, through desk top literature review, the processes of both concepts (community engagement (TTFPP) and Local Government Development Planning) and the phenomenon to anticipate through social constructivism (TTFPP merger with Local Government Development Planning).

This research can also be seen as phenomenological. As Merriam (1998, p. 15) states: "The focus is on the essence or structure of a phenomenon" (TTFPP; local Development Planning).

Phenomenology focuses on exploring the very nature of a phenomenon by learning about the lived experiences of people under investigation in relation to a particular phenomenon or concept (Patton 2002). According to Patton (2002), phenomenology gives answers to the following questions: What is the meaning, structure and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people?

Phenomenology focuses mainly on two aspects; first on describing the subjective perspective of how people experience the world (the descriptive part) and second on analyzing what experience means to them (analytical part). This research is based on the assumption that UDS through its TTFPP seeks to influence adjustments that will ensure the realization of social development and community consciousness. The experiences of past and present program Directors, District Development Planning Officers, local assembly members and that of a long serving and fulfilled local government Director are analyzed and compared to identify the essence of the phenomenon.

Also, although not the only means of generating a final theoretical analysis of data, the grounded theory approach stands out as central to the naturalistic/ interpretive paradigm. "The grounded theory approach is a method for discovering theories, concepts, hypotheses, and propositions directly from data, rather than from a priori assumptions, other research, or existing theoretical frameworks" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 126). "A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23).

Grounded theories are likely to reflect the complexity of that which is studied rather than oversimplifying it. This study is of Grounded theory in nature as it employed interviewing to collect data that lead to a reflection for theorizing on how UDS can influence Development 47

Planning in Ghana. In this study, the perceptions, attitudes and practices of key Directors' relating to the challenges and preferences for TTFPP to contribute to policy in Ghana are identified and clarified. This increases understanding of how the program intends to help alleviate poverty by exposing developmental challenges of local communities for prioritization into planning decisions.

Creswell (2007) noted that for a grounded theory design, ".... participants in the study would all have experienced the process, and the development of the theory might help explain practice or provide a framework for further research" (p.79). A key idea is that this theory-development does not come "off the shelf," but rather is generated or "grounded" in data from participants who have experienced the process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus, grounded theory is a qualitative research design in which the inquirer generates a general explanation (a theory) of a process, action, or interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Based on the above considerations, it is clear that this is a grounded theory research design as the study assumed an inductive stance and strived to derive meaning from the data in order to develop theory. Merriam (1998, p. 17) indicates: "The end result of this type of qualitative research design is a theory that emerges from, or is grounded in the data."

In the field of qualitative research methodology, case study is discussed as a significant qualitative strategy or tradition along with phenomenology, ethnography, biography, and grounded theory (cf. Crotty, 1998; Creswell, 1998, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Mertens, 2005; Hatch, 2002; Patton; 1990). Case study is differentiated from other research strategies because the focus of the research is a bounded system or case. In this case, the study focus is on TTFPP and Upper West Region hence the resolve is to situate my interpretations of aspects of community engagement in higher education within a defined or demarcated framework

so as to support my work. Case study seemed like a natural approach to use, given the study's objective to understand how and why the TTFPP is the way it is.

3.4 Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research provides rich narrative descriptions of the respondents' perspectives on the construction of the reality of their social world. It provides an opportunity to understand social phenomena of multiple realities from respondents' perspective. The researcher is the primary agent for the gathering and analysis of the data.

3.5 Data analysis

Social researchers, prompted by the challenge of developing evidence base reports for policy, increasingly use qualitative methods to address their research aims (Attride-Sterling, 2001). These methods often lead to large amounts of data which must be laboriously analyzed. In an insightful overview of approaches to qualitative data analysis, Thorne (2000) explains grounded theory's use of constant comparison, phenomenology's application of hermeneutics, ethnography's description of cultures and the frameworks or stories that people employ in narrative analysis.

There is also the focus on text and the use of language (Albery & Munafo, 2008). Flick (1998), argued that the researcher's communication with research participants is an explicit part of knowledge production in qualitative approaches. She continued; "... the researcher's feelings and reflections on their actions during the research process become data in their own right and this might apply to data such as field notes and reflexive diaries".

In this qualitative study, the framework analysis technique was adopted. Framework Analysis was expounded by social policy researchers in the UK (Ritchie & Spencer 1994, Ritchie et al. 2003) as a practical approach for real-world investigations. It was developed for addressing specific

questions and in that sense can be seen as an applied research technique that is useful for informing both policy and practice (Ezzy, 2002).

Framework Analysis borrows principles from different heuristic traditions in the social science field; it is this diversity that maintains its strength throughout its development (Ritchie et al. 2003). However, it is refreshing learning that Framework Analysis, like Thematic Analysis, is a method of data analysis rather than a research paradigm as in ethnography, phenomenology, or grounded theory. "Its ontological position adheres most closely to subtle realism" (Snape & Spencer 2003), which maintains that the social world exists independently of individual subjective understanding, but is only accessible in qualitative research via participants' interpretations which are further interpreted by the researcher (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995).

Framework Analysis is considered as straightforward, provides transparent results and offers conclusions that can be related back to original data (Johnston et al. 2011). Framework Analysis may be undertaken both during and after data collection (Ritchie et al. 2003). In this particular study, the data analysis began in the field. It also permits researchers and service users to work together and consider a study's progress (Furber 2010), and provides an audit trail which improves independability (Flick 1998). In this study, all the respondents (District Assemblies and communities) were conceived as service users of TTFPP and they passionately interacted and followed up with their expectations on the study.

Framework Analysis links to social policy's tradition of adopting a holistic approach to community engagement. It gives policy makers a structured and established rigorous process for managing data, whilst also allowing for the flexibility associated with qualitative enquiry (Swallow, Newton, & Van Lottum, 2003).

In summary, the study involved 12 respondents. Respondents were recruited to explore their experiences of students' community placements and their education needs in relation to social policy and development planning. Each participant was interviewed once, for about an hour by the researcher. Intensive and semi structured interviews were employed until data saturation (a situation whereby any additional data adds no or less meaning to the research). Framework Analysis was selected because it is flexible in terms of allowing data collection and analysis to run in tandem (Srivastava & Thomson 2009) and provides a structured approach to transcript analysis.

Following each interview, field notes were taken and a reflexive diary was kept to ensure self-awareness during the process from beginning to end and to acknowledge that there is subjectivity in terms of the researcher's psychological and emotional responses (Furber 2010), a common issue in qualitative research approaches. According to Ezzy (2002), some elements of subjectivity can be useful in enhancing insights which have been drawn from the data.

Through immersion in the data according to Dixon-Woods (2011), the overall aim was to become immersed in the details of each transcript, to gain a sense of whole interviews prior to dividing them into sections and identifying recurring themes. Having undertaken all interviews, myself, I familiarized with all transcripts and this improved the time taken to become fully familiar with the data. Field notes made immediately following each interview were read alongside transcripts to ensure that the context was taken into consideration. Arthur and Nazroo (2003) noted that field notes enable the researcher to record what is seen and heard during interviews, what thoughts and feelings occur and issues that may be relevant during analysis.

Srivastava and Thomson (2009) indicated that, due to the large volume of data in qualitative research, not every piece of material may be reviewed at this stage. However, I felt the sample size was small enough for all transcripts to be studied. Hence all narratives from all participants were 51

considered and no data were ignored. It was seen to be a more complete process, as it was thought that data which were not commonly repeated might be missed if only a proportion of material was reviewed. Ezzy (2002) advised analysts to move to higher levels of abstraction without moving too far from the data: matching reflective diaries with field notes ensured that this was possible.

3.6 Summary of Chapter Three

This chapter dealt with the proposed research design and methodology of this study. The nature, methodology and data analysis of this research was indicated. The qualitative data collection method was discussed and substantiation was given for choosing this particular research approach. The strategies to ascertain trustworthiness were pointed out. The study area as well as respondents were also indicated and justified.

The next chapter gives a comprehensive presentation of the results and discussions in the form of narratives.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Presentation of Results and Discussions

Below is a presentation of narratives (findings) and report of the analysis made from the interviews conducted between May to August 2015. To a large extent, university-community engagement is principally a tripartite phenomenon; involving service users (Community), Service providers (Duty bearers) and the learning community (University authorities and students). Among the 12 respondents interviewed, six were community members who were elected assembly representatives, three were also Development Planning Officers (DPOs) conveniently sampled from the various District assemblies and three were authorities of the university who have had direct contacts with the program. It was deemed that these categories of stakeholders were appropriate enough to generate insight into the issue under investigation. My goal was not to do a representative study but to talk to anyone within this categorization who was willing and available to share their knowledge of the University-Community program at UDS and of course within the case study sample frame.

Notable of the three categories was the DPOs since the general idea is that they receive UDS students and therefore cannot be sidelined in discussions concerning student output. Most community members also wove these students into fabrics of their community's lives' and therefore are also better shaped to give subjective accounts of the program. It is also inappropriate to assume that the program at the boardroom level at UDS, has not appealed to core university staff differently. This different shades of opinion from the university itself, provides further ingredients to understand the program.

Holding onto my own subjective experience of the program as a former student, I can still say the program is in a dilemma reckoning with facts from the narratives of all the three categories of

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stakeholders who responded to the study. The preoccupation of the University is to place students in the various communities whiles the assemblies remain excited about how and when they will be seen taking active participation across every stage of the program.

Having access to accurate statistics is a challenge to many studies in Africa especially social researchers in Ghana. Even though the program under investigation is a direct flagship of an academic research institution, my several attempts at the university website and at the Directorate responsible for the TTFPP could not guarantee me the number of districts and communities that have benefited from the program so far. The latest request at the department is yet to receive any serious attention. On a visit to the TTFPP directorate at the central administration of the university, one is greeted by piles of huge sacks, containing hard copies of student field reports, competing for space with the Director and his three supporting staff. I recall that the very first day I submitted my letter requesting for interview with the Director, it could not be traced shortly after the secretary received it. It appeared as though it quickly dissolved into the midst of papers.

The communities on the other hand are anticipating some real world benefits following engagements with students (Clark & Jasaw, 2014). In my encounter with a university Professor, who, until now, served as a Director to the program for more than five years, I got responses such as "we think we are an academic institution, our students are always able to stay in communities and we evaluate and award them marks". When I asked further, making reference to the program's own objective of supporting District Assemblies to implement and sustain Government's decentralization program, it brought our healthy engagement to an unexpected end. It appeared I was being hard in pushing for a commitment the University is yet to embark on despite having it boldly printed in their official records. And this respondent was such a person whose responses

could generally reflect the position of several UDS staffs because he had lead, inspired and directed the program for a significant longer time.

He was not the only person, another senior member of the university, also a Professor, an astute expert in rural development and poverty reduction, a core activist in civil society and development of civil consciousness among marginalized populations, had similar posturing when asked the philosophy behind the conceptualization of the program.

"It operationalizes the motor of the UDS-"Knowledge for Service". Whatever we do as an institution shouldn't end at the preparation of students but should provide direct benefits to immediate communities. It is meant to support local government, communities, traditional institutions and local citizens. Apart from the fact that we offer opportunity for education, we want to be in constant dialogue with them, trying to understand and strategize with them towards resolving the issues they struggle with, to be able to provide programing support, bring innovation to all these constituencies whether it is in Development Planning, community development interventions etc."

The above response relates perfectly well with the mandate of the university; to "blend the academic world with the community in order to provide constructive interaction between the two for the total development of northern Ghana in particular and the country as a whole" (PNDC Law 279, Section 2). Again, relating the above mandate to the objectives of the program especially the one that eloquently relates to the topic of this study; "to support District Assemblies to implement and sustain Government's decentralization program", it appears as if by design, that almost every member of the university appreciates the ambition of the program yet the overwhelming desire among constituencies such as local communities and civil society is for the institution to articulate this ambition beyond further printing and presenting ambitious mission statements.

Attempting to engage deeper with my second Professor, I asked what the university can report relative to specific achievements of the program in terms of helping them to realize their decentralization support agenda. A very interesting response I present below;

"Our engagement generates specific data about communities which the district assemblies hitherto are unable to access. So it is expected that when we share that data with them, it will help in their planning with regards to the specific issues i.e the socioeconomic issues confronting the communities, they know the community challenges as well as demographics. However, we are unable to force them to use the data generated by our students."

I asked; so what happens when they do not use them? "We evaluate and award our students their marks", was what I got as an answer.

My next goal here was to understand why the assemblies may not be using the data from Student field reports.

So the discourse continues........... .

ME; Prof, please do you think you are doing a lot in this regard?

PROF; I think that we put in sufficient efforts to let them understand what they need to know about their own development and what to expect from these District assemblies. We are not preparing our students to be policy makers only; we are training them to be practioners of diverse fields of which policy is just one of them.

ME; Yes I do appreciate that but we are talking about the program contributing to better the decentralization program by the District Assemblies in Ghana? I queried further.

PROF; From my personal perspective, one could be right to state that the program hasn't done much to realize this objective and that is currently informing our initiatives in terms of trying to move from just generating the data and allowing the local assemblies to determine their usage but to implementing the various projects in the second year of the program with the communities so that in the end we can report that specific interventions have gone on.

From my long discussion with Prof, It became clear how attempts were made to drift from generalized indicators of program achievements as in many other instances with other university staff to honest acknowledgements of the program doing very little to influence and report on specific indicators in influencing policy. As I engaged another University staff at his office, this time a senior member but not a Professor, a local governance expert and a program field supervisor for more than a decade, He indicated that he has been serving as consultant to most of the Districts but in his capacity as a lecturer. He would not agree with me that the program is placing him at the advantage of gaining financially from the districts except to agree that, the program only sharpens his mind on current happenings in some of the communities for which the Development planning officers lack the resources to harness. Coming from such a background, he disclosed to me, superior knowledge about the guidelines that are always given these district assemblies to draft their development frameworks. He identified Sanitation and Hygiene, Education, Health, Agriculture, HIV & AIDS, Housing and Population dynamics among some of the thematic areas they are compelled to design policies to cover. According to him, these are matters of data and planning. Relating these thematic issues in the guidelines to the key issues that students report on in the communities, he demonstrated clearly how the program could complement the assemblies in the areas of programing support.

"I mean I have always seen that direct link between TTFPP and the work of the assemblies especially their planning departments. Our students are able to generate data from communities that the assemblies have been doing "arm-chair" planning for. At the end of the day, they are able to report on all the areas that the NDPC requires the Assemblies to consider in their development planning processes. The only problem I must say is that, our mandate has not found expression in the work of the assemblies. Our posture too as an institution does not suggest we are interested in leading the direction for district assemblies' work. The other challenge that shows up most at our meeting has been financing the TTFPP. We have observed that it is increasingly becoming expensive to monitor student activities and it would have been fine if these assemblies could be collaborating with our field supervisors to provide logistical supports especially transportation."

When asked about the school's interest in effecting real world benefits in these communities and what is being done to offset effects of disillusionment from promises that students would have been making to these communities, his response suggested two interesting aspirations; the program needs to be sustained at all cost since it is what gives meaning to modern pedagogy and also gives a promise that one day UDS could attract external support into some of these communities.

"For me, it will be a big mistake if UDS ever abandons this program. It's often difficult for us to have tangible measures for all that we are doing but the exposure that the students get from that program can never be compared to what we do on campus. ...and I have always defended this program anywhere even in management....I have always defended it as our trump card. It is a very big initiative to be able to move students out there to experience what they are supposed to do, otherwise we just admit students; put them in class rooms

that is not a better way to face our development challenges. I know of some communities

that students have even gone back and helped after their periods of mandatory engagements. Some managed to convince NGOs to assist and others helped financially."

On the part of the District assemblies too, the Development Planning Officers I spoke to, sounded unanimously on not being obliged to consult the UDS program in their development policy planning discourses. I got responses like "our work is guided by guidelines from the NDPC and in these guidelines, no recognition is made of the UDS community engagement program. However, given the benefits that we stand to gain, the output of the program could be complimentary." I also got responses on how they experience improvements in the quality of engagements with these communities after students have interacted with them.

"For me, that alone (improvements in engagement) is crucial to gaining from the community forums we are required to periodically organize in order to update our knowledge on community needs"

One district development planning officer indicated to me.

For the community representatives I encountered, their responses were not any different from the planning officers. They are confirmations to the above submissions. In the preceding sections, I present the narratives I got in the field under four categories which generates answers to the research questions in chapter one. These include;

1. Respondents knowledge of TTFPP

2. Program's current contribution to Development work.

3. Program's potential in supporting development work

4. Mobilizing to overcome challenges-birthing a new program

I have tried to present these narratives with fictitious names so that I can ensure the request for anonymity from these respondents is guaranteed.

4.1 Respondents Knowledge of TTFPP

This knowledge was ascertained on the basis of the level of appreciation each respondent had about the program's objectives, the source they got this knowledge from and what they made of it relative to their experience and this was meant to answer research question one

I met a highly enthusiastic Mr. Salifu, a former student of UDS, who has being working as a district development planning officer since 2003 and has experienced the program in all the three districts he had worked until his current district. He welcomes me warmly to his small office and offered me a bottle of cold water having informed me earlier through mobile phone about his interest in the study.

According to Mr. Salifu, his wish is to one day see that, UDS was at the forefront of conceptualizing and shaping how the decentralization program should be operationalized and tailored to the specific needs and capacity of the various local government units especially given the connection and the knowledge the program affords UDS to gain from these local communities. I present his narratives below;

Mr. Salifu: I mean I have been through the program for three good years and I imagined how the district we served, learnt or so to speak, benefited from us.....it was a new district with fairly new structures and so the planning unit lacked the capacity at that time to profile most of the communities or engaged them in their planning processes. I believe the system we are operating today, has not varied that much from what was guiding the work of district assemblies since the start of the decentralization concept in Ghana. It was same guidelines but different documents. I

must indicate that the core of our work here as an assembly is determined by guidelines from the NDPC and what do these guidelines contain? Basically three things; Extent of consultation with community about their needs, mode of engagement and the extent to which compromises might be made in case it is difficult to consult broadly.

ME: That is interesting! But when you say lack the capacity, what clearly are you talking about?

Mr. Salifu: You know, the planning unit was relatively understaffed, they had virtually no logistics to carry out community engagement activities and the communities at the time had certain mentality concerning officialdom; they viewed community meetings as waste of time and anything that was not concerned with supplying them fertilizer, they were not interested. So it's actually a whole lot. When we were first posted to the district, a lot of my colleagues, reported apathy in engaging community members. But you know we were like journalists sent to report cases for which there is no room for excuses and so no matter the difficulty, we had to work with these communities otherwise we risked not getting our grades. But it wasn't so when we returned to same communities in our second and third years.

He was trying to tell me how reserved the communities were in receiving them as students when they were initially posted (that is first year) but later as they were determined to work with these communities for their academic grades, they had to apply the appropriate community engagement and facilitation skills they learnt in the classroom which according to him, worked so well since the reception accorded them by the same community in their second and third years of engagement were relatively better and cooperative.

In similar fashion, Mr Gregory, another DDPO for a different district, had this to say on capacity; ".... I must however add that the capacity of our assembly members to draw up their own plans is

very low and also due to the fact that these assembly members are not paid; a lot of them lack the capacity in terms of funds to engage their constituents broadly so the people are inadequately represented. We as planning unit also lack the resources to do a broader consultation to draft these plans. In my former district, when it was necessary to have these plans, the UDS students helped them to draft them and it really helped us but...."

ME: So Mr. Salifu, do you think the program actually has any influence in opening up "reserved" communities?

He sounded emphatic and enthusiastic with an assuring "oh yes! It does"

He continues....

You know as I was trying to relate to you, it is real and some of the communities' representatives are even taking notice. In my District here, a lot of my assemblymen and electoral area representatives have come to lobby so that in the event UDS plans to send students to the district, we consider their communities. It is because; those communities are really very hard to engage. It was same with the District I understudied when I was a student under the program because ..... look, let me tell you something....the life blood of most rural communities is the youth. Whatever they accept, chances are that it will stay in the community and what I have observed is like a natural charm. Before these students settle in the community, they often win the hearts of most youth in the communities and for me, that always serve as a critical entry point to their success in opening up and buying the confidence of the community to attend their programs. So I have observed it and it appears a refreshing magic.

That was Mr. Salifu, giving me a lecture on dynamics of community engagement. I gave his long service as community development worker, the benefit of the doubt. I had similar stories from Madam Gladys, another district development planning officer and also an alumnus.

She has been working as DDPO for about a decade and was exactly three years at her current district. As a former student of UDS, and working also as a development planning officer, her admiration for the program was so glaring that it surpassed what the program seeks to achieve in the statutory books of the university. I was only successful at meeting her on my fourth attempt due to her busy schedules as head of the planning unit and also a mother of three. Finally, she invited me over for the weekends at her resistance. It was a rather lengthy but insightful encounter; her knowledge about the program was largely appreciable except that it was over ridden by passion. I tried to find out from her, apart from the fact that she knows of the program by virtue of being a past student, how else she gets updates concerning the program.

"You know, I think even though the idea out there is that we (district assemblies) should partner the program to realize its goal, the school is doing very little to promote the program or update our knowledge of it. My other colleagues who are not past students of UDS probably would not know as much as I do. I cannot remember the last time I attended a UDS meeting on this program throughout my career yet in three of the districts I worked, UDS has always sent students to those districts for the TTFPP.

I recall my time as a student; we used to have comprehensive district report where we all met our Assessors at the premises of the district assembly for public presentations. This was an interface for the Assembly to access firsthand, what we studied in their communities after which copies of our respective community profile and reports were submitted to the assembly".

To Madam Gladys, the school is doing very little in giving them updates about the program and so as partners, they (District Assemblies) are unable to determine the direction of the program at any particular point in time. Her observation was accurate because when I later checked the University website, TTFPP section, I got no indication suggesting the kind of stakeholder engagement that precedes each TTFPP year. Once again, the only extent I could get this verified was through the official mouth piece of the UDS which is the official website since it has been difficult for me to access primary information from the Directorate responsible for the program.

Mr. Dakura, an alderman, for the past 13 years and still, has been representing 3 electoral areas comprising 8 communities at the district assembly. An active pensioner as he is, has his own absolute version of how things around him appear to be and would not trace his knowledge about the program to UDS but on what he thinks it is and how he feels it.

ME: Mr. Dakura, What and how do you know about the program?

Mr. Dakura: ...you know I have been around for a while, and I am not a small boy? [*takes off his hat to show me his grey hair*] I think about 9 batches of students have passed through me as an assembly man of this area. What I found so amazing for some time is that each time students are about to be posted here, I only get to know through the chief of that particular community meanwhile some years back, I used to be consulted. The Coordinators will meet the chiefs and later ask of me and we discuss one or few things. However, even with those years, I have never been told and I also honestly never asked what they use the information for.

ME**:** You mean the district assembly does not inform you through maybe one of your general assembly meetings?

Mr Dakura: No! I doubt if they are also even consulted sometimes. But let me be honest, it is recent times that the homage seems to be non-existent. Those times, especially those that I met the Coordinators before the commencement of their work, I served as their interpreter.

I tried to avoid the excess of Mr. Dakura's old age but in summary what he was trying to tell me was that he gets to know of the program through informal encounter with the field coordinators and sometimes through the chiefs of those respective communities. According to him, in recent times however, he is not informed of the direction of the program. He has also never been informed either officially or unofficially, what the program seeks to offer them after engagement. This is generally the picture all respondents outside the University painted to me. My checks also indicted that there was no mechanism for updating them on the program despite their position as crucial partners to the sustainability of the program. There is equally no briefing from the Program concerning what benefits the program's outcome stands to render them hence most communities and assemblies are left muddled.

4.2 Previous and Current Experience of Program

Relating their previous experience of the program, there was this dominant theme across the submissions. It was a feeling of dissatisfaction with the current state of the program. From responses of UDS staff to responses of district DPOs as a well as that of district assembly members, there were pointers of reduction in program quality and this has gone fairly far and wide. Taking an account of one of my professor-respondents', a representation of many dimensions to this reduction in quality could be ascertained but the weight is heavier on the university side.

I will say it is like a pyramid, when we were on the tip, student population was not as large as we currently dealing with. Students use to do a good job at the communities, meet before final assessment to put together comprehensive district reports based on which they present

to the District assemblies. You know it used to be a three-year engagement where students in their year one will study and profile these communities, identify and prioritize their problems in year two and then finally work out solutions with the communities in their third year. But later when the numbers were rising, our pyramid got to the base with so many other factors compelling us to reduce the program to two years. Then challenges started setting in. You never knew who was doing what and what the focus of the Directorate was. Students no longer submitted reports to the communities nor the assemblies. Lecturers, having been tasked with guiding and assessing students on the field, also along the line, you know had little appreciation of the program and the circle kept widening. And so going forward we need to redirect the focus of the program into meeting the objectives of faculties or departments so that it may gain its relevance.

Mr Gregory also recounted that ever since he completed UDS, he has never met any official of the school in his official capacity but has been receiving students at his office anytime they came around to ask one or few questions. He shared his student "days" experience with me;

....we used to spend three years at the community. Even our assessment was always in the form of a community durbar (confirming what the above professor indicated) at the premises of the district assembly unlike the recent times where it is only students and their lecturers' affair. Sometimes we even had the DCE, DCD and chiefs gracing such events. You know, it was lively but now, hmmm,

I don't know what is going on.

ME: So what have you observed now?

Mr. Gregory: I think what is going on now is a short cut of what we did. Just last year, we went on monitoring and I encountered some (student group) in one of our communities. Had it not been for

that I wouldn't have known. .... surprisingly they were "cutting and pasting" from a previous report. I do know, we normally give these students some supporting information when they request at our offices but I never saw any. And a lot of the communities also reported not ever meeting them yet I believe they were awarded their marks. So you ask yourself, how these students update the communities' population and the aspects of their assignment that requires them to engage these communities before writing their reports.

As the sound of my keyboard feels me with nostalgic moments, I am tempted to relate my share of experience when I was a student. It is an affirmation of the good days of the program Mr. Gregory observed above and what such good times could offer community live and development in the various districts. Ours was one big swell of an ambition to do something spectacular in Bongo District of the Upper East Region.

The DCE intervened and accommodated one of our groups in a decent three bed room staff bungalow in the district capital after Bees attacked them at where their host community had accommodated them. This was just some few meters away from the District Police Station. We were about twelve student groups comprising of ten students per group (4 from FIDS, 2 FAS, 1 FAGS and 1 from Medical School). That bungalow later became our central point where we skip our work in the community and meet to catch a glimpse of "District Capital Life". Since one can even get a more decent place to sleep and not minding about sleeping in darkness, I was always present in this bungalow amid excuses to my colleagues who would feel cheated for my numerous days' absence.

In catching up with the district life, there is a popular slogan among all students who have been through the program; that is "Local Connection" (LA). So adventure took some of us to pursuing these local beauty gems in the community. What appeared to be a moment for misbehavior turned

a recipe for our own independently engineered intervention to save the future of children in the district. We would follow up to their funeral centers which last continuously for three days three nights to check on these "Lasses" where they dominate. On one of such adventures, (my first time though) I saw lots of school or girls who should have been in school, mostly at risk and justifiably so, lots of them were carrying pregnancies. I made a follow up to the district hospital because literally, one of the nurses was my "LA" instead of a community girl. I later learnt from my nurse friend that "on top of cases in this hospital are complicated births arising out of teenage births". The story on the ground was so bad that lots of these girls after birth have to fend all alone for the kids. As if that was not enough, when I followed up to the only senior high school in Bongo to understand how girls were measuring up to the boys in terms of enrollment ratio, my suspicion was confirmed. The senior house mistress shared with me, (that time when you introduced yourself as a university student to any other community member, their expectation of you would normally exceed your own assessment of yourself) a bleak representation of the future for girls in Bongo. "Even if you are a girl here and you don't get pregnant by age twelve, there seem not to be joy from your parents. Here, parents love to see their grandchildren early. Action Aid is helping us to retain and teach mothers here not girls. We have 70% percent of these young girls having children". The paramount chief of Bongo later confirmed this to me. His response to me indicated sounds of despair. "Our efforts at public awareness are not yielding any results. Our problem here is poverty. Parents want their daughters to give them in-laws so they could gain. Most young girls you see around here are either staying with their grandparents or other relatives. So in situations where these guardians are old, then it becomes gainful to have an in-law who will support with food supplies and other needs."

This became an opportunity for us because I observed that, the chief's blame (Poverty) for this occurrence was not significant. Together, we fixed a public awareness campaign on premarital sex and benefits of educating a girl child. We met the chief and the Cultural desk officer of the district to put up a youth cultural festival around these themes. Our mates from the department of integrated community development, kept all of us to good use on their community development skills. They shared and we all learnt and contributed. The festival originally was meant for the drama club of the senior high school but when the chief saw the wisdom in our campaign, he scaled it to the entire district with personalities such as himself and his subjects, the district director of education and the DCE grazing our durbar which was the first of its kind. We used the students themselves to advocate for changes on issues we observed were putting them at risk through the drama. We covered themes such as late night funeral durbars, how parents are getting their young girls pregnant without knowing, the dangers of premarital sex and the benefits of girl child education. I am unable to report on extensively on the impact of the campaign that we used the two weeks waiting period for our supervisors to undertake but what I know is that, it endeared well with the chief who announced some significant changes in bye-laws such as reforms in funeral organization and punishment for people who impregnates teenagers at our durbar.

Whiles sharing this with other friends in other communities, they were also reporting similar cases of engaging the communities to encourage their children to go to school and some others were also supporting the community schools by offering to teach for as long as the TTFPP allowed them. Interestingly, there are no marks to encourage these extra TTFPP activities.

Away from the experience and falling standards of the TTFPP, Madam Gladys's optimism on the future of TTFPP excites me.....

The program I can say is very good but the issue is if the assembly can tap into it by having access to the reports..... because the composition of student teams I understand reflects all our critical areas of preference when planning. i.e health, education, agriculture, trade, gender etc. I completed UDS and our time we use to present before the assembly. Trying to influence aspects of communities that they could touch to affect lives of community members. I recall the work we did as part of our TTFPP in profiling the coverage of National Health Insurance in the communities we served. Maybe now there are gaps in the program else I can tell our time the feedback from the assembly after these presentations were refreshing especially at the end of our third year. Even though I am unable to say much about what the program does in recent times, I am convinced that if we lay our hands on the reports, we can still make some gains out of it for our planning purposes.

4.3 Program's Potential in Supporting Development Work

Despite the gloomy picture presented above, I was surprise to record traces of hope from the respondents especially the development planning officers and the assemble members. The respondents from UDS however remained stuck in their position that the program is not required to do more beyond awarding marks to students. Madam Gladys related the challenges they currently face and recommended that sharpening the program will support them "a lot in reaching out to" their communities. She was the third Development Planning Officer to speak to me on this prospect.

"I will go for any sort of engagement with the assemblies on the planning aspect. Maybe an agreement that during planning we can write to them to assign students to our communities. I know this will require some commitments from us too but I think it is worth

it. .... it will still be much cost-effective and profitable to engage the students to tailor their

learning processes in the community to our specific needs whiles still meeting their learning or student service objectives. I think this will even give more meaning to the fact that they want to serve and learn. ....UDS students can cover our communities more than we can. So I think we as assemblies need to explore opportunities for partnership as much as the UDS."

On the part of the school authorities, evidence was mixed. Whiles two of the Professors I spoke to were of the view that UDS as an academic institution was not concerned with development activism, another Professor and other staff members who have experienced the program thought otherwise. They felt that what the program is currently doing is less of the promise to actualize its goal of stimulating debate surrounding issues of deprived communities and attracting relieves to them.

Of much pronouncement is the faith local community actors had in the program's promise to deliver. This faith I learnt has either arisen out of students mischievous promises they often made to communities in order to access their full support and cooperation or expectations the communities themselves had out of misinformed comparisons of the program with other NGO related field work. Clark and Jasaw (2014) reported how student conduct and the inability of the program itself to clearly articulate the extent to which it seeks to ameliorate living conditions of local communities is causing disillusionment among communities due to (According to Mr. Ernest-an Assembly member) "failed promises or unmet expectations after students have exited communities".

This was the tone that waxed Mr. Dakura's submission to me on what he thinks his community can benefit from the program in terms of solving some of the problems the students engage them to uncover.

"I think we itemized a lot of activities to undertake with the students that came around in 2005 but unfortunately, their time ran out and they left. We still miss them. I know I can't get those kinds of groups back but granted that the spirit of the program still lives, we will love to have them touch us more. I believe new technologies would have been out there which I know they could transfer to us. I also will like them...you know, we have a change of leadership in most of our communities so granted that the assembly remains challenged in funding our activities, their presence as neutrals; young beautiful ladies and men rekindles communal spirit and we get on, on our own. You see, now also, so many things are rotting away about rural life. Such includes teenage pregnancy, parental neglect, youth migration, school absenteeism and forced marriages. I think they have the spirit to advocate on these issues so the community members will listen. The young girls especially listen a lot to the female students. The boys also mingle so well with the male students and through that; they listen and believed them as role models."

As I tried digging deeper to understand from the community representatives about what they have experienced about the program regarding their development planning at the local level, I got revelations that the school itself has been silent in attributing to the program.

Mr. Issaka is a JHS teacher who represents his community as the elected member at the District assembly. He shared with me, his experience of the program in his capacity as the elected representative;

> "I think they (Students) built our capacity. I for instance felt I was under a classroom experience anytime they were moderating forums for which I honored invitations. They advised that we revamp our non-formal literacy education classes which we did and later the church took over when they left. I can say now, a lot of those communities are

enlightened than they were. Almost every population group was touched by their presence. They met some as farmers, some as teenage mothers, some as youth, some as market women, some as parents, some as opinion leaders and you know through these separate meetings, we were each reminded indirectly of what our stakes are as stakeholders in our own development. "

Whiles the dominant mood out there coupled with my own experience of the program as a former student suggests a fast consuming pattern of despondency, I am minded to mute my experience because of affirmations I got from the field such as the above. Mr. Issaka was the third elected community representative to relate similar experience to me. Themes such as empowerment, sensitization and community group organization, dominated their endorsement of the program. I also understood that, these themes visibly dominate the participation of affected communities at their future Development Planning discourse. Like Paulo Friere (1970) tried to explicate the preference of thematic themes over generative themes in development investigations, these elaborated themes of the program, expressed as effects, felt by those who experienced it, sets a rudder to determine the next phase of expectations regarding Development Planning at the local government level. And these expectations include broad based engagement of local populace; people-led development; social audit and accountability and rekindling of communal spirit which are already being championed by some practitioners such as SNV, Action Aid, LoGoDep, Oxfam etc.

These new expectations of the Ghana's decentralization program, in my own assessment are attempts to give local communities those inalienable opportunities to take decisions on their own and to execute these decisions on certain specific subjects by themselves like say community sanitation and hygiene, preventive health programing, education etc. I got astonished by the

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success stories some of the assemblies related about the program so far. By the time I left the

field, I was satisfied that, TTFPP offers these communities those opportunities to meet these new expectations. The conversations below, explains further.

ME: Could you please recount the last time any aspect of the program informed deliberations at your Development Planning discourse?

Mr. Gregory: Errrmm... in my former district, UDS students on this program brought our attention to the struggles children were making to attend school in other neighboring communities. They uncovered that community and included it in their report. We followed up and included them in our action plan. Consequently, we kept up a school structure for them because the distance was far and the number of children there too was large enough to earn them a primary school.

Madam Gladys: I think even this year, UDS hasn't been there yet but they (a community) copied from their neighboring communities and sought assistance to draft their own action plan and brought it to the assembly. Through this, we redirected a borehole to them because we saw they were far from any other water source....

4.4 Mobilizing to Overcome Challenges-Birthing a New Program

Throughout my interaction with respondents, the goal was to see how the system (the program) recognizes its own shortfalls and what it had to offer to make it more pragmatic. So attempts were made to understand the challenges experienced in the program and how those challenges can be surmounted.

They related quality of student work and reporting, funding challenges, attitude of both students and some staff, and by my own assessment, posture of the university itself. Some of the DPOs appear to admire the program despite its quality and reporting challenges. Staffs of the university

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who spoke to me were of the view that students were adequately prepared to put up good reports

that will be relevant to development planning at the assembly level but this is contrary to my experience.

At the time of putting up this report, I happen to have been a Part time lecturer at the University's Faculty of Education and from my own experience and assessment, the first obvious comment that can be made on the training of students prior to community engagement is that there is no adequate time and resources to support the training of large numbers of students in any meaningful manner as the University have been trying to diplomatically portray. It is human nature not to run down one's own efforts to third parties so to that extent, the views of the professors I spoke to, may be understood.

As hard and porous as it is to find evidence for their views on quality of training, there are discernible evidences that negate such views; first of all, students' population has recently risen, forcing the university to increase student group membership from 10 to 13 whiles academic user facilities to train these students are relatively largely less expanded. It has therefore become difficult to engage these students in any proper training given the fact that, lecturers are few, and would also normally want to conform to university's limited time (just two weeks) allotted for training. Secondly, these are mostly fresh men and women from the Senior high schools (Clark & Jasaw, 2014) with barely any prior knowledge and experience in social research, community mobilization or development and yet with two weeks limited training, they are placed in communities.

Consequently, enough is not always done in training students and educating them to appreciate the importance of their work. Also in most situations, students return to school and in almost third year before they appreciate research methods proper. For many, they get to hear components of a report

and other vital elements of theory and field work, in the field. This has much to tell on their capacity given any limited attempt to compare the reports. Therefore, for these students to adapt, there is a dominant phenomenon; "grandfather"-the situation whereby students plagiarize from previous work of earlier groups just to cover up. I am however unable to report when this "grandfather phenomenon" was birthed but I can recall that as far as 2007, my year group and many other groups were able to survive the program and earn our grades through the help of a "grandfather". And I personally will not recommend my own community report as any serious document for any District assembly to even start with.

I asked one of my professor- respondents whether preparations are always adequate to first of all get these students to do a job whose outcome will be policy relevant.

"...you know this program is actually an interface between theory and practice. Our academic year comprises 12 months, making three trimesters, 8 in classroom and 4 in the field. So the field offers them the opportunity to translate the theory. Before, we use to bring all students together and spend a week with them, having classes so that students can be familiar. The orientation is part of classroom work and they are even examined. However, the extent that this is effective, I don't know. But yes, we spend some time preparing them."

Despite this observed uncertainty, District assemblies and communities are yearning for students to submit the reports as have been conventionally established. The norm has been that, students put up three copies of their field work; submit one to the community chief, the district assemble and the university for assessment. My checks reveal that in recent times, it's only the assessment copy that students are submitting. I tried understanding incase that phenomenon has been officially sanctioned. Unfortunately there was no revelation of such.

Confronted with these challenges, what immediately came to mind was "is this the end or best of the program?" The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Now Vice Chancellor), with whom I was privileged to hold a discussion on his personal take of the sort of reforms that he thinks corresponds with the aspirations of my study, had a big no for an answer. He thinks otherwise.

"It is best that every faculty or department feeds their respective interest into the program. Yes! TTFPP, an entire university flagship could still be possible and carried on simultaneously across all faculties at the same time but every faculty must task students to engage communities on designed projects that are directly more specific and relevant to what is taught in the class room. For instance, the faculty of agriculture should have a period whereby they can just choose say a district and in that district, all what they will do will be largely on a project that they have determined to undertake. Let's say livelihood empowerment through piggery; Student teams can work with their faculty and maybe other research institutes (CSIR) to put to practice, with communities, the new technologies in piggery that they have learnt. Nutrition is one of the major developmental challenges mostly reported in northern Ghana. Similar can be undertaken with the other faculties as such. This way, the students would have learnt something practical whiles serving these communities with their new and enhanced knowledge and I think more specific achievements can be measured and reported."

Like Chinua Achebe queried in his novel, *a man of the people*, "what can a tuber of yam do when the Roaster knows where to place the fire for a good roast?" I tried understanding from him, that which is keeping this innovative reform away from the program despite its over two decades existence.

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"This is a university, and by our system, decisions on reforms are not unilaterally within the domain of one person. We work through committees and before a committee's recommendations are effected, it takes series of processes and further deliberations at several levels. So the discussions are on, and in future the program is going to taking shape"

There was fair knowledge, among the respondents on the program's potential in informing or shaping development practice at the District Assemblies but per their assessment, the program was not doing that much towards fulfilling that promise. As I tried digesting the program's problems and challenges from the perspective of UDS authorities with that of the district assemblies, the revelations and anxiety to see the program work for their interest as it was meant to be, was overwhelming. The revelation is one that gives hope and suggests the birth of a NEW TTFPP. I report this below.

District assemblies are required to gather data from at least 50% of their communities in order to assess communities' needs. The Assemblies functional structure is made of a general assembly comprising committees mostly represented by elected representatives of these communities. With the continuous evolvement of the decentralization program, assemblies are supposed to compose integrated teams to be assisted with these respective elected members, engage communities on cross cutting development issues. For these teams to do proper work, they must generate information on health, education, agriculture, sanitation, water and hygiene, girl child protection and among others, gender issues. The development planning officers serve as secretaries to the assemblies' administrative wing and they have reported to me, how incapacitated they are in meeting this daunting task of the beautifully designed of the decentralization program.

"We have guidelines from NDPC. So out of the guidelines we also select those that reflect our local conditions and plan to implement. .....this is only done interacting with our

community members through District forums comprising youth, women, elders, opinion leaders and possibly NGOs and other stakeholders. At such meetings, we try to review previous plans to guide us into drafting new ones. ....now our district has undertaken an ambitious initiative to encourage these communities to come out with their own projects. Communities Help Projects (CHP). This is because our communities are many and we lack the capacity to engage all of them in planning especially the needs assessment. So what we do now is to guess for them which is not good. With this innovation, the idea is that at least if the communities suggest something on themselves, they can even start implementing and ask the assembly for assistance. So we are training them but that one too, hmmmm, we are challenged resource and time-wise. We are unable to reach them together as an integrated team (comprising all departments and sectors in the district). Again we are supposed to engage all these communities on quarterly review of plans which we can't so we end up evaluating only area council plans which are different from community action plans."

The above is one of the development planning officers speaking. Whiles relating this to me this, I realized all along her mind was on TTFPP because she kept referring to her old student report we just finished discussing.

ME: Madam please when you say you are challenged, I mean how?

Madam Gladys: hmmm, my brother, things are not how they seem out there. My unit is supposed to lead a team of representatives from the district health directorate, district education directorate, district Agric directorate and other sectors with presence in the district to engage our communities and consult broadly on development aspirations of these communities. That is basically what makes our planning. I have little influence over agenda setting because the District Planning Coordinating Unit (DPCU) is comprised of specialized representatives from the various

departments. So depending on what every department or sector presents, is what we consider for a plan of that sector in the District. Now as I am talking to you, we lack the logistics to even go out there as individuals much more a team of representatives. The other thing is that, a lot of the personnel posted to the district many at times lack both expertise and commitment and you know,..... one has to be interested before something can be interesting.

ME: I understand UDS has been here for their community engagement program, what would you say about the program and Development Planning in this district?

Madam: Currently, my only problem with the program is our inability to access student field reports. This is because the composure of student teams reflects all our critical areas of preference when planning. i.e health, education, agriculture, trade, gender etc...

"it has helped somehow and to some extent too it has not helped much. Most of the students after their periods of engagement generates community profiles and even in most cases teach these communities to update these plans subsequently. However, for unknown reasons, some of the students will leave the communities without submitting to them, their engagement reports which contain these profiles I am talking about. So in such instances, we are unable to benefit from the data these reports would have contained. The irony of it is that, even students from UDS request for

community profiles from my office. Communities that the school has engaged before so I do not know whether they don't have a repository for these reports or the students are just being lazy to ask for them. It also tells you that, if these reports are hard for students within the institution to access for their academic work, then how more us? SO though we may wish to refer to these reports in our planning processes, it appears it's hard to come by. We end up replicating what students have engaged these communities on. But I understand the program is supposed to support

us, help us implement our decentralization policy more effectively. This is my own personal understanding". Another District Development Planning officer related me.

From the field, timing, submission of students reports and funding came up stronger than quality of report. There is unanimous agreement to the fact that, TTFPP should be helping towards supporting work at the District assemblies. As I tried understanding what the district would be willing to offer to support the program in order to attend to some of the challenges they go through in policy planning, their responses came with conditions. One is consultation. From the type of topical issues to be investigated to the communities to be investigated as well as the time that will most meet their demand were subjects they considered very crucial.

To Mr. Gregory, involving them in the various phases of the program means consulting the assemblies to first of all understand key issues they will prefer the program to investigate for them. Then after these consultations, the program trains students and dispatch them into the field to serve on these areas. By his estimation, this will compel the assemblies to reinforce their faith and support for the program. When I tried drawing his attention to the funding challenge the program authorities reported, he was too assuring with his commitment to support the program financially. The same was given by his colleague development planning officers when I posed same questions to them.

ME: Do you see any partnership between UDS and your District towards social development interventions?

Mr. Salifu: No! But there is an unexplored opportunity. I think UDS has changed the approach of the program. Those days, before students could be placed, it was done in collaboration with the District Assemblies. Currently I have students in my District, the last time I knew about their

presence was when they came knocking for some information in my office. But I would have loved that if we were informed of the program's interest in our district, probably there are some communities that are habitable but for some challenges we haven't been engaging them before we plan projects and programs ....Well I believe my unit would have been the School's first point of call and I would have recommended these communities and even with some specific areas for the students to do intensive engagement so that in the end, they will get what they want amid generating useful information for us through the report............Oh yes, sure why not, we could have supported with some logistics in whatever way we can-Accommodation, funds, etc. I think that we will, if UDS can sit with us to understand our work and the complimentary nature of their program too".

Madam Gladys**:** I will go for any sort of engagement with the assemblies on the planning aspect. Maybe an agreement that during planning we can write to them to release students to engage our communities. But this will depend on timing. I also know this will require some commitments from us too but I think it is worth it. .....it will still be much cost-effective to engage the students to tailor their learning processes in the community to our specific needs whiles still meeting their learning or student service objectives. I think this will even give more meaning to the fact that they want to serve and learn. ....UDS students can cover our communities more than we can. So I think we as assemblies need to explore opportunities for partnership as much as the UDS.

With this obvious endorsement of the program by service providers, I daresay there is apathy within the University corridors concerning the program. This is because, I have come to understand the controversy between establishing the program as a research program and other attempts to separate field training from research. Whiles TTFPP comes under the research section of the

University's website, hardly is there any other hard fact to support this claim hence giving premise to the opposing thought that it is just meant to train students and nothing more.

My argument is that, the university in general and its faculties in particular are in partnership with other regional development agencies. One is AGRA; providing improved soil management technologies to farmers and yet no proposition is made for the project to benefit from the reports of students in the field despite the fact that, the AGRA project is implemented predominantly across communities that students have previously served. Another obvious evidence to support the apathy of the university is the projects of their only research institute; Institute of Continuous Education and Inter-disciplinary Research (ICEIR). Currently the institute is in partnership with some institutions in the Netherlands and Institute of African Studies, Ghana, on a history documentation project (Society and Change in Northern Ghana). The most conspicuous section of every TTFPP report is the History of the community section and I can vouch that the history section is the most original of all the sections that make up the reports. As I tried understanding from the ICEIR history project coordinator on the relationship between TTFPP and the project, the response was very disappointing. So many other projects relating to community engagement and field research have come into the university and yet different setups are made to implement them. It therefore appears that business development or partnerships seeking are not part of the mandate of the TTFPP Director. Could it be that the University itself lacks confidence on the program? How else is the program expected to raise funds to support its effective implementation without fully slapping it on student through fees? How else will the program attend to community needs if the knowledge is not being put to use by the same university? If the TTFPP is not integrated within setups of the same university, how possible will it be for other institutions outside the university?

Narrowing specifically to the issue of supporting decentralization in Ghana, the challenges reported by the actors of decentralization (District assemblies and Communities) give much meaning to ask; "what is going on?" If assemblies and communities are chasing students for their field reports and students are searching for these same things from the assemblies, then what is going on? If no trace of a single TTFPP report can be found in any of the five libraries of the university, then what is going on with the program?

4.5 Summary of Discussions

The goal of this study was to investigate the role UDS was playing through her community engagement program in the implementation of the decentralization program in Ghana as contained in the objectives of the program (UDS, 2014). The following research questions informed the study:

1. In what ways can TTFPP be more relevant to development planning at the Assembly level?

2. How is the UDS actualizing the program's objective of supporting District Assemblies to implement and sustain Government's decentralization program?

3. What is the relationship between the program and host Assembly's work plans?

4. What aspects of the program promises relevance to development planning at the assembly level?

5. What can UDS and District Assemblies do after the program to make it relevant to policy?

During in-depth interviews, study participants described their perceptions and experiences with development planning at the district assembly level in Ghana and the program. They also discussed what they perceived as plausible recommendations (the true essence of grounded theory) to establish a formidable connection between the two (District assemblies' development planning and

TTFPP) to improve level of community engagement and tackling of real issues of communities in the drafting of development policy. The research findings reported in this chapter are based on analysis of data and narratives from the following sources: unstructured interviews, TTFPP documents, and the researcher's observations.

Respondents commented on the four major themes that comprise the narrative presented in chapter four. Some respondents spoke at length on one or two themes; some respondents made nearly equal contributions across all four themes. Thus, all respondents' voices and views are represented in this study. To make it easier for the interviews to go with the research questions and also make possible for the grounded theory proposition, preset themes were established which later were replaced by emergent themes after field work (Powell & Renner, 2003)

Four themes emerged from the narratives:

1. Respondents knowledge of TTFPP

2. Current contributions to decentralization

3. Program's potential in supporting development work

4. Mobilizing to overcome challenges-birthing a new program

While these themes are reported as being discrete, there is considerable overlap among them. Further, respondents' responses to interview questions often addressed more than one theme. In those cases, the narratives as presented in chapter four are described where they appear to fit most logically.

4.5.1 Theme One: Respondents knowledge of TTFPP

This theme emerged out of the narratives because in the estimation of the researcher, before any filtration of narratives to establish answers regarding the main research question; "In what ways

can TTFPP be more relevant to development planning at the Assembly level?" can be made, there is the need to first of all establish each respondents knowledge about the program. To that extent, each transcript was scrutinized to understand the respondents' level of appreciation of the program, its goals and modus operandi.

Except for the University staff who gave evaluative responses on their knowledge of the program, it was hard to establish any superior knowledge about the program from the other respondents even though four of them who responded as DPOs and assembly members also happened to be former students of the UDS. "I cannot recall the last time I attended any program or meeting to discuss this TTFPP as related to our work here", "....we are here with them yet a lot of the youth in this community cannot access admissions to the UDS. One would have felt that they will help the youth in the community to have relatively easier access to university education". "....My brother! I can tell you, ever since I assumed planning role in this district I have never met any UDS official to discuss this program, yet students have been coming and going..." These were the type of submissions given by respondents. And of course which indicate the extent of misinformation as some were seeing TTFPP as a tool for expanding access to university education. Generally, one could say respondents know that TTFPP is a UDS program and beyond that, it was difficult to tell what else they know. Knowledge of program objectives, the dynamics of student groupings, the contents of the students' reports were all hard to establish. To the communities, the program's objective was only one; TTFPP and UDS program where they bring students to investigate their problems so that the school can help them. The Assemblies on the other hand understood that the program was meant to supply them with data to support their planning work. But there were others (Assembly Members) who appear very ignorant about the program. This reveals that there is no conscious effort by UDS to market or promote the program among service providers to rural people

who normally collaborate with the hope of getting some help in return to problems they always report to the program through these students. It is unfortunate but pardonable that the study design had a very limited sample but future studies may have to expand the sample and include NGOs and other partners in rural development to investigate further, the efforts UDS is making in promoting the program. It is obvious that for any program, to get its intentions translated on the ground, then key stakeholders must be not merely just be identified but given regular updates on the performance and changing trends. In the case of TTFPP, though it aims at supporting the district assemblies to sustain and implement the Government's decentralization program, it is yet to get those organs of the Government and other actors responsible for decentralization to integrate the program into their operations. One could rightly ask, when will this be done? It has been over two decades now.

After noting the mixed reception of the program in the field, I checked the University website and five of her six libraries to see if they maybe some supplementary printed materials that missed circulation. Again, my checks revealed not even a single TTFPP report or a newsletter or any publication to that effect. Presently as it stands, it appears the only way to ascertain any information of material value about the program is through personal contact with the Directorate.

On this particular theme, what I observed in the field was that because the program is yet to establish systems to regularly update stakeholders' knowledge, most of them are forcing their previous knowledge and expectations on the program which are variant when compared to that of the knowledge and expectations of Staff of UDS. On the merit of this theme, it is valid to conclude that since there are poorly developed knowledge systems in place to update stakeholders of the vision and current information of the program, UDS is not interested in spreading the benefits of the program beyond the academic honors students receive and this is detrimental to first of all

achieving the program's objectives and also supporting its sustainability.. However, there were some mixed but interesting revelations too. This takes us to the second theme.

4.5.2 Theme Two: Current Contributions to Decentralization

This theme was established as a direct response to objective one which sort to render explanations to how the UDS is realizing the program's objective of supporting District Assemblies to implement and sustain Government's decentralization program. It was also to seek an interpretation of that objective from the perspective of key informants from UDS. Among the numerous submissions on this theme, largely from the UDS staff, I tried to combine that with the experiences that key actors in the decentralization program at the District level would have had about the program.

Interestingly, responses from the UDS were not only honest but confirmations of what is happening on the ground as it was hard for all the UDS Staff I interviewed to speak to specific achievements that can be reported in that regard. One of the Professors relates:

"From my personal perspective, one could be right to state that the program hasn't done much to realize this objective and that is currently informing our current initiatives in terms of trying to move from just generating the data and allowing the local assemblies...."

It was quite revealing that even to some of the UDS staff, their current experience of the program is as old as their previous experience thereby affirming the truism that if one cannot relate the program to specific achievements in helping to implement and sustain the decentralization program in the past, then it is same of their current experience.

On the part of the DDPOs and some of the Assembly members, it was established that, apart from what they knew about the program when they were students, they could not point to any new

progressive development in the program. It happened, though not by design that all the DPOs who responded were past students of the UDS and it was these experiences about the program and Decentralization that they had to share. However, those reported cases were not sanctioned by any official protocol from the UDS when I checked.

"I recall the work we did as part of our TTFPP in profiling the coverage of National Health Insurance in the communities we served" (a DPO and Alumnus related to me)

According to this respondent, even though they provided support to the assembly on health planning by profiling the coverage of Health Insurance during their TTFPP, it was not part of their mandate in the field. Similar cases in Education, Reproductive health, Girl child protection and many other social issues were reported as student engineered initiatives.

So for the over two decades that UDS set out to help in the implementation and sustainability of the Decentralization program in Ghana, that objective is yet to be realized. However, the contribution of UDS in producing human resources that are employed in the local government system is significant. UDS alumni can be found as staff in the various metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies. The Alumni office of the UDS could not provide me with statistics of UDS former students working as local government staff but what I learnt through this study was that, currently almost all districts in Ghana have students of UDS in key management positions and one cannot take this away from the program. Maybe this is another interesting area for future studies to look at.

4.5.3 Theme Three: Program's potential in supporting development planning

This theme was also established as an answer to the second and third research questions;

1. What is the relationship between the program and host Assembly's work plans?

2. What aspects of the program promises relevance to development planning at the assembly level?

The study revealed that currently the district assemblies are not under any obligation to use or consult the program whether when students are in the field or they have left engagement reports behind. However, there were lots of interesting revelations; there were rather situations that the assemblies will literally be chasing after these reports to guide their decisions in futility. This is because; the students leave the communities without submitting engagement reports to the assemblies and the assemblies have reported not being able to access these reports from the school either. This confirms my own experience at the TTFPP directorate. However, my search for evidence on attempts made by these assemblies to access TTFPP reports from the UDS could not establish any concrete attempt. But it was also revealed that, even in some instances, students rather come to the assemblies requesting for certain information in these reports to support their academic project activities. This suggests that, there are very limited sources that one could access these field reports in the school.

"..... Oh my brother, there are even instances where some of these students come searching for these reports from us" (a DPO related to me)

My understanding from the field was that the UDS has also never made any attempt to get these assemblies to reflect over the field reports as complementary documents to development planning. For instance, a symposium or some sort with official attendance by all Districts for deliberations on prospects or challenges of TTFPP as supportive tool to decentralization in Ghana could have been productive in realizing TTFPP's objective of contributing to local government administration. My search could not establish any evidence. On that basis, one will be right to conclude that currently there is no relationship

between the assemblies works plans and the TTFPP. Even with the suggested reforms that came from staff of the UDS, none were articulated around giving clarity to realizing the program's objective of helping to implement and sustain the decentralization program.

"...I think that is currently informing our reforms: every faculty will in future determine its own TTFPP activity so that specifics can be reported." (A faculty member related to me)

But the assemblies are optimistic and are willing to contribute in both cash and in-kind for the program to work to their benefit. This is because it was revealed that there were some qualitative gains the assemblies were making on the program regarding support in their development planning processes. These were categorized under a sub-theme; potentials of program to contribute to development planning at the assemble level. The potentials I identified from the submissions in the field include empowerment, sensitization and activation of community structures or groups.

It was reported that through students' interactions with communities, community members gain some sort of empowerment education on how to conduct community forums, how to write minutes, how to facilitate at these meetings and even how to engage resource persons at these meetings.

The second potential was sensitizing these communities as rights owners so that they can engage the assemblies for services they have determined to be due them. According to revelations from the field, it was no longer about those communities settling for anything from these assemblies because key segments of their population and opinion leaders would have been enlightened by the time students exit the community.

The third potential the study revealed was activation of functional groups and institutionalization of advocacy structures in these communities. Hitherto to student engagement and interfacing, the study observed that these communities were always left without structures that will push their

social development agenda. But as part of the activities of these students, it was reported that where structures such as women's group, youth group, market women group, shea butter processers group, rice par-boilers group, farmers group and any other identifiable activities that can be grouped are not existing, students normally do well at organizing them with relevant structures which subsequently makes engagement at those communities very easier and meaningful.

Reviewing the NDPC guideline (2013), it was seen that all the three identified potentials are key ingredients to checking corruption and socially auditing the development processes at the various district assemblies and even though they are yet to find expression within the UDS, per the guidelines given to these Assemblies, community capacity development is very crucial. The hope in those guidelines (NDPC, 2013) is to see these communities being at the forefront, determining what the assemblies are executing in attempts to bring them development.

4.5.4 Theme 4. Mobilizing to overcome challenges-birthing the new TTFPP.

This last theme answers the last research question; what UDS and district assemblies can do to make the program more relevant to policy

Approaching this stage of the study, reference must be made to the conceptual framework in figure 2.2 above where the funnel concept was used to depict the tripartite relationship between the program, the communities and the District assemblies in refining raw information from the communities to the Assemblies for development planning.

From the submissions that were made by respondents, the assemblies upheld three key issues including consultation before students are sent to the field, collaboration with field Coordinators and summary of findings from the field in the form of briefs.

The study found that District assemblies expect the program authorities to engage them broadly in program's activities as field work begins every year. This is believed to first of all help in pointing key directions and the form of engagement that will reflect the requirements of their planning work. It will also help in determining appropriate communities for the student fieldwork. The assemblies could also then present any budgetary considerations if they have any to offer.

The second issue the assemblies raised was collaboration with Program field Coordinators so that Assemblies can monitor the quality of engagement processes. This is also believed to increase the confidence they will have in the program output and will therefore be able to judge its relevance to their planning purposes.

The last concern the study revealed was the issue of policy briefs. It was found that the assemblies prefer working with briefs rather than full reports from the program. This is to be expected through compilation of field reports, analysis and release of policy briefs for each district, highlighting key policy considerations so that in the event the district considers any segment of the brief topical, then they could reach for the main documents for further consultation

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Recognizing that the District assemblies currently face a number of issues in getting the TTFPP to inform policy decisions and allocation of development resources, TTFPP administrators equally face the challenge of formal recognition by the NDPC, funding and technological restructuring to improve visibility and accessibility of the program and its output.

Inconsistency among staff of UDS on how the TTFPP is contributing to better the decentralization program, the direction of the program coupled with unclear directions in meeting the wider expectations of the program at the local government, renders TTFPP administrators unprepared to meet the increasing challenges facing the program. For instance, some of the staff held that the program belonged to the Participatory Action Research (PAR) paradigm when in actual fact, those who maintain it as Service Learning Program could be closer to right than the others who see it as merely a placement program for training students. Each of the above traditions has its own innate implications for the direction of the program. This inconsistency must first of all be set out clearly. The hope is that, in future, it should be right to see it fully and effectively functioning as PAR with real action translating specific developments to these communities. UDS staff commonly reports the lack of funds, limited number of staff to coordinate the program and laziness on the part of students and are therefore recommending efforts towards overcoming those challenges. The conclusions and recommendations are discussed in detail below.

5.1 Conclusion

This study attempted to increase understanding regarding the ways in which University Community partnerships could lead to development of local communities as well as enhancing the service learning objectives of students. The experience of the University for Development Studies

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was subject of investigation. Being the first of its kind in Ghana, the University for Development Studies' Community Engagement Program gets students placed in local communities to share knowledge and experiences. Key among the objectives of the TTFPP is to position it as a tool to help implement and sustain the decentralization program in Ghana.

The study found that, there has been robust consensus on the program's impact on the students and the University. However, it was hard to find similar quantitative evidence of the program's impact on the local communities and for that matter how it was shaping development concerns for these local communities. This therefore made a pure qualitative methodology ideal so that with the assistance of grounded theory and case study approach, factors, elements, conditions, relationships and assumptions can be discovered, described, explained, analyzed and established to later measure and assign quantitative weights or scores. Whiles evidence on the objective of helping and sustaining the decentralization program in Ghana was porous, there were some qualitative evidences the study uncovered.

First of all, it was discovered that UDS has through the TTFPP trained manpower to manage the administration of District Assemblies in Ghana. Of the three case districts studied, all had their DPOs being past students of UDS, two had their District Chief Executives also being past students and several other departments were headed by past students of UDS. It is however recommended that, further study be conducted to measure the scale of this observation in a more scientific manner as it was hard for the UDS alumni office to offer such information.

Secondly, it was also seen that, even though there is absence of documentary evidence on how UDS actually influences development planning at the assembly level, revelations such as community empowerment, community sensitization and activation of social structures as well as blue prints for development advocacy were attributed to the program. However, the blue prints

(field reports) for development advocacy became an issue when students were found not be submitting their field reports to the communities in recent times. There was also some evidence on the program's influence in distribution of development projects to communities in some districts. This also will however need further studies to establish the scale.

Thirdly, it was also seen that the UDS was not showing interest in using the program for development activism. Submissions from authorities of the UDS were all pointing to the fact that it is purely an academic program and the buck stops with the award of academic grades. It will be interesting for future work to engage the UDS in conceptualizing what development activism and praxis really mean.

5.2.0 General Recommendations

The findings of this study point to three broad recommendations for addressing and improving the relevance of the program in supporting development work at the various District assemblies in Ghana. These are related to pre field recommendations, on field and post field recommendations.

The "pre-field" recommendations refer to those activities to be embarked by the TTFPP before student placements. The "on-field" recommendations also refer to the activities undertaken in terms of relationship and engagements at the field. The post-field also refer activities to be taken after exiting the field.

5.2.1 Recommendation; Pre-Field Activities

Whiles official protocols from TTFPP show that stakeholder engagement precedes the placement of students, evidence from the field indicate mix outcomes. Key stakeholders such as Assemblymen and District DPOs have challenged such established protocols. Many have reported

not seeing students in the community at all. This therefore calls for further sharpening of those protocols to safe the future of the program.

It is recommended that, managers of TTFPP should reconsider holding out the program as solely an academic activity and rather encourage a broad-based stakeholder approach to creating awareness and publicity before every TTFPP session. There is everything to lose and so much to gain if the program takes to that line. Community expectations coupled with students' uninformed promises in attempts to solicit community support and participation to their projects is causing disillusionment in communities and if not checked, might cause problems in future. On the other hand, the program stands to attract direct development support to these communities as improving publicity and extending networks for uptake of program output means signaling attention to critical development challenges in poor communities. Several avenues abound the program to approach this engagement for the most effective results. These include first of all seeking to find space within the frameworks and guidelines of the NDPC. It was discovered that, both NDPC and the UDS are establishments of legal acts and that their respective works are clearly set out under the law. However, it was difficult establishing the relationship between them though they were both established with explicit mandates to support rural/local development. Whereas the NDPC's work acts as determinants to the work of the District Assemblies by merely just giving guidelines, the UDS through TTFPP goes beyond guidelines to providing enough signposts through which lest developed communities' lives could be touched yet this nonetheless does not bind the assemblies in anyway. Once the sort of coordination between the mandate of the NDPC and the UDS is set out, a rudder will be established to steer UDS to the realization of the Decentralization support objective of the TTFPP. This is because in that regard, District Assemblies will be compelled to mind ensuring that UDS TFFPP works to their benefit.

The second comment to pass on Pre-field activity is one that borders on treating the opening ceremony of TTFPP as full fletched event with prominent press and media coverage. It was understood that, the business of rural or local community development is not sole enterprise for the District assemblies alone. In fact, framers of the local government act provides for private sector participation in diverse ways. Some includes the operationalization of Local Economic Development (LED) as well as Public Private Partnership (PPP). Identifying and targeting these stakeholders with varied interests in Local development is another route to clamoring for attention. It is therefore recommended that, the program starts an intentional and technical engagement with the media to generate heightened publicity ahead of every TTFPP session. It is hoped that, carefully planned guest or distinguished lectures and other addresses by prominent authorities in society will add up to sharpening stakeholder attention on what TTFPP does and how complimentary it could be to their respective work.

5.2.2 Recommendation; On-field Activities

On-Field Activities refer to the activities undertaken in the field after student placement. These activities include observation of Community entry protocols, durbars, surveys and seminars. The study revealed that, currently, the assemblies and assemble members are neglected when observing protocols. There was also evidence that assemblies are no more involved in student presentation seminars in the field. Another issue exposed by the study was depth of community engagement whereby some key segments or populations of the community are neglected in student consulting. Overall, the general impression was that student on-field activities are not as comprehensive as it used to be in the past. Even with this, the assemblies reportedly expected the on-field output in the form of field report to peruse.

It is therefore recommended that the UDS should establish a robust interactive system to enable the assemblies to monitor progress in the field. There are already a number of interactive solutions offered by modern communication tools and technologies. When these including the University website are harnessed, they will make student work interesting and engaging. For instance, with the proliferation of smart phones and wider internet coverage, it is possible that they could be an engagement segment on the UDS website such that when students are on the field, they could share stories, videos and pictures. The website hosts could also undertake a promoter- adventure by pitching these stories from students as they unfold onto popular media sites and the appropriate media hype could be achieved even before students exit communities. These as well will signpost developmental issues and or gaps and where the frequencies are high; other development partners aside the assemblies will be interested. It is also even possible that as students use the above interactive technique to report field activities whiles in there, resources could be mobilized just in time enough to get them to support in working out solutions.

It is also recommended that staff numbers on the program need to be increased as well as motivation to increase morale so as to harbor daunting tasks of supervising students in the field. Students, who are the bedrock of the entire exercise also need to be motivated to take community engagement more seriously. Part of this could be achieved when there is adequate supervision and students realize that their work will be put to use to effect some changes.

5.2.3 Recommendation; Post-Field Activities

These refer to the activities required of the District assemblies and the UDS after the program. It is recommended that the program should have an eventful closing ceremony where conferences are attended and key issues or findings reported by student reports are debated. The idea is that, through these debates, consensus would be reached on how to fix issues uncovered at the

assemblies and possibly also on how to get the program or students to fix local solutions to address identified developmental issues. Some of the avenues to debate these issues are talk shows with relevant agencies such as NDPC, NGOs, Ministries, Agencies and other civil society representations.

It is worth noting that, even those times that students use to compile comprehensive district reports and present before authorities of these assemblies, there were no systems to monitor and track what the assemblies were using the reports for. Therefore, to make the program work towards programing support at the assemblies, UDS must be interested in sharing experiences with the Assemblies. If such a system were to operate, it is possible that some of the identified gaps in this study would have been filled by now.

The other important issue of concern is accessibility of program findings. The field reports from the program should not be limited to hard copies only. It should be possible for interested parties to easily access information about these reports on the university website. Technology once again has offered several avenues to make this possible. Even with the current structure of the program, all previous reports should be uploaded to a page on the website so that in the event any interested party requires information about communities or development issues in Northern Ghana, all that is required will be an enquiry to the university and access will be granted at a fee or a commitment to be determined by the UDS. This promises some financial blessings to smoothen the financial tightness and resourcefulness of the program. Again, lecturers and students should be encouraged to write, publish and share their field experiences with the rest of the world.

In addition, the study recommends that, UDS should consider transforming the program from a directorate to an institute with the capacity to offer guidance in development planning, activating systems and networking with appropriate institutions solely for the purpose of

highlighting 100

 developmental challenges in local communities as well as attracting development support to these communities as is done in Al-Ahfad University for Women in Sudan, University of Brighton in the United Kingdom and University of South Africa. When that is done, all the objectives of this study are likely to be achieved.

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List of Appendices

Appendix i: Appointment letter

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UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

FACULTY OF AGRIC BUSINESS AND COMMUNICATION SCIENCES

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<div align="right">

11th May, 2015

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Letter of introduction

</div>

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR INTERVIEW

I am an Mphil student of the University of Development Studies, carrying out a study on the influence of University for Development Studies' community engagement program on Development Planning at the District Assembly level in Ghana.

As a stakeholder in the local government administration sector, your views are important in this study and I would be grateful if you could grant me an interview on this important topic. I would like to assure you that the information you provide in the interview will be treated confidentially and anonymously and will be used solely for the purpose of this research.

If you are able to honor this request, please indicate your preferred date, time and venue for the interview. Kindly notify me through my contacts below.

Moomin Solahudeen Tando
Contacts:
Phone: 0209021960 / 0244690361
E-mail: sola.costless@gmail.com

Appendix ii: Interview Schedule for District Planning Officers

UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
FACULTY OF AGRIC BUSINESS AND COMMUNICATION SCIENCES

GRADUATE THESIS ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
PLANNING IN GHANA
DISTRICT PLANNING OFFICERS

Purpose: The study is to first of all enable me meet a requirement in completing my post graduate studies and also to explore opportunities for the University for Development Studies' community engagement program have some bearing on setting the agenda for Development Planning at the district assembly level in Ghana.

1. How long have you been working as a District development planning officer?

2. May you kindly describe to me how development policies are drafted and adopted into action here?

3. Since you took this position, what role have you been playing with regards to setting the agenda for local community development by policy makers? Please explain in details (Interviewer prompt when necessary)

4. I understand UDS has been here for their community engagement program, what would you say about the program and Development Planning in this district? (Interviewer explains program objectives to respondent)

5. Which aspects of the UDS program do you think contributes to your Development Planning efforts?

6. Could you please recount the last time any aspect of the program informed deliberations at your Development Planning discourse?

7. Do you see any partnership between UDS and your District towards social development interventions?

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8. What mechanisms or systems exist in this district for harnessing external knowledge in your policy considerations?

9. How effective are these mechanisms or systems?

10. If UDS were to partner you in updating your knowledge about your communities, how willing is your outfit to support in terms of resources?

11. What do you consider to be the barriers to UDS contributing to Development Planning in your district?

12. What suggestion can you offer for consideration of the student report as a policy document?

Thank You

Appendix iii: Interview Schedule for Assembly Members

UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
FACULTY OF AGRIC BUSINESS AND COMMUNICATION SCIENCES

GRADUATE THESIS ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
PLANNING IN GHANA
ASSEMBLY MEMBERS

Purpose: The study is to first of all enable me meet a requirement in completing my post graduate studies and also to explore opportunities for the University for Development Studies' community engagement program to have some bearing on setting the agenda for Development Planning at the district assembly level in Ghana.

1. How long have you been representing this community at the Assembly level?

2. Kindly describe to me how development policies are considered for implementation by the District Assembly.

3. Since you took the position what role have you been playing with regards to setting the agenda for local community development by policy makers? Please explain in details (Interviewer prompt when necessary)

4. I understand that UDS has been here for their community engagement program, what would you say about the program and Development Planning in this district?

5. Which aspects of the UDS program do you think contribute to your Development Planning efforts?

6. If you are given another chance, would you welcome the students into your community?

7. What areas of collaboration will you prefer for a second chance?

8. Could you please recount the last time any aspect of the program informed deliberations at your Development Planning discourse?

9. Do you see any partnership between UDS and your District towards social development interventions?

10.   Do you have any mechanism in this community for updating your knowledge about changes for planning purposes?

11.   How effective are these mechanisms or systems?

12.   What do you consider to be the barriers to UDS contributing to Development Planning in your district?

13.   What suggestions can you offer for consideration of the student report as a policy document?

Thank You

Appendix iv: Interview Schedule for TTFPP Director

UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
FACULTY OF AGRIC BUSINESS AND COMMUNICATION SCIENCES

GRADUATE THESIS ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
PLANNING IN GHANA
TTFPP DIRECTOR

Purpose: The study is to first of all enable me meet a requirement in completing my post graduate studies and also to explore opportunities for the University for Development Studies' community engagement program have some bearing on setting the agenda for Development Planning at the district assembly level in Ghana.

1. Could you kindly tell me the philosophy behind this program?

2. I understand that objective four of the program is to help district assemblies implement and sustain Ghana's decentralization program. Kindly tell me how you are operationalizing or realizing that objective. Please explain in details (Interviewer prompt when necessary)

3. Is the program structured to target specific areas of development (sanitation, education, health, agriculture) in the districts?

4. Do you think students are actually well prepared on dynamics of local governance for which they could seek to inform some real changes in the districts' development work?

5. What would you say about the program and Development Planning at the district assembly level currently?

6. Which aspects of the program do you think contribute to Development Planning efforts?

7. Could you please recount the last time any aspect of the program informed deliberations for policy considerations at the District Assembly level?

8. What would you say about user-friendliness of the student report for policy makers and others?

9. Have there ever being a period that officially you sanctioned changes to the program?

10. What would you say about the program, then and now?

11. Do you foresee any more changes to aspects of the program in the future? What will you say about the future of the program and the UDS?

12. Do you see any partnership between UDS through this program and District Assemblies towards social development interventions?

13. Aside just Development Planning, what other impacts can you say are visible in communities that the program have served so far?

14. What mechanisms or systems exist to measure the impact of the knowledge generated by the program on the districts served?

15. How effective are these mechanisms or systems?

16. Have you, any mechanisms to raise external resources or seek partnership with development actors to support the program?

17. What can you say alternative funding sources of the program?

18. What do you consider as barriers militating against the program to serve the districts better with regards to policy shaping?

19. What suggestion can you offer for consideration of the student report as a policy document?

20. What do you suggest UDS and the District should do before and after the program to give it more policy prominence?

Thank You