Examining Electorates' Perception on the State Funding Political Parties Activities in Ghana

Ernest Adu-Gyamfi

Ghana Education Service, Diaso Senior High School, Post Office Box Dw 13, Diaso, Central Region, Ghana
E-mail: socialanalyst2004@yahoo.com

Abstract
It is widely recognised that representative democracy could not function without political parties, which provide a critical link between free civil society, effective and accountable government. Therefore, this study examined the perception of electorates on the state to fund political parties in Ghana. Descriptive survey technique and simple random sampling were used to select respondents for the study. The sample size was eight hundred with interview and questionnaire as the research instrument. Findings revealed that electorates' understanding of the accurate role and functions of political parties is very good. From the study, all the respondents (100%) were able to state a number of important functions of political parties and 95% of the respondents' immediate response to the suggestion of state funding of political parties was that they would not be happy and agree that state money be used to fund political parties' activities because there are other equally crucial state priorities that need to be considered presently. The study concluded that Efficient, equitable and sustainable party financing is necessary for establishing strong democratic government and recommended that public support for state funding of political parties is very poor therefore citizens' confidence for state funding needs to be established and there must be education for political parties' members to be card-bearing members to ensuring smooth payment of membership dues.
Keywords: Political parties, electorates' perception, parties funding, democracy, Ghana

1.1 Introduction

Political parties are paramount institutions of contemporary democratic governance. The common consent in relative political thought and among policy makers is that political parties performs a fundamental function in deepening and nurturing democracy in both well-known as well as up-and-coming democratic politics. This is rightly captured by the assertion that 'political parties created democracy and modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the political parties' (Schattschneider, 1942: 1). The significance of political parties in the establishment of current politics and governance is not a new occurrence of present-day societies. Political parties have been part and parcel of political establishment since the foundation of the nation state.

Political parties execute vital roles without which representative democracy cannot survive. They present different policies from which electorate select at elections, arrange campaigns to marshal electorates and possibly most crucially, they present candidates for political office. Political Parties form the engines of democratic political systems for they stimulate contest between public groups and welfare. They are helpful instrument by which average citizens can have any individual make contact with the body politic. They are mandated to motivate and draw followers to their cause, their membership being of key significance in their claim to represent populace. They however maintain to be entrusted with what is perhaps the most calculated conscientiousness of modern democracy – to organize and choose candidates for both parliamentary and presidential elections and then to sustain them into positions of leadership and government.

Democracy cannot function successfully lacking tough and vigorous political parties. There is an increasing worry that political parties are lacking resources in particular opposition political parties to enable them carry out the tasks we anticipate them to do. The debate about the funding of political parties is therefore a debate about the worth of governance. The funding of political parties is an input subject for ensuring good governance and fighting fraud.

Nevertheless, for democracy to do well within existing scant resources, an efficient, impartial and sustainable party funding is regarded as a means forward (CDD, 2005a). Without a doubt, a healthy funding base for all parties is a prospective driver of political party enthusiasm and competitiveness. Funding the practice of democracy is therefore the primary key direction to fostering a strong democratic and transparent culture from within (CDD, 2005a). The incapability of a democracy to create sufficient provisions for its funding creates a productive situation for corruption and poor governance which impact unconstructively on society.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Political Parties require to making revenue to fund for their electoral rallies and also cover their running costs as political institutions with a task to participate between elections. Nonetheless political parties, in emerging as in grown-up democracies, are under growing demands, faced with a fierce circle of rising costs of political activities, insignificant membership income, and deepening public doubt about the undesirable position of money in politics. Their troubles of fund-raising are causing profound concern to politicians and all those who

concern about democracy. The question of party funding has in the past been dealt with in harshly divergent ways across the globe. Numerous fora have been held to discuss the funding of political parties in Ghana since the 1992 elections. The main concerns have been how to build viable political parties in order to sustain multiparty democracy and whether state funding is desirable.

The availability of appropriate funding for the mobilization and political activities by political parties is therefore tremendously imperative. In Ghana, though the concern of funding of political parties has been on the political schedule, it has not really been debated critically among the electorates. Most research works have concentrated on the views of political leaders, civil societies and politicians on the state funding political activities, how politicians and their parties can best be funded and with most helpful financial safeguards for ensuring 'free and fair' elections as well as good governance in Ghana. Therefore, this study examines popular electorates' perception on the state funding political parties' activities in Ghana.

1.3 Research Question

The main research question for the study was how electorates perceive the funding of political parties by the state in Ghana?

Specific questions were the following:

1. What is the electorates' knowledge on the functions of political parties in Ghana?
2. What are political parties' sources of fund to financing their activities in Ghana?
3. What are electorates' views on main challenges facing political parties in Ghana?
4. Must the state fund the activities of political parties in Ghana?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to examine electorates' perception on the state funding political parties activities in Ghana. The specific objectives of the study were the following:

1. To examine the electorates' knowledge on the functions of political parties in Ghana.
2. To determine political parties' sources of fund to financing their activities in Ghana.
3. To find out electorates' views on main challenges facing political parties in Ghana.
4. To examine if the state must fund the activities of political parties in Ghana.
5. To give recommendation to the study.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Meaning of Political Party

A political party is a collection of individuals who seek to be in charge of government through engaging and winning of elections, influence public policy and the holding of public office. Political parties are a fundamental characteristic of any democracy. They are the media by which citizens come together freely to battle for public office, communicate their interests and desires, and label their aspirations for their people. Whereas there are political parties without democracy, there can be no democracy without political parties. Political Parties are crucial in democratic are crucial in governance.

The aspect of contest and striving to administer is a fundamental element of modern political parties. Sartori aptly describes a political party as 'any political group identified by an official label that present at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office' (Sartori 1976: 63). Maliyamkono and Kanyongolo (2003:41) define that 'a political party is an organised association of people working together to compete for political office and to promote agreed-upon policies'. Political parties prepare and elect political leaders who will assume a position in governing society. Through their efforts to control and influence public policy, political parties play an intermediary role, linking the institutions of government to economic, ethnic, cultural, religious and other societal groups. They can rally support behind important legislation, advocate positions that improve the public welfare, and advance citizens' interests. Further, their participation in elections allows citizens to hold them accountable for their policies and actions.

Currently, the country is blessed with political parties of different ideologies whose leaders have acquired political experiences spanning several decades. Some of these political parties have drawn their inspiration and philosophies from tested political traditions, some of which have existed since pre-independence era. For instance, the Progress Party (PP) that ruled Ghana from 1969 to 1972 and the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) both trace their roots to the United Gold Cost Convention (UGCC), which was formed in 1946. The National Democratic Congress (NDC), which can be considered as a hybrid party, claims to be of the social democracy stock. The Convention People's Party (CPP) and the People's National Congress (PNC) trace their roots to the Convention People's Party (Nkrumaism), which was formed in 1949 and governed the country since its independence in 1957 to 1966.

2.2 Functions of Political Parties in Ghana

Political parties have made priceless assistance to Ghana's struggle for independence and the endorsement of democracy and good governance. Nevertheless, military interventions in party politics in the country have occasionally hindered the activities of Parliament, the Executive and Judiciary as well as political parties. But

any time there is an agenda to return to the nation to civilian rule; political parties are always the first to restore to life to give the process a moving strength as was witnessed by actions leading to the establishment of the Fourth Republic. This rich background of political parties probably explains why Ghana, unlike some other African countries, is finding it easy in coping with the wave of democracy blowing across the continent.

Essentially, political parties are providing a fertile ground for the advancement of the new political experiment and giving impetus to the promotion of rule of law, good governance and national development. Undeniably, the political parties are serving as an umbilical cord between society and the state, ordinary citizens and social groups on the one hand and organs of government on the other hand.

The political parties provide psychological anchorage to some Ghanaians as political rallies that are often characterized by music and carnival throw supporters into state of ecstasy and give them a sense of belonging. So crucial is the contribution of political parties to the country's multiparty democracy that it would not be out of place to describe them as the heart beat of the political system. Ghanaians rely very much on political parties for shaping public opinion and gauging information and education on government policies and programmes. But despite the contributions of political parties to national development, there is the need for them to intensify efforts to improve the political system towards accelerated development.

The parties would be required to collaborate in their efforts to sustain peace, unity and stability through diversity of opinions to enable them to fulfil their objectives. Political parties must always have recourse to the 1992 Constitution Article 55 (4), which enjoins them to foster unity from diversity. Thus, they must ensure that they have a national character and membership devoid of ethnic, religious, regional or other sectional considerations. Both the ruling political party and the minority parties are obliged to collectively push the national development agenda forward. Managing the affairs of a country is not a technical issue that can be handled by the wisest and best qualified people in society alone.

On the other hand, minority parties are obliged to constructively keep the ruling party on its toes, scrutinize and criticize its policies and programme to help solve the myriad socio-economic and political problems facing the country. Political parties are expected to support vital state institutions such as the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, Electoral Commission, National Commission for Civic Education, the police, and government departments and agencies to carry out their functions effectively.

The battle against corruption, in particular, is complex and comprehensive and would require the collective efforts of all political parties. Political parties would be expected to demonstrate their commitment to such a crusade by abiding by all laws regarding their financial operations. Political parties are reminded that they are required by the 1992 Constitution article 55 (14) (a) to declare to the public their revenues and assets and the sources of those revenues and assets. Parties are also, according to article 55 (14) (b), "to declare to the public annually their audited accounts and only a citizen of Ghana may make a contribution or donation to a political party registered in Ghana".

It behoves political parties to ensure that their members are disciplined, accountable and transparent in all their activities since the parties are avenues for the training of political leaders. This is very essential because, in a democracy, political parties have been a major vehicle for the recruitment of political leadership, providing electoral choice and peaceful political competition and framing of alternative policies. Political parties, despite the differences in policies, ideologies and manifestoes, have the common objective of ensuring peace, stability and unity for national development.

2.3 Concept of Political Party Funding

The notion of political party funding implies to the mode in which political parties and individual candidates who seek to get elected to political offices marshal funds for electoral activities and in the case of political parties seek to sustain themselves as organizations (Fambom, 2003). The availability of appropriate funding for the mobilization and educational activities by political parties is therefore extremely important.

The responsibility of party funding in establishing a well-built democratic government cannot be understated. This is because party financing is regarded as the main driving force for current competitive political systems (Nassmacher, 2003), the "oil that greases the engine" of party politics (Heidenheimer, 1970) and the "mother's milk of politics" (Unruh, 1960). Others also see finance as the significant medium that can master shortages of manpower and overcome virtually all other deficiencies (Patiel, 1981) and one which "can buy goods, skills and services" (Alexander and Shiratori, 1994: 362). In short, party financing is viewed as the most important political resource that drives party vibrancy and competitiveness (CDD-Ghana, 2005: 5).

Ssenkumba (2005) defines political funding as the approach political parties and individual candidates contesting for political office raise funds for election campaigns. According to Walecki (2004), political funding relates to the use of funds by political parties for election campaign and other party activities. This definition is however narrow in the sense that it only draws an association between political finance and campaign election. Ohman and Zainulbhai (2009) opine that campaign/political finance refers to the fund raising and spending that political parties do in their election races. This definition is fairly obvious in that, it acknowledges the fact that as campaigns have many expenditures ranging from the cost of travel for the aspirants and others to the buying of

airtime for media advertisement, aspirants have to allocate substantial time and effort raising money to fund campaigns and rallies. Effectively, political finance describes spending money on two main events: in election and during non-election periods (Austinand & Tjernstrom, 2003).

2.4 Political Parties Sources of Fund

In Ghana, Article 21(1) of the Political Parties Act (2000), Act 574 evidently stipulates the regulations for financial coverage including sources of funds, while Article 23 regulates the funding of political parties (Ninsin, 2006). Article 23 also states that, only Ghanaian citizens or firms, partnerships, or enterprises in which a Ghanaian owns at least 75% and is registered under the laws of Ghana can donate or make contribution in cash or kind to a political party. This implies that, it is unlawful for noncitizens to contribute or make donations in cash or kind to a political party. The essence of these regulations is to ensure transparency and accountability in the operation of political parties (Ninsin, 2006).

To this time, political parties in Ghana have used four main sources to make income. These are: (1) seed money given by the founding members of the party, (2) membership dues, (3) gifts by well-wishers and (4) fund raising events. The common agreement is that these sources of funding are insufficient. Undeniably, the political parties themselves, particularly those in the opposition, regularly proclaim inadequate funding as the main problem facing them. Apparently, the financial limitation of the parties accounts for the lack of political party enthusiasm and encourages the exploitation of incumbency, political patronage and corruption that, in turn, weaken political party competitiveness, thereby hindering the entire structure of alternating governments through democratic elections (CDD, 2005a).

2.5 Challenges Facing Political Parties in Ghana

The extensive times of military rule has underdeveloped political party growth in Ghana. Not only were the parties restricted during these periods, but also other areas of society that foster political growth were equally undermined. For instance, the prohibition of political parties included limitations on the fundamental political right of free association, speech and gathering. Media freedoms were curtailed, the state-owned media were strictly managed and fearful libel laws dampened the few independent media that existed. Civil society organizations were either co-opted, pliable or disbanded outright if they did not conform. As a result, viable political parties competent of sustaining multiparty politics were slow to grow and be institutionalized and nurtured (CDD, 2005a).

Another setback of political party progress is the control of parties by a few individuals, weak internal structures, and the usually poor organizational capacities. Strong individual personalities, usually termed "founding fathers," who habitually treated the parties as personal property have conquered the political party process. In the event, the internal structures of the parties have been pathetic, having lacked internal democracy, transparency and accountability and the vigour capable of creating strong bonds with their supporters. These circumstances have weakened the capacity for policy formulation, broad-based interest articulation, representation, and membership mobilization for the generation of funds for party work (CDD, 2005a).

Insufficient funding or lack of finances is principally to responsible for the weaknesses of political parties in Ghana and the predicament is poorer for parties in opposition. While ruling parties capture advantage of the power of incumbency in the nonexistence of laws or regulations that differentiate between the party and the state, the opposition parties undergo the ensuing uneven political playing field (CDD, 2005a).

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

In the study, the descriptive survey technique was used. This technique was found convenient because it is a tool that helps to search for detailed information about the characteristics and very simple to use.

3.2 Research Population

The component population of the study comprised all individuals who are 18 years and above and are qualified electorates residing in the following 4 constituencies: Upper Denkyira East and Upper Denkyira West constituencies and in Central Region and Amenfi East and Amenfi Central constituencies in Western Region. The study nevertheless did not include to party officials at the polling station and constituencies levels. These constituencies were selected because of their proximity to the researcher.

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size for the study was eight hundred respondents. Two hundred respondents each from each constituency selected for the study.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

This study used simple random under probability sampling procedure in selecting respondents for interview and responding to the questionnaire. In this study, respondents were selected based on their readiness and capability to answer to the questionnaire.

4.0 Results and Discussion
4.1.1 The Gender Distribution of Respondents
The gender distribution of respondents is shown in (Table 1). Fifty-five percent of respondents are males while about 45% are females.

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Male	440	55
Female	360	45
Total	800	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

4.1.2 Age Distribution of the Respondents
The age distribution of the respondents is almost equally divided between the youth and adult population. Slightly over half (56.25%) of respondents are between ages 18 and 40 with 21.25% percent are in the age cohorts of 41 and 50; 16.25% are between 51 and 60 and 6.25% are above 60 years. Age-wise, the sample is comparatively representative of the Ghanaian electorates.

Table 2: Age of Respondents

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
10-20	40	5
21-30	220	27.5
31-40	190	23.75
41-50	170	21.25
51-60	130	16.25
61 and above	50	6.25
Total	800	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

4.1.3 Educational Background of Respondents
The educational background of respondents is shown in Table 3. Educational attainment of respondents ranged from 'no school' to those with tertiary education, though the sample is skewed (42%) in favour of those with secondary education. If voters are educated and knowledgeable, then t is logical to presume that respondents are well-informed about the basics of party funding in Ghana.

Table 3: Educational Level of Respondents

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
No education	62	7.75
Basic	198	24.75
Secondary	438	54.75
Tertiary	102	12.75
Total	800	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

4.1.4 Political Party Affiliation
More than half of respondents **(Table 4)**, 50.75% affiliated themselves with political parties and 40.5% of respondents said they did not associate themselves with any political party. The remaining 8.75% did not answer the question.

Table 4: Political Parties Affiliation of Respondents

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	406	50.75
No	324	40.5
Undecided	70	8.75
Total	800	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

It is assumed that the more people partake in political party activities, the more they are expected to understand the degree to which funds are critical for carrying out political parties' activities.

4.1.5 Attendance to Political Parties' Meetings Excluding Campaigns

From Table 5,The all the of respondents, 81% have not attended any party meeting besides attending campaigns, and 19% of the respondents have attended party meeting besides campaigns. This finding suggests that being members of political parties do not translate into attending political party meetings. The result shows that larger percentage of the Ghanaian electorates' affiliation to a political party and a smaller amount want to attend party meetings.

Table 5: Respondents Attendance to Political Parties meetings

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	152	19
No	648	81
Total	800	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

4.1.6 The Role that Political Parties Play in Democracy

Question on the role that political parties play a in the country's democracy was asked and from the study, all the respondents (100%) are of the opinion that representative democracy could not function without political parties, which provide a pivotal link between free civil society and effective, accountable government.

4.1.7 Electorates' Understanding of the Accurate Roles and Functions of Political Parties

The electorates' understanding of the accurate role and functions of political parties is very good. From the study, all the respondents (100%) were able to state a number of important functions of political parties: representation, giving a "voice" for the citizens, developing most up-to-date ideas and alternatives, coming out with party's manifestos and visions for nation and putting these to the populace, moderating public opinion where indispensable and providing local representation.

4.1.8 General Performance of Political Parties

Respondents were asked to appraise the general performance of political parties over their activities. In this perspective, performance was viewed at in terms of a political party's educating the general populace, educational policies, capacity to offer leadership, present policy alternatives, add to national policy debates, and ability to mobilize popular support. Respondents were asked to rank on a degree of poor, average, good, and excellent. On the general performance of the political parties, respondents were quite impressed about their performance. From table 6, respondents rated political parties in Ghana performance as cumulative (good and excellent) 41.25% and 42.5% percent rated them as average.

 Political parties capitalize on the capacity for popular elections to create both secure governments and efficient opposition. To embark on these roles, political parties need members, activists and leaders. They also need money. From the study, Table 6, more than half (60%) agree that political parties would execute their roles more effectively if they were well resourced while 40% of the respondents disagree with this.

Table 6: Respondents' view on performance of political parties

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Poor	130	16.25
Average	340	42.5
Good	306	38.25
Excellent	24	3
Total	800	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

4.1.9 Political Parties' Source of Fund

Electorates' knowledge on political parties' source of fund was asked during the study. The results of the study as shown in Table 7 revealed that, 42.75% of the respondents said all the political parties in Ghana depend on personal funds of party leaders and external funds from party members represent 26.5%. Membership dues represent 13% of funds accruing to political parties and donation to parties is 7%.

Table 7: Electorates' knowledge on political parties' source of fund

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Membership dues	104	13
Donation	56	7
Sale party paraphernalia	34	4.25
Personal funds of party leaders	342	42.75
External funds from party members	212	26.5
Others	52	6.5
Total	800	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

This source of funding for political parties in Ghana by party leaders and external funds from party members could create domineering and can weaken the multiparty democratic system of governance with narrow plan not automatically in consonance with the populace expectations. The Centre for Democratic Development (CDD) Research Report (2005) similarly noted that political party financing is an area that provides opportunities for corruption worldwide.

4.2.0 Challenges Facing Political Parties in Ghana

On the challenges facing political parties in Ghana, the respondents gave the following answers in relation to this study in Table8: the lack of sufficient funding (35%), internal party conflict (30%), Party members selfish interest (15%), corruption (10%), lack of realistic party's vision (6%) and others (4) were ranked in that order as the critical challenges facing political parties in Ghana.

Table 8: Challenges facing political parties

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of sufficient funding	280	35
Internal party conflict	240	30
Party members selfish interest	120	15
Corruption	80	10
Lack of realistic party's vision	48	6
Others	32	4
Total	800	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

4.2.1 Perception of Electorates Concerning State Funding of Political Parties in Ghana

The study sought to examine the perception of electorates concerning state funding of political parties in Ghana. The results of the study table 9 shows that 95% of the respondents' immediate response to the suggestion of state funding of political parties was that they would not be happy about their money being spent to finance parties because there are other equally crucial state priorities that need to be considered presently, 3 % of the respondents support state funding on the grounds that all parties would be on a level playing field - which would allow funds to be dispersed among parties in a more equitable way than the present arrangement with its dependence on personal sources of money and 2% of the respondents were undecided.

Table 9: Electorates' perception on state funding political parties

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	760	95
No	24	3
Undecided	16	2
Total	800	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Almost the respondents feel that state funding is neither the best answer to parties' funding problems, nor is it an adequate means of ensuring financial parity among political parties. The major explanation for respondents' view was that state funding political parties would imply there is a lot of issues state funds must be used for and other state priorities would suffer.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation
5.1 Conclusion
Efficient, equitable and sustainable party financing is necessary for establishing strong democratic government. It is a determiner of political party's enthusiasm and competiveness. In spite of the acknowledgment of the

significance of political parties to multiparty democracy, the Ghanaian populace is unwilling to support state funding the activities of political parties. There is an obvious first choice for all grassroots party members to fund their various political parties. Respondents are looking ahead to political parties to continue play important roles in the promotion of good governance and democratic consolidation.

5.2 Recommendations

- As the findings show, public support for state funding of political parties is very poor therefore citizens' confidence for state funding needs to be established.
- Political parties must be keen to divulge their sources of income and expenses and adhere to reporting needs as required by law.
- The Ghanaian media has an essential function to play by covering acts of corruption, misuse of incumbency and other violations of democracy as well as best practices by political parties.
- Thriving promotion of genuinely active support for political parties will obviously facilitate the mobilization of resources through membership dues.
- There must be education for political parties' members to be card-bearing members to ensuring smooth payment of membership dues.
- For political party funding to be tolerable to the broad populace and for it to add to the fall of disparity, fraud, and special interest manipulation, political funding ought to constitute an fundamental component of a broader package of political reforms.

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