TOPIC: REDUCING POVERTY THROUGH DECENTRALISED SERVICE PROVISION IN THE CENTRAL REGION OF GHANA

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Abstract

Improved service provision, which are responsive to the needs of local citizens, is important in reducing poverty at the local level. Decentralised provision of services, through local governments, have been accepted globally due to its theoretical promises of allocative and productive efficiencies. Decentralisation is to enhance participation of the local people in governance. It is also to promote more accountability and transparency in service provision at the local level. Adequate provision of services such as health and education are considered important in addressing poverty because a healthy population can invest a lot into productive ventures and make money, whereas an enlightened population, through education, can work their way out of poverty. The trend is that decentralised service provision in developing countries have achieved mixed result, as some areas have achieved success and others failure to benefit the citizens, not to talk about reducing poverty. This study looks into decentralised service provision, health and education, in reducing poverty in the Central Region of Ghana; which is one of the leading poverty regions in Ghana. A panel study of health and education outcomes, measured at the local level over a period of 10 years, for all the 20 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in the Central Region were used. Additionally, amounts spent (expenditure) on the provision of these services by the local governments, over a period of 10 years, were also used. Correlation and multiple regression analyses were employed to analyse the panel data to test the public choice theories on service provision and its impact on poverty reduction, at an alpha of 5%. Major studies have been done to assess the perceived satisfaction and feelings of the local people from decentralised service provision, however, what makes this particular study unique and significant to be studied is that it looks at the public choice theory from the fiscal perspective of decentralisation against service provision outcomes; which are measured at the local level where service is provided and consumed by the citizens. With the main objective of measuring the impact of service provision (in terms of expenditure) on service outcomes (with particular reference to education and health) and assessing the impact of service provision on poverty levels in the region, the study reveals the following results. These are: services provision has improved levels of poverty levels and more expenditure on service provision improves service outcomes at the local level. It is therefore recommended for an intensive local provision to further improve service outcomes.
Keywords: Poverty, Decentralisation, Poverty Alleviation, Service Provision