

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

**INFORMATION AND THE LEGISLATURE: AN ANALYSIS OF
INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND INFORMATION BEHAVIOUR OF
MEMBERS OF GHANA'S PARLIAMENT**



**Thesis Submitted to the Department of Integrated Development Studies
of the School for Development Studies, College of Humanities and Legal
Studies, University of Cape Coast in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for award of Doctor of Philosophy Degree in
Development Studies**

JULY 2020

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature.....Date.....

Name: Gifty Hanson

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature.....Date.....

Name: Professor Stephen B. Kendie

Co-Supervisor's Signature..... Date.....

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the information behaviour of Members of Parliament (MPs) in the context of parliamentary institutional arrangements and how it shaped their access to and use of information as they made laws, oversaw executive action and represented the citizens of Ghana. The legislature compared to the executive, often has fewer technical experts and limited access to information creating an “information gap” between the two. There also exists information gaps among MPs since the legislature is composed of elected representatives with varied levels of expertise and experience. These can negatively impact on the ability of the legislature to perform its mandated roles, especially since the work of legislators revolves around information. Against this background, the objectives of this study were to examine Ghanaian legislators’ information needs and information seeking behaviour, and analyse how institutional arrangements in the Parliament of Ghana affect members’ access to and use of information. In furtherance of these objectives, the study used a multiphase mixed-methods research design. Data from questionnaires, interviews and a database on information about bills presented to parliament were analysed. The main findings were that MPs’ frequency of need for information for performing financial control related roles was higher compared to that for oversight functions; and that leadership of the Parliament of Ghana strategically use information control tactic of shortening the layover time for executive/leadership priority Bills. However, leadership was less able to use such strategies when there was high public interest in bills. The study has demonstrated that in spite of progress made by Ghana’s Parliament in the Fourth Republic, the delegated power of citizens to government, especially to Members of Parliament, is not optimally exercised. The Parliament of Ghana needs to assert its independence especially in scheduling its workload and by improving access to information by its members.

KEYWORDS

Access to information

Information behaviour of Members of Parliament

Information control

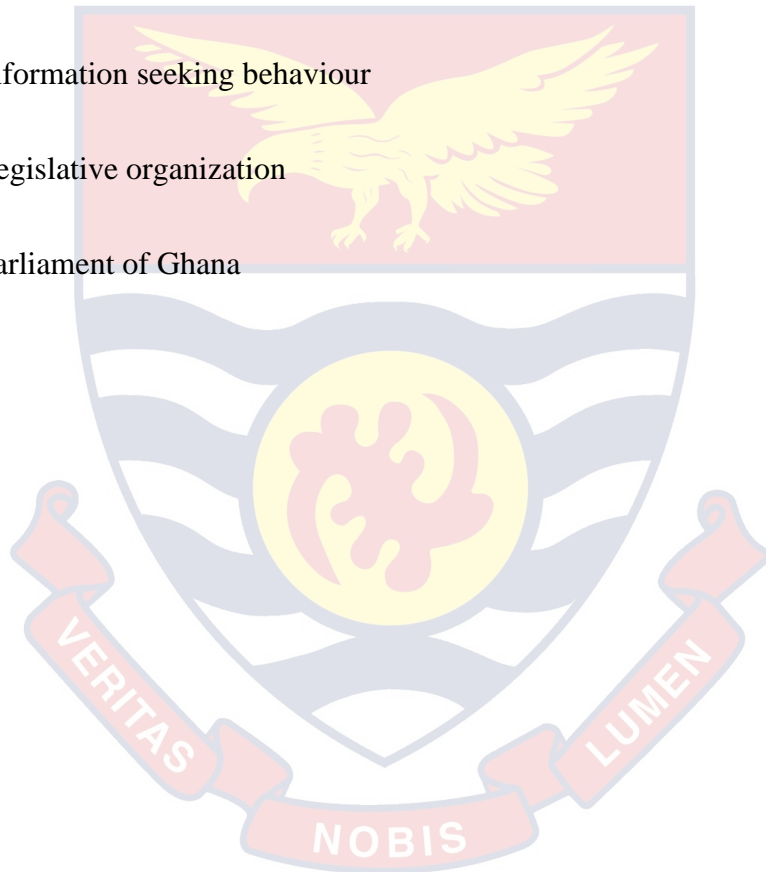
Information need

Information processing and use

Information seeking behaviour

Legislative organization

Parliament of Ghana



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DEDICATION

To my family: My husband, Professor Gordon Senanu Kwame Adika, our sons

Samuel N. Graham, Emmanuel Graham and Senanu Adika



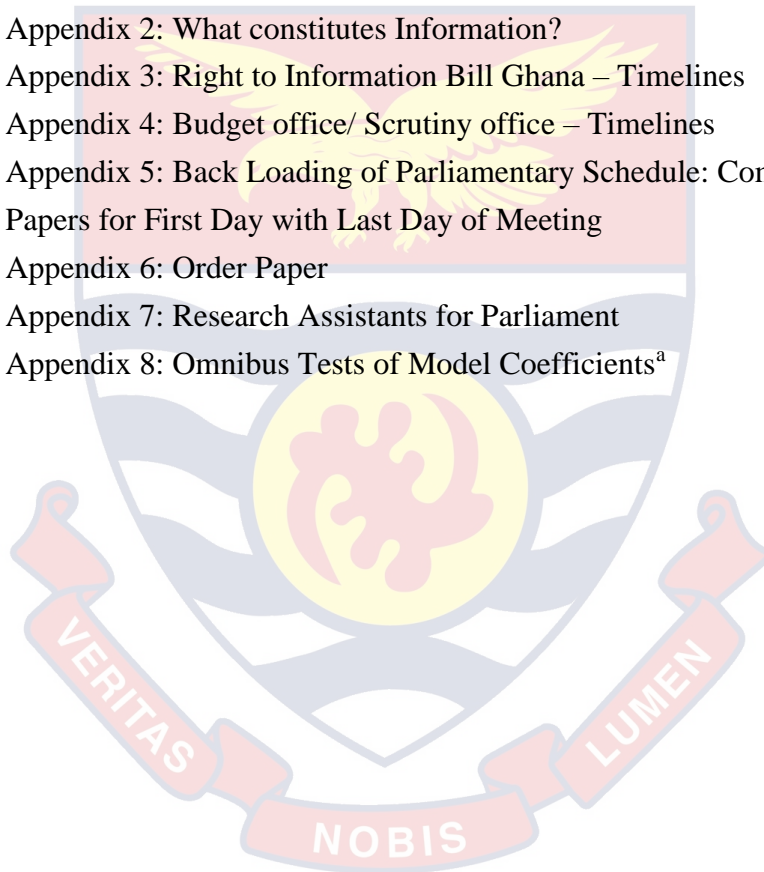
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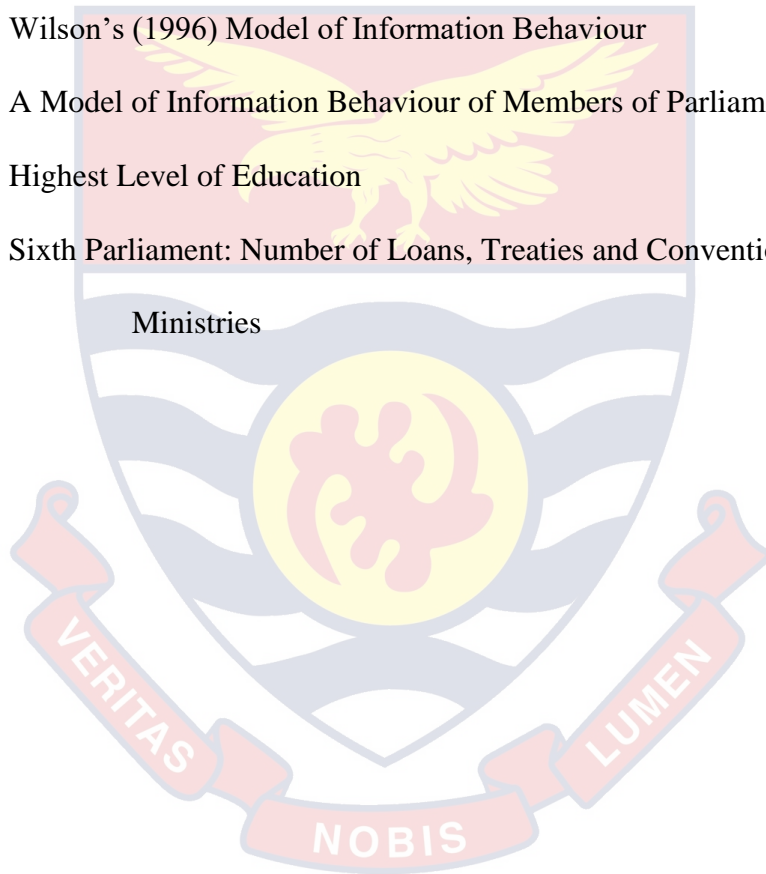
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACEPA	African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs
AfDB	African Development Bank
AG	Attorney General
APLESA	Association of Parliamentary Libraries of Eastern and Southern Africa
ASK	Anomalous State of Knowledge
CDD	Ghana Centre for Democratic Development
CHRAJ	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
CPP	Convention People's Party
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DFID	Department for International Development
EC	Electoral Commission of Ghana
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EOCO	Economic and Organised Crime Office
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GINKS	Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
GTV	Ghana Television
HS	High Salience
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDEG	Institute for Democratic Governance
IDRIG	Inter-departmental Research and Information Group
IEA	Institute of Economic Affairs, Ghana

IPU	Inter Parliamentary Union
ISSER	Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research
LS	Low Saliency
MDAs	Ministries Department and Agencies
MP	Member of Parliament
MPs	Members of Parliament
MPSA	Master Project Support Agreement
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NCCE	National Commissions for Civic Education
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisation
NMC	National Media Commission
NPP	New Patriotic Party
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PBB	Programme Based Budgeting
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PC	Parliamentary Centre
RTI	Right to Information
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Understanding the politics and related issues regarding the role of information and expertise in the legislature's performance of its mandate requires an understanding of the broader context within which the legislature exists and operates. This is necessary because Information Behaviour, that is, the totality of human behaviour in seeking and using information including sources and channels of information available, occurs within a context (Bates, 2010; Wilson, 1999; Wilson, 2000). Most importantly, research shows that for legislatures, institutional arrangements, encompassing institutional structures, rules and procedures, shape the relevance of information and expertise to political decisions, actions and outcomes (Bimber, 1992; Demaj, 2015). Individual and institutional factors are therefore important in understanding the role of information and expertise in the legislature. For legislatures, the effectiveness with which they perform their mandate is intertwined with the broader political system within the state and the institutional arrangements that shape behaviour, power and preferences of actors.

In modern society especially in liberal democracies, a basic assumption is that the mechanisms for making and enforcing collective decisions and through which ordered rule is maintained should be exclusively by states (Dunleavy, 2011). A pivotal theory of the state – the social contract – is an agreement between the government and the people which enjoins rulers to rule justly and the people to obey (D'Agostino, Gaus, & Thrasher, 2014). Social

contract stresses the existence of the state and provides justifications for political obligation, governmental authority and rights of the governed. Key proponents of the social contract theory include Thomas Hobbes, 1588–1679; John Locke, 1632–1704; Jean Jacques Rousseau, 1712–1778; Immanuel Kant, 1724 – 1804 and John Rawls, 1921– 2002. Social contract is the core basis for government and law in constitutional states.

The state often exercises authority through a set of permanent institutions recognizably public that are responsible for the collective organization of communal life and are funded at the public expense (Heywood, 2007). These institutions and the mechanisms through which a state can exercise authority and maintain ordered rule vary but, as Dunleavy (2011) points out, nearly a majority of the world’s population are living under liberal democratic forms of government that combines majority rule, protection of civil liberties, and protection of minority rights. This includes a number of African countries, Ghana being one of them.

In liberal democracies, these primary institutions of the state, specifically the three arms of government namely, the legislature, the executive and the judiciary are entrusted with the power to manage affairs on behalf of the citizens (Brako & Asah-Asante, 2014) on the basis of the social contract. Integral to this arrangement is the expectation that the state, through its institutions, will protect the rights of the individual, as they in turn are obliged to accept the authority of the state as espoused in the social contract theory. The citizens can also anticipate that the arrangement will promote the transformation of their societies and economies towards the general well-being of all.

For African countries as the quest for solutions to Africa's development challenges continues, the role of the state and its associated primary institutions, including the legislature, remains a topical issue among researchers and the international development community (Leftwich, 1993; Mkandawire, 2001; UNECA, 2011; UNDP, 2013). This is important, given the fact that most of the world's poor live in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia (United Nations, 2016).

As alluded to earlier, in modern states with liberal democracies, the three arms of government – the legislature, the executive and the judiciary – provide the machinery for making and enforcing collective decisions and maintaining ordered rule, and it is through these institutions that mechanisms for socio-economic transformation of the state and its citizens rest.

Out of the three arms of government, the legislature, made up of representatives of citizens, is the only primary institution of the state, specifically created to represent the diverse interests of citizens in different constituencies in liberal democracies (Barkan, 2008). The legislature therefore serves as the strongest platform citizens have in ensuring that their needs and their voices are taken into consideration at the highest level of governmental decision-making. There is also increasing recognition that legislatures can play an important role in delivering governance which is effective both in reducing poverty and building democracy (Hudson & Wren, 2007; Nijzink, Mozaffar & Azevedo, 2006). Indeed, it is the democratic face of a country.

The background to these issues relates to the fact that in African countries especially, the state's role in development has undergone numerous

changes as a result of “ideological, paradigmatic and structural shifts in both the domestic and international spheres” (Mkandawire, 2001, p. 294). After the independence of most African countries only a few have successfully transformed their economies in spite of the numerous development strategies implemented across the continent in partnership with major international development partners (Ayee, 2013; UNECA, 2011).

Following a resurgence of democracy on the African continent and globally from the 1970s to the 1990s (Huntington, 1991), there has been renewed hope among Africans not only for political stability but also for socio-economic development (Adejumobi, 1999; Omodia, 2013). This has been accompanied by a shift in strategy in the development community since the 1990s which acknowledges that political factors have played a significant role in Africa's economic misfortunes (National Academy of Sciences, 1992).

The literature, however, shows that scholars disagree on the relationship between democracy and development. The relationship between the two has remained a keenly contested issue among scholars ever since it was advanced by Lipset (1959). Against this backdrop, a growing number of researchers skeptical about democracy bringing about development have advocated for a “developmental state” for African countries, that is, a state that intervenes in economic life promoting industrial and economic growth through partnerships with major economic interests (Ayee, 2013; Gyimah-Boadi, 2010; Heywood, 2007; Kendie, 2011; Leftwich, 1993; Mkandawire, 2001; UNECA, 2011). Kendie (2011, p.ii) advocates “for Ghana to adopt the principles of a developmental state and for the local level to be central to development planning”. For academics such as Gyimah-Boadi, a combination of a

developmental state with liberal democracy can promote national development in African countries (Gyimah-Boadi, 2010). Indeed, for countries such as Ghana that already practise democracy, Gyimah-Boadi's suggestion presents a viable approach towards national development.

Regardless of these diverse perspectives among scholars on the relationship between democracy and development, one underlying assumption for all is effective institutions, such as the legislature, as the backbone for national development (Gyimah-Boadi, 2010; Mkandawire, 2001; UNECA, 2011). Legislatures may be the crucial political institution to advance democracy (Fish, 2006). Arguably, an effective legislature is a key factor in moving from nominal democracy to a democracy that delivers development results for people (Bolarinwa, 2015). It is in this context that this research seeks to contribute to the broader goal of a better understanding of the role of information in the work of the legislator especially in overseeing executive action, passing laws/policies while championing development agenda that is aligned with the needs of the citizens/citizenry they represent.

Legislatures are historically viewed as the main conduit for providing “responsible and representative government” (Heywood, 2007, p. 352). Beyond their law-making function, legislatures are crucial for promoting development through their oversight function which is to “provide mechanisms for achieving both vertical and horizontal accountability of the ruler to the ruled” (Barkan, 2009, p.1). They work to balance the power of the executive (Folscher, 2006) and serve as representatives of the citizenry. By their mandate, legislatures in democratic governments are also uniquely designed to serve as “national debating chambers (Heywood, 2007, p.335). These roles of debating,

scrutinizing, making laws, checking executive action and representing citizens all revolve around information and expertise.

As part of their role, Members of Parliament (MPs) also routinely work with many documents ranging from the content of bills to voluminous reports such as the Auditor-Generals' Reports. Not only do legislators need prompt access to the actual content, they also need knowledge, experience and additional information when performing their duties. They require information as they work on policy solutions, project policy outcomes, prepare speeches, participate in debates, maintain discussions with peers and constituents and influence government decisions. They also need information to monitor progress in the implementation of on-going programmes (IPU, 2009; Mostert, 2004). Furthermore, for reviewing national budgets and economic policies, members need access to independent budget analyses (Folscher, 2006; Wehner, 2004). Indeed, reliable facts and analyses can contribute to both a better understanding of the problems and more realistic and effective legislative solutions (Miller, Pelizzo, & Stapenhurst, 2004; Robinson, 2002).

In sum, information is seen as vital for the legislator and the legislature (Frantzich, 1979; Marcella, Carcary & Baxter, 1999; Johnson & Nakamura, 1999). A logical assumption then is that the majority of MPs will need access to information on different occasions if they are to make informed contributions as they carry out their roles. However, the literature shows that the role of information in the legislature remains a complex and highly contested issue (Bimber, 1991; Demaj, 2015).

The need for information, access to information and the use of information in legislatures vary considerably from Parliament to Parliament and is interlinked with the power dynamics associated with the political system and the institutional arrangements of legislatures. The power dynamics and the effectiveness of the legislature can be viewed from two constituent parts. The first is *power as relational*, that is, the legislature having sufficient power and independence in relation to the executive for it to effectively oversee the work of the executive. The second is *power as capacity*, that is, the legislature having the relevant legal rights and resources such as financial, human and organisational resources to perform its mandate (Beetham, 2006); and it is within this context of power that the role of information and expertise in the legislature can best be understood.

To begin with, asymmetry of information (that is, where one party has more or better information than the other) exists between the executive and the legislature. Irrespective of the model of government, presidential or parliamentary, a common thread relates to the fact that the executive arm of government and its bureaucratic departments often have an advantage with information and expertise because of the large array of technical experts employed by the executive branch. They also tend to have access to more information as executors of laws and policies allowing them to exhibit more power and control (Lowenberg & Patterson, 1979; Stapenhurst 2011), and the capacity to hold back what they know (Weber, 1991) to the disadvantage of the legislative branch. (power as relational and asymmetry of information between the legislature and the executive).

Asymmetry of information also exists within the legislature. Indeed, the very nature of legislatures as institutions composed of representatives with varying backgrounds creates asymmetry of information among Members of Parliament (Krehbiel, 1991). MPs have to deal with a broad range of issues, some highly complex and technical. At any given time, and on any given issue, some legislators will have better knowledge than others about the relationship between the policy and its potential consequences (Krehbiel, 1991). Generally, matters before the House which fall outside the legislator's own expertise or experience prompts a need for information (Schneier, 1970). Legislatures in democratic governments will always be composed of members with different expertise creating asymmetry of information and expertise within the legislature. This is because the professional background of the individual is rarely a requirement for becoming an MP (power as capacity and asymmetry of information within the legislature). It is therefore very important to understand the power dynamics in the political system between the legislature and the executive, as well as within the legislature in terms of its legal rights and the resources and the asymmetries of information associated with these.

Legislatures as self-organizing institutions have the potential to resource themselves to help address the asymmetry of information between parliament and the executive and also within parliament among its members. Most legislatures set up committee systems not only to help them effectively manage their workload but also, according to Gilligan and Krehbiel (1987, 1989, 1990), tap the talent of committee members, promote specialization and share that expertise with their colleagues with less information for decision-making.

In addition to setting up committee systems, well-resourced legislatures especially in advanced democracies usually address asymmetries of information in a number of ways. These include employing in-house experts from different disciplines, setting up libraries, establishing training centres and providing resources to individual members (Beetham, 2006). These strategies have become the ideal expected from most legislatures. The reality is that not only are these efforts costly, but they also require reforms championed by committed individuals as demonstrated in the USA (Bimber, 1992), in Uganda in 2001 and in Kenya in 2003 (Barkan, 2009; Makau, 2012). In addition to being relatively new compared to centuries old democracies such as the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA), a number of African legislatures have been constrained by their past experiences of colonialism and military rule that have shaped the emergence of democratic rule in Africa.

In modern times, several factors including the society structure, constitutional provisions, the internal structures of the legislatures and resources at their disposal affect the work of the legislatures (Barkan, 2009; Bolarinwa, 2015; Nijzink, Mozaffar & Azevedo, 2006; Stapenhurst 2011). The few exceptions to this are countries such as South Africa, which has a national assembly described by some as the best resourced legislature in Africa (Barkan, 2009) as well in Uganda and Kenya that have been identified as legislatures that hold the executive to account (Barkan, 2009). For most African legislatures with limited access to information and expert advice the situation is often worsened by the lack of autonomy, and by parliament's lack of control over its budget which limits access to funds for setting up units to provide independent analyses to the legislators. Such legislatures continue to grapple with asymmetry of

information associated with relational power with the executive as well as with asymmetries of information associated with power as capacity experienced within the institution itself.

The end result is that in most of these legislatures, access to substantive, policy-relevant information continues to remain exclusively in the province of the executive and its bureaucracy (Miller et al., 2004; Stapenhurst, 2011; UNECA, 2005). Most African legislatures therefore lack access to independently analysed factual information for performing their mandates (Beetham, 2006; Bolarinwa, 2015; UNECA, 2005; Stapenhurst, 2011).

Ghana has been described as one of Africa's most liberal, vibrant democracies (Brierley, 2012; Gyimah-Boadi, 2008) and politically stable countries in sub Saharan Africa (Ayensu & Darkwa 2006; Brierley, 2012). Ghana is classified as a middle-income country, yet many development indicators are still in the state of a low-income country (Nketiah-Amponsah, 2015). Economically, Ghana remains poor in spite of its rich mineral resources (Agbesinyale & Inkoom, 2014). The Parliament of Ghana per its mandate has the potential to contribute to moving Ghana from nominal democracy to a democracy that delivers development results for its people.

The legislature in Ghana's Fourth Republic is relatively stable following more than twenty-five years of uninterrupted democracy. With the country's return to constitutional rule following the adoption of the 1992 Constitution in April 1992 (the Fourth Republican Constitution) Ghana adopted its own political system: a blend of the presidential and the parliamentary systems. It is described as a hybrid system primarily because the 1992 Constitution Article

78 (1) instructs that majority of ministers of state in Ghana be appointed from among members of Parliament.

Ghana's Parliament, like legislatures across the globe, is an institution that deals with a wide range of complex issues some of which are highly technical. Often, elected representatives in Ghana's Parliament, irrespective of their personal professional achievements and experience, enter Parliament in their first term with limited or no formal training in performing their core functions of representation, oversight and law-making. So, in addition to dealing with complex parliamentary procedures, the MP must deal with highly technical subject matters that come before the house.

Trends within parliaments of the Fourth Republic show high proportions of new Members of Parliament after successive elections in Ghana. Table 1 shows the turnover of MPs in Parliaments of the Fourth Republic of Ghana. While having new members in Parliament as part of the democratic process in itself is not undesirable, the high numbers tend to negatively affect efforts at building the institutional capacity of parliament and also erode "the capacity of the legislature to perform its core functions" (Barkan, 2009, p.15). Table 1 indicates that 44.0% of MPs of the Seventh Parliament of the Fourth Republic were new entrants.

Table 1:

Turnover of MPs: Parliaments of the Fourth Republic of Ghana

Year of Election	Returning MPs	New MPs	Total Number of MPs	Percentage (%)	
				Old	New
1992	0*	200	200	0	100
1996	73	127	200	36.5	63.5
2000	118	82	200	59	41.0
2004	101	129	230**	43.9	56.1
2008	137	93	230	59.6	40.4
2012	129	146	275***	46.9	53.1
2016	154	121	275	56.0	44.0

Source: (Compiled by author, 2017 - from parliamentary documents)

Note: *In 1992 all MPs were new following Ghana’s return to democratic rule

**In 2004 there was an increase in number of MPs to 230

*** In 2012 there was an increase in number of MPs to 275

The large numbers of new MPs in Parliament, who inevitably have to go through a learning process, exacerbate the existing fundamental challenge legislatures in general face, with asymmetry of expertise among its members on any given subject matter. The situation can negatively affect the overall performance of the core mandate of the House especially in the initial years of a parliamentary term (Stapenhurst, 2011). Furthermore, Ghana’s Parliament as an institution must contend with limited resources in a hybrid governance system (Lindberg & Zhou, 2009) and that, inadvertently, creates a dominant executive arm of government (Gyampo & Graham, 2014) and a president with vast powers (Gyimah-Boadi, 2009) supported by a large bureaucracy invariably

exacerbating the asymmetry of information between the executive and the legislature.

Like most legislatures across the globe, the Parliament of Ghana has made some efforts over the years to provide MPs with information through the provision of library services, employment of in-house researchers and the establishment of committee systems. These have however proved inadequate in addressing the challenge of lack of access to information among members of Ghana's Parliament. Studies on the role of information in the Parliament of Ghana confirm that Ghana's legislature faces challenges with regard to access to pertinent information (Addo, 2011; Alemna & Skouby, 2000; GINKS, 2015; Ofori-Dwumfuo & Addo, 2012; Osman & Agyei, 2014; Stapenhurst, 2011). While these findings are beneficial and point to the overall lack of access to information among Ghanaian MPs, the key question remains as to how institutional arrangements such as leadership structures, and the rules and procedures that guide the work of the legislature affect members' information behaviour, especially their access to and use of pertinent information in a fast-paced, collective action work environment.

Statement of the Problem

Parliaments and Parliamentarians have a major role to play in national planning, shaping strategies for development, ensuring transparency and accountability (United Nations General Assembly, 2018) and in representing the needs of the citizenry as they perform their mandated roles. While several factors are at play including power relations among the different arms of government and levels of authority and autonomy of legislatures as these parliaments play their mandated role, it remains a fundamental fact that the

work of the legislature including law-making, holding debates, scrutinizing government policies, overseeing executive action and representing their citizens all revolve around information. Information remains integral to political decision-making and efforts towards socio-economic development especially in this era of the information society. This notwithstanding, the literature reveals that there is a gap in knowledge of the role of information and expertise in the legislature. Indeed, there is intense debate among scholars on the value of information especially in the law-making process (Bimber, 1991; Demaj, 2015). While some scholars argue that “knowledge is power”, and see information as one of the chief factors in projecting the impact bills and policies passed by legislatures will have on citizens, others argue that information and expertise often appear to have limited value in the work of the legislature especially in the law-making process (Bimber, 1991; Demaj, 2015).

Linked to the debate on the value of information to legislatures, various studies have confirmed an asymmetry of information (i) between the legislature and the executive, as well as (ii) an asymmetry of information within the legislature among members of Parliament (Demaj, 2015; Gilligan & Krehbiel, 1987; Krehbiel, 1991; Stapenhurst, 2011). To address these, well-resourced legislatures across the globe adopt mechanisms to provide expert advice to their members aimed at bridging these information asymmetries.

In the African context, some studies have revealed that most African legislatures, such as the Parliament of Ghana lack access to information and expert advice, which weakens their ability to adequately perform their mandate (Aggrey-Darkoh, 2012; Barkan, 2009; Beetham, 2006; Bolarinwa, 2015; Rotberg & Salahub, 2013; Osman & Agyei, 2014; Stapenhurst, 2011; UNECA,

2005). While this is noteworthy, it must be pointed out that most studies on information and legislative politics have been conducted on legislatures in advanced democracies where availability of and accessibility to information is often not the core problem. Such lines of inquiry are therefore based on an assumption of abundance of information (“More information hypothesis”) (Bimber, 1992; Demaj, 2015, p.3). This assumption is in contrast with the scarcity of information and the inadequacy of access to relevant and quality information that pertain in emerging legislatures such as the Parliament of Ghana.

The literature also reveals that a large number of the works on information and the legislature focus on the United States Congress and US state legislatures which reflects only one of the two dominant systems of government, namely, the presidential and the parliamentary. These studies on Congress and the role of information have also been carried out in legislatures which allow individual MPs to initiate bills for passage in the legislature. Historically, members of Ghana’s Parliament have not initiated private members bills due to Parliament’s strict interpretation of Article 108 of the 1992 Constitution to mean that private member’s bill will have financial implications thereby making the Executive, the President, the sole proposer of bills in Ghana (Asante, 2002; Gyampo, 2013)

Regarding the study of information and expertise in the legislature, scholars apply different approaches. Of these, rational choice theory specifically the information theory of legislative organization, is extensively applied to examine the asymmetry of information within the legislature focusing on parliamentary committees and issues of specialization especially in

the US Congress. While rational choice theory has proved useful as a model for predictions and in some instances has helped explain how legislatures can tap the talent of their members through committees to promote specialization for legislative decision-making, (Gilligan & Krehbiel, 1987, 1989, 1990; Hall, 1993; Krehbiel, 1990, 1991) it has however, proved inadequate in providing a clearer understanding of how institutional arrangements shape members' access to information and their use of information. The "intuitionist approach" spearheaded by Weiss (1979, 1997, 1998) offers an alternative approach to studying the politics of information and the interplay of ideology, interest and members' use of information. However, the intuitionist approach, while useful in studying individual MPs, does not adequately address questions related to how institutional arrangements shape the role of information and collective action in the legislature.

In this regard, it is worth investigating the information needs of members and how they go about meeting those needs. It is also important to examine how institutional arrangements, such as leadership structures and the rules and procedures that guide the work of the legislature, affect members' information behaviour, especially their access to pertinent information and the use of such information in a fast-paced work environment.

Of particular interest is Curry's (2011) theory of information control which posits, among other things, that the priority the executive and leadership of parliament attach to bills affects the timeframe (the layover time) parliamentarians actually have at their disposal when they work on such bills. This is a strategy used by parliamentary leadership to restrict members' access to information. This phenomenon as it pertains in the Parliament of Ghana also

needs to be investigated to deepen our understanding of how institutional factors shape the role of information in Ghana's legislature.

Objectives

The main objective of the study was to investigate the information behaviour of members of Ghana's parliament and how current institutional structures shaped access to and the use of information in the performance of their mandate.

The specific objectives were to:

1. Examine Ghanaian legislators' information needs in the performance of their mandate,
2. Investigate the information seeking behaviour of members of Ghana's Parliament,
3. Analyse how current institutional arrangements in the Parliament of Ghana, especially the leadership structure affect members' access to information in the performance of their mandate, and
4. Examine how current institutional arrangements in the Parliament of Ghana, especially the leadership structure affect members' use of information in the performance of their mandate.

Research Questions

1. What are the information needs of Ghanaian legislators in the performance of their mandate?
2. What is the information seeking behaviour of members of Ghana's parliament?

3. How do current institutional arrangements especially the leadership structure in Ghana's Parliament affect members' access to information in the performance of their mandate?
4. How do current institutional arrangements especially the leadership structure in Ghana's parliament affect members' use of information in the performance of their mandate?

Research Hypothesis

The study tested the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: *Leaders may use information control tactics to advance executive/leadership priority bills.*

Hypothesis 2: *Leadership may be less able to restrict information on bills when public interest in the bill is high.*

Scope of the Study

The study covers the Parliament of the Fourth Republic of Ghana specifically sitting and former MPs as well as key staff members of the Parliamentary Service. The research covers information control and the leadership structure, focusing on the majority and minority leadership, the Chairpersons as well as ranking members of key Parliamentary Committees. This study limits itself to information behaviour of Members of Parliament as defined by Wilson (1997) and used in the context of information science.

Significance of the Study

Numerous studies have established that in the performance of their role, MPs, especially in poorly-resourced legislatures in developing economies, lack access to information and expertise (Aggrey-Darkoh, 2012; Beetham, 2006;

Bolarinwa, 2015; Parliamentary Centre, 2011, 2013; Pelizzo & Stapenhurst, 2004; Stapenhurst, 2011, UNECA, 2005). There is however limited understanding of the totality of the issues revolving around access to and use of expert advice and information within a collective action and decision-making environment that has complex institutional arrangements as pertain to legislatures.

By combining the theory of information control with an information behaviour model the research sought to provide a more holistic approach for investigating the information behaviour of individual MPs within the complex collective decision-making environment. It is hoped that this contribution to the application of information control theory and Wilson's model of information behaviour will offer researchers a more comprehensive approach for investigating the issue of the role of information in the legislature.

It is anticipated that the findings of the study will provide relevant insight about the role of information in the legislature that will be beneficial not only to leadership and Members of Parliament but also to researchers and all interested in promoting more effective African parliaments. It is also hoped that the empirical analysis on parliamentary leadership information control tactics will provide clarity and better understanding of the dynamics of MPs' access to and use of information to help improve information support systems for Parliament. Overall it is expected that the research findings will contribute to bridging the research and knowledge gap by providing greater insights into the role of information and expertise in less-resourced legislatures where this remains a challenge. The research will contribute to the broader goal of a better understanding of legislatures, especially those with similar historical and

structural developments as Ghana's Parliament. As these countries strive to build democracies that deliver development results for their citizens, understanding the role of the legislature, the representative arm of the government becomes paramount.

Limitations of the Study

Even though a total of six Parliaments have completed their full four-term since Ghana's return to constitutional rule in 1993, it was not possible to extend the third component of the study – multivariate analysis of bills – to cover all six Parliaments due to time and resource constraints.

Operational Definition of Terms

Information Behaviour is the accepted term in information science that covers the totality of human behaviour when it comes to information need, sources and channels of information, seeking information both active and passive and information use (Case 2007, Wilson 1997).

Information Need is an approximation of the causes of information seeking behaviour (Wilson, 1997). For legislators, information need is approximated by identifying MPs' need for information in performing their mandated roles.

Information Seeking Behaviour is "concerned with the variety of methods people employ to discover, and gain access to information resources" (Wilson, 1999, p. 263)

Information Use has a broad range of definitions in scholarly literature. In the context of this study, information use covers two main aspects, namely i) application of information and ii) non-use of information.

Layover Time is the duration in hours from the date a committee report is presented to the House to the date of second reading of the bill or date of commencement of debate on a motion.

The State is a “political association that establishes sovereign jurisdiction within defined territorial borders, and exercises authority through a set of permanent institutions...” (Heywood, 2007, p. 91).

Public Salience – Topic/issue with great level of importance for the public and highly visible in the public domain.

Executive/leadership priority – parliamentary business including bills and loan agreements that are deemed as more important than others by the executive and leadership of the House.

Power – defined as having two constituent parts. The first is power as a *capacity*: having the relevant legal rights and resources including financial, human and organisational resources to carry out necessary tasks; the second is power as *relational*: having sufficient power and independence in relation to the executive to oversee it effectively.

Organisation of the Study

The thesis is divided into seven chapters as outlined below: Chapter One, ‘Introduction’, provides a general introduction to the thesis. It states the problem under investigation, the objectives and the research questions. Other aspects of the chapter cover the scope and significance of the study. It also provides the limitations of the study and the operational definition of terms. Chapter Two of the study, ‘Review of Related Literature’, captures the Literature Review. It reviewed the theories, models and concepts that inform

this research. The theories and models covered included the social contract theory and legislative organization theories (as foundational theories of the study) and the theory of information control and information behaviour models (as the main theory and model applied to the research). It also reviewed empirical works on the role of information in the work of the legislature and presents the conceptual framework for this research.

Chapter Three, 'Research Methods', covers the methodology and research design. Different research paradigms and research designs that have been applied in research work on the role of information in the legislature are reviewed. It describes the methodology and research design adopted for this current study. It also covers the population and sampling procedure, describes the data collection procedures and analysis of data, and outlines strategies adopted to address ethical issues. Chapter Four, 'Parliament of Ghana: Mandate, Structure and Information Support Services', is devoted to the Parliament of Ghana. It covers the evolution of the Parliament of Ghana, its mandate and structure. Details on the core functions, the leadership of parliament, the committee system as well as information units within the Parliament of Ghana are provided. Chapter Five, 'MPs' Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour: Results and Discussions', shows findings from the three components of the study covering objectives 1 and 2. The analyses were based on the conceptual framework, the research objectives and questions for the study. Chapter Six, 'Institutional Arrangements and MPs Information Behaviour: Results and Discussions' presents findings from the analysis of the questionnaire data, interview data and from data on loans/international agreements and Bills. It covers objectives 3 and 4. Chapter Seven, 'Summary,

Conclusions and Recommendations’, summarises the main findings of the study and makes recommendations. It also presents the contribution of the study to knowledge and suggests possible areas for future research.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviews the theories and models that inform this research. They include the social contract theory, legislative organization theories, and the intuitionist perspective of policy positions of politicians which serve as the foundational theories. The main theory and model used for the study are the theory of information control and Wilson's information behaviour model. The chapter also explains relevant concepts and presents summaries of empirical works that investigate the role of information in parliamentary work. Furthermore, the chapter presents an overview of research paradigms and design alternatives, and it concludes with the conceptual framework for this study.

This research, by virtue of the issues it raises, straddles multiple disciplines; therefore, its theoretical approach is eclectic in nature. It should be noted though, that at the core of the research is a developmental problem, that is, the quest to understand the role of information in the legislature's performance of their mandate especially in ensuring checks and balances of the executive and passing laws and policies that are in line with the needs of the citizens.

To inform the conceptualization and operationalization of the research problem, the information control theory by Curry (2011) and Wilson's 1996 general model of information behaviour are reviewed in terms of their definitions, perspectives, and assumptions. In addition to the review of theories

and models, concepts such as information need, seeking and use are identified and defined in line with Sonnenwald's (1999) assertion that it is worthwhile to discuss fundamental concepts in order to develop shared meaning, usage and relationship with other concepts. Attention is paid to identifying important concepts and reviewing empirical work on the role of information and the legislature. At the end of the review, a conceptual framework that binds the theories together and offers a coherent framework for the analysis of the data is presented.

The social contract theory and legislative organization theories are the foundational theories of this study. To understand members' information behaviour there is the need to understand the context within which the legislature operates.

The Social Contract Theory

Social contract theory dates back several centuries. Social contract is an agreement between the government and the people which enjoins rulers to rule justly and the people to obey (D'Agostino et al., 2014). As a theory of the state, the emphasis is on the existence of the state and justifications for political obligation, governmental authority and rights of the governed. These fundamentals of the social contract theory underpin the current study because social contract is the core basis for government and law especially in liberal democracies.

Proponents of the social contract theory range from philosophers to historians, from Thomas Hobbes, 1588–1679; John Locke, 1632–1704; Jean Jacques Rousseau, 1712–1778; Immanuel Kant, 1724 – 1804 to John Rawls,

1921- 2002. A two-stage social contract theory has been advocated by Buchanan, namely, the constitutional and the post-constitutional (D’Agostino et al., 2014 citing Buchanan, 2000). As explained by D’Agostino et al., the constitutional stage (“the protective state”) aims at developing a system of constraints to ensure the harmonious co-existence of people while the post-constitutional (“productive state”) seeks to ensure the constitutional orders of social and political institutions. Against this backdrop, Nbeta (2012, p. 277) concludes that “the state is both a *community* and an *association*”, and from this, further draws the implication that, “... the existence of the state is rooted in and justified by its purposes, or a rational will to promote the general well-being of her citizens”.

Strengths of the Social Contract Theory

From the perspective of the social contract theory the constitution of liberal democracies must originate from the people (Nbeta, 2012). A constitution may consist of a set of norms that create structure and possibly define the limits of governmental power (Allan, 2001 as cited in Gyampo & Graham, 2014). The expectation is that these norms will impose significant limitations on the powers of government and promote mutual checks and balances. The effectiveness of the legislature is rooted in its power and authority especially the power dynamics with the executive.

For liberal democracies the two main model of governments – the presidential system and the parliamentary system of government – determine the power relations and structures that ensure checks and balances, among the different arms of government. Separation of powers and checks and balances as practised in the presidential system of governance offers a practical way for

promoting constitutionalism, a good example being the system practised in the US (Gyampo & Graham, 2014). The other major form of government in liberal democracies, the Parliamentary system (as practised in the United Kingdom) often has its structures for power sharing and promoting checks and balances, even though the prime minister and ministers of state are MPs. In this system, there is a fusion of the legislative arm and the executive arms of government. Attributed to Montesquieu (1689–1755), checks and balances allow the separate branches of government to hold each other mutually responsible.

Criticisms of the Social Contract Theory

The social contract theory has come under some criticism. One of such criticisms relates to the practical application of the theory. The question is “whether it is ever possible in practice to secure the consent and deliberative participation of *all* the adult citizens at every point in time in order to justify the exercise of governmental authority over them” (Nbeta, 2012, p. 277). Nbeta proposes two ways of resolving this challenge: one, that good Constitutions guarantee the fundamental rights and liberties of citizens, and provide them with outlets for the expression of their views with respect to tenets of justice and governance; and two, that

“the application of the concept of *hypothetical agreement* ... would ensure that laws and public policies are made on the basis of the crucial hypotheses that the citizens are parties to the contract (and so each has a stake in the state as well as a right to participate in her affairs, directly or representatively), that they are rational, that they are members of a well-ordered society” (Nbeta, 2012, p. 277).

The tenets of the social contract theory therefore underpin the fundamental theoretical assumption of this research. For this study the focus is on understanding the norms, the limits of governmental power, the institutional arrangements, and the asymmetries of information that exists especially between the executive and the legislature and within Parliament. These are the fundamentals for understanding the role of information in the work of the legislature. Access to information and the use of information by MPs are well rooted in the power dynamics that impact the overall effectiveness of the legislature. The next section focuses specifically on the limits of governmental power, the power relations and the asymmetries of information inherent in these in more detail.

Systems of Government, Power Relations and Asymmetry of Information

The effectiveness of any legislature in performing its mandate, as indicated earlier, is intrinsically linked to its power and authority in the political system, especially power relations with the other arms of government most notable with the Executive.

To interrogate governmental power especially as it relates to the legislature, there is the need to look at the two main institutional arrangements, that is, the parliamentary and presidential systems of government. For the study, this is looked at from the perspective of parliamentary effectiveness. As argued by Beetham (2006, p.115) “Parliamentary effectiveness cannot be satisfactorily treated without confronting issues of power. ‘Power’ has many different meanings, but two are particularly relevant here. The first is power as *relational*: having sufficient power and independence in relation to the executive to oversee it effectively. The second is power as a *capacity*: having

the relevant legal rights and resources – financial, human and organisational – to carry out necessary tasks

Power as Relational: Legislature-Executive Relationship and the Asymmetry of Information

In liberal democracies across the globe the relationship that exists between the executive and the legislature varies greatly but is often clustered by most scholars into two main models. The first, the parliamentary system also known as the Westminster-style system in which the legislative and executive powers are fused in the assembly, and the second, the presidential system of government as practised in the United States of America and a number of Latin American countries, in which there is strict separation of powers between the legislative, the executive and judiciary branches of government ensuring that each branch is formally independent. The checks and balances in the doctrine of separation of powers allows the separate branches of government to hold one another mutually responsible. Studies on the relationship between the legislature and the executive often focus on the relative merits of these two main systems of government: the presidential system of government and the parliamentary system of government, but findings to date on the two systems are inconclusive as to which has more merits (Elgie, 2005; Hamdy, 2011; Linz, 1990). Such studies highlight the importance of understanding the wider institutional context including the power dynamic (Elgie 2005; Hamdy, 2011).

Also, in practice a number of democratic governments across the globe adopt different variations of these two systems to reflect the values and culture of their society, thus leading to wide variations in the power relationships between the executive and the legislature. Regardless of the system, what is

evident is that the two main systems of government and their hybrids often create a strong executive with the legislative arm of government constantly struggling for political power and relevance (Alabi, 2009; Barkan, 2008).

The literature shows that the challenge of an overly strong executive is particularly true in several African democracies often leading to the situation where even though legislatures represent strong symbols of democracies, most continue to remain weak in executing their mandate due to their relationship with the executive (Bolarinwa, 2015; UNECA, 2005;). This poses a challenge especially when scholarly works show that there is asymmetry of information between the executive and the legislature (Demaj, 2015; Stapenhurst, 2011).

It can be argued that presidential and parliamentary systems of governments are structured in such a way that inherently the executive arm of government often has more experts to support its work compared to the legislative arm. This is because public sector bureaucracies including the ministries, departments and agencies that support the executive arm of government usually engage a range of technical experts that provide technical advice and support to the executive arm (Demaj, 2015; Stapenhurst, 2011). Also, The technological advancement in managing and disseminating information, the ever-increasing professionalism in society, the shift towards results and outcome-based public administration and an increasing complexity of societal demands have all contributed to the executive arm of government establishing agencies and hiring a corresponding high number of experts to make the executive more effective at handling complex societal demands (Heywood, 2007). Furthermore, within government machinery and agencies, government agents by virtue of their work have more information about

government operations. The executive, supported by the bureaucracy, as implementor of policies and laws; tend to have more up-to-date information on the status of implementation of these policies and laws which then gives them more power and control (Lowenberg & Patterson 1979; Stapenhurst, 2011). Asymmetry of information therefore exists between the executive and the legislature.

The opposite is often true for the legislature. The limited technology, limited expert staff, limited information and other resources have an impact on the legislature's authority and capacity in the performance of its core mandate of making laws, influencing policies, overseeing executive action and representing constituents. Cohen (1973), making reference to the 1970s US Congress reforms, describes this phenomenon as an "information gap" which creates a situation where the legislature not only deals with an executive which has access to a large array of technical expertise, but due to its limited resources the legislature then becomes too dependent on the executive for information, the very institution it is mandated to check, thereby greatly limiting the political power of the former (Bimber, 1991; Demaj, 2015). It is important to point out that in hybrid systems of government where the executive is fused with the legislature, as pertains in Ghana, the situation can be exacerbated further, especially when partisanship is rife, negatively impacting the ability of the legislature to hold the executive to account.

In systems of government where constitutional provisions already tilt the power balance in favour of the president and the executive, the legislature's dependence on the executive for information will be expected to be heightened further. The need for legislatures to address the asymmetry of information

linked to the power relation with the executive arm of government is therefore vital especially when a historical review of the development of democratic legislature shows that it is only when legislatures moved away from depending on information from the executive branch were they able to play distinctive and effective deliberative roles within the separation of powers system (Krehbiel, 1991 citing Maass, 1983).

Power as capacity: Asymmetry of Information within the Legislature

Asymmetry of information exists within the legislature in a number of ways. Indeed, the very nature of legislatures as institutions composed of representatives with varying backgrounds creates asymmetric information among members of parliament (Krehbiel, 1991). MPs have to deal with a broad range of issues and subject matter, some highly complex and technical. At any given time, and on any given issue, some legislators will have better knowledge than others about the relationship between a policy and its potential consequences (Krehbiel, 1991). Generally, matters before the House which fall outside the legislator's own expertise or experience prompts a need for information (Schneier, 1970). Krehbiel's Information Theory of legislative organization explained later in this thesis highlights asymmetry of information among members and in the legislature.

Also, distribution of resources among members within the same legislature can vary often with leadership having an advantage over other members. In the US Congress for example "party leadership and committee offices possess far more resources in terms of staff and are able to specialize and develop expertise in legislative procedure and in areas of policy substance far beyond what can be expected from the staff of a typical member of

Congress” (Curry, 2011, p. 9). The lack of uniformity in distribution of resources among members and the varying backgrounds of elected representative creates asymmetry of information within parliament.

Beyond the political system and the power dynamics between the executive and the legislature, the organizational structure of Parliaments creates unique power dynamics within the legislature among members. The next section looks more in-depth at the main theories on how legislatures are organized.

Theories of Legislative Organization

Legislative organization refers to “the allocation of resources and assignment of parliamentary rights to individual legislators or groups of legislators” (Krehbiel, 1991, p. 2). This is evident both at the micro and macro level. Micro level forms of legislative organization relate directly to the performance of the individual parliamentarian within the legislature, which link to the resources and rights the individual has at their disposal. These include time, money and staff support. Macro level forms of legislative organization bear directly on the performance of the legislature within the political system in which it occurs. These include the importance of the legislature in the political system, what they can collectively agree on, what collective action they can take and how effective implemented legislation meet their objectives (Krehbiel, 1991).

The literature on legislative organisation is heavily dominated by studies of the American Congress. Therefore, in this review though the references to Congress should be understood in the general sense of the word, that is, the law-

making body of a country, in most of the studies the use of the term refers to the Congress of the United States of America. The theories of legislative organization have evolved within the broader context of evolution of theories in political science (Lecours, 2005). In the 1930s through to the 1950s traditionalist political scientists especially in the United States of America researched into formal structures and rules for institutions covering the executive, legislature and judiciary using mostly qualitative methods. In the 1960s there was a shift in focus away from institutions to studying actions of individual political actors, using mostly quantitative methods. Describing the state of affairs in research work in political science up until the 1980s March and Olsen (1984, p.734) said that “contemporary theories of politics tend to portray politics as a reflection of society, political phenomena as the aggregate consequences of individual behaviour, action as the result of choices based on calculated self-interest, history as efficient in reaching unique and appropriate outcomes, and decision making and the allocation of resources as the central foci of political life”.

March and Olsen pointed out that in most of the theories – referring to behaviouralism that emerged from the 1960s – traditional political institutions such as the state and the legislature were not considered important compared to earlier theories such as those proposed by Max Weber. In the 1980s, however, theoretical thoughts combined elements of the contemporary theoretical styles (behaviouralism) with older concerns with institutions (traditionalist). These theories (referred to as new institutionalism) were designed in part to bring the study of institutions back in research work in political science. They emphasised among other things, the relative autonomy of political institutions and argued

for institutional analysis to better understand political actors within political institutional contexts (Ishiyama, 2015).

Emergence of new institutionalism led to a surge in literature on political institutions including the legislature (March & Olsen, 1984) accompanied by ambiguity as to what constituted New Institutionalism (Hall & Taylor 1996). Hall and Taylor point out that some elements of the ambiguity surrounding what really constituted new institutionalism could be dispelled if it is recognized that new institutionalism does not constitute a unified body of thought. New institutionalism is placed into two streams in the Oxford Handbook of Legislative Studies: first, the rational choice analysis and second, the sociological and norm-oriented approach. Hall and Taylor on the other hand cluster new institutionalism in political science into three different analytical approaches which they labeled as historical, rational and sociological institutionalism. What these theories have in common relates to the fact that they all evolved in response to behavioural perspectives in political science during the 1960s and 1970s. Hall and Taylor point out that each of these three approaches has its peculiar strengths and weaknesses in their study of the relationship between institutions and behaviour of political actors.

The Triad of Distributive, Partisan and Informational Theories of Legislative Organization

Studies in political science theoretical discussions on legislative organization have mostly been from the rational choice perspective. Legislatures are usually made up of a large number of representatives, and to promote effectiveness much of the deliberative work is moved from plenary to smaller groups such as legislative committees (Mattson & Strøm, 1995).

Rational choice provides the most influential approach in legislative studies, the other two are the informational and the partisan. Binder (2014) sums it up with reference to the triad of distributive, partisan, and informational theories of legislative institutional arrangements which have informed the study of legislative organizations. In the ensuing sections, the three theoretical dimensions are explained with emphasis on the information theory of legislative organization which has direct relevant to this study.

Distributive Theory of Legislative Organization

Legislative organization theories of the 1980s focused on committees as the way in which legislative organization was structured to serve electoral interests with little attention paid to parties. Research work based on distributive theory was in line with Mayhew's (1974, p.5) argument that members of the legislature were "single-minded seekers of re-election and that parties represented unprofitable units of analysis." This is what constitutes the distributive theory of legislative organization, also described as the conventional approach (Shepsle & Weingast, 1987; Weingast & Marshall 1988; Hall, 1993; Prince & Overby, 2005). It views Congress as a highly decentralized institution having a weak party system but a strong committee of a self-selected nature that allows logrolling among members of parliament. Logrolling allows members to pursue preferences of their constituents aimed at securing their re-election. In this theory of legislative organization where the committees are strong, members with intense interest in a particular domain tend to control agenda and dominate policy outcomes in the legislature (Hall, 1993).

Partisan Theories of Legislative Organization

The partisan theories which emerged in the early 1990s argue that conflicts in parliaments follow party lines, such that members of the same party will act together. The majority party therefore uses its agenda powers to influence legislative outcomes (Rohde, Stiglitz & Weingast, 2013). The agenda power concept refers to how Congress allocates power to decide what comes up for vote and when. Agenda power is divided into two: “negative agenda power” which refers to the power to prevent issues from coming up for a vote and “positive agenda power” which is the power to propose outcomes and protect them (Cox and McCubbin, 2004). For the partisan theorist, conflicts in the legislature follow party lines with members of the same political party acting together as party members rather than individual representatives. Partisan theory sees committees as agents of the majority party.

Strong partisan identity divisions between two major political parties have emerged in Ghana following its success with its democratic governance system (Ayee, 2008; Brierley, 2012). The partisanship has also extended to the work of the Parliament of Ghana (Ayee, 2008; Brierley, 2012). Ghana’s hybrid system which fuses the executive branch and legislature has been identified as a major contributory factor to this development. Since Ghana’s return to democratic rule, the majority party in Parliament have also won the presidency, implying that the party that forms the majority Caucus in Parliament also controls the executive arm of government. How this affects information behaviour of Ghanaian MPs has been analysed in more detail in later sections of the thesis.

Information Theory of Legislative Organization (a Rational Choice Approach)

Information theory was put forward by Gilligan and Krehbiel in the late 1980s and early 1990s informed by the work of researchers such as Mezey (1979). The information theory argues that the central problem of legislative organizations is to design institutional arrangements that lead legislators to develop policy expertise and to share that expertise with their colleagues with less information. In other words, legislative committees are structured to provide the chamber or plenary with the necessary information to legislate (Gilligan & Krehbiel, 1987, 1989; Gilligan & Krehbiel, 1990; Krehbiel, 1990, 1991; Hall, 1993; Khmelko & Beers, 2011; Lin, 2015).

Public policies are complex, consequently, effective legislatures need policy specialists. The specialization creates informational asymmetry creating opportunistic use of expertise (Krehbiel, 2004). Such specialization can be particularly important when policies have uncertain outcomes (Baron, 2000). Specialization is a predominate feature of informed decision making in collective bodies. In the legislature the restrictions on the ability of the chamber to amend committee proposals can enhance the informational role of the committees. In other words, restrictive procedures (closed rule – where plenary does not amend the work of the committee) can encourage committees to gather information and facilitate the adoption of informed policies that are jointly beneficial to the committee and to the parent body (Gilligan & Krehbiel, 1987).

Transmission of credible information to the floor also holds true even under open rules (no restrictions on the ability of the chamber to amend proposals) as demonstrated by Diermeier and Feddersen (2000) in their research

work on committee hearings. The information theory of legislative organization does not deny the partisan or distributional interests of MPs (Krehbiel, 1991); rather, its argument is that the main role of committees is to permit the division of labour and generation of policy expertise (Mezey, 1979).

Strength of the Informational Theory of Legislative Organisation

The strength of the informational theory of legislative organisation is aptly summed up by Khmelko and Beers (2011). They stress that, “the informational function of committees provides critical knowledge during the policymaking process and can reduce uncertainty about the policy consequences of a bill under consideration in the parliament, thereby offering potential benefits to all legislators, regardless of one’s political affiliation or distributional agenda” (Gilligan & Krehbiel, 1989 as cited in Khmelko & Beers, 2011, p.504). By allowing legislators to specialise in a particular policy area, committees give parliamentarians a competitive advantage in their dealings with the government, thereby increasing opportunities for effective oversight (Gilligan & Krehbiel, 1989 as cited in Khmelko & Beers, 2011).

Criticisms of Information Theory of Legislative Organization

Hall, while praising the value of the information theory of legislative organisation, nevertheless points out a number of weaknesses of the theory. For example, Hall indicates that the principal arguments of the information theory of legislative organization are overstated. He argues that Krehbiel’s effort to push out “one stylised overworked view of legislative organization (distributive, decentralized)” has also introduced an “overly stylized view (informationally efficient, majoritarian)” (Hall, 1993, p. 496).

Also, while impressed with the breadth and depth of empirical evidence put forward in support of the arguments advanced by Krehbiel, Hall emphasizes that some of the evidence is strong while others are not convincing. He argues further that Krehbiel's information theory of legislative organization leaves a lingering theoretical puzzle; what has come to be known as the "Olsonian illogic of collective action", that is, if shared interests are to be satisfied and if satisfying shared interests for one member of a group satisfies the others, then why would a rational self-interested individual work to get their shared interest satisfied? Why is it that legislative representatives do not sit back to let others do the labour-intensive specialization while they reap the benefits, why do they not avoid committee assignment rather than seek them out?

Observations: Rational Choice Approach to Legislative Organization

The legislative organizational theories presented above are all premised on the rational choice approach. Rational choice models are based on a number of assumptions. Rational choice assumes for example that decision makers have full and perfect information that they can evaluate to make a choice. It also assumes a measurable criterion that guides data collection and analyses. Additionally, it sees the individual as having the cognitive ability, time, and resources at their disposal to inform decisions they make. In the rational choice model an individual's ethical values and personal feeling are not taken into consideration (Boundless, 2015).

Others believe that the rational choice approach is flawed. Jones (1999), for example, points out that findings from behavioural organization theory, behavioural decision theory, survey research, and experimental economics have shown the limitations of rational choice as a descriptive model of human

behaviour. Non supporters of the rational choice approach, for example, Pious (2004) argues passionately that the rational choice models are out of sync with anything that happens in the real world and that rational choice and game theoreticians have an almost perfect prediction record of getting it wrong. He elaborates that the models deliberately omit a lot of the description of politics, an example being the ideology and the political culture; they also oversimplify descriptions of the process of government.

Alternatives to Rational Choice and Decision-making

In the ensuing sections, alternatives to the rational approach for investigating decision-making are reviewed briefly. As indicated earlier, rational choice approach dominates legislative research in spite of the criticism put out by researchers who believe that the basic assumption of fully rational individuals in decision making is flawed. Broader discussions that look at information in decision making offer alternatives. These include Herbert Simon's Bounded rationality and Alan Pred's Behavioural model.

Bounded Rationality by Herbert Simon (1947)

Bounded rationality by Herbert A. Simon (1947) proposes that when individuals make decisions, they are not entirely rational, instead their rationality is limited by the information they have, by the cognitive limitations of their minds, and the time they have to make that decision. This proposal offered an alternative view for looking at individuals during the decision-making process. Simon sought to deal with the shortcoming of the rational man proposal by positing that individuals do not maximize, but rather "satisfice." This was an effort to capture features of actual human behaviour and constituted

a radical departure from the traditional economic framework (Modarres-Mousavi, 2002).

A few observations made by Modarres-Mousavi (2002) regarding Simon's bounded rationality need to be made here. His work sought to formalize bounded rationality by establishing a new framework. The researcher saw this as important because as pointed out in the thesis, advocates of bounded rationality suggest that a boundedly rational individual is a more accurate depiction of real decision makers; however, this remains a claim rather than an established proposition. According to Modarres-Mousavi the boundedly rational model loses manipulability when applied to realistic characteristics of an individual and/or environment. In contrast, the model of the rational agent is a more easily applied framework for prediction, since it can be used in many different situations and it still remains technically simple. According to Glasgow (2004, p.79), the most common distinction between bounded and unbounded rationality as proposed by Simon, is that under full rationality, individuals find the best solution to a problem, on the other hand with bounded rationality, individuals are satisfied with a solution that is "close enough."

Alan Pred Behavioural Model (1967)

The Alan Pred behavioural model in Geography (1967) posits that decision makers are not entirely rational. This is because all the required information for optimal decision may not be available; it might be expensive or time consuming. Pred proposes a matrix to help explain this proposition. The principle of Pred's (1967) behavioural matrix is that every decision is considered to occur under conditions of varying information of all the

alternatives, ranging from nil to perfect knowledge, and varying abilities of the decision maker (Selby,1987).

According to Selby (1987) Pred's model presented an alternative to existing normative location theories in Geography. Pred had critiqued these models and his main arguments were as follows: first, their logical inconsistencies, because it was not possible for competing decision makers to arrive at an optimal location decision at the same time; second, motivation is not maximizing behaviour but rather making do with what is available; and the third, human ability – humans are simply unable to attain perfect knowledge. The model not only takes into consideration the decision-makers' spatial location but also considers aspirations, experiences and the norms of the group to which they belong (Selby, 1987). Pred's framework point to the fact that “many real decisions fail to come anywhere near optimality” (Walmsley & Lewis, 2014, p. 88).

Pred's model has been criticised (Selby, 1987 citing Harvey 1969). The criticism relates to Pred's replacement of the economic man, that is, a rational individual with a behavioural man. It is argued that normative economic theory is a good fit for explaining economic issues, but it may not be so good a fit for Geography accounting for its failure in explaining what actually happens in that context. Furthermore, the two basic concepts of the behavioural model – information and ability – are too vaguely defined, are ambitious and non-operational in Pred's model. Other criticisms of the model indicate that behavioural matters are impossible to apply to real world.

Intuitionist Perspective on Policy Positions of Politicians

The intuitionist perspective discussed in this section provides an alternative to rationale choice approach to understanding policy positions of politicians. Presented in this section is Weiss's (1979, 1997, 1998) proposal of three sets of factors impacting formation of policy positions of politicians from an intuitionist perspective.

Weiss's Ideologies-Interests-Information and Policy Positions (1983)

Weiss (1979, 1983, 1997, 1998) argues that the formation of policy positions of politicians is the result of a complex interaction among three sets of forces: their *ideologies*, their *interests*, and the *information* they have. This section highlights key issues from an overview of Weiss's (1979, 1983, 1997, 1998) proposal with regard to the formation of policy positions of politicians by Demaj (2015).

According to Weiss, when groups discuss and bargain to determine what to choose from alternatives for potential policies, there are other forces that are at play. These include factors such as hierarchy, norms and control of information. According to Weiss, each group's position on the policy undergoes changes in the course of negotiations which are affected by interplay of ideology, interests, and information as the group interprets them.

For Weiss, *ideology* covers a broad range of issues including philosophy, principles, values, and political orientations. At the core of ideology are ethical and moral values that affect a politician's general disposition toward particular policies.

Interest is seen as self-interest such as seeking re-election, ambitions for higher authority positions, eagerness for power and influence. Legislators as a particular group of policy actors care about voters' preferences and the effects of a decision on their chances for re-election. They also consider their relationships with their party members and other legislators; ideologies are often in line with the self-interest of the politician.

Information represents the facts on which policy positions are based. There are many forms of information and from many sources conveyed through formal and informal channels; it may even originate from the politician's own experience. When put together, the *ideology-interest-information* framework makes it possible to operationalize the concept of the context of information behaviour. The influence of each of these three factors, that is, information, interests and ideology on the formation of a policy position varies depending on the prevailing situation. Demaj (2015) argues that the potential situations politicians find themselves in may differ according to the degree to which ideology and interests harmoniously suggest how to decide on a particular issue.

At one end of the spectrum will be a situation in which the politician's ideology and interests are harmonious on a particular policy or issue they are working on. In this instance, the chances that new information will have little potential of altering the politician's decision are high. At the other end of the spectrum will be instances when ideology and interests are in conflict; such scenarios should make a politician more receptive to new information as he/she explores the options (Demaj, 2015).

Sylan, Goel and Chandrasekaran (1990) aptly describe this saying that political behaviour such as political decision-making, results from interaction of both political mechanisms and information mechanisms located along a spectrum. At one extreme end are the political mechanisms and at the other end the information mechanisms. Political mechanisms represent the values, interests and influence of political actors while information processing mechanisms concern actors' use of knowledge and experience in choice and actions. They explain that the decision-making process in a political context is always located along this spectrum and specific decision-making instances are always a particular mix of these two depending on the norms, degree of consensus among actors, and experience with that problem area. In sum the interplay between information and political mechanisms for different instances of decision-making will not necessarily be the same.

There could be instances where the decision-making process incorporates information, knowledge and experience and other instances where information mechanisms are completely overshadowed by political mechanisms. Demaj (2015), Sylan et al. (1990), and Weiss (1983) demonstrate the interplay between information and political mechanisms during political decision-making. The recognition of the importance of this interaction as regards decision making in the legislature provides additional foundation for this study. This is both at the level of interrogating the individual legislator's information behaviour as well as the dynamics of the broader institutional system within which an individual operates especially the power dynamics within which they contribute to collective actions.

The foregoing sections provided information on foundational theories and arguments situating the legislature within a broader system of government. The social contract theory and the theories of legislative organization provide the basis for understanding the existence of the state and its primary institutions and justifications for political obligation, governmental authority and rights of the governed. These theories also set the foundation for understanding the interplay of governmental power, institutional arrangements and the associated asymmetries of information that exist especially between the executive and the legislature as well as within the legislature.

The next section presents the main theoretical framework that shapes this inquiry. It reviews Curry's (2011) Theory of Information Control and Wilson's Information Behaviour Model, the theory and model adapted for the analytical examination of the role of information in Ghana's legislature.

Information as a Power Resource: Theories and Arguments

As explained earlier, power relations is essential in understanding the effectiveness of the legislature in achieving its mandate. It is therefore an important perspective to take into consideration when interrogating the politics of information and expertise in the legislature. This requires looking at information control and associated power and how that shapes among other things information flow, access to information and in some instances the use of information in performance of parliament's mandate. Scholarly work shows that control of information can be a power resource in organizational settings (Pettigrew, 1972) and for politicians (Curry, 2011, 2015; Bimber, 1992; IPU 2009; Lowenberg & Patterson, 1979). A focus on information control therefore offers a unique perspective for researching access to information by MPs

especially in the context of limited availability of information which pertained in poorly-resourced legislatures.

In organizational settings, Pettigrew (1972) identifies a number of research works highlighting the control of information as a power resource by: i) generating dependency through control of access to information (Mechanic, 1962); ii) advancing and defending positions (Burns and Stalker, 1961); iii) controlling flow of information to exert influence over decision-making (McCleery, 1960); and iv) leaders being crafty and deceptive about what they know (Machiavelli, 1998). In organizational settings for example, individuals who have the ability to control information especially those who serve as source of information necessary for task performance have perceived power over other individuals.

In this context the expanded version of the long-standing notion of “gatekeepers” becomes relevant. While Kurt Lewins’ introduction of the concept was in reference to housewives and the eating habits of households, the evolution of the concept when it comes to information flow include scientists’ reference to the single person who receives the information first in “two-step information flow”; and opinion leaders who shape knowledge and attitude of neighbours (Case, 2007). “A gatekeeper is one who controls the flow of information over a channel: shaping, emphasizing, or withholding it” (Case, 2007, p.300).

To expand further, scholarly work on diffusion of innovation, communication, information flow and decision-making, all identify the role of gatekeepers in the transfer of technology and in the flow of information. An

implied assumption is that gatekeepers use their position for the public good, but for such gatekeepers there is also an interplay of communication and power (Pettigrew, 1972 citing Barber, 1966; Curry, 2011). Gatekeepers do control flow of information.

The field of economics also provides very useful examples of information asymmetries and how holders of information are advantaged and empowered (Akerlof, 1970; Spence, 1973). Also, in political science, a good example can be found in the political system, whereby the executive arm of government and bureaucratic departments with their advantage of access to more information and expertise exhibit more power and control (i.e. power as relational) (IPU 2009; Lowenberg and Patterson, 1979). Additionally, varying backgrounds of members, in addition to leadership within parliament by virtue of their position as well as having access to more resources confer on such individuals' power and control (i.e. power as capacity).

From an institutionalist perspective, Polsby (1975) makes a distinction between *Arena* (rubber stamp legislatures) and *Transformative* legislatures based on their independence from outside influence (power as relational), and their capacity to shape policy proposals (power as capacity). *Arena* or rubber stamp legislatures are strongly influenced by external forces, while *Transformative* legislatures have internal structural factors that are effective and influential (March & Olsen, 2015).

Demonstrating this, Robinson and Miko (1996) link the information needs of the legislature to the functional levels of the legislature as defined by Polsby (1975). Robinson and Miko (1996) distinguish four categories of

legislature. They argue that in Arena or Rubber stamp legislatures, information and research needs are virtually non-existent because of strong external influences and the expectation that MPs only agree with all policy proposals. While at the other extremity end are Transformative legislatures that can alter proposals initiated by the executive, as well as introduce and enact bills made possible with access to a large collection of information and a large library/research staff to provide research analysis. In between these two extremes are *Emerging* and *Informed* legislatures. Emerging legislatures may have a library and a research unit while the informed legislatures have more resources in these units (Polsby, 1975; Robinson & Miko, 1996). The distinction drawn above especially between Arena and Transformative legislatures captures the interrelationships between information, power and the effectiveness of the legislature but fails to elaborate on the determinants of this link. It also does not adequately address how political factors such as partisanship and fusion of executive and legislative arms of government might impact the role of information in these legislatures.

Theory of Information Control

In legislative settings leadership positions confer on such individuals the advantage of being the source of information necessary for performance of numerous tasks and roles in the legislature presenting an opportunity for such leaders to control information as a power resource (Curry, 2011). Additionally expertise in political settings is said to confer authority on political actors (Bimber, 1992). Leaders are uniquely positioned to control the flow of information allowing them to exert influence over decision-making (McCleery, 1960); Most studies of information as a power resource in political systems have

focused on the executive and bureaucracies. Rarely have scholars studied informational power within the legislature (Curry, 2011).

Curry's (2011) work on the US Congress has contributed towards bridging this gap in knowledge. Curry postulates a 'theory of information control' in the U.S. House of Representatives:

Legislative leaders in the U.S. House of Representatives, here defined as both majority party leaders and committee leaders, have a unique source of power they can harness to lead the policymaking process in the chamber. That power is control over the flow of information about legislation, or *information control* for short. Because of the needs of rank-and-file legislators, and because of leadership goals and desires, legislative leaders use information control strategies to strongly influence policymaking in the House. (Curry 2011, p.26).

According to Curry (2011), a number of theories, including Krehbiel's Information theory of Legislative organization see legislative leaders as weak, and legislative outcomes as shaped entirely by the distribution of policy preferences and priorities among the rank-and-file. Krehbiel argues that fundamentally institutional arrangements of legislatures including legislative committees, are structured to provide the chamber or plenary with the necessary information to legislate (Gilligan & Krehbiel, 1987, 1989; Gilligan & Krehbiel, 1990; Krehbiel, 1990, 1991; Hall, 1993; Khmelko & Beers, 2011; Lin, 2015). Hence informational power resides with committees.

Curry bases the theory of information control on three foundations. The first is premised on the argument that information is a valuable commodity in Congress. Before legislators can take any action on a bill before them be it an amendment, a statement, or voting on the bill they have to have the knowledge.

Curry also argues that having information empowers lawmakers especially because other colleagues tend to rely on the more informed members for information.

The second foundation is that all members do not have the same amount of information at any given time on the bill before them. Working in an environment where time is scarce and resources are limited most members do not have the time to get informed on most of the bills that they vote on at plenary. They tend to rely on the leaders of their party and on chairpersons of committees for such information.

Curry's third foundation for the theory is that leaders have certain tools that make it possible for them to control the flow of information when it comes to bills before parliament, and they use these as they lead the chamber in its work. Some of these tools include the ability to restrict access to content of bills, bring bills for votes on short notice, and set up agenda for work on bills such that a lot of bills come up for consideration all at once.

In summing up his theory Curry emphasizes that "information control is a powerful tool for legislative leaders in the House of Representatives. It is an independent, institutionally-driven source of power that leaders can draw on to lead the chamber" (Curry 2011, p.45).

Strengths of the Theory of Information Control

The strength of Curry's theory of Information Control is not only in its innovative approach (that is, demonstrating the power of leadership in using complexity of bills, restrictive layover practices and other tactics to limit members' access to key information during the legislative process), but, as

Taylor (2016, p.401) points out, also in the theory's concrete illustration (through description and analysis of case studies) of "the costs to ...representative democracy of legislating" in the dark.

Few studies highlight the influential sources of power possessed by leaders, or systematically analyse the influence leaders can have over the policymaking process; the Theory of Information Control bridges that gap.

Criticisms of the Theory of information Control

Taylor (2016) while commending the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches especially participant observation methods to interrogate the theory of information control in the legislature, also critiques Curry's over-estimation of leadership's informational advantage especially in the 21st century where the internet, polls, media, policy institutes and think tanks give lawmakers and staff access to analysis of complex issues. Taylor's second criticism of Curry's theory falls in line with the school of thought that argues that information and expertise often appear to have limited value (Bimber citing Jones 1976; Schick 1976; Schneier, 1970). He sees the real problem of representatives as having "been cut out of agenda setting" and having "seen their floor rights eviscerated" (Taylor, 2016, p.402). These observations by Taylor however do not diminish the core argument of the information control theory, that is, the information control power that leadership of the legislature have.

The next section focuses on the individual. It reviews three models on information behaviour from communication studies and information studies.

This is because the two disciplines offer very elaborate and well researched models for interrogating information behaviour related issues.

Information Behaviour Models and Concepts

To make it easier to understand the models, this section starts with explanation of the key concepts in information behaviour research. These are information, information behaviour, information need, information seeking behaviour, information use and context.

Information

The concept of information as used in everyday English may carry other meanings. As a concept that is used in many disciplines, it is important to situate it within the right context and with regard to specific phenomenon. The implication then is that the concept “information” should not be used in isolation but in relation to the related context.

Bimber (2003, p. 11) defines information broadly as “something that can be known or communicated”; in other words, it should not be restricted to facts but should encompass “any knowledge relevant to the workings of democratic process”. On the basis of this broad definition, Bimber explains that information thus becomes vital to democracy in myriad ways: in the processes by which citizens’ preferences are formed and aggregated, in the behaviour of citizens and elites, in formal processes of representation, in acts of government decision making, in the administration of laws and regulations and in the mechanisms of accountability that freshen democracy and sustain legitimacy. None of these elements of democratic process can operate apart from the exchange and flow of information among citizens and their associations and

organizations, among citizens and government, and within government itself. According to Bimber “...democratic power tends to be biased towards those with the best command of political information at any particular stage in history” (Bimber, 2003, p. 11).

Information Behaviour

Information behaviour is the favoured term used to describe how human beings interact with information; especially the ways in which people seek and utilize information (Bates, 2010). Wilson (2000, p. 49) defines information behaviour as the “totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information including both active and passive information seeking, and information use...” However it is not uncommon to have authors, such as Case (2007), continue to use the term information seeking behaviour. Information behaviour encompasses three key concepts; these are information need, information seeking behaviour and use of information.

A related concept which has increasingly gained importance in information behaviour research is the Context. Researchers argue that it is only by understanding the Context that you can understand information behaviour (Johnson 2003; Dervin 1997). The definitions of these concepts vary greatly and some are more researched than others. Theories and literature on information needs, seeking and its use span multiple disciplines. Examples include Development studies, Political science, Information studies, Consumer behaviour, Communication studies, Organizational decision-making, Business, Communication, Psychology and Information systems design (Davies, 1994; Wilson, 1999; Case, 2007; Bates 2010).

There exists a wide array of research works that capture the use of theory and metatheory in information behaviour. In research in information and politics, this includes information theory of legislative organization by Gilligan and Krehbiel (1987, 1989, 1990); and Krehbiel (1991). In research on the user and information systems, studies include models of information behaviour by Wilson (1981) Wilson and 1996) and Dervin (1983) as well as comprehensive reviews of conceptual frameworks by Pettigrew, Fidel and Bruce (2001) and Fisher, Erdelez and Mckechnie (2005) as cited in Case (2007). On theories of information behaviour, Fisher, et al., (2005) covered a total of seventy-two theories and models ranging from the Anomalous State of Knowledge by Nicholas J. Belkin (1980) to World Wide Web Information Seeking by Choo, Detlor, and Turnbull (2000).

Models from different disciplines provide useful insight from those perspectives. For example, development studies research looks at the ways in which information is used in decision-making which affects development policy, planning and practice (Davis 1994), while communication research emphasises the communication process and its effect, sociology research, might focus on the social hierarchy. Pettigrew, Fidel, and Bruce (2001, p.46) in reviewing theoretical work in information behaviour clustered them into three as follows: a) cognitive approach which encompasses theories that examine the individual as the pivot of information behaviour; b) Social approaches which investigate frameworks that focus on the social context; and c) Multifaceted approaches, which as the description implies, concentrate on the multiplicity of contexts such as cognitive, social and organizational. Case (2007) points out that multiple approaches in information behaviour research are acceptable. This

is supported by Pettigrew, Fidel, and Bruce (2001) who emphasise that a number of researchers recognize the complexity of human information behaviour, hence a growing number support the fact that multiple views are needed to capture human information behaviour.

In line with these observations, for this research the emphasis on information adapts the view expressed by Bates (2010, p. 3) and focuses on information as the “red thread in the social tapestry”. The emphasis is therefore more on the information itself not so much on other aspects such as the communication process and its effects as might be of interest in, for example, communication studies. Additionally, the research looks at information from a development studies perspective by focusing on the ways in which structures and procedures may hinder access and use of information in decision-making and related activities which overall affects parliament’s law-making, oversight of executive and its representational roles. Given the coverage of the research problem, an eclectic approach is adopted combining the fundamentals of new institutionalism with norms in the intuitionist approach and the theory of information control in examining the information behaviour of Ghanaian Members of Parliament.

Information Need

The concept of information need generates a lot of debate and confusion among researchers in the area of information behaviour (Wilson, 1981, 1996). It is described as an elusive construct with multiple meanings (Naumer & Fisher, 2010 as cited in Savolainen, 2012). The difficulty with the concept is partly accounted for by the numerous definitions of the term information and a

failure by researchers to situate the appropriate definition within their investigation.

Wilson (1996,1981) characterises the concept of information need as the root of the nature of information-seeking behaviour. In other words, a user's search for and utilization of information must be triggered by a need for information. According to Savolainen (2012), information need, which he calls motivations, triggers and drivers of information seeking, is one of the most neglected topics in the studies of information behaviour. In spite of this, some major studies from the 1960s to the 1990s on information needs have provided insights for interrogating the issue of information need. Saastamoinen, Kumpulainen, and Järvelin (2012) as well as Savolainen (2012) identify these studies to include Taylor's (1968) study on question-negotiation in the context of information professionals interviewing users of information resources centre, Wilson's (1981) article on user studies and information needs, Belkin's (1980) hypothesis of the anomalous state of knowledge (ASK), the sense-making methodology by Dervin (1983), and the principle of uncertainty proposed by Kuhlthau (1993).

The most widely cited definition of information need is Taylor's (1962) description of the four levels of information need that a reference librarian must bear in mind as they engage with a user in what he terms question negotiation. The four levels of information need are 1) the visceral need – the actual, but unexpressed need for information; 2) the conscious need – the conscious, within brain description of the need; 3) the formalized need – the formal

statement of the need; and 4) the compromised need – the question asked the librarian or as presented to the information system such as an online database.

While Taylor's explanation of information need is very useful and indeed serves as a basis for other definitions of information need, it is most useful when the person in need of information can negotiate and have a question and answer session with an intermediary. Taylor's depiction of information need becomes difficult to apply in other circumstances, but it is useful as a foundation for most. Case (2007) places Taylor's depiction of information needs in a category of what he terms "seeking answers". He identifies other information need definitions and categorizes them as "reducing uncertainty" and "making sense".

The notion of viewing information need as uncertainty dates back from the 1940s. While there are different variations of this definition the core argument centres on the fact that an individual's current level of uncertainty with regard to an issue, an event, an idea, as a result of differences in what they perceive to know now and what they would want to know or need to know equates an information need. Atkin (1973) defines information need as "a function of extrinsic uncertainty produced by a perceived discrepancy between the individual's current level of certainty about important environmental objects and a criterion state that he seeks to achieve" (p. 206). Belkin calls it an anomalous state of knowledge (ASK). "The ASK hypothesis is that an information need arises from a recognized anomaly in the user's state of knowledge concerning some topic or situation and that, in general, the user is

unable to specify precisely what is needed to resolve that anomaly.” (Belkin, Oddy, & Brooks, 1982, p.62).

The other category of defining information need as linked to “sense making” has gained a lot of popularity among researchers especially following the strong argument by Brenda Dervin who defines information need as compulsion to make sense of a current situation. According to Dervin (1983, p. 4-5) sense-making starts with “an assumption that reality is neither complete nor constant but rather filled with fundamental and pervasive discontinuities or gaps”.

Demaj (2015) and Case (2007), from a theoretical perspective, argue that information need can be looked at from an objective perspective to a subjective perspective not as distinct entities but as a continuum that accommodates a spectrum of views regarding motivations, triggers of information need. Looked at from the objective perspective at one end of this spectrum, information needs are relatively fixed and assumed to stem from some sort of uncertainty. Purposeful thinking leads to information seeking and use to solve an existing problem and to reduce uncertainty (Atkin, 1973).

From the subjective camp, at the other end of this spectrum, information needs and subsequent search depends on how an individual perceives a particular situation. Searching for information and utilizing the information are considered as attempts to make sense of that situation (Demaj, 2015; Dervin, 1983). Information need is seen as a subjective experience which occurs only in the mind of the person in need of information and not directly accessible to an observer. It is thus a concept that can only be discovered by deduction from

behaviour such as information seeking activities (Saastamoinen et al., 2012 citing Allen, 1996; Wilson, 1996; Demaj, 2015).

In spite of the debate and confusion among researchers in relation to the concept of information need, Case (2007) indicates that there are similarities in the conceptualization of how information need emerges in studies conducted by Taylor, Belkin, Dervin and Kuhlthau which point towards the user's feelings of uncertainty, ambiguity or uneasiness.

When it comes to the types of information that elected officials need, Frantzich (1979) identifies four types of information that both individual MPs and Congress as an institution need. These all revolve around their roles. Burstein (2014) also identifies three types of information individual MPs need, and these are linked to their interest. Other researches categorise information into political information and policy information (Bimber 1991, 1992). Frantzich's (1979) and Burstein's (2014) categorizations are further elaborated upon below.

Frantzich (1979) spells out the four types of information as follows. First is information to coordinate and plan work schedule. Both Congress and individual congressmen need this type of information. Second, as a decision-making body, Congress needs information to track and record legislative work as well as individual voting behaviour. Third, individual congressmen need information to track constituent demands, improve dealing with them, and develop ways for following up constituent interests in both the House and beyond as part of their representational role. Fourth, congressmen need information for monitoring problems, developing solutions, predicting consequences, and facilitating influence strategies in their legislative role. In

overseeing the bureaucracy and the executive arm of government, Congress needs to monitor both success and areas of weakness of ongoing programmes.

Burstein (2014) on the other hand identifies three types of information (focusing on the individual MP, and other elected officials linked to their interest). First, they want information to help them prioritize based on the importance of the myriad of issues that they have to work on at any given time. Second, elected officials want information about the potential impact of policy proposals/bills etc. Third, they want to know what the impact of their votes on matters before the House will be on their re-election bid.

Wilson argues that a helpful way of determining information need is to find ways to approximate causes of information seeking behaviour. For legislators therefore, a useful way of determining their information need is to situate it within the context of their work. Therefore, in this study information need for MPs examines MPs' need for information when performing particular roles.

Information Seeking Behaviour

Unlike information needs, information seeking behaviour is the most widely studied concept of information behaviour (Nickpour, 2012) and the most common term in use (Case, 2007). According to Bates (2007, p. 80) when it comes to the definition of the term “researchers have had less to say about the concept of information seeking behaviour than they have about information needs” and empirical work on information seeking behaviour rarely defines the term. He attributes this to the possibility that the term is seen as self-explanatory.

A closer look however shows a range in the definition from narrow definitions to far broader perspectives. Bates (2007) cites Johnson's (1997) definition as one of the most restrictive. Johnson defines information seeking as the purposive acquisition of information from a selected information carrier. From a broader perspective, Wilson (1999, p. 263) describes information-seeking behaviour as "concerned with the variety of methods people employ to discover, and gain access to information resources".

With advancement in information and communication technologies, research in information seeking behaviour and related issues has expanded and encompasses substantial research on human-computer interface and related topics aimed at building information systems for improved access to and use of information. An issue that has emerged is the difficulty of distinguishing between information seeking and searching with online platforms (Nickpour, 2012). This difficulty appears to have been resolved by Wilson (1999, p. 263) who explains that information searching behaviour should be defined as "a subset of information-seeking, particularly concerned with the interactions between information user (with or without an intermediary) and computer-based information systems, of which information retrieval systems for textual data may be seen as one type" (Figure 1). In other words, information seeking behaviour is a broader term ranging from passive attention to on-going search. Looking for information on an online platform is only a subset best described as information searching.

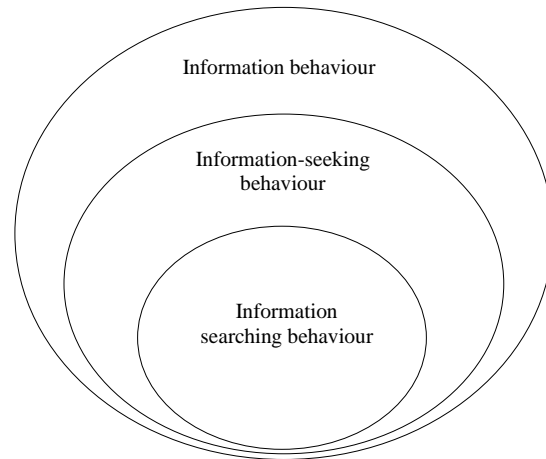


Figure 1: Wilson's (1999) Nested Model of Information Seeking and Information Searching

The study adopts the definition of information-seeking behaviour as “concerned with the variety of methods people employ to discover, and gain access to information resources” (Wilson, 1999, p. 263). The emphasis in this study is to explore the variety of methods MPs employ to discover and gain access to a variety of information resources.

Information Use

Wilson and Walsh (1996) link information processing and use together. They argue that the fact that a situation demands information to fill cognitive gaps, to support values and beliefs, or to influence affective states, and the fact that sources of information are available and accessible to the searcher do not guarantee that the information will be 'processed' (that is, incorporated into the users' framework of knowledge, beliefs or values) or used (that is, lead to changes in behaviour, values or beliefs) (Wilson & Walsh, 1996, p.30), or in the context of this research used for decision making or some action.

They describe information use as the least researched of the concepts of information behaviour based on the literature they reviewed. Wilson and Walsh explain that the few examples found were from research in decision-making in organizations and innovation research. This is reiterated by other researchers who have argued that compared to other facets of information behaviour, information use has been addressed and explored the least (Nickpour, 2012; Spink & Cole, 2004), and still others who have claimed that information scientists have paid insufficient attention to the use of information (Kari, 2010; Savolainen, 2009).

Consequently, theoretical development in the research area has been very slow. It is interesting to note that Case's (2007) book (hailed as the first comprehensive book on the subject of information behaviour) does not use the term "information use" in the title neither does the book cover the concept in details when compared with the concepts information need and seeking, probably confirming Wilson's assertion that "information use" is the least researched concept. It is also very common to find research articles with titles of information use that do not explore the concept beyond identifying sources used.

Kari (2010) examined how the concept of information use has been defined in scholarly literature in the field of information studies and concludes that a broad range exists. The author lists the seven major conceptualizations of information use as follows: i) information practices – almost any kind of human interaction with information; ii) Information search – the processes of *information seeking* and *information retrieval*; iii) Information processing –

information is interpreted, analysed and modified; iv) Knowledge construction – mental constructs are shaped or designed to function as a basis for thinking; v) Information production – creating an expression of knowledge which others can also observe; vi) Applying information – information functions as a resource in some process; vii) Effects of information – changes brought about by information.

When it comes to information use in the context of the legislature, Whiteman (1985) following his study of the U.S. Congressmen's use of policy information in decision making, categorised information use into three based on the purpose such policy analysis serves; namely, substantive use, elaborative use, and strategic use. He differentiated the three types of use based on "the strength of the policy-maker's commitment to specific solutions to policy problems" (Whiteman, 1985, p. 298).

Substantive use of policy information occurs when there is no strong commitment to specific solutions. In such instances the information is used to help the legislator come to a satisfactory position. In *Elaborative use*, legislators use analytic information to help them extend and refine the aspect of the position they are already leaning towards. *Strategic use* occurs when a strong commitment has been made to a well-defined position; the policy analysis can be used in the process of advocating or reconfirming the merit of this position.

Whiteman (1985) noted that the three categories correlate with the degree of partisan conflict with a particular policy before the committee or House. Demaj's (2015) also suggests two categories of information use, based on the degree of ambiguity a legislator faces when confronted with a policy

problem. If ambiguity is low, information is considered true or valuable if that information is in line with what one already knows. On the other hand, if the degree of ambiguity is high, then information is valuable to a legislator, because it can help in his/her decision and action. The above show that the use of information is, to varying degrees, affected by different influencers. These expressions of use can be described as application of information in the context of this study.

There are studies of legislators and information especially the use of performance information by legislators that have identified instances when MPs ignore information they have at their disposal or instances when they are unable to apply the information they have due to some prevailing factors (Demaj, 2015; Raudla, 2012; Askim, 2007). These instances can be described as non-use of information in the context of this study. The foregoing highlighted the complexity of the concept of information use in the context of legislators and their work. These dimensions can be included in the broad concept of information use for this research. In the context of this study, therefore, information use covers two main aspects; namely, i) application of information and ii) non-use of information.

Context in Information Behaviour Research

Research in information behaviour has moved over the years from system-oriented research to user or individual centred research. With this shift has come the recognition that information behaviour can best be understood by taking into consideration the context in which it occurs. Context is therefore seen as source of meaning for human information behaviour. According to Johnson (2003), the main reason for focusing on context in information seeking

is that without understanding the context you cannot understand information seeking. Johnson (2003) cites Dervin (1997) to support this. Case (2007) cites Dervin (1997, p.14) who states that “there is no term more often used, less often defined and when defined, defined so variously as context”.

Context is multidimensional and can be described with a variety of attributes (Sonnenwald, 1999; Dervin, 1997). Examples include place, time, goals, tasks, systems, situations, processes, organizations and types of participants (Sonnenwald, 1999). Dervin complains that every possible attribute of a person, culture, situation, behaviour, organization or structure has been defined as context. Sonnenwald (1999) points out that contexts have boundaries, constraints, and privileges as perceived by participants and by outsiders and these are flexible and subject to change yet they are not discrete; a number of contexts may share common attributes. Case refers to Johnson’s (2003, p. 244) description of the use of context in “three progressively complex sense, especially in communication studies. He categorises context as follows:

1. equivalent to the situation in which a process is immersed – a positivist orientation specifying factors that moderate the relationship;
2. contingency aspects of situations that have special effects – a post positivist view that emphasizes the prediction of outcomes;
3. frameworks of meaning – a post-modern sense in which the individual is inseparable from the context.

Of these three, Johnson (2003) indicates that the first two share much in common suggesting objective features while the third offers ways of viewing the world with different interpretative assumptions. *Context as situation* provides a list of situational or environmental factors but they do not explain

the linkages if any between these situational and environmental factors and the process under investigation. *Context as contingency* specifies key situational or environmental factors which provide predictive state of information seeking. They tend to be more rigorous theoretically than *context as situation* but remain functionalist than interpretative. *Context as framework* within which debates, discussions or dialogue occur within organizations have evolved along a number of research streams including sense-making and embeddedness.

Johnson advocates for multi-contextual approach in applying context in information seeking research. The complexity of institutional arrangements, rules and procedures and the exogenous factor such as the system of government that impacts information and its use in the work of the legislature makes it abundantly clear that the concept “Context” as applied to the work of the legislature must be situated in the frameworks of meaning of *context* where the individual is inseparable from the context, context within which debates, discussions occur.

Models in Information Behaviour Research

This section reviews specific information behaviour models – Wilson’s first model (1981); Dervin’s sense-making model (1983); and Wilson’s second model (1996). Bates (2010) summarizes the broad clusters of studies on information and human behaviour spanning over eight decades into the earlier years, when such studies were described as “use studies”; studies of “information seeking and gathering” and studies of “information needs and uses” leading to a gradual emergence of the term “information seeking” research (Bates, 2010, p. 4). In the 1990s, the term “information behaviour” replaced the previous term “information seeking” because some researchers

explained that the word “seeking” was restrictive connoting an explicit effort to locate information which did not capture the other ways in which people interacted with information. In spite of objections to the use of the term “behaviour” since information does not behave (Bates, 2010 p 4) the concept “information behaviour” is now widely accepted to encompass the totality of human interaction with information (Case, 2007; Wilson, 1996; Bates, 2010).

Bates (2010) attributes the key development in the shift from systems-oriented research to person-centred research in the 1970s to questions raised by researchers prominent among them, Dervin, who in her 1976 seminal article from a post-modern perspective challenged some assumptions that dominated communication and information seeking research. For example, she challenged the assumption that only objective information is valuable, that is, people are rational beings who process data from the environment to explore alternatives to help them make the best decision. According to Dervin, there are several problems with such an assumption, including the fact that the common tendency of people is to rely on easily available source of information such as friends. For most tasks and decisions in life, people settle for the first satisfactory solution to a problem, rather than the best solution.

Numerous models exist for interrogating the issue of information behaviour. Most of these models are “statements, often in the form of diagrams that attempt to describe an information-seeking activity, the causes and consequences of that activity, or the relationships among stages in information-seeking behaviour. Rarely do such models advance to the stage of specifying relationships among theoretical propositions; rather, they are at a pre-theoretical stage, but may suggest relationships that might be fruitful to explore or test”

(Wilson, 1999, p. 250). For this research the relevant models reviewed were Wilson (1981); Dervin (1983); and Wilson (1996).

Wilson's first Model (1981) - Model of information behaviour

Wilson's first model of information behaviour was first presented in what Bawden (2006, p.1) describes as "Wilson's (1981) seminal article". Wilson proposed a model in 1981 as a way of addressing what he described as debates and confusion as to what constituted "Information needs" following an increase in research efforts in understanding users of libraries and information resource centres (Figure 2). In his attempt to reduce this confusion, Wilson developed his first model with twelve components starting with the "Information user" who has a need, which may or may not stem from their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with previously acquired information (Case, 2007, p.124). The need then leads the information user to seek information through demand on information systems or on information sources which may lead to a successful outcome in which case the information is used to partially or fully satisfy the need (Case, 2007; Wilson, 1999) or a failure to satisfy the need and have to repeat the search process (Wilson, 1999) represented by the double arrows between satisfaction/non satisfaction and information transfer in Figure 2. The information seeking process may involve information exchange with other people and information found useful may also be transferred to other people, an aspect of the model Case describes as important (Case, 2007).

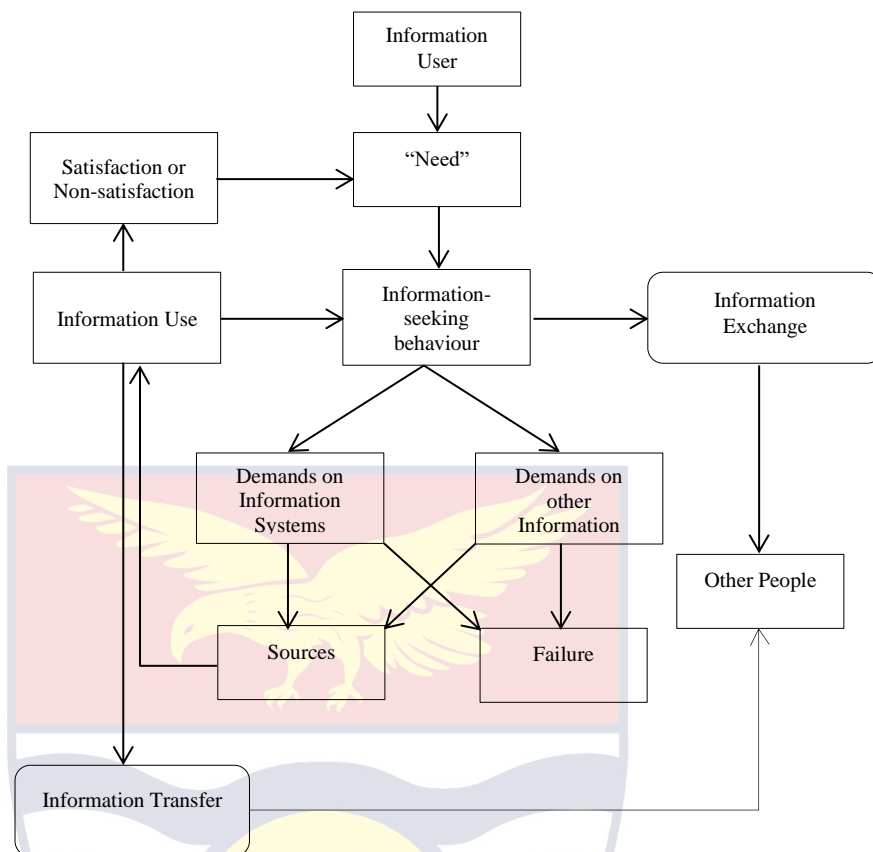


Figure 2: Wilson’s (1981) Model of Information Behaviour

Dervin’s Sense-Making Model

The work by Dervin (1983) has sparked a great interest in what is broadly described as the “sense-making approach” to researching information behaviour with Dervin as the primary proponent (Case, 2007). The model is built on the proposition that information is not something that exists apart from the human behavioural activity. It is created in a specific moment in time and space (Case, 2007) (Figure 3). Wilson (1999, p. 253) argues that the sense-making approach has developed over the years and is not simply a model. It is a set of assumptions, a theoretical perspective, a methodological approach, a set of research methods, and a practice, a tool designed for making sense of reality assumed to be both chaotic and orderly (Dervin, 1983 as cited in Wilson 1999).

The sense-making model incorporates three conceptual premises as follows: SITUATION-GAPS-USES.

SITUATION refers to the time and space context at which sense is constructed by the individuals in question; in other words, sense-making is situational. GAPS reflects the gap that needs bridging, the information needs or questions individuals have as they construct sense through time and space. USES refers to the use to which individuals put newly created sense, conceptualized as helps or hurts (Dervin, 1983, p. 9). In later writings Dervin makes modifications to the Sensemaking Approach including replacing USES with OUTCOMES (Figure 3).

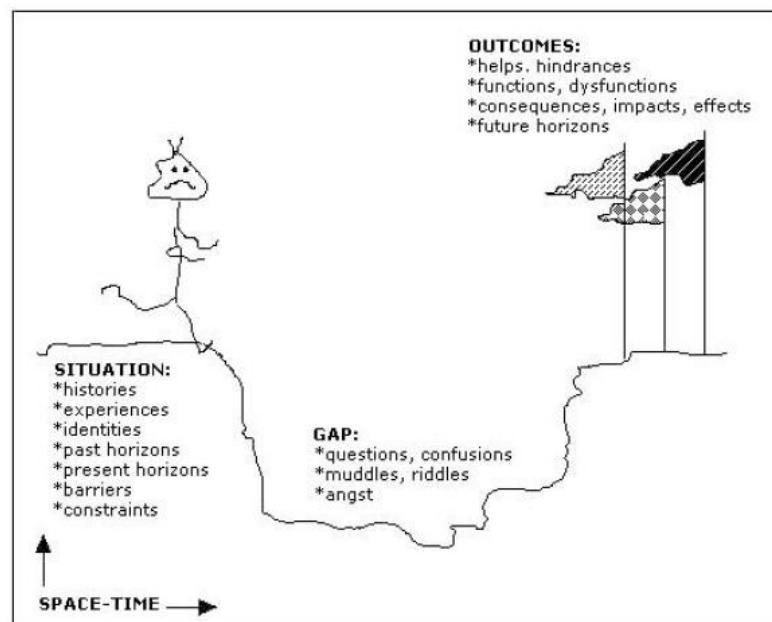


Figure 3: *Dervin's Sense Making Approach revised in* Dervin & Foreman-Wernet (Eds.) (2003)

The first assumption of the sense making approach is that “reality is neither complete nor constant but rather filled with fundamental and pervasive discontinuities or gaps” (Dervin, 1983, p.4). The second assumption is that “information is not a thing that exists independent of and external to human

beings but rather is a product of human observing”, ” (Dervin, 1983, p.4), Dervin recognizes that in both context the human observing has constraints; namely, limitation on human physiology and limitations of present, past and future time-space. Informed by the first two assumptions, the third assumption of sense-making is that all information is subjective. Based on those assumptions the sense-making approach posits information seeking and use as “...constructing” activities – as personal creating of sense (Dervin, 1983, p. 5).

The advantage of Dervin’s model is the emphasis on the context in which the individual seeks and uses information. Wilson (1999) sees the *micro-moment time-line interview* methodology of Dervin’s model, which asks a respondent to detail what happened in a situation step-by-step in terms of what happened first, second etc., as one of the strengths of the model that can provide insight and influence the design and delivery of information services.

Wilson’s Second Model (1996)

Wilson’s (1996) model of information behaviour (Figure 4) is a revision of an earlier model he had proposed in 1981 informed by a comprehensive review of literature from multiple disciplines. This is the model adapted for this research.

While maintaining some of the basic structure of the 1981 model, Wilson’s (1996) model draws from theories, models, concepts from several disciplines including, organizational decision-making, psychology, innovation research, health communication studies, consumer research and information systems design.

Three of these theories namely stress coping theory; risk/reward theory and social learning theory are integrated into Wilson's 1996 revised general model. Case (2007:136) summarizes the stage at which each of these theories are applied as follows:

1. Why some needs prompt information seeking more so than others. This is informed by stress coping theory, from psychology.
2. Why some sources of information are used more than others is informed by the risk/reward theory, from consumer research.
3. Why people may or may not pursue a goal successfully is based on their perceptions of their own efficacy. This is informed by the social learning theory, from psychology.

Person in context

In this new model Wilson emphasizes the importance of incorporating the context of the information behaviour; that is, focusing on the *person in context* when interrogating information need, information seeking behaviour and use of information. Case (2007) notes that this addition of the *person in context* in the model is informed by Dervin's (1983) sense-making approach to investigating human information behaviour. This observation that the model incorporates some of Dervin's proposals is confirmed by Wilson's (1996) recognition of the need to include in the revised model an additional stage between the *person in context* and the *decision to seek information*.

Activating mechanisms

A concept labelled as *activating mechanism* which Wilson describes as similar to what Dervin refers to as the *gap* between *situations* and *use*, is introduced in this model based on the review of literature and assessments of

Wilson's first Model. He included two stages referred to here as activating mechanism between the *person-in-context* and the decision to seek information (*information seeking behaviour*). These include sources of motivation like stress. It also includes additional elements such as risks or rewards. These activating mechanisms occur between the determination of need and the initiation of action to satisfy the need (Wilson and Walsh, 1996)

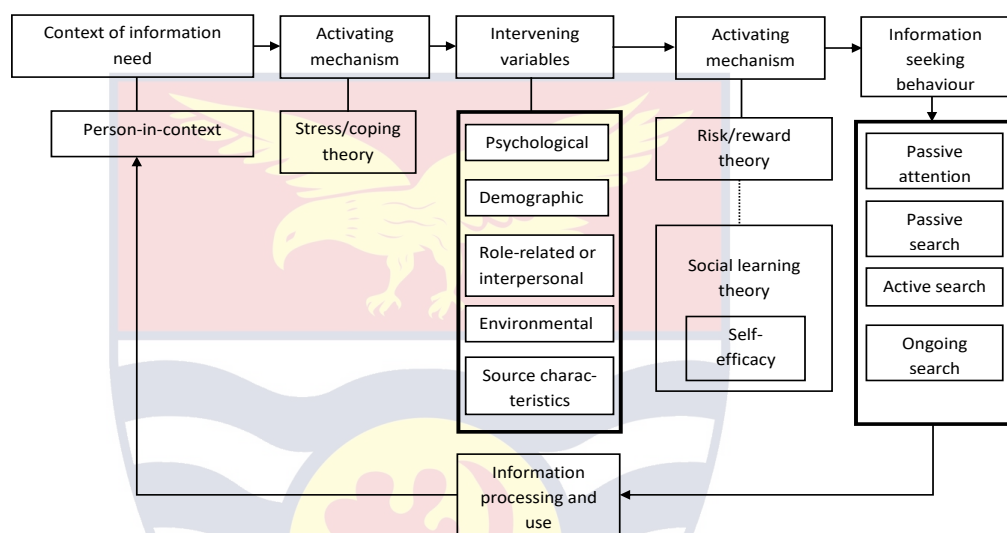


Figure 4: Wilson's (1996) Model of Information Behaviour

Source: (Wilson & Walsh, 1996, p.31 and Wilson, 1999, p. 257)

Information Need

Seen as the root of information seeking behaviour, Wilson and Walsh (1996) situate information need in the broader context of human need describing it as a psychological concept that has subjective character and motivation or drives that lead to expression of need. Wilson and Walsh (1996) point to categorization of information need as one way of viewing the concept citing the three information needs categories by Weights et al., (1993) to which Wilson adds two additional categories (d and e). These are: a) Need for new information, b) Need to elucidate the information held, c) Need to confirm information held d) Need to elucidate beliefs and value held, and e) Need to

confirm belief and values held. Wilson's proposed categories are to cater for the type of needs associated with belief and values. While these categorizations might be useful in looking at individual information needs, their applicability in situations where the need emanates from a collective action environment becomes more difficult. In such instances, Wilson's suggestion that a helpful way of determining information needs is to find ways to approximate the causes of information seeking behaviour is applicable. For legislatures then the emphasis is on their mandate which translates into specific roles and tasks that members must perform. It is in that context that information need of members were studied.

Information seeking behaviour

Wilson (1999, p. 263) offers a broad definition of the term describing information-seeking behaviour as "concerned with the variety of methods people employ to discover, and gain access to information resources". According to Wilson and Walsh (1996) information seeking behaviour is not a necessary consequence of a person's perception of a need for information. Evidence of this is the Miller and Mangan's (1983) study which identified blunters (information avoiders), that is, individuals who prefer less information in stressful health related situations. Wilson's assertion then is that an individual's personality as well as other additional factors, or barriers may affect information seeking behaviour after the recognition of an information need.

Intervening variables

The 1996 model uses the term “intervening variables” to refer to factors or barriers that affect a person’s motivation to seek or not to seek information. Their impact may also be supportive of information use or be inhibitive (Wilson, 1999). Wilson and Walsh (1996) categorizes intervening variables into personal characteristics, emotional variables, educational variables, demographic variables, social/interpersonal variables; environmental variables, economic variables and source characteristics. In his 1996 model, Wilson presents five of these as types of intervening variables. These are 1) psychological predisposition; 2) demographic background; 3) role-related or interpersonal factors; 4) environmental variables such as the resources available; and the 5) characteristics of the sources.

Information seeking and acquisition

Wilson and Walsh (1996) identify four categories of searching and acquisition of information in the model spanning the following:

1. passive attention – using an information source such as radio with no specific intention of information seeking, nevertheless information acquisition takes place;
2. passive search – occasion when one search or behaviour results in acquisition of relevant information;
3. active search – actively seeking information; and
4. on-going search – follow active search with occasional continuing search to update or expand information and knowledge.

Wilson and Walsh (1996) highlight the relationship between information and information sources and channels, describe different research for different disciplines, and demonstrate the preferred sources of information for different categories of people. Wilson describes the model from Johnson and Meischke (1993) in health research, a model that suggests that while the motive for seeking health information may be informed by health-related factors, the actual search and acquisition of information are shaped by information carrier factors; that is, the characteristics and the utility of the information source or channel with a strong preference in almost any information seeking context for information that comes directly from other people (Case, 2007). The characteristics of the information source such as access and credibility may constitute a barrier, either to information-seeking behaviour or to information processing.

Information Processing and Use

As mentioned earlier, Wilson and Walsh (1996) point out that the recognition of an information need, and availability and accessibility of information, does not guarantee information processing and use. Wilson and Walsh describe information processing as an under researched area, the concept is subjective making it difficult to directly observe, just like the concept, information need. Based on his review of research work in consumer behaviour Wilson points out that presentation format is a key factor in information processing.

When it comes to information use, Wilson's review of Rogers's (1983) diffusion of innovation model and related work including Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive theory, as well as Howze and Redman's (1992) research work

led him to infer that the use of information is dependent upon the context of use. Drawing from Rogers's (1983) idea of selective exposure and Krohne's (1986) cognitive avoidance, Wilson and Walsh (1996) propose that individuals will select information and sources that are likely to confirm prior held beliefs, attitudes and knowledge.

The main model adapted for the research is Wilson's 1996 general model for information behaviour. The model is selected because it has an advantage of adaptability for interrogating information behaviour in many disciplines and is best suited to the research problem of this thesis. A number of changes were made by introducing key variables such as *exogenous* and *endogenous* context as well as *application* and *non-use* of information into Wilson's 1996 General Model for Information Behaviour in the conceptual framework for the study. These are explained further in later sections.

Empirical Studies

The review of empirical studies below is divided into the following thematic areas, namely, social contract theory and the Ghanaian State, legislative organization, and empirical work on information and the legislature.

Ghana's 1992 Constitution: the Social Contract

The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana is unique, described as a hybrid constitution crafted to provide the best from both the parliamentary system and the presidential system (Gyampo & Graham, 2014). Article 78 (1) of the constitution, for example, makes provision for the majority of the President's ministers to be appointed from among members of parliament. According to Ayee (1998), the reason is based on the experience of the conduct

of parliamentary business under the 1979 Constitution, which, “although excluded ministers from membership of parliament, impeded the implementation of legislative programmes under the Constitution” (Ayee, 1998, p.6).

The first Article (Article 1) of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana Article 1 and its preamble are in line with the tenets of the social contract theory, reaffirming the fact that the 1992 Constitution originates from the people of Ghana laying the foundation for the setup of the framework of government to secure liberty, equality of opportunity and prosperity for the citizens of the country. In view of these provisions the Constitution of Ghana can be said to follow the tenets of the social contract theory, as defined in this study, the fundamental basis for government authority and promotion of checks and balances.

There is formal separation of powers in the 1992 Constitution. Some of the constitutional Articles exhibit some features of presidentialism. Specifically, executive power is vested in a president of the Republic of Ghana, who is also the head of state, as well as the head of Government and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces (Article 57 of the 1992 Constitution). The legislative power is vested in parliament (Article 93 of the 1992 Constitution). However, the president also has a number of legislative powers. The judicial power is vested in the judiciary (Articles 125 & 2 of the 1992 Constitution), (1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, Gyampo & Graham, 2014, Asante and Debrah, 2015). There are also other aspects of the constitution that reflect the Parliamentary system of government. Article 78 (1) of the constitution for example, makes provision for the majority of the

President's ministers to be appointed from among members of parliament. This blend of presidential system and parliamentary system has its strengths as well as areas that require improvements.

The following discussion highlights two key observations following the implementation of the 1992 Constitution that relate to governmental authority and checks and balances: (i) the impact of the provision of Article 78(1) on the provision of separation of powers in the constitution, and (ii) the extensive powers of the presidency.

First, Article 78(1) and the provision of separation of powers – Article 78 (1) of the 1992 Constitution states “Ministers of State shall be appointed by the President with the prior approval of Parliament from among members of Parliament or persons qualified to be elected as members of Parliament, except that the majority of Ministers of State shall be appointed from among members of Parliament.” There have been extensive research and discussions on the impact of this provision in the constitution on the practice of separation of powers in Ghana. A number of studies on Article 78 (1) highlight the fact that the fusion of the Executive and the Parliament of Ghana as provided for in Article 78(1) reduces the independence, and slows down the growth of the Parliament of Ghana; makes the Executive influential on the House, and undermines the oversight role of the Parliament of Ghana (Amoateng, 2012; Asante and Debrah, 2015; Sakyi, 2010). Similar issues are raised in publications by non-governmental organizations such as the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) and the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD).

Findings from Amoateng's (2012) work, for example, showed that Article 78(1) undermines the oversight role of the Parliament of Ghana. Sakyi (2010) points out that Article 78 first, affects the work of legislators significantly. MPs reported that, the practice of appointing the majority of executive ministers from the legislature has resulted in i) a reduction of time and energy legislators devote to parliamentary work; ii) legislators who are ministers are either late or absent to the House and parliamentary committee meetings; iii) Sakyi (2010) laments that Article 78.1 has not only rendered control over executive arbitrariness and excesses ineffectual, but it has also made the legislature vulnerable to executive control and manipulation in several ways, which in the end subverts the powers and autonomy of the Ghanaian legislature.

The second observation relates to the extensive powers of the President and the executive arm of government. There are studies that have identified a major problem with the current constitution when it comes to the power of the President and the executive arm of government compared to the legislature. There are arguments put forward to the effect that the 1992 Constitution gives extensive powers to the president and the executive arm of government (Ala-Adjetey, 2006; Gyimah-Boadi, 2009; Gyampo & Graham, 2014, "The president is too powerful", 2007). A number of these concerns on the excessive powers of the President were raised as part the constitution review process which was set up by government on the 11th of January 2010. The Commission submitted its Report to government on the 20th of December, 2011 and a government White Paper on the report was issued by government in June 2012. Two examples of these constitutional provisions that relate to power relations

identified by the Review Commission and the responses by government through the white paper on the Commission's report are presented below. These are the president's excessive powers when it comes to 1) appointments and 2) legislation.

Excessive Powers of the President – Appointments

The president in consultation with the Council of State appoints the heads of independent constitutionally established commissions such as the Electoral Commission (EC), the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), and the National Media Commission (NMC) per Articles 46, 70, 225, 234 and 172 of Ghana's 1992 Constitution. (Gyampo & Graham, 2014).

Other powers of the president with appointments include appointing the 1) Chairman and Members, the Director-General and the staff of the National Development Planning Commission (Article 195); 2) Other provisions in the constitution give presidents the freedom to appoint a large number of ministers and other executive-branch staff, at the expense of the professional public service (Gyimah-Boadi, 2009); and 3) Appointing the staff of agencies such as the Economic and Organized Crime Office (EOCO), formerly Serious Fraud Office, and the Auditor-General and keep them perpetually in "acting" positions evading parliamentary scrutiny (Gyimah-Boadi, 2009).

Excessive Powers of the President – Legislation

With regard to legislation and the excessive powers of the president, even though the legislative powers of Ghana are vested in Parliament (Article

93 (2)), to be exercised in accordance with the constitution, a number of articles of the constitution confer some legislative powers to the president.

Article 108 of the constitution is said to confer exclusive right on the President to introduce into parliament bills that have tax implications or make provision for charges or payment, issue or withdraw from the consolidated fund or public fund (Constitution Review Commission, 2011). It has been pointed out that Article 108 by conferring exclusive right on the president to introduce into parliament bills that have financial implications does not only disrupt Parliament's constitutional power of the public purse but also makes the president the sole legislator in Ghana based on the fact that every bill has financial implications (Graham & Gyampo, 2014).

The government accepted the recommendations of the Constitution Review Commission which stated that: "the current limitation on the introduction of Bills with financial implications by private members should be maintained but limited to "Money Bills"; and what amounts to "Money Bills" should be clearly defined in the Constitution or legislation" (Constitution Review Commission, 2011, p. 148; Republic of Ghana, 2012, p. 16). None of these recommendations have been implemented.

The tenets of the social contract theory require that citizens have a stake in the state as well as a right to participate in its affairs, directly or representatively. The Parliament of Ghana provides the avenue for representational participation for its citizens. As highlighted above, the very structure of the current 1992 Constitution already tilts the power balance in

favour of the president and the executive. While provisions such as Article 78 (1) also dilutes the power of the legislature.

Legislative Organization

Institutional context is important in understanding the role of information in the work of the legislators as indicated earlier. The triad of theories of legislative organization referred to earlier namely the distributive, partisan and information theories continue to dominate research work on legislatures as evidenced in the review of literature. Of the three, Information Theory of legislative organization proposed by Krehbiel offers the best theoretical basis for interrogating the institutional dimension of information and its use in the legislature. It is important to note that the information theory of legislative organization is based on the American system of government; therefore, there are some assumptions of the theory that are not applicable to the Ghanaian situation. For example, while MPs in US Congress initiate private members' bills, MPs in Ghana's parliament do not initiate private members' bills. The committee systems also differ, committees in the US Congress are much more powerful than that of committees in the Parliament of Ghana.

Existing literature on legislatures often focus on parliamentary committees, including their vital role in legislation processing and oversight work (Prince & Overby, 2005 cite research work on Parliamentary committees including Fenno, 1973; Hamm & Hedlund, 1990, 1994, 1996; and Deering & Smith, 1997). Proponents of the information theory of legislative organization also focus on committees and suggest that legislative committees are designed to provide their parent chamber information on policy alternatives through specialization. Empirical work show that legislators' knowledge, experience,

and expertise are related to committee appointments. In other words, legislatures take into consideration the expertise of members in placing them in committees so that they can tap their expertise (Lin, 2015; Battista, 2009; Hamm, Hedlund & Post, 2011).

Researchers who have applied the information theory of legislative organization in their investigations include Battista (2009); Hamm et al. (2011), and Lin (2015). Battista's research work provided evidence in support of the information theory of legislative organization. Battista finds that committee informativeness is associated with i) a committee's information-gathering capacity, ii) the chamber's demand for information and iii) the incentive to police committee membership.

Hamm et al. (2011) also uses an informational theoretical perspective to look at the appointment of legislative committees, using new measures of knowledge and expertise. Their investigation looked at how committees of U.S. state legislatures are formed to meet the basic knowledge and expertise needs of the house. Their findings indicate the existence of a long and enduring tradition of appointing "issue area specialists" to legislative committees in the U.S. states. This finding supports the informational model's expectations that over time legislative chambers have consistently "tapped the talents" of their membership when making committee assignments.

A study by Lin (2015) on US state legislatures also showed that not only are legislative committees information providers to the Chamber and that they also substantively impact legislative outcomes. The independent variable for the study was a measure of the collective proportion of informative committees

of both chambers in each state. The two dependent variables were bill introductions and legislative efficiency. The results showed that “informative committees are not simply information providers but also substantively influence the legislative process as well as legislative outcomes. As the committee system of a legislature becomes more informative, it reduces the number of bills introduced to the chamber and ultimately enhances the legislative efficiency of the legislature” (Lin, 2015, p. 405).

The review of theories reveals that while rational choice theories dominate research on legislatures, to investigate the individual MP’s information behaviour in the collective decision-making process, the following – Simon’s (1947) bounded rationality, Alan Pred’s behavioural model (1967) and Weiss’ (1983) ideology-interest-information model – offer useful insights, especially in recognising that decision making is not entirely rational. The rationality of decision makers can be limited by the information decision makers have, by the cognitive limitations of their minds, and the time they have to make that decision. Additionally, all the required information for optimal decision may not be available; it might be expensive or time consuming. For politicians such as legislators, the formation of policy positions is the result of a complex interaction of a set of forces including their *ideologies*, their *interests*, and the *information* they have; an interplay between the political mechanisms and information mechanisms within the context of the collective action environment, as they contribute to decisions in the legislature.

These observations are especially relevant based on the recognition that individual MPs in young democracies, including Ghana, in performing their duties need to be responsive to citizens’ demands and as such operate at both

the formal and informal levels. MPs must respond to conditions that bring about formal sanctions when seeking re-election as well as the informal sanctions such as loss of prestige and status with their constituencies (Lindberg, 2010). Their need for information, access to information and use of such information straddle these multiplicities. The foregoing informed the conceptualization of the study. In interrogating role-related information needs for Members of Parliament therefore members' constituency services as well as their formal roles such as legislative role were included.

Information and the Legislature

As highlighted earlier, the relationship between information and political work including policy expertise, and effectiveness of the legislature is not without its tensions. Bimber (1991) reports that there are varying opinions about the role of information and of expertise in legislative politics. This is based on his extensive review of literature on the role of information in legislative politics in the US Congress. Demaj (2015) also observes that there are contradictory findings from the limited empirical evidence on the use of performance information in budget decisions by legislators. Bimber (1991) classifies research on the relationship of information to political outcomes into two main traditions: The first is linked to Bacon's claim that "knowledge is power". This tradition sees information as one of the chief factors in legislative outcome (Bimber (1991) quotes Fenno, 1973; Metcalf (1974), Rieselbach, 1977). Demaj (2015) in his review of literature on the role of performance information for legislatures budgeting decision discusses the "more information hypothesis" in public administration. This, he says, is linked to tremendous increase in the availability of policy information emerging partly from the

objective of exposing politicians to policy information for evidence-based debates and the overall commitment to the notion of intelligent choice and to the quality of evidence-based policies. Demaj (2015) makes reference to Askim (2007, 2009); Askim and Hanssen (2008) and ter Bogt (2001, 2003, 2004) as the few studies that demonstrate that there have been occasions where legislators did actually use performance information.

Bimber reports that the second school of thought argues that information and expertise “often appears to have limited value”. Supporters of this school of thought argue that information and expertise is not the primary factor in decision making in legislatures and that in instances where expertise or information is considered by legislators it is only to re-enforce their entrenched position (Bimber quoting Jones 1976, Schick 1976 and Schneier, 1970). Bimber makes reference to Schneier’s (1970) argument that Congress has abundance of information, and that the information problem, is a problem of political value of deciding who gets what, when and how. Demaj’s (2015) own findings for Swiss legislators concluded that provision of performance information to the budgeting process is likely to increase polarization. He makes reference to a number of what he calls - *survey and meta-inquiries* which suggest that performance information is rarely used by legislators. These include: Ho and Coates (2004); Julnes and Holzer (2001); Joyce (1993); Poister and Streib (1999); Matheson and Kwon (2003); Raudla (2012) and Pollitt (2008).

Bimber (1991) argues that both supporters and critics of the “knowledge is power” idea can point out practical examples from the USA Congress to support their arguments. He further points out that common to both in the

literature on the role of information and expertise in legislative politics is the fact that legislative institutional arrangements shape the relevance of expertise to political outcomes.

Weber (1987) postulates a model of legislators' use of policy information identifying four main factors. These are i) the worldview and attitude towards social sciences, ii) perception of the way policy issues are considered in the legislature, iii) perception of the legislative structure and iv) the legislative orientation. Weber tests two rival hypotheses that seek to explain the limited use of policy information. These are the two-communities theory and the legislator orientation perspective. Through structured interviews data was collected from Indiana State House of Representatives. The findings and conclusions show the success of the legislator orientation hypothesis relative to the two-communities theory as an explanation for the limited use of policy information. Indiana legislators use policy information if it is available to them through the network of contacts and information sources ordinarily encountered as they carry out their responsibility. Legislators who do not find policy studies useful are reacting to their job images, the way they perceive policy issues to be considered in the legislatures and to their world view and view of social sciences. Legislators are political decision makers hence the legislative setting including the legislative process, the time constraints and the electoral backdrop serve as a "double-edged sword" affecting their use of policy information.

An area of research that has received considerable attention relates to legislators use of performance information. Askim (2007), for example, studied Norwegian councillors' use of performance information and points out that such information is considered to varying degrees and for different purposes

depending on the particular situation. Using a survey method that covered 1500 councillors, the findings showed surprisingly high levels of utilization. The study compared utilization across policy sectors and the results indicated differences among the different groups in the way they utilized information.

For example, frontbenchers (more senior members) and highly educated councillors found citizen input less useful for agenda setting when compared with other councillors. Askim attributed this variation to the fact that the frontbenchers simply did not need this type of information since they have full access to, and prefer, other information types (Askim, 2008 citing Mouritzen and Svava 2002; Jacobsen 2003) and not information from citizens. For the well-educated councillors Askim argues that their use of citizen input is limited since “they do not need such input; they already possess (or think they do) the information they need for agenda setting”. (Askim, 2008, p.399).

Another study, Raudla (2012), examined the extent to which legislators in Estonia used performance information (PI) in budgetary decision-making. Using agency theory (Askim, 2008) and organizational learning theory (Willoughby & Melkers, 2000), the researcher adopted a qualitative approach and interviewed members of the finance committee of the parliament of Estonia. The research findings showed that more experienced politicians are less interested in performance information than the novices (Raudla, 2012). There are no significant differences between legislators from governing and opposition parties when it comes to their interest in performance information (Raudla 2012).

Other studies on information and the legislature especially those covering

the Parliament of Ghana, including studies by Mostert (2004); Mostert and Ocholla (2005); Alemna and Skouby (2000); Ofori-Dwumfuo and Addo (2012); Osman and Agyei (2014) and Curry (2011), are reviewed.

Research by Mostert and Ocholla (2005), and Mostert (2004) investigated the information needs and information seeking behaviour of parliamentarians in South Africa using Wilson's (1997; 1999) general models. Using questionnaire and non-participant passive observation methods, data was collected aimed at determining the information sources, service and systems used in South Africa by the parliamentarians, and the role of the parliamentary libraries in meeting these needs. A total of 763 questionnaires were sent out and the response rate was 167 (23%).

The study found that Legislative libraries are under-utilized as only 34% of the legislators use the legislative libraries often. Unlike the findings of Thapisa (1996) where oral tradition as a means of seeking information was a major source of information gathering amongst parliamentarians in Africa, the study by Mostert and Ocholla (2005) showed that oral sources are not as highly valued as anticipated. The majority of parliamentarians (75%) obtain their information using their own personal sources and expertise. In addition to that they often use an intermediary, namely, their personal assistants to do their information searches for them. Mostert (2004, p. vii) also established that among the South African legislators "the higher the educational level attained the wider the variety of [information] sources used".

Alemna and Skouby (2000) investigated the information need and seeking behaviour of MPs in Ghana's legislature. The study looked at MPs'

perception of information, the need and sources of information including an assessment of the adequacy of the library and the degree of assistance MPs require in securing information. Of the 164 questionnaires distributed, 94 were returned, giving a response rate of 57.3%. The research question on information need was a yes and no question on when members' require three categories of information. These categories were "preparing for some parliamentary roles" (e.g. debates), "information for carrying out data analysis", and "information when preparing to answer enquiries from constituents". The study showed that 68% of MPs needed information the most for parliamentary roles such as debates, speeches and questions, with 10% indicating that they need information when preparing answers for enquiries received from their constituents. The views of MPs were varied on the type of information often sought when the category of information was ranked. Rural development, agriculture and human rights were rated more important than information on foreign affairs and military. A large number of respondents (81%) were aware of the services of the parliamentary library; however, 68% were not satisfied with the services. MPs also indicated that they seek information from Government and Ministries: 50% do this sometimes while 22% seek information always. On the way in which they want to receive information, 72% want summarized information while 16% want an original document. Another study, Ofori-Dwumfuo and Addo (2012) investigated the level of awareness and extent of use of information resources including ICT-based resources and the parliament library by the members of Ghana's parliament. The study adopted the Wilson's Model of Information Behaviour and survey method, to collect data from 115 out of the 230 MPs, a response rate of 70%. Their findings

indicate that Ghanaian MPs need information for parliamentary speeches, debates and questions; they also need information for answering questions from constituents and for keeping abreast with topical issues. Ninety-two point six percent (92.6%) were aware of the internet but due to challenges associated with using electronic resources 70.3% were unable to access internet by themselves while 29.4% indicated having difficulty accessing information on the internet. Ghanaian MPs use print sources especially the number one selling newspaper *Daily Graphic*. Fifty-five percent (55%) prefer original documents. Even though 92.6% were aware that the library provides relevant services, 49.4% of the MPs affirm that the services were adequate. MPs' challenges with regard to information include: unavailability of adequately trained research assistants and limited number of library staff, challenges in acquiring documents and information from Government, Ministries and Agencies especially for the minority in parliament and reluctance of library staff to release original documents.

Osman and Agyei (2014) examined information use in decision making by Ghanaian MPs. Using a survey method, questionnaires were used for data collection from a sample of 50% of the 275 MPs of Ghana's Parliament. No response rate is given making it impossible to deduce the number of MPs the percentages reported in the findings correspond with. Findings showed 89% of respondents needed information for parliamentary debates, 86% for broadening their knowledge on critical issues. Seventy-five percent (75%) and 74% needed information respectively for work on bills or insight on other issues on the floor of the house. Forty-one percent (41%) needed information for appearance on TV and radio stations.

The preferred source of information for most of the respondents (70%) was to use personal contacts. Professional, technical and administrative staff were identified as important and regular sources of information. Newspapers and radio stations were rated very high as major sources of information. With a policy that assigns young graduates to parliamentarians as research assistants through the national service programme, 80% of respondents indicated that they receive support from their assistants in meeting their information needs. The parliament library was said to contain mostly old and out-dated materials. Parliamentarians therefore seldom visit the library to look for information. The use of ICTs for meeting information needs was not very common among the MPs, and the authors attribute this to the lack of offices to house equipment and information communication technology infrastructure. There is also the possibility that some MPs may not have the requisite skills to use ICT tools. Indeed, the study finding showed that only 10% of respondents indicated that they use computers to access information. These studies on information in the Parliament of Ghana did not disaggregate the data by political party. Partisanship is strong in Ghana's Parliament and disaggregated data would have helped to provide better insights.

Curry (2011) empirically demonstrates that with a decrease in access to independent information resources for rank-and-file members of the US Congress and a greater centralization of information resources for leadership, an opportunity was provided for majority party leadership and committee chairpersons to exploit this information advantage by controlling access and thereby aiding the push of their preferred legislation through Congress. Curry's study, which is premised on actors controlling information as a power resource,

identifies information control strategies and explores circumstances under which these are used to influence the work in Parliament especially during the law-making process. It provides an innovative way to empirically analyze the strategic use of information control tactics by key actors in the legislature. This is an approach that provides theoretical as well as empirical insight into the politics of information and expertise in legislatures. It offers a good template for interrogating such issues especially in legislatures with weak information support systems and inadequate access to pertinent information for their MPs as pertains in the Parliament of Ghana.

Research Paradigms and Design Alternatives

Research design of scholarly works on information and the legislature cover all three broad competing research paradigms, namely, positivist-quantitative; non-positivist-qualitative and a combination of the two. The application of these different paradigms can be traced in all social science sub-disciplines that conduct research on information in the legislature including development studies, political science, and information and communication science.

Research on information and the legislature use quantitative approaches ranging from computing simple descriptive statistics such as tallies and frequency counts of collections and services by libraries to surveys of users of information services that generated descriptive and inferential statistics. With the emergence of formal models and game theory in the 1980s and 1990s, there is increased use of sophisticated statistical analysis for studying legislative committees modelling informativeness of parliamentary committees.

Almost concurrently in the 1980s and the 1990s there was also an emergence of trends towards preference for the use of qualitative approaches to research in information science, communication studies and related disciplines especially in studying human information behaviour (Wilson,1999; Case, 2007). Scholars who subscribe to qualitative approach often highlight the inadequacies of quantitative methods especially their inability to provide real insights and meaning when it comes to explaining human interaction with information. Supporters of qualitative approach point out the usefulness of qualitative methods especially the fact that it is context-specific which helps to understand in a holistic way human information behaviour.

The category of scholars who argue for a mixed-methods approach to the study of information and the legislature argue that both quantitative and qualitative methods have their strengths as well as their disadvantages and stress the overall benefit of complementing quantitative analysis with qualitative analysis to improve the depth of knowledge that can be revealed through mixed methods research (Dervin 1983; Case 2007).

As indicated earlier quantitative studies on information fall within a broad spectrum, from designs that use formal models to survey methods that use likert scales to generate descriptive statistics and in some instances inferential statistics. Positivist studies on information and the legislature that use formal models and game theory are fairly common in studies of the US Congress. Often based on the theoretical foundations of Krehbiel's information theory of legislative organization, such studies rely solely on quantitative data that is subjected to sophisticated statistical analysis and predictions. Examples of such research include Hamm, et al. (2011) longitudinal analysis of dataset on

committee membership of American state legislatures and members' knowledge, experience and expertise covering over nine decades; and Battista's (2009) modelling of informative committees, that is, committees specializing to reduce uncertainty with regard to the link between policies (bills) before the house and outcomes (impact of the bill once enacted), (Gilligan & Krehbiel 1990). Applying multilevel linear regression analysis based on a model that depicts committee informativeness as a dependent variable, Battista analyzes committee membership and roll-call votes for over 2000 committees in 97 US State legislatures.

Survey methods have also been used extensively to generate both descriptive statistics that tally and rank information related factors, as well as generate inferential statistics including chi-square analysis to determine links among information variables. Such studies use questionnaires and structured interviews for data collection from target respondents, and they are often used to investigate MPs' information needs, sources of information, flow of information and use of information. Examples include a study by Bogt (2004) which determined statistical significance of links between use of information sources and related variables among different categories of municipal and assembly members in Holland using chi-square analysis of data from questionnaires from 698 politicians from 206 municipalities.

Also, in one of the pioneering studies of over 500 British MPs and their information use, survey and interviews were used by Barker and Rush (1970) to determine MPs' source of information compared with their perception of their mandate. Additionally, all identified studies of Ghanaian Parliamentarians and information by Alemna and Skouby (2000), Addo (2011), Ofori-Dwumfuo

and Addo (2012) and Osman and Agyei (2014) use survey methods that generate frequency distributions and ranking of MPs' information needs and sources of information. Some of the criticisms of the quantitative approach to information behaviour include Wilson's assertion that the inadequacies and inappropriateness of quantitative research for information behaviour research partly account for the relatively limited number of theories for studying information behaviour (Nalumaga, 2009; Wilson 1999).

Qualitative methods are also frequently used in information research. Even as formal models emerged in the 1980s and 1990s (especially in legislative studies), qualitative research was increasingly gaining ground among researchers in information science, librarianship and communication studies with a shift from system-centred approach to person centred–approach in understanding users and information (Case, 2007; Wilson, 2000). Scholars who adopt qualitative approaches use observation, interviews and other participatory methods to investigate the role of information in the legislature.

With its roots in anthropology, philosophy and sociology (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton, & Ormston, 2013), qualitative studies generate qualitative data for analyses through the use of a number of data collection instruments including interviews (Curry, 2011), observation (Nalumaga, 2009; Orton, Marcella and Baxter, 2000), time-series analysis (Dervin, 1983) content analysis (Burstein & Hirsh, 2007). These are all generally aimed at understanding and explaining human information behaviour. An example of a qualitative study of MPs' information behaviour is Nalumaga's (2009) use of in-depth interview and observation to capture data of information options/choices and information challenges of female MPs of the Uganda

Parliament. The method included transcribing and coding data from interviews for detailed analysis. In general interview-based approach to the study of the legislature is rare due to the numerous challenges associated with it when compared with other modes of data gathering including questionnaires and the analysis of existing data from sources such as the Hansard, and from roll-call (voting) databases. For the few who use interviews, a pioneer, Matthews (1960) affirms that the benefits of in-depth understanding of issues under investigation can be enormous when interviews are used and augmented with other data. This assertion remains true (Baker, 2011).

In addition to the quantitative methods and the qualitative approaches described above, there is a sizeable number of research works that combine the two, both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Using research designs that combine in-depth interviews, observations, with questionnaires such studies look at information sources and services in addition to members' information needs and their information seeking behaviour. An example is the study by Mostert and Ocholla (2005) that combines questionnaires to investigate information needs, seeking behaviour of South African members of Parliament with non-participant observation to investigate services provided by South African libraries.

Implications of the Literature Review

The review of existing literature provides valuable insights for researching information and legislative politics in Ghana. This section summarizes the main theoretical and conceptual issues.

Social contract, looked at as a theory of the state, emphasizes the existence of the state and justifications for political obligation, governmental

authority and rights of the governed. It is the fundamental basis for government and law in constitutional republics. Depending on which of the two major models of democratic government a state may adopt, each offers a different approach. While parliamentarianism is characterised by fusion of executive and legislative arms of government, presidentialism involves separation of the three arms of government, the executive, legislative and the judiciary. Each in its unique way promotes checks and balances, a set of rules or system-based regulation aimed at limiting excesses of government and allowing branches of government to hold each other mutually responsible. Ultimately, in modern liberal democracies those who rule must do so in the public interest since they are representatives of the people and accountable to the people. Tenets of the social contract theory require that citizens have a stake in the state as well as a right to participate in its affairs, directly or representatively.

An effective legislature, as representatives of the citizens, is key for democracy that delivers results for the people. In this research the focus is function of the members of the Parliament of Ghana, as elected representatives from the 275 constituencies across the country. The social contract through the country's 1992 Constitutional provisions offers a good basis for interrogating Parliament and MPs' mandate as an arm of government in a state that practises a hybrid system of government.

The form of government and the power dynamics between the executive and the legislature and its attendant asymmetry of information, as well as the power dynamics within the legislature and the asymmetry of information among members, sets the context in which legislators operate in Ghana. Examining members' information behaviour and the institutional context within which

collective decisions and actions are made should contribute to better understanding of the information support system and role of information as the legislature plays its part in meeting government's social contract with citizens of this country. The insights from theoretical, conceptual and empirical reviews have informed the conceptual framework for this study as captured in Figure 5.



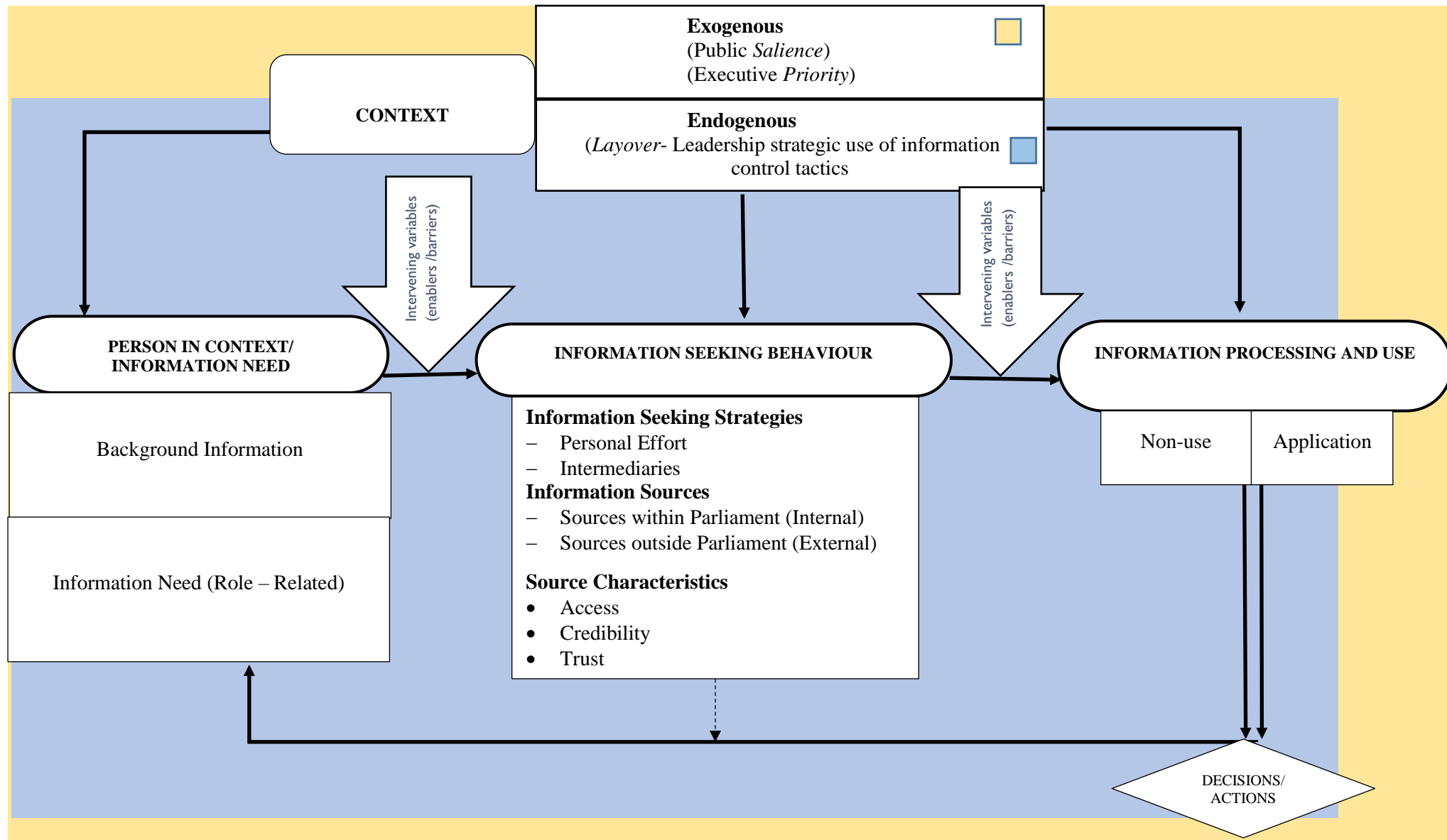


Figure 5: A Model of Information Behaviour of Members of Parliament

Source: Researcher’s adaptation of Model/Concepts from: (Curry 2011; Wilson & Walsh, 1996; March & Olsen, 1984)

The conceptual framework, Figure 5, shows the variables under study and how they relate to each other. One of the main components of the framework is *Context*, which the review of the literature covering both theoretical and empirical studies indicate is central to human information behaviour. For the legislator, context can be categorized into two broad groups, namely factors outside the legislature (*exogenous*) and factors within the legislature (*endogenous*) that impact the work of the institution and Members' information behaviour.

The exogenous factors covered in the study are citizens and the executive. The construct of interest with regard to citizens relates to the level of importance and interest citizens express in the business before the legislature. This is described as public "*Salience*" in this study. The second construct relates to the interface between the executive and the legislature as the latter performs its mandate. For this study the construct of interest is operationalized as Executive/Leadership "*Priority*".

The other main component of the conceptual framework for the study relates directly to the individual (person in context). For the individual legislator operating within the broader context of their environment, their information behaviour covers three key variables. These are their *information need* (their need for information), *information seeking behaviour* (strategies and ways through which they seek information or obtain information to meet these needs) and *information processing and use* (the use of information they have obtained).

Information need occurs in a context hence the importance of the person-in-context measured by looking at the background information of the

individual. For the legislators, ultimately the goal is to perform their mandate. Information need for this study is therefore operationalized as role-related information need. When individuals move to the subsequent stages to seek information and use information there are a number of intervening variables that either enhance or hinder these processes. The study is interested in the barriers that affect the individual's access to information.

Information seeking behaviour was operationalized in three constructs. The first examined search strategies namely through personal efforts or the use of intermediaries. The second was information sources within the legislature and also outside the legislature that individuals might use when seeking information. The third construct was the source characteristics. The study looked at access, trust and credibility as important source characteristics.

Information processing and use were measured in two ways these were Application and Non-use. Both categories of the concept information use were based on the basic assumption that the respondents had received, obtained or were in possession of relevant information. Application was used in this study to refer to those instances when respondents were *able to use* relevant information they had, while Non-use was used in the study to refer to those instances when respondents were *not able* to use or ignored relevant information they had. In the context of the legislature, leadership structure and procedural arrangements and associated political mechanisms can affect access to information and timelines for use of such information.

The conceptual framework also shows a loop back (bold arrow) from information processing and use back to information need. This shows that

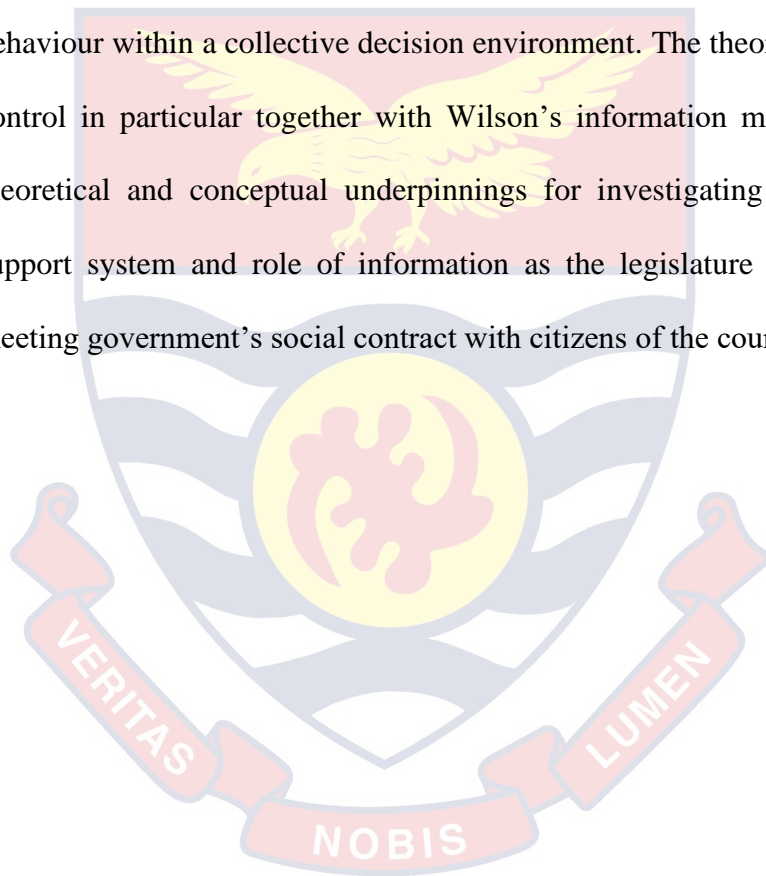
information behaviour can be cyclical, in instances where processing and use of information can lead to the need for more information. In other instances, information processing and use leads to an action or decision for the individual or towards an informed collective action or decision.

The conceptual framework for this study introduces key variables into Wilson's 1996 General Model for Information Behaviour adapting it to the study of the information behaviour of Members of Parliament. The first addition related to the variable *Context*. This was categorized into two broad groups, namely factors outside the legislature (*exogenous*) yet impact the work of the legislature and factors within the legislature (*endogenous*) that impact the work of the institution and members' information behaviour.

The second modification relates specifically to *information processing and use*. Information processing and use was conceptualized and measured in two ways, these were *Application* and *Non-use*. Application refers to those instances when respondents were able to use relevant information they had, while Non-use refers to those instances when respondents were not able to use or ignored relevant information they had. Wilson's feedback loop is maintained to show that information behaviour can be cyclical, with instances where processing and use of information can lead to the need for more information. Thirdly, there are additional stages introduced into the model to cater for instances, when information processing and use contribute to an *action* or *decision* for the individual or towards an informed collective decision or action of the House. The result is a Model of Information Behaviour of Members of Parliament (Figure 5).

Summary

To summarize, the system of government, the power dynamics that exist and the associated asymmetry of information between the executive and the legislature as well as among legislators set the context within which MPs perform their role. Theories of legislative organization, Weiss intuitionist perspective on politicians' decision-making and the theory of information control provide important perspectives for examining members' information behaviour within a collective decision environment. The theory of information control in particular together with Wilson's information model provide the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings for investigating the information support system and role of information as the legislature plays its part in meeting government's social contract with citizens of the country.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This chapter of the study presents the methodology and the research design. This includes a review of the different research paradigms and the research designs that have been applied in research work that focus on investigating the role of information in the legislature. The chapter also details the proposed methodology including the research design for the current study which is informed by the major paradigms discussed earlier. The population for the study and the proposed procedure for sampling are outlined. The chapter also describes the data collection instruments, the data collection procedures and the analysis carried out as well as strategies for addressing ethical issues.

Paradigms in Social Science Research

Historically, social science research has been seen as a “purposive and rigorous investigation” aimed at generating new knowledge (Saratankos 2005, p.4). But social science research also encompasses exploratory work, explaining and evaluating social issues and behaviour, and in some instances seeking meaning on matters relating to human actions and realities (Bailey, 2004). There are however ontological, epistemological and methodological differences in social science research.

In this regard there are social scientists “who think of themselves as scientists in the strictest sense of the word” (Bailey, 2004, p8.) and for such researchers the only difference between social science research and physical and natural science research is the subject matter. They employ realist/objective

ontology, epistemology that is based on empiricism and adopt quantitative methodology. This view to social science research is referred to as positivism (Saratankos, 2005).

As is to be expected, there are other researchers who critique positivism. While these critics put forward diverse arguments to justify their views, the central principles that keep this group together include their subjective approach to social science research and their reliance on interpretation. This view is often referred to as non-positivism encompassing phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, feminism and several others (Bailey 2004, Sarantakos 2005). Some researchers only categorize social science research approaches into these two broad groups, but increasingly there is a third group of social scientists who strongly believe in combining the strengths of positivism with that of non-positivism in order to minimize the negatives of each of these. Therefore, they adopt a mixed-methods approach to their study. For supporters of the mixed-methods approach, mixed methods research falls in a category of its own comparable to the quantitative and qualitative designs (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Johnson et al., 2007).

Based on the above, social science research can be placed into the following broad categories: the *positivist approach* (positivism) – which is quantitative in nature; the *qualitative approach* – encompassing phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, feminism and several others and the third category – the *mixed-methods approach* that combines both qualitative and quantitative. These approaches inform the methodology of a given social science research, that is, the philosophy of the research process which

determines the research strategy based on a researcher's ontological and epistemological view.

The quantitative research design is based on the philosophy of positivism. Sarantakos (2005) outlines central principles of positivism including objectivism, that is, the adherence to objective reality and absolute truths, and also adherence to strict design planned before the start of the research (Sarantakos, 2005). Quantitative research methodologies therefore perceive reality as objective, simple and fixed, see humans as rational individuals and follow strict rules and procedures. Methodology for quantitative research looks at cause and effect linkages, through experiments and surveys and apply sophisticated statistical analysis to data gathered.

The second, which is qualitative research is based on the principle that there is no objective reality or objective truth, instead reality is based on interpreted social action. One's history, cultural orientation and experience all come into play in how one perceives the world. As such qualitative methodology is subjective and employs methods such as interviews and observations, focus groups discussions and content and discourse analysis. Sarantakos also identifies the different features of qualitative research following his review of the works of Pfeifer (2000) and Benini (2000). These include carrying out the research in the natural settings and being flexible with the research design and the process such that it can change during the course of the research.

In sum, qualitative research is premised on the belief that natural and physical science methods cannot be adequately applied to social science issues,

that there is the need for context-specific investigation and stress the importance of adopting flexible research design for such studies (Sarantakos, 2005; Bailey, 2004; Berg, 2012). There is therefore a diverse array of qualitative research approaches in social sciences. Critics argue that qualitative methods do not ensure validity and reliability, do not generate representative results and findings cannot be generalized.

The third category of social science research combines both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. This is the mixed-methods approach. Creswell (2003) highlights a number of arguments from researchers to support the increasing calls that mixed methods approach be seen as a separate research design in the same category as well-known quantitative and qualitative designs. These include increasing recognition through publication of journal articles that show the advantages derived by combining quantitative and qualitative methods; and the emerging progress towards identifiable design elements and criteria that aid selection of design type to use in specific research.

Three types of mixed methods research design are identified by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011). These are explanatory sequential design, exploratory sequential design and convergent parallel. There are some who simply identify two approaches, namely sequential and concurrent, also described as simultaneous (Morgan, 1998; Sumner & Tribe, 2010). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) point out that with greater acceptance of mixed methods in research other types of research methods continue to emerge leading to an expanded typology for mixed research methods design. There are therefore a wide range of combinations of qualitative and quantitative methods available today that generate different subcategories of mixed methods beyond the two

or three broader groups outlined earlier. These different variants of mixed method design differ based on their underlying assumptions. The choice of one design over another by a researcher is informed by the procedure that will best meet the specific research questions and objectives.

Well known assumptions underlying mixed methods approach are those put forward by Morgan (1998). According to Morgan (1998), what is important is to determine the sequence of collecting the quantitative as well as the qualitative data. Equally important is the need to determine the weight that will be placed on each form of data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Morgan 1998). With these assumptions serving as the basis, researchers can determine the variant of mixed methods design that best fit their research problem.

Additional assumptions as proposed by others such as Tashakkori and Teddie (1998) and Green and Caracelli (1997) are highlighted by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011). Tashakkori and Tessler (1998) propose a mixed-methods design based on how data is integrated into all the different stages of the research process from the research questions through to the discussions of the research findings. Green and Caracelli (1997) also propose the transformative design. Such research design could be action-oriented or have transformational value combining qualitative and quantitative methods which ultimately aim at generating changes in action, policy, or ideology. One of the advantages of a mixed-methods approach is promoting triangulation by combining methods from qualitative and quantitative research, which helps identify areas of convergence among the methods and increases usefulness and reliability (Johnson et al., 2007, Emerald Publishing, 2019).

As Case (2007) points out there is not a single way to approach the subject of information and related concepts such as information behaviour, information seeking or information need. Hence, there is no perfect study design that exists which can then be used to judge the quality of any given research on information. Existing studies therefore have their strengths and their weaknesses.

Study Design

The study used a multiphase mixed methods research design to examine the role of information in the legislature. This is primarily because combining both qualitative and quantitative methods and conducting the research in phases created the opportunity to get a more in-depth understanding of the role of information in the legislature.

First, a mixed-methods approach made it possible to study individual MPs and their information needs and the information sources they used while at the same time allowing for detailed investigation of the context in which these occurred. It was possible to examine institutional arrangements such as leadership structure, rules and procedures governing parliamentary business and how these affected access to information and the use of information as MPs carried out their core mandates. By combining qualitative and quantitative approaches for collecting, analysing and reporting findings, the study sought to achieve a holistic coverage of members' information behaviour in the legislature. The mixed-methods research design helped highlight the advantages while minimizing the effect of the disadvantages of each method. It aimed to make the research "richer and more comprehensive" (Neuman, 2014 p.167). Given the competing approaches and the intense debate that persists

among scholars on the role of information in the legislature, a mixed method was ideal since it provided the “most informative, complete, balanced and useful research results” (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 129).

Second, the multiphase mixed-methods design involved examining the research problem through a series of phases (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This study used a series of phases (components) in a single study to examine the role of information in the legislature. The study also took a cue from Morgan’s (1998) suggestion that researchers could determine the variant of mixed methods design that was most appropriate for their research problem. This study thus adopted its own combination and sequence of mixed methods. The study design had three interrelated components.

1. Component one which used the quantitative method and was questionnaire-based;
2. Component two which used the qualitative method and was mainly interview-based;
3. Component three, also used a quantitative method, specifically multivariate regression analysis.

To expand further, the first component of the study – component one, used the quantitative method to examine individual MPs information need, their information seeking behaviour and their use of information. The second component of the study used a qualitative method to examine in more detail how Parliament’s institutional arrangements such as parliamentary leadership structure and procedures for parliamentary business affected access to information, and also the use of information in the work of Parliament. These two components of the study were carried out concurrently. The third

component of the study used a quantitative method to examine into detail how the timeframe MPs actually had at their disposal when they worked on a bill (layover time), was affected by a number of independent variables including *priority* (the executive and leadership priority at the time), as well as by *public salience* (the interest and level of importance the public associated with the topic of the bill).

The multiphase mixed methods approach was needed to capture the individual and the collective decisions and actions, because it is through the actions of individuals that institutions have an effect on political outcomes (Hall, 1993, Hall & Taylor, 1996). At the same time, as Bimber (1991, 1996) argues, the institutional arrangements shape the relevance of information and expertise to political outcomes. In sum, institutions constrain the actions of their members, but individuals also shape the institutions within which they function (Peters, 2012). The multiphase approach therefore provided the best approach to understand both dimensions, that is, study the individual MPs information behaviour while examining how the leadership structure of the Parliament of Ghana and the way the Parliament conducts its business shape MPs' access and use of information and expertise in the performance of Parliament's mandate.

Population

The main component of this study, study component one, primarily targeted the current members of the Parliament of Ghana. All members of the Seventh Parliament of the Fourth Republic of Ghana, therefore, constituted the primary population for the study. The unit of analysis was therefore the individual member of Parliament (MP). There is a total of 275 Members from two major political parties in the country.

Study component two: For this component, the target population was 15 Parliamentary Service staff and Members of Parliament both current and former. Together they constituted a great source of data because of their level of experience and the institutional memories they hold.

The third component of this study used the duration information about bills and loan agreements presented to Parliaments of the Fourth Republic of Ghana. This covered the timelines involved in the presentation of bills/loan agreements to the House until their passage or rejection by the House. It provided the needed information for analysing “layover time” of bills presented to the Parliament of Ghana.

Sample and Sampling Procedures

Study component one (quantitative method): A stratified random sampling method was used to determine the sample for this aspect of the study. Though most social science researchers might consider a population of 275 an ideal group to carry out a census, most scholars of legislatures on the basis of their research experiences, agree that legislators fall in a category of hard-to-research group leading to low response rates during research. Considering the difficulty of getting access to MPs coupled with time and resource constraints for the study, a representative sample was drawn through stratified random sampling.

The following was done to obtain a stratified random sample. The list of the 275 members of the Seventh Parliament was obtained from the Hansard (Parliamentary Debates, official report) of 7th January 2017. The Hansard is the official record containing the list of all MPs returned at the general election

which was held on 7th December 2016. Additional information including gender was obtained from other official records of the Parliament of Ghana. The term gender is used in this research to refer to the sex of respondents i.e. male and female respondents. The official records were used to create in Excel a complete record for each MP. The record captured the name, the political party, the constituency and the gender for each of the 275 MPs. This served as the sampling frame.

The sample size for a population of 275 members was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula and table. A sample size of 161 MPs was needed for this study. Once the sample size for a 275-population sample size was determined the next step was to stratify the list of 275 MPs into strata. The strata were based on political party affiliation, and gender. The population of MPs was stratified by political party affiliation because political parties play a crucial role in shaping membership of parliamentary committees, setting the agenda for parliamentary business and deliberations in the legislature (Cox & McCubbin, 1993, 2007). The other criterion was gender because research shows that information needs and active information seeking varies across gender (Rowley et al, 2016; Nalumaga 2009, 2012, 2014).

The list of MPs of the Seventh Parliament of the Fourth Republic showed that all 275 members belonged to one of the two main political parties in Ghana namely the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC). There were no independent MPs, neither were there any members for the other political parties. The New Patriotic Party had the majority of seats in the Seventh Parliament while the National Democratic Congress were in the minority. The proportion of NPP MPs to NDC MPs was

169:106 (Parliamentary Debates, 2017 July 12). This translates into 99 NPP members to 62 NDC members to make up the sample size of 161 target respondents. When it comes to the gender distribution of members in the Seventh Parliament the ratio was 240 male MPs to 35 Female MPs. This translated to 141 males and 20 females in a sample size of 161 MPs. The sample size quotas therefore were as follows: NPP Members (14 females and 85 males). For NDC members it was 6 females and 56 males (Table 2).

To proceed, the list of MPs was ordered by placing each MP in the appropriate subgroup based on their political party affiliation as either NDC or NPP and their gender (male or female). The next major step was the actual random selection of 161 target respondents. The open source software EPI INFO was used to generate random numbers which were then used to select the 161 MPs for the study.

*Table 2:
Population and Sample*

Party	Gender	Population	Sample
NDC	Female	11	6
NDC	Male	95	56
NPP	Female	24	14
NPP	Male	145	85
Total		275	161

Source: Author, 2018

Sampling for study component two (qualitative method):

A non-probability sampling approach was adopted to get the sample for the second component of the study that is to identify target respondents from current and former MPs and staff of the Parliament of Ghana who were to be interviewed. The objective of this phase of the study was not to get a

representative sample but rather aimed at getting in-depth understanding of factors that affected access to and use of information from a select few who understood the workings of Parliament well. While the number of interviews necessary to explore a given research question remains contestable when it comes to qualitative research (Nalumaga, 2012), for most researchers it is recognized that the number interviewed depends on the nature of the issues to be interrogated and the characteristics of the target group. The number selected was also informed by Curry's (2011) study on leadership and information in the US Congress which had 435 voting members, 30 members were interviewed. Guided by this knowledge, this study targeted interviewing 15 people for the qualitative component of the study.

To select MPs and staff (former and current) to be interviewed a purposive sampling method was used as a way of mitigating the poor response rate for most studies covering members of Parliament. This approach was adopted to get information from individuals who understood the workings of parliament and members who could provide the information needed to meet the objectives of the study. It was also to take advantage of its cost effectiveness and usefulness as a time-saving strategy which is ideal in situations where time constraint and limited budget are challenges. It was recognized that one of the problems with purposive sampling, was the danger of bias. Interviewees were therefore purposefully selected across a range of experience, political affiliations and form among staff and MPs both current and former to help mitigate this bias. MPs who were interviewed were selected from outside those who answered questionnaires For this component of the study these advantages of purposive sampling were deemed to outweigh the danger of bias.

Sampling for Study Component Three (Quantitative Method)

The core dataset for study component three comprised information on bills and loan agreements that were presented to the Parliament of Ghana. The initial data was obtained from official Parliamentary documentation. An excel template was used to capture data on the dates on which the different stages for the passage/resolution of bills and loan agreements occurred.

The study focused on two Parliaments out of the seven Parliaments of the Fourth Republic of Ghana. The selection was informed by the fact that Parliaments of the Fourth Republic of Ghana have always had their majority either from the New Patriotic Party or the National Democratic Congress. The two parliaments selected were the Sixth Parliament (2013 – 2016) which had a majority from the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the Fourth Parliament (2005 – 2008) which had a majority from the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The current Parliament which is the Seventh Parliament of the Fourth Republic was not included in the regression analysis because it was too early in its four-year term and therefore had not passed enough bills and loan agreements at the time of data collection for meaningful analysis.

Sources of Data and Data Collection Instruments

According to Case (2007), a simple way of understanding the term “methods” in research is to come to the realization that methods refer to two types of techniques and these are measurement and analysis. He chronicles a number of techniques of measurement including observation (under experimental conditions and participatory), survey and self-reporting of experiences. For techniques of analysis, Case (2007) identifies such techniques as statistical analysis to discourse analysis and network analysis.

For the current study, data was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. There were three major categories of data for the study. These included a first set of data from questionnaires targeting members of the Seventh Parliament of the Fourth Republic of Ghana. A second set of data was obtained through semi-structured interviews with key target respondents using interview guides. The third set of data was compiled from records and documents on bills and loan agreements obtained from Parliament. A Microsoft Excel template was used to capture details of dates covering the different stages of bills / loan agreements presented to the House. These three sets of data were obtained for a combination of mainly primary sources of data complemented with secondary sources deemed to be relevant for addressing the research questions and objectives.

Instruments

The main instruments for data collection were questionnaires, interview guides and excel records templates.

Questionnaires: The questionnaire was considered the most appropriate for the first component of the study because of the challenge of access to MPs as recognized by most researchers who study Parliaments (Baker 2011). The questionnaire covered questions on MPs' information needs, their sources of information, strategies they used to obtain relevant information, factors that improved or hindered their access to information. It also looked at MPs' use of information.

Information need: To measure information need researchers use proxies (Naumer & Fisher, 2010 as cited in Wilson, 1981, 1996; Savolainen, 2012,. For this research, information need was measured as the frequency with which

respondents needed information to perform their roles. *Information Seeking Behaviour* – the study looked at respondents i) strategies for meeting their information need, ii) the sources they used when looking for information and iii) the importance of key information source characteristics (namely: 1) trust in external sources 2) level of satisfaction with access to key documents and 3) how they established credibility of information). *Intervening Variables* looked at the i) barriers to respondents' access to information and ii) their preferred format for receiving information. *Information Processing and Use* was measured in two ways, namely: i) *Application* - occasions when respondents were able to use relevant information they had and *Non-use* - those occasions when respondents were not able to use or ignored relevant information they had.

Most of the questions on the questionnaire were close-ended questions but for each of the questions the opportunity was given to respondents by providing space per question for MPs to write their responses in situations where they were of the opinion that the responses listed did not accurately capture their response. Because of the busy schedule of MPs, structuring the questionnaire as close-ended was viewed as a way to help save time with the potential of improving response rate. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

Interview guide: The study also used interview guides. The study sought to benefit from combining questionnaire data with interview data. The questions on the interview guides were open-ended and the process semi-structured to help promote conversations around the issues of interest. As recognized by seasoned researchers bringing flexibility during the interview process during elite interviews is important to elicit the needed information (Baker, 2011). At

the same time the questions on the guide helped to cover the pertinent areas for this research from one interviewee to the next. The interview guide questions were varied slightly to fit each of the three categories of interviewees for Ghanaian Parliamentary leaders, Members of Parliament and Parliamentary staff.

The differences were as follows: Questions for MPs aimed at understanding how members become informed on bills, loan agreements and obtain information for oversight work with emphasis on how leadership, both party leaders and committee leaders, either through their actions or inactions, facilitated, or hindered access to and use of such information.

For leadership interviews, questions aimed at understanding the strategies and tactics they used to get themselves as well as other members informed on bills, loan agreements and oversight work before the House or a committee.

For staff, questions were geared towards understanding their role as staff as well as that of their colleagues in getting members informed on bills, loan agreements and for oversight work. It was also to assess their observations related to ways through which leadership of the House provided other MPs with information, most importantly how actions or inactions of leadership could hinder members' access to and their use of information.

Record Templates and Variables for Research Component Three

Table 3 shows the variables studied under research component three. The *layover time* which is the dependent variable covers the total time MPs have from when a committee report on a bill is laid in the House to when the

motion for second reading of the bill is taken, allowing full debate on the principles of the bill. This period is the only time when all MPs have access to a committee’s report which provides the committee’s in-depth review and recommendations for consideration on the matter before the Plenary. The independent variables studied were namely: *Salience* (Bills on topics of great importance to the public), *Priority* (Executive and leadership priority bills), *Appropriation* (*Bills on Budget Statements and Economic Policies of the Government of Ghana*), *Parliament* (4th and 6th Parliaments), and *Bill schedule* (*bills presented during the last two weeks of parliamentary meeting- back loading*). Table 3 is a summary of the variables studied under research component three

Table 3:

Description of Variables: Study Component Three

Dependent Variable

Layover Time is the duration from date of committee report to date of second reading of a bill (in hours)

Independent Variables

Salience – refers to how important issues/subject matter of the bill were with the voting public.

Appropriation – refers to Appropriation Bills.

Parliament – refers to the bills presented to the Sixth (NDC Majority) Parliament and the Fourth (NPP Majority) Parliament.

Bill Schedule – refers to when bills were presented to Parliament during a particular Meeting

Priority Bill – refers to executive/leadership priority bills.

Source: Author, 2018

Excel templates were created to capture data from documentary sources from Parliament on loan agreements and also for bills. The excel template on

loan agreements captured the following details for each agreement: Title, presented by, date of presentation, date of committee report, date of motion and date of resolution. Data captured for each bill included the title, presented by, date of first reading, date of second reading, date of consideration stage, and date of third reading.

Questionnaire and Interview Guides (Pre-testing of Instruments)

The questionnaires and interview guide were pre-tested. The respondents included MPs from Mauritius and Zambia who were part of a group of Parliamentarians attending a training programme in Accra. Feedback obtained from respondents was used to improve clarity and overall quality of the questionnaire and helped improve the wording of questions and establish manageable timeframes for actual interviews.

Data Collection Procedure:

Research Component One – Questionnaires

Questionnaires were administered to Members of Parliament at Parliament House. This was preceded with interactions with leadership and Parliamentary staff. The objective was to explain the nature and objective of the study and also to gain their support and get guidance in administering the questionnaire to the Members of Parliament. The period for the data collection spanned two meetings of Parliament. Data collection started in February during the first meeting through to March 2018 when Parliament went on recess. The process resumed during the second meeting from May through to July 2018 when Parliament again went on recess. Questionnaires were administered with the support of the leadership and the staff of the Majority and the Minority Secretariat and other staff of the Parliamentary Service especially staff at the

Library of Parliament. Their support was critical in administering and retrieving completed questionnaires.

Research Component Two - Semi-structured Interviews

To conduct the interviews a number of strategies were adopted. First some key MPs and leaders were contacted by phone and with follow-up visits to their offices to schedule interviews. The second strategy adopted to interview MPs was to send emails out to a number of MPs who had been identified. The third strategy was mainly aimed at interviewing Parliamentary staff. The process as was expected was much easier for staff compared to interviewing MPs. The interviews revealed current initiatives in Parliament that were geared towards addressing some of the issues of interest in the study. For instance, as a consequence, it became necessary to interview a staff member of a development partner organization supporting Parliament to enhance its information system. Overall, the interviews proved really insightful. In the end a total of ten persons were interviewed. The following is a list of those interviewed:

List of Interviewees:

Interviewee 1 – Parliamentary Staff (Research Department)

Interviewee 2 – Parliamentary Staff (Library Department)

Interviewee 3 – Parliamentary Staff (Library Department)

Interviewee 4 – A Principal Assistant Clerk

Interviewee 5 – Member of Parliament (Ranking Member, former Minister, former chairperson)

Interviewee 6 – Member of Parliament (Chairperson of committee)

Interviewee 7 – Staff of a development partner organization

Interviewee 8 – Leader of the House (former minister, former Chairperson)

Interviewee 9 – Former Leader of the House

Interviewee 10 – A Senior Assistant Clerk

Each interview session started with a brief description of the purpose of the research and why the interviewee was deemed a very important target respondent. Interviews were all recorded with the permission of the interviewees using a free app, Easy Voice Recorder version 2.4.5 for android phones. With the exception of one interviewee who initially expressed some hesitation, all other interviewees readily agreed to being recorded. Interview times ranged from about twenty minutes to about an hour, with most of the interviews with the leadership and with MPs lasting on average one hour.

Research Component Three - Data on Bills and Loans/International Agreements:

For research component three, the initial data was obtained from official Parliamentary documentation. For each bill passed by parliament an excel template was used to crosscheck and edit available data on the dates on which the different stages for the passage of the bill occurred. For each bill details covered included the title of the bill, the presenter of the bill, the date the committee report was presented to the house and the date of the Second Reading of the bill. The regression analysis focused on the duration from the date of committee report to the date of second reading.

For loans and international agreements, an excel template was used to crosscheck and capture the title of the paper, the presenter, the date the committee report was presented to the house, as well as the dates for Motion

and Resolution. Data from official documentation were crosschecked for accuracy. Excel databases which captured important dates on each bill and each loan agreement, served as the source of information for computing layover time.

Determining Public Salience of Bills

There are different approaches adopted by researchers to measure the issue of salience. These include using survey questions on what respondents believe is the most important problem/issue (Burden & Sanberg, 2003) or using expert opinion on salience of an issue (Segal & Spaeth, 1996). The use of the level of coverage an issue receives in the media as a measure of salience has also been used by researchers including Binder (1999), Epstein and Segal (2000) and Curry (2011). This study adopted the latter approach and used the coverage of issues in newspaper editorials to determine if an issue was considered high salience or low salience as far as the public was concerned.

As pointed out by Curry (2011) research shows that the public's attention towards political issues is strongly related to the amount of coverage it receives in the news (Curry (2011) citing Iyengar, Peters, and Kinder 1982; Page and Shapiro 1992; Pew Research Centre 1999; McCombs 2006). Researchers such as Curry (2011), Binder (1999), Epstein and Segal (2000), and Mayhew (1991) use New York Times editorials as a basis for determining the salience of issues, and subsequently, salience of legislation.

To determine the salience of bills presented to Ghana's Parliament for this study, a number of steps were taken. To do this, editorials from the state-owned *Daily Graphic* which is published by the Graphic Communication Group was used. The study used editorials for the *Daily Graphic* because not only is it

the oldest published newspaper in Ghana, it is also widely distributed across all districts in the country (Elliott, 2018; Kafewo, 2006). The editorials covering the duration for the 4th and 6th Parliaments, that is, from 2005 to 2008 and from 2013 to 2016, constituted the population. The sample sizes were determined using the Krejcie and Morgan table (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). For the four-year period of the 4th Parliament the number of editorials were 1252 and the sample size was 295. For the four-year period of the 6th Parliament the population was 1253 and the sample size was 295.

Random numbers were used to select the dates of editorials to be included in the sample. The relevant *Daily Graphic* newspapers were obtained from major libraries including the Library of the Parliament of Ghana, the Balme Library of the University of Ghana and photocopied. In the few instances when copies of the newspapers were not available, efforts were made to get them from the original source, the Graphic Communications Group Limited office. Editorials that did not cover major policy issues as captured in *Policy Agendas project* codebook were then excluded. The actual number of editorials used for the study for the 4th Parliament was 288 and that for the 6th Parliament was 266.

To compute issue salience a number of steps were taken. Each of the editorials was given an “Issue Code” using the set of Codes from the *Policy Agendas Project* codebook. The code for issues on health for example was 300. The next step involved computing two numbers. The first number was obtained by counting the total number of editorials on a particular issue for each year (issue frequency). The second number computed was the overall total number of editorials for each year (editorial totals). The next step was to determine the

salience value. The issue frequency was divided by the total number of editorials for that year. For example if for the year 2005, the number of editorials that covered health (issue code 300) were 15 editorials in total out of a total of 100 editorials for the year 2005; then, the salience value was determined by dividing the number of editorials on health (15) by the total number of editorial for 2005 (100 editorials). This gives 0.15 (or 15%). This process was repeated for all the editorials and the mean value was calculated for that year. All values above the mean value were high salience; all values below the mean were classified as low salience.

Determining Priority Bills

The literature identifies the state of the union addresses as important agenda setting tools for the president. Some researchers in the United States have analysed the content of the State of the Union addresses in order to identify presidential priorities when it comes to legislation (Cohen, 1995; Curry, 2011). The current study adopted this approach by analysing the annual State of the Nation address of the President of Ghana to determine executive/leadership priority.

According to Cohen (1995) the state of the union address is used to determine the president's priority because it is an institutionalised routine of the presidency. This is similar to what pertains in Ghana where every year the president presents to Parliament the State of the Nation address. Cohen's second reason for using the US State of the Union address to approximate presidential priority is the fact that you can identify the broad outlines of the president's agenda from the address. This applies to the State of the Nation address presented to the Parliament of Ghana. It is possible to determine the central

issues of importance to the president and the executive arm of government from the address. Furthermore, Ghana's governance system is structured such that to date it is the executive arm of government that initiates all bills that come before the Parliament of Ghana for passage. Bills are drafted by the AG's department in close collaboration with the sponsoring ministry, it is then approved by cabinet before the bill is presented to the House. In this regard, the key assumption for this study is that the priority of the leadership of the Parliament of Ghana is aligned with the priority of the Executive.

The bills in the dataset covered the duration for the 4th and 6th Parliaments, that is, from 2005 to 2008 and from 2013 to 2016. The Bills already coded based on the issue each covered, were used as the basis for identifying executive *priorities* by linking them to the issue content of the State of the Nation addresses. Eight State of the Nation Addresses covering the periods 2005 – 2008 for the Fourth Parliament and 2013 – 2016 for the Sixth Parliament were analysed. For each the number of times a specific issue was mentioned was counted. This was done using the open source text analysis software by Laurence Anthony ANTCOnc 3.5.7. In the 2016 State of the Nation Address by His Excellency John Dramani Mahama, for example, health (issue code 300) was mentioned 45 times. Therefore every bill on health presented that year, 2016, to the Parliament of Ghana was assigned the priority value of 45. This process was repeated for all bills and each assigned a priority value.

A summary of the methodology used for the study is provided in Table 4. The summary covers the target respondents/source, the nature of information, data collection method and data collection instrument adopted.

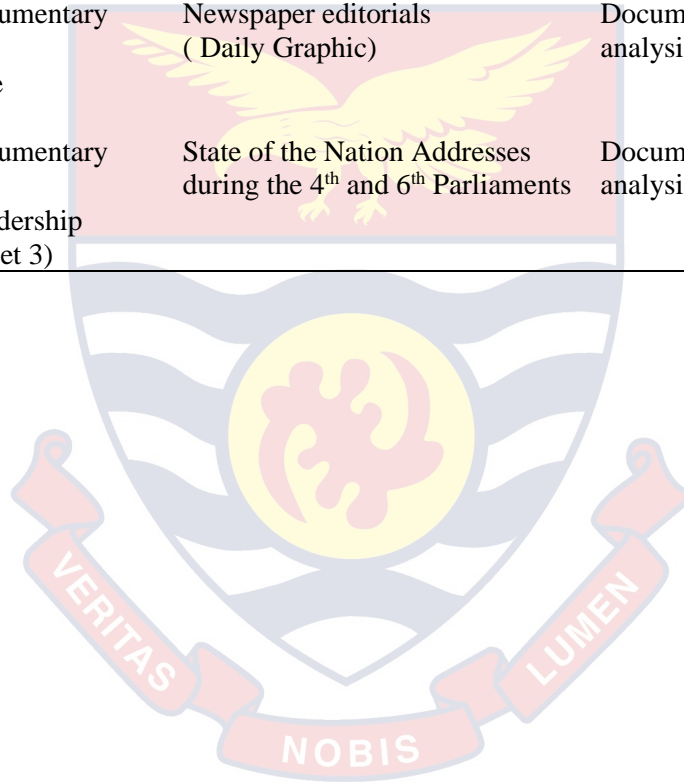
Table 4:

Methodology: Nature of Information, Respondents/Source and Method

Objectives	Nature of Information	Target Respondents/Sources	Data Collection Method	Data Collection Instrument
Objective 1: Information Needs	Quantitative data (Dataset 1)	Members of Parliament	Questionnaire survey	Questionnaire
	Qualitative -Transcripts of Interviews (Dataset 2)	MPs/ leadership/Staff (Current and former)	Interview	Interview guide
Objective 2: Information Seeking Behaviour	Quantitative data (Dataset 1)	Members of Parliament	Questionnaire survey	Questionnaire
	Qualitative - transcripts of Interviews (Dataset 2)	MPs/ leadership/Staff (Current and former)	Interview	Interview guide
Objectives 3 & 4: Institutional arrangements and members' access to and use of information in the performance of their mandate.	Quantitative data (Dataset 1)	Members of Parliament	Questionnaire survey	Questionnaire
	Qualitative - transcripts of Interviews (Dataset 2)	MPs/ leadership/Staff (Current and former)	Interview	Interview guide
Objectives 3 & 4 (cont'd):	Quantitative - Documentary data/ Database on	Hansard / committee reports/ other official documents	Documentary Research and analysis	Microsoft Excel Template /checklist on bills layover time

Objectives	Nature of Information	Target Respondents/Sources	Data Collection Method	Data Collection Instrument
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> layover time of bills and agreements for 4th and 6th Parliament (Dataset 3) 			
	Quantitative - Documentary data on	Newspaper editorials (Daily Graphic)	Documentary research and analysis	Template/ List of sampled Newspaper editorials
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public salience (Dataset 3) 			
	Quantitative - Documentary Data On	State of the Nation Addresses during the 4 th and 6 th Parliaments	Documentary research and analysis	Template/List of State of the Nation Addresses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive/Leadership Priority (Dataset 3) 			

Source: Author, 2018



Field Challenges

The process of retrieving completed questionnaires from Members of Parliament was slow and arduous. The retrieval of questionnaires was encouraging when that process commenced two weeks after the questionnaires had been administered, but it slowed down almost to a complete halt when for another two weeks just a few completed forms trickled in. While the feedback showed that most of the MPs said that they simply did not have time to complete the questionnaire, it also emerged that a few were reluctant to write the name of their constituency on the questionnaire.

To help improve the response rate the decision was taken to make it optional for MPs to decide whether to write their constituency or not on the questionnaires. The questionnaire was slightly modified in this regard and then administered. The retrieval process was also slightly modified. There were more frequent follow-ups and gentle reminders while at the same time Members were given enough time to complete the questionnaires. This strategy helped and with the support of the parliamentary staff enough questionnaires were retrieved which made it possible to proceed with data analysis.

Another challenge related to the interviews. Contacting identified MPs was relatively easy but getting to conduct the interviews required patience. For a number of senior MPs that needed to be contacted the initial contact was by phone to request an initial meeting. The follow-up was a trip to their offices. Others were contacted through emails, but only two MPs acknowledged receipt.

The advantage of Ghanaian MPs having offices now, compared to the previous situation when members did not have offices, was that it was relatively easy to find the offices of the Members to be interviewed. The negative side of

MPs having offices was evident in the pressure members faced, since on any given occasion MPs' offices were filled with several other individuals waiting for their turn to engage with them. Getting to meet MPs to set interview dates and to conduct the interviews therefore required a number of telephone calls and several trips to the office of the person as well as waiting for long periods often with mixed results. For example, with one interviewee the date, time and place changed numerous times due to the MP's extremely heavy and unpredictable schedule. The initial agreement was to meet outside parliament to minimise interruptions during the interview. In the end the meeting had to be held in the office for about an hour while several other individuals were waiting their turn to see their MP. With another interviewee the initial meeting had to end abruptly for the member to go into an emergency meeting. It was therefore rescheduled for the following day. The second attempt went extremely well with no interruptions.

Efforts to set a meeting date and time for the two MPs who acknowledged the email also ended with different results. For one of the MPs the initial date and time were agreed on for the meeting. A visit to the MP's office on the day and time however did not yield positive results since the office was closed. Efforts were made to obtain a telephone number for the MP but the calls to the member went unanswered. An email was sent to the MP seeking to reschedule the meeting. This was acknowledged by the Member with the promise to set a new meeting date. However, this never happened.

The story was different for the second MP. Though the meeting was successful, it took some effort. In the reply to the email request, the MP provided a telephone number and a date and time to call to fix an appointment.

This was done. However, the first appointment date had to be cancelled due to an unforeseen change in the MP's schedule. A second meeting date and time was set. On the scheduled date and time, the office was filled with several other individuals waiting for the MP. The time given for the interview also coincided with the MP's schedule to present a committee report on the floor of the House. The MP, therefore, had to keep an eye on proceedings in the House on television while he attended to matters at the office. Eventually, the interview took place, during the MP's lunch break.

Two main problems were identified and corrected when the data on bills and loan/international agreements were being compiled. First, some dates were incorrect. There were instances when the date for committee report preceded the date for the presentation of the bill which could not have been possible because bills have to be presented to the House before they are referred to a committee. The second common problem were omissions in the records. It was possible to identify the omissions because Acts of Parliament are numbered chronologically. A number of Acts had been passed but these had not been captured in the initial dataset that were obtained from Parliament provided. To resolve these two problems, a list of those omitted bills and loan/international agreements was compiled. A team of research assistants then had to retrieve the original copies of the Hansard to find the accurate dates for each of the stages of the bills or the agreement. The corrected details were then captured in the excel database.

Ethical Issues

The study design took into consideration the importance of meeting ethical considerations and requirement for interviewees and research

respondents as prescribed by the University of Cape Coast and social science research in general. The methodological approach respected these ethical considerations. The appropriate permission was sought prior to data collection from the leadership of the Parliament of Ghana.

The verbal consent of MPs as well as Parliamentary staff was sought for both the interviews and the questionnaires. The respondents were assured that their anonymity will be strictly guarded and that data collected will be used only for the academic purpose for which it was intended.

Data Management and Analysis

There were three main clusters of data namely:

1. Data from questionnaires from MPs of the Seventh Parliament (dataset 1)
2. Data from interviews with a select group of respondents (dataset 2)
3. Data on bills and loan/international agreements passed by Fourth, Sixth and Seventh Parliaments of Ghana (dataset 3)

Dataset 1: Data from Questionnaires Administered to MPs.

All completed questionnaires were reviewed for usability; very few with too many uncompleted questions were excluded from the analysis. Each questionnaire was then given a unique number for easy identification. The completed questionnaires were then coded and the data captured using Statistical Product and Service Solutions software (SPSS) version 22. The analysis addressed research objectives and research questions on individual MP's information behaviour.

Dataset 2: Data from Interviews with a Select Group of Respondents (MPs, staff – both current and former).

The number of interviews made it possible to combine manual and electronic based analysis. First, the audio recordings from the interviewees were transcribed using a dictation software called Voice Typing which comes preinstalled in a cloud-based Google Docs app. For each interview audio recording, the following steps were taken. The Voice Typing tool in Google Docs was activated on the laptop. The audio recording of the interview on the Android phone was then played back, listened to carefully using earphones and then repeated out loud. The voice typing tool automatically picked the sound and typed this out. In a few instances, words were miss heard and miss typed. It was relatively easy to correct these by pausing the playback and manually correcting these errors before resuming the process. An hour long interview took about two hours to transcribe.

Second, the transcribed interviews were printed out and read and key themes in line with the objectives of the research were identified. These formed the basis for compiling the common themes (codes). The final step was carried out using an open source qualitative data analysis software QDA MINER lite v2.0.5. This made it possible to apply the codes to analyse the transcribed data in a speedy manner.

Dataset 3: Data on Bills and Loans/International agreements presented to parliament.

The third group of data (Dataset 3) covered Bills and Loans/International agreements passed by the Fourth, Sixth and Seventh Parliaments of the Republic of Ghana. A multivariate regression, specifically the cox (proportional hazard) regression, was carried out to analyse the layover

time for bills presented to the 4th and 6th Parliament. The data for the Seventh Parliament was not included in the regression analysis because the 7th Parliament has not yet completed its full four-year term. The data from the 7th Parliament was used where needed to help illustrate major points or findings.

The basis for regression analysis was the layover *time* which is the dependent variable against a number of independent variables. These included *Priority bills* covering executive and leadership priority bills, public *salience* of bills, that is, how important issues/subject matter of the bill were to the voting public. Additional variables examined were the *Bill schedule*, that is, when during a meeting the bill is scheduled, and the *Parliament*, that is, comparing duration for bills presented during the Sixth (NDC Majority) Parliament with those presented during the Fourth (NPP Majority) Parliament. *Appropriation Bills* as well as *Bill Schedule* were also examined.

The cox (proportional hazard) model, a non-parametric duration model was deemed appropriate because the emphasis of the analysis was to understand the impact of the independent variables on the layover time of the bill. The objective was not to predict layover time of specific bills. Such duration model which is often used in medicine to study survival time (time to event) have also been successfully used in social science (Box-Steffensmeier & Bradford, 2004) including studying the legislature. Curry (2011), for example, used the cox (proportional hazard) model to test the duration that a bill is laid over in the US Congress. The current study adapts Curry's approach to analyse the duration for bills that were laid in the Parliament of Ghana.

To protect the data, efforts were made to create backups of all electronic data, where it was possible, while both print and electronic data was kept in a secure manner to protect the data.

Summary

A multiphase mixed methods research design was used in this research to examine the role of information in the Parliament of Ghana. The study design had three interrelated components and adopted its own combination and sequence of mixed methods. Component one used the quantitative method and was questionnaire-based; component two used the qualitative method and was mainly interview based; and component three used a quantitative method, specifically regression analysis. The multiphase approach offered the best methodology for examining the information behaviour of individual MPs and how the leadership structure of the Parliament of Ghana shapes their access to and use of information and expertise in the execution of Parliament's mandate. The main limitation related to time and resource constraints. It was therefore not possible to extend the third component of the study – multivariate analysis of bills – to cover all six Parliaments that had completed their full four-term since the 1992 Constitution.

CHAPTER FOUR

PARLIAMENT OF GHANA: MANDATE, STRUCTURE AND INFORMATION SUPPORT SERVICES

Introduction

The chapter discusses on the Parliament of Ghana with emphasis on its mandate, structure and information support services. The information presented here constitutes an important backdrop to the issues to be invoked in this study. Drawing from the theory of new institutionalism, the basic principle of “path dependency” from historical institutionalism demonstrates how an institution’s history including structural choices at inception impacts its current practices and norms (Peters, 2012). To understand the institutional arrangements in the Parliament of Ghana, one must understand its history in order to appreciate current practices and norms. Information in this chapter is from a number of sources including parliamentary fact sheets and other official parliamentary documents, books, articles and the author’s own experience working with an organization that partnered the Parliament of Ghana in implementing a number of capacity enhancement projects.

History of the Legislature of the Gold Coast (Pre-Independence)

The history of the legislature of Ghana dates as far back as the 19th century, the days of the Gold Coast during the colonial era when the legislative power was exercised by Queen Victoria (1837 -1901). A Legislative Council made up of the Governor and at least two other people, all British, was set up to make rules and regulations, subject to the approval of the queen, to maintain peace, order and good government between 1850 and 1865 (Ayensu & Darkwa,

2006; Parliament of Ghana, 2004). The period 1866 to 1874 saw the reunification of West African Settlements leading to a reduction in size of the Gold Coast Legislative Council. In 1874 the Gold Coast once again got its own government with a legislative council. It was not until 1888, more than 30 years after the first Gold Coast Legislative Council that the very first African was made an unofficial member of the Legislative Council. In 1916 the Legislative Council was reconstituted and its membership expanded to include six Africans (Ayensu & Darkwa, 2006; Parliament of Ghana, 2004). In 1925 when the Guggisberg Constitution came into being the very first election to the Legislative Council was conducted and representation on the Legislative Council expanded. The Governor controlled the legislative power. The Guggisberg Constitution was replaced by the Burns Constitution in 1946 and for the first-time representatives of the indigenous people of the Gold Coast outnumbered the European Members of the Legislative Council. The Governor, however, continued to wield enormous legislative power. (Ayensu & Darkwa, 2006; Parliament of Ghana, 2004).

The Arden-Clarke 1950 Constitution replaced the Burns Constitution and made provision for a Legislative Assembly with 104 members. In 1951 the Gold Coast Legislative Council was given “limited responsible government” marking the beginning of representative Government. For the very first time, large-scale elections were conducted and members were elected to the Legislative Council together with ex-officio and special interests members. It was also the first time that the National Assembly had elected its own speaker. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the leader of CPP which won the majority in the election, was also appointed the Leader of Government Business (Parliament of Ghana,

2004). In 1954 Dr. Kwame Nkrumah amended the Constitution introducing the concept of single-member constituencies to serve as the basis for elections. A change which has been maintained in the current 1992 Constitution of Ghana (Ayensu & Darkwa, 2006; Parliament of Ghana, 2004).

Parliaments of Ghana (1957 – 1979)

Ghana gained its independence on the 6th of March 1957. The first Parliament of Independent Ghana was modelled as a sovereign Westminster Style Parliament, with the Queen as the Head of State and a Prime Minister as the head of government. The Prime Minister and his ministers were all members of the National Assembly (Parliament of Ghana, 2004).

On the 1st of July, 1960 Ghana became a sovereign unitary republic under the First Republican Constitution, a constitution which had features of both presidential and parliamentary systems. Under the new arrangement Ghana was to have a multi-party National Assembly and an Executive President. The Executive President was not a member of parliament but the ministers were appointed from among the members of parliament.

The National Assembly was abruptly ended February 24, 1966 when there was the country's first Coup d'état resulting in the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah's government and a takeover by a Military Government. It was not until 1969 when power was returned to a constitutionally-elected government that a national assembly was reconstituted ushering in the Second Republic of Ghana (Ayensu & Darkwa, 2006; Parliament of Ghana, 2004).

The Second Republican constitution of 1969 following the 1966 coup d'état restored party politics and took Ghana back to the Westminster model

(parliamentary system). The Prime Minister Dr. Busia and all his ministers were all members of the National Assembly. The tenure of the National Assembly was however short lived with the overthrow of the Busia government on January 13, 1972 in the country's second coup d'état and an interruption of the work of parliament once again. Then followed a series of Military Governments that run for almost eight years (Ayensu & Darkwa, 2006; Parliament of Ghana, 2004).

On September 24, 1979 democracy was restored in Ghana and with that came the restoration of Ghana's legislature in the Third Republic. The 1979 Third Republican Constitution moved Ghana away from the parliamentary model of government to separation of powers in a presidential system of Government. The president, Dr. Hilla Limann, was not a member of parliament neither were the Ministers of State, a strict separation of the legislature from the executive was practised for the first time. For the first time the National Assembly was officially referred to as a Parliament. The Third Republic like the previous two did not last long. On December 31st, 1981 the democratically-elected government was once again overthrown in a military coup d'état accompanied by the all too familiar disruption of the work of the Parliament. (Ayensu & Darkwa, 2006; Parliament of Ghana, 2004). The period that followed was the longest period post-independence that Ghana had no parliament.

The Fourth Republican Parliaments

The Fourth Republic Parliament of Ghana was reconstituted following Ghana's adoption of the 1992 Constitution (the Fourth Republican Constitution) and its return to multi-party democracy. The architecture of the

1992 Constitution has been described as complex (Ala-Adjetey, 2006; Ninsin 2008). In 1992 Ghana adopted its own model of democratic system which has been described in different ways by different authors: a quasi-executive presidential system of government (Ayee, 1998), a semi-presidential system (Stapenhurst, 2013), a presidential system of government, with a separately elected legislature (Ayee, 2010); a hybrid of the presidential and parliamentary systems (Ayensu & Darkwa, 2006; Gyampo & Graham, 2014, Ninsin, 2008).

The complexity and the different descriptions given to the model of democracy based on the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, emanates from its constitution which is based on the principles of separation of powers, found in the presidential system, but at the same time the system has “overlapping personnel, functions and power resulting in a hybrid of the presidential and parliamentary systems” (Ninsin, 2008 p1.). Rt. Hon. Peter Ala-Adjetey describes the 1992 Constitution as one that decouples Parliament from the presidency but diluted this decoupling by other provisions in the constitution (Ala-Adjetey, 2006). Ghana has therefore experimented with the two main forms of democratic systems, the parliamentary and the presidential systems, at different times at independence and during the different republics. The country is now practising its unique blend of a hybrid democratic system.

Since January 1993 there have been seven parliaments with the first six parliaments of the Fourth Republic successfully serving their full four-year terms. With the inauguration of the Seventh Parliament of the Fourth Republic on January 7, 2017, the Parliament of Ghana has for the first time in the country’s history run continuously for over twenty-five years.

Some of the common features of all Parliaments of Ghana from the First Republican Parliament through to the current Seventh Parliament of the Fourth Republic include the office of the speaker and the deputy speakers, the clerk's office and the regulation of parliamentary proceedings by Standing Orders. These have formed a strong basis of the institution of the Parliament of Ghana.

Composition of Parliaments of the Fourth Republic

The Parliament of Ghana is a single-chamber parliament with its members elected as single-member constituency representatives. Per the 1992 Constitution, parliament is to be composed of not less than one hundred and forty members, which is similar to the provision in the 1979 Constitution. The First Parliament of the Fourth Republic started with 200 single-member constituencies which were maintained for the Second and the Third Parliaments. The number of MPs was increased for the Fourth Parliament of the Fourth Republic to 230 seats and this was maintained for the Fifth Parliament. In the Sixth Parliament of the Fourth Republic the number was increased again to 275 members. This number was maintained for the Seventh Parliament of the Fourth Republic.

These changes in the composition of the Parliament of Ghana were carried out by the Electoral Commission of Ghana (EC) per its mandate to routinely review and divide Ghana into as many constituencies for the purposes of election of MPs based on the provisions of Articles 45 and 47.

Election of Members of Parliament/ Termination

To qualify to contest to become a Member of Parliament of Ghana one must be a citizen of Ghana, must have attained the age of twenty-one years and

must be a registered voter (Article 94 (1a). This is in addition to other criteria as detailed in Article (94) of the 1992 Constitution. MPs are elected by direct popular vote in single-member constituencies using direct simple majority system or First Past the Post System to serve a four-year term which is renewable with no limit on the number of terms one can serve.

Political party primaries have become crucial in the selection of representatives at the party level who can then be elected by the general voting public to take up positions as MPs. While parties set out qualification criteria and processes for contesting primaries which may seem free and fair, the ever increasing trend of experienced and high performing MPs losing primaries have led to speculations among citizenry as to the reasons for the trend. High among them are speculations that financial prowess of aspirants play a dominate role on who wins the primaries. This assertion seems to have been substantiated by a number of studies. According to Lindberg (2003) campaign financing by incumbent MPs in Ghana on average doubled or tripled between 1996 and 2000. Findings from another study shows that between 2012 and 2016 on average candidates needed to raise GHC389,803 (approx. US\$85,000) an increase by 59% to secure the party primary nomination, cementing the fear that politics has become the preserve of the wealthy (WFD & CDD-Ghana, 2018).

There are provisions for termination of Membership of a Parliamentarian. Article 97 (1) and (2) of the Constitution provide the conditions under which a person's membership can be terminated. This includes their election as the Speaker of Parliament. A member of Parliament can also lose his or her seat for floor-crossing (that is, if they were elected as an independent candidate but decide to join a political party or if they decide to

leave the political party under whose banner they contested and won the election to join a different political party, unless there has been a merge of those parties at the national level). This provision serves as a deterrent for members who want to discern from the party position. Stapenhurst (2011) describes the constitutional provision on floor-crossing by MPs in the 1992 Constitution as harsh. Under the First Republic (1960–1966), President Kwame Nkrumah was able to lure MPs to cross-carpet to his party and gave them appointments while those who did not comply were detained (Awoonor, 1990). Gyampo and Graham (2014, p. 147) argue that similar to Nkrumah’s tactics, the end result of the floor-crossing provision in the 1992 Constitution is that it “forbids MPs to behave independently on the floor of parliament and to vote according to their conscience”. While the intention of the framers of the Constitution may have been good, the application of the provision has created another problem by stifling MPs expression of independent views in Parliament.

Power and Authority of the Parliament of Ghana

Chapter ten of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, Article 93 through to Article 124 is devoted to the legislature. There are also other Articles throughout the Constitution that give power to the Parliament of Ghana to perform its mandate. The most fundamental power of Parliament is its power to legislate. Article 93 clause (2) of the 1992 Constitution states that “Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the legislative power of Ghana shall be vested in Parliament and shall be exercised in accordance with this Constitution”.

The Parliament of Ghana has the power to regulate its own procedure through Standing Orders (Article 110 of the 1992 Constitution). All parliaments

of Ghana from the parliament of the First Republic through to the current parliament have been guided by standing orders. Parliament also has the power to appoint committees that have the mandate to investigate and inquire into activities and administration of government ministries and departments (Article 103 of the 1992 Constitution). The Power of the Parliament of Ghana also extends to its ability to pass a resolution to remove the president (Article 69 of the 1992 Constitution) and other officials including the Speaker (Article 95 of the 1992 Constitution), but the executive cannot dissolve parliament.

Parliament's power also extends to financial matters of the state. Parliamentary approval is needed for use of public funds and the Executive cannot make any payment from public funds without approval by Parliament (Article 174 and 178 of the 1992 Constitution). In addition to these, parliamentary approval is also needed for the annual budget statement and economic policy of Ghana (Article 179 of the 1992 Constitution) and for the approval of loan agreements (Article 181 of the 1992 Constitution and Standing Orders 171 (1) of the Parliament of Ghana). Parliament must also ratify any international treaty, agreement or convention executed by or under the authority of the president (Article 75 (2) of the 1992 Constitution). Additionally, though the Auditor-General is appointed by the President of the Republic, the accounts of the Auditor-General's office must be audited by an auditor appointed by parliament (Article 187 (15) of the 1992 Constitution).

The power of parliament extends to the approval of presidential nomination of ministers, deputy ministers (members of the executive branch) and approval of the chief justice and justices of the Supreme Court (senior

positions in the judiciary branch) (Articles 78, 79, 144 (1) and (2) of the 1992 Constitution).

Functions of the Parliament of Ghana

The Parliament of Ghana is an arm of government with a clearly defined mandate. While most scholars cluster the functions of legislatures into three broad categories namely legislative, oversight and representational roles, on its website and in its guidebook the Parliament of Ghana lists five functions it performs. These functions are Legislative, Financial, Oversight of the executive, Representational and Deliberative. In addition to these five, MPs also carry out specific duties for their constituents outside the chamber in what Barkan (2009) describes as Constituency Service which is very important for an MP in a single-constituency. Each of these is looked at in more detail below.

Law-making Function of the Parliament of Ghana

The most fundamental function of the Parliament of Ghana and the one most citizens associate with Parliament is its law-making function. Per the Constitution of Ghana, the country's legislative power is vested in parliament (Article 93 (2)). By this provision "no person or body other than Parliament has the power to pass any measure with the force of law except by or under the authority conferred by an Act of Parliament" (Article 93 (2) of the 1992 Constitution). Indeed most research work on legislatures focus on legislative function. The law-making function of Parliament requires scrutinizing and passing bills and statutory instruments (Parliament of Ghana 2004, Ayensu & Darkwa 2006).

While the provision of Article 93 (2) might portray enormous powers of the Parliament of Ghana when it comes to law-making, it is important to note that there are other provisions in the same constitution as well as practices and “ways of doing things” over the years including the processes for initiating bills that put limitations on Parliament’s legislative power.

Ala-Adjetey (2006) points out that, the legislative competence of the Parliament of Ghana has been “subject to limitations imposed by wording in the 1969, 1979 and the 1992 constitutions” (Ala-Adjetey 2006, p. 16). Specifically with regard to the 1992 Constitution, these limitations can be found in Articles 107 and 108 (Ala-Adjetey, 2006; Djietror, 2013). The provisions of Article 107 in effect implies that the Parliament of Ghana cannot enact retroactive laws. The second Article that is Article 108 is described as having particularly far reaching limitations on the legislative competence of the parliament (Ala-Adjetey, 2006). Successive speakers of the Parliament of Ghana have interpreted Article 108 to mean that private member’s bill will have cost implications. The effect is that since the return to democratic rule in 1993, almost all bills passed by all seven parliaments of the Republic of Ghana, have originated from the executive arm of government, making the Executive, the President the sole proposer of bills in Ghana, because every bill is seen to have financial implications (Asante, 2002; Gyampo, 2013). The result is that Ghanaian MPs often do not know the content of bills until it is formally presented to the House. With no champions or lead MPs who have intimate knowledge of the content of the proposed bill, as is the case in legislatures where MPs are originators/sponsors of bills and know what it captures, deficit in information is created. This implies that, the most MPs will need information especially analysis on alternative positions

within short periods of time, if they are to critique and make relevant inputs to improve these bills before passage.

Stages of the Law-making process

Bills presented to the Parliament of Ghana go through a number of stages to become an Act of the Parliament of Ghana. These are First Reading, Second Reading, the Consideration Stage and Third Reading. The passed bill must then be assented to by the president before it becomes the law of the land. The following describes the different stages in more detail.

First Reading

Bills are presented to parliament through the Table Office. Each bill must be accompanied by an explanatory memorandum which gives details on the policy and principles of the bill. The bill is then laid on the floor of the House for first reading. The speaker then refers the bill to the appropriate committee or joint committees. At the committee level the bill is examined in detail by its members. At this stage of the process MPs have the content of the Bill including the explanatory memorandum. These are important sources of information for MPs at this stage of the process. Parliamentary committees can also use their powers, rights and privileges to enforce the attendance of witnesses, compel the production of documents and can issue a commission or request to examine witnesses abroad (Article 103(6) of the 1992 Constitution; Standing Order 155). They can also set up sub-committees and call experts for their advice. This stage has been described as the most information intensive stage of the law-making process. The committee then reports to the House through the Table Office. The presentation of the committee report to the House is another crucial stage, especially for MPs who were not on the committee to

get additional information to assist them in their scrutiny, because committee reports provide observations and recommendations from the in-depth work at the committee level. The Standing Orders require that no motion shall be debated until at least forty-eight hours have elapsed referred to in the literature as “layover” time (Curry 2011) (This 48 hour period does not include days on which the House does not sit (Standing Order 78.1). The layover of forty-eight hours therefore gives members the opportunity to thoroughly review available information as well as seek additional information prior to debate on the bill.

Second Reading

A motion is made on the floor of the House that a bill is read a second time. A full debate is then held focusing on the principles of the bill. The explanatory memorandum and the report of the committee are key documents that inform these debates. It is also an opportunity for Members to use any additional relevant information at their disposal to contribute to the debate. If the motion is agreed to, the clerk then reads aloud the long title of the bill. The bill is then considered read a second time.

Consideration Stage

The Standing Orders also allow at least forty-eight hours after second reading before a bill goes through the consideration stage. The consideration stage is devoted to the actual details and content of the bill. This stage is deliberately made informal so that members can have the opportunity to speak more than once. The process involves going through the bill clause by clause considering amendments proposed and voting on them. The consideration stage is structured to give opportunities for MPs to meaningfully use information and

expert advice at their disposal. It allows members to make concrete changes to clauses of the Bills.

Third Reading

Upon completion of the consideration stage twenty-four hours must elapse before the next stage. A motion is made on the floor of the House that the bill be now read for the Third Time. If members agree, the bill is then taken to have been read the Third Time and passed. In instances where the bill is to be rejected, members agree to the motion that the bill is rejected. This marks the end of Parliament's role in the law-making process.

Assenting to Bills

As is the procedure in a number of legislatures across the globe, all Bills passed by the Parliament of Ghana must be assented to by the president (Article 106 (1) of the 1992 Constitution); without presidential assent bills passed by parliament cannot become laws.

Oversight Function

In addition to the law-making function of the Parliament of Ghana there are also several Articles in the Constitution that give Parliament the authority to oversee Executive actions. Oversight function of the legislature is seen as one of the most important functions of parliament by citizens and by development practitioners especially because the oversight role among other things gives the legislature the opportunity to assess the implementation phase of policies and laws, a process that is seen as critical to promoting transparency especially when it comes to public financial management (Olsen 2008; Stapenhurst, 2008). Oversight also offers the opportunity for active participation in the

implementation of laws and policies which when performed properly can put the executive and civil servants in check, minimize corruption (Pelizzo & Stapenhurst, 2012; Stapenhurst, 2011) and overall improve efficiency and effectiveness in the governance system.

The bulk of parliamentary oversight work is handled at the committee level where in-depth enquiry can be carried out and a report generated for review, debate and final approval, decision and necessary action at the plenary. The Parliament of Ghana “as an embodiment of the sovereign will of the people of Ghana exercises oversight of the executive...to ensure that the implementation of public policies conform to the developmental agenda of the state and expenditure incurred is in accordance with parliamentary authorisation” (Parliament of Ghana, 2004, p.33).

The Parliament of Ghana has a number of these internal oversight tools at its disposal. These include the committee system, questions to ministers of state and vetting of ministerial appointments. Members of Ghana’s Parliament also debate the State of the Nation address delivered annually by the president. Through its various select and standing committees, parliament supervises all the Ministries, Department and Agencies charged with formulation and implementation of government policies and programmes (Pelizzo, Stapenhurst & Olsen (eds.), 2004; NDI, 2007; Stapenhurst, 2011). The above provide Parliament and its committees ample opportunity to obtain the needed information for effective oversight.

Stapenhurst and Pelizzo (2012) noted that in spite of the increase in reputation and the legitimacy of Ghana’s Parliament due to increased oversight

activities, the research findings also revealed serious questions about the effectiveness of parliamentary oversight in Ghana. This is primarily because while parliament became more active in certain areas such as confirmation of appointments, in other areas parliament's oversight activity has either not increased (censure on ministers) or the increase of activity performed came at the expense of quality of the activity (number of parliamentary questions asked).

The research confirmed that "successful functioning of institutions depends on the presence or absence of specific contextual factors" (Pelizzo & Stapenhurst, 2012, p. 335) and for the Parliament of Ghana, the researchers identified conditions important for the success of legislative oversight in Ghana including parliament's ability to find alternative sources of information. The ability of Parliament to find alternative sources of information is therefore important if Ghana's Parliament is to improve its oversight function.

Financial Control / Financial Oversight

A country's public finances and how they are managed are often of great interest to the citizens who pay the taxes and in return expect efficient public service delivery and transparency in how these funds are utilized. It is also linked to the economic management of the country, the quality and type of public services in the country. While often described as part of the oversight role of parliament, Ghana's Parliament in its official guide book highlights its financial control role as a distinct function of the parliament. The Parliament's financial control function is not only limited to the budget process but also covers authorisation of loan agreements.

Budget Process

The most commonly recognised financial control function of Parliament is its role in the control of the public purse, the “power of the purse”. Accordingly, for the Republic of Ghana, Article 174 of the 1992 Constitution prevents the Executive from imposing any taxes on the people without the consent and approval by Parliament. Also Article 179 empowers Parliament to approve the annual budget statement and economic policy of the government. Article 187 (15) gives parliament the power to appoint an auditor to audit and report on the accounts of the Auditor General’s office. Parliament is also tasked with the duty of monitoring of the foreign exchange receipts; and payments or transfers of the Bank of Ghana in and outside Ghana. The expectation is that MPs will have access to relevant information in order to perform these critical functions.

To provide parliament with independent budget analysis and non-partisan information on public financial management as a whole, a number of countries have set up Budget Offices, these are specialised units equipped with experts that provide independent budget analysis to MPs. In Africa, some legislatures including Kenya, Uganda and South Africa have Budget offices. The Parliament of Ghana does not have a budget office. The literature points to the minimal role the Parliament of Ghana plays in the budget process. Killick (2005), for example, described parliament’s scrutiny of the budget as hurried, superficial, partisan, with inadequate flow of information.

Authorisation of Loan Agreements

An important financial control function of the Parliament of Ghana, rarely covered in scholarly work on the functions of the Parliament but equally

important is its power to authorise loan agreements. According to Article 181, the Executive cannot enter into any agreement for the granting of loans out of any public fund or for the raising of loans without the authority of Parliament (Article 181 of the 1992 Constitution and Standing Orders 171 (1)).

The Parliament of Ghana, in its Standing Orders, has well-defined rules, processes and procedures towards the House's decision (resolution) related to loan agreements as well as other international agreements such as treaties and conventions. When applied to the letter these provisions allow the Parliament of Ghana adequate time within which to play its role. There should therefore be no reasons why the Parliament of Ghana cannot adequately scrutinize each loan agreement within the required time frame while ensuring that all the relevant information is made available to its members to ensure the best for the country.

The stages for approval of loan agreements in the House include a stage when the agreement is referred to the appropriate committee(s) for detailed examination. At this stage of the process parliamentary committees have the powers, to obtain all needed information including analysis and explanation on the loan agreements before them in order to make the necessary recommendations for the consideration of the entire House.

Regardless of the authority of the Parliament of Ghana, Ninsin (2018) reports that the committees tasked with the duty of financial control do not have adequate time, neither do they have the requisite research and technical capacity to thoroughly scrutinize the budget and loan agreements that come before the House.

Deliberative Function

The Parliament of Ghana routinely carries out deliberations in fulfillment of its mandate. The deliberative functions of parliament “function of criticism” (Ayensu & Darkwa, 2006, p. 19.) are conducted mostly through substantive motions followed by debates. The deliberative function serves as a great opportunity for members to apply knowledge, experience, expertise, explanation and advice that they have received from experts into the work that they do. In practice the limited time under which most parliamentary business occurs, the whip system and the partisan norms at play influence who speaks and for how long especially on critical matters that come before the house.

Representational Forum

As a “forum for the ventilation of grievances aimed at seeking redress” (Parliament of Ghana, 2004, p. 34), parliament through mechanisms such as motions, questions and statements accompanied by debates do not only make it possible for members to debate policies and bills, but also allow members to bring to the fore specific developmental issues affecting their constituencies and the nation as a whole. Questions especially have proved to be a valuable tool for most MPs since they helps them get up-to-date information on issues they deem important to their constituents. Without the requisite information MPs will not be effective in theses representational roles.

Additional roles performed by Members of Ghana’s Parliament

There are additional roles that Members of Ghana’s parliament perform that are not explicitly captured in official documentation of Parliament. These include constituency services, party duties including media appearances and working towards personal effectiveness.

Constituency Service

Though not explicitly captured in documentation or on the website of the Parliament of Ghana, research has established that members of Ghana's Parliament like other MPs in a number of African countries carry out specific duties for their constituents outside the chamber in what Barkan (2009) describes as constituency service. Constituency services are services carried out by the member of Parliament as an individual for his or her constituents and ranks very high among the citizens' expectation of their member of Parliament. In Ghana and most African countries with single-member constituencies the expectation extends to meeting constituents' financial and other needs at the individual level. Beyond the individual expectations, constituents also expect MPs to finance or be at the forefront of development projects such as roads, water, education and health projects for the constituency (Barkan, 2009; Lindberg, 2010; Lindberg & Zhou, 2009; NCCE, 2009, 2011).

Party Duties/Media Appearances and Personal Effectiveness

MPs give high priority to their work for the party both in and outside parliament. As mentioned earlier Ghana's robust political party system has helped move the country's democracy forward; however, this success has also led to strong partisan identity divisions between the two parties (Ayee, 2008; Brierley, 2012), which is also reflected in the work of the Parliament of Ghana. With the proliferation of media houses in Ghana since the removal of the criminal libel law together with the many milestones towards the consolidation of democracy, a trend seems to have emerged where a significant number of MPs represent their party on several media platforms with the sole purpose of articulating and defending party positions on matters that arise.

Examples of such programmes are the Newspaper review segments of Good Morning Ghana on Metro TV and the Breakfast show on GTV Ghana.

For this research, Information Behaviour of members of Ghana Parliament in terms of their role therefore spans seven main functions namely: Law-making, Oversight, Financial control, Deliberative, Representational, Constituency service and Party Duties -Media appearances.

Leadership and Principal Officers of the Parliament of Ghana

The Speaker of Parliament

The Speaker of Parliament is the highest authority and the first officer of the Parliament of Ghana. The Speaker is also the chairperson of the Parliamentary Service Board which is responsible for regulating the effective and efficient administration of the Parliamentary Service. The Speaker is also a very important officer of the state, ranked as the third in precedence after the president and the vice-president (Article 57(2) of the 1992 Constitution, Parliament of Ghana, 2004).

The Speaker of parliament is assisted by two deputy speakers. The expectation is that the speaker will be non-partisan and fair in performing his/her role in order to ensure that all members and all shades of opinion on matters before the House are freely expressed. The Speaker therefore does not participate in debate, does not vote and is responsible for enforcing the Standing Orders. The Speaker rules on matters before the House and his/her ruling cannot be challenged by members. The only exceptions are on substantive motions. Standing Order 66 (1) makes the Speaker the sole judge when it comes to questions that are admissible on the floor of the House (Parliament of Ghana,

2000; Ayensu & Darkwa, 2006). In practice the majority and minority leaders consult the Speaker regularly especially with regard to the business of the House. The Speaker creates opportunities for dialogue and consensus building on critical matters even before opening the floor of the House for general debate and decision making on such matters.

The Majority Leader

The majority leader is the Member of Parliament selected and designated as leader of the party or parties with the majority of seats in the House and is recognised to be their leader (Parliament of Ghana, Standing Orders, 2000). The majority leader therefore is the main spokesperson for the majority caucus and is in charge of government business. The main role of the majority leader is to make sure that the business of the House is conducted smoothly with minimum interruption. The leader does this in close association with the Whip for the party. He is conducted smoothly. He chairs a number of committees including the Business Committee of the House, a committee mandated to determine the business for every sitting and also responsible for establishing the order in which they must be taken. The majority leader does this in close consultation with the Speaker of the House.

The majority leader and the Speaker of Parliament are crucial for the working of the Parliament of Ghana. While the Constitution gives Parliament the power to manage its affairs which include electing who becomes the Speaker and who is appointed the Majority Leader from among the party with the majority in the House, in Ghana the trend has been that the majority party through the President often nominates the occupants of these crucial positions invariably giving the president control over the legislature. In 2005, for

example, the control of the executive became evident during the election of a new speaker when Rt. Hon Sekyi Hughes was elected, depriving Rt. Hon. Ala-Adjetey of a second term.

The Minority leader

The minority leader is the Member of Parliament designated as the leader of the party or parties forming the minority as their recognised leader in the House (Parliament of Ghana, Standing Orders, 2000). The minority leader is therefore the spokesperson of the minority caucus. One of the key roles of the minority leader is to chair the Public Accounts Committee, a 25-member committee assigned the task of examining audited accounts of the Republic of Ghana (Parliament of Ghana, Standing Orders 165). The minority leadership is a key member of the leadership of the House, a member of the Business committee, Parliamentary Service Board and many other key important positions in the House. Both the majority and the minority leaders are supported by deputies.

Whips of the Parliament of Ghana

The majority caucus and the minority caucus in parliament each appoints a Whip. Called the Chief Whips they are assisted by two deputies. Their job is to help organise the party contribution to business before the house. They are to make certain that maximum numbers of party members vote or give their full support to matters before the House in a way that projects what their party wants. Chief whips work closely with the leaders of their caucus especially when it comes to arranging the business of the House and bringing members together to get work done.

The real strength of the whip system is in its power to compel party members to comply with the party position on matters before the house. The three line whip system is a tool effectively used by whips and their party leaders in parliament to ensure that members comply with a party position on the given issue. When a member defies a three line whip system there can be serious consequences. In the UK for example, a member can be effectively expelled from the party but remain in the House of Commons as an independent member until the party decides to reverse the decision. In countries like Ghana Whips have their own strategy for indicating to MPs the urgency of matters and the direction that the party would like members to follow.

In Ghana the whip system is often used to ensure that the leadership and the executive get their way. This is strengthened by a provision such as floor-crossing as well as the potential of MPs being promoted to a ministerial position (Article 78 (1)). In anticipation of elevation to ministerial positions and other lucrative positions such as chairpersons of boards, the ruling party members of Parliament do not want to ruffle the feathers of the executive and become submissive to their dictates. This ultimately stifles MPs' expression of independent views. In executing their mandate whips invariably play a crucial role in gatekeeping members' access to and use of information in their work.

Committee System of the Parliament of Ghana

The committee system is one of the well-established institutional structures of the Parliament of Ghana. Parliamentary committees consist of smaller groups of legislators specially created by the parent organization to perform specific tasks, and duties the result of which then feeds back into the work of plenary for final action or decision making (Mattson & Strøm, 1995).

Laundy (1989, p. 96) points out that Legislative assemblies ‘work to a greater or lesser extent through committees’.

The obvious reason for the use of Parliamentary committees clearly relates to the voluminous nature of parliamentary business which often times must be conducted within limited time. Strong committee systems are essential for legislatures to function effectively and efficiently especially in performing their core mandate of legislation and of oversight (Strom, 1990).

Types and composition of Committees

The Parliament of Ghana has different types of committees. These are the standing committees, the select committees, Ad hoc committees and the committee of the Whole House.

Membership of committees in Ghana’s parliament is guided by the rules and provisions in the 1992 Constitution, the Standing Orders of the House and by convention based on an agreed formula for determining proportions of majority to minority caucus representatives on each committee. The convention ensures that membership of committees reflect proportions of the Majority and the Minority caucuses in the House. For the Seventh Parliament the ratio used for the composition of committees was 169:106 based on the number of MPs for the two caucuses (Parliamentary Debates, 2017, July 12)

With regard to committee composition and assignment in Ghana, every member of Parliament must be a member of at least one of the standing committees of Parliament. (Article 103 (4) of the 1992 Constitution). The composition of the committees shall, as much as possible, reflect the different shades of opinion in Parliament (Article 103 (5) of the 1992 Constitution,

Standing Order 154). The practical aspect of composing the membership of parliamentary committee is done by a Committee of Selection. (Standing Order 151); in practice the work of the committee is preceded by the work of the Whips of the majority and the minority caucuses, who are tasked with presenting their list to the selection Committee. MPs also provide information to the Chief Whips indicating the committee on which they want to serve. The influence of the party especially the Chief Whips in deciding the final list of membership of committees is therefore very strong.

The question remains as to the extent to which the parliament of Ghana taps the expertise, knowledge and skills of its members when assigning them to committees (Informational theory of legislative organization). Research points to the negative impact of Article 78 (1) of the constitution and the deprivation of Parliament of their best since most are made ministers and deputy ministers (Sakyi, 2010; Amoateng, 2012). Ministers also cannot actively participate in committee work due to competing demands on their time (Sakyi 2010) offloading that burden to those that are not ministers. The minority in parliament on the other hand have the opportunity to assign their best as their ranking members and deputies on committees.

Powers of Parliamentary Committee in Ghana

Under the 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution, committees of the Parliament of Ghana have powers, when it comes to enforcing the attendance of witnesses, examining witnesses under oath, and compelling the production of documents, as well as issuing a commission or request to examine witnesses abroad (Article 103(6) of the 1992 Constitution; Standing Orders 155). This should be an enormous informational advantage for all committees and

Parliament as a whole. However, in practice this power is limited especially with respect to call for production of documents, this is because it has been “confined to such departmental documents as are not of an internal kind; in other words, departmental files and minutes cannot be demanded” (Parliament of Ghana, Fact Sheet number five). Matters involving national security are also often not disclosed (Parliament of Ghana, Fact Sheet number five). The passage of the right to information Act, could help improve Members’ access to a broader array of information in the performance of their mandate.

Performance of Committee Mandate

Parliamentary Committees across the globe adopt a number of strategies to accomplish the tasks assigned to them and these include: Committee Hearings (formal methods for obtaining and analysing information from witnesses); Verification tours (on-site field tours to ascertain facts); Consultations (formal dialogues and discussions with experts and witnesses); Consideration of bills (detailed scrutiny of proposals for new laws or amendments to existing law); Ratification of presidential appointees (consideration and interaction with presidential nominees for approval) ; Consideration of action-taken reports (reviewing action-taken reports for compliance); and in most developing economies additional strategies focus on consideration of loan agreements and other international treaties (detailed scrutiny of loan agreements and international treaties).

All the strategies provide important avenues for parliament to obtain the needed information for its work. A number of these strategies are used by Committees in Ghana to varying degrees and with varying consistency. Unfortunately parliamentary committees in Ghana’s Parliament do not consider

action-taken reports as is done in countries such as Zambia and the United Kingdom.

Chairpersons and Ranking Members of Committees

Every committee of the Parliament of Ghana has a chairperson supported by a vice-chairperson. The Standing Orders of the Parliament of Ghana specifies the members of the leadership that should chair seven of the Parliamentary Committees, the rest are not specified. In practice almost all chairperson positions in the Parliament of Ghana are occupied by members of the party or group with the majority in the House. An exception is the Public Accounts Committee which is chaired by a member who does not belong to the party which controls the executive branch of government. And by convention the Subsidiary Legislation Committee is also chaired by a Member of the Minority group.

The minority caucus select the ranking members and the deputy ranking members of the committees. Ranking members project the views and opinions of the minority caucus in Parliament at the committee on which they serve. They are often seen as specialists for the minority caucus on the committee. Chairpersons are selected as part of the committee composition process at the beginning of a new parliament. By convention the chief whips of the majority and the minority caucuses collaborate their leadership and the Committee of Selection to select chairpersons and ranking members.

Parliamentary Service

The Parliament of Ghana has a team of parliamentary staff with the Parliamentary Service, the Service has the sole purpose of supporting the work

of Ghana's Parliament. The Parliamentary Service was set up in 1993 backed by the law (Article 124 of the 1992 Constitution, Act 460). It is tasked with ensuring smooth operation of the House, and of parliamentary committees for an effective performance of parliament's mandate. Staff of the parliamentary service in performing their duties must promote "transparency, non-partisanship and a high sense of professionalism" (Parliament of Ghana website).

The Clerk to Parliament is the head of the Parliamentary Service. The clerk is supported by three deputy clerks, a number of heads of departments and special units, as well as other staff of parliament. While the Clerk heads the service and ensures efficient day to day management of the service, there is a six-member board chaired by the Speaker of Parliament that regulates the work of the service. The clerk to Parliament is a member of the Board (Article 124 of the 1992 Constitution) and by practice the majority leader and the minority leader are also members in addition to two other appointed members.

Information Units within the Parliament of Ghana

Within the Parliamentary service there are a number of units that have been set up over the years to provide Parliament with the necessary information, the work of these units revolve around publications, research and information management in general for the effective work of Parliament. The following looks into details at some of these units.

The Library

Libraries in Parliaments are called different names by different legislatures. These include parliamentary libraries, federal libraries, legislative

libraries, information resource centres, documentation centres, or reference services (Anghelescu, 2010). Core functions of Parliamentary libraries revolve around the provision of research analysis and information services in all its varied forms for the Parliament (Alemna & Skouby, 2000; May, 1997). For centuries, legislatures across the world have set up special libraries in-house to cater for the information needs of their members. The first Parliamentary library is credited to be that of the French National Assembly in 1792 (Anghelescu, 2010).

In Ghana the evolution of a library to support the work of the legislature runs concurrent with the history and evolution of the Parliament in Ghana. Right from the colonial days of Legislative Councils efforts were made not only to capture official records of proceedings but to keep these and other legislative documents and make them available for the work of Legislative Councils. Though not referred to as a department at the time these collections later became the foundation for setting up the Library as well as the Hansard departments.

The Library of Parliament was properly established following the first ever large scale election in the Gold Coast and the setup of the First Indigenous Gold Coast Legislative Council under the 1951 Constitution. The library of parliament contributes to Ghana's parliamentary democracy by creating, managing, and delivering authoritative, reliable and relevant information and knowledge for parliament. It provides timely and relevant information services designed to assist MPs perform their duties on non-partisan basis (Parliament-Library-Gh). There are six professional staff working at the Library headed by a qualified professional librarian, who is supported by a deputy who is also a professional Librarian.

The Parliament Library stocks most documents that come to parliament for parliamentary business including bills and loan agreements. It also stocks document it receives from committees and from the Table Office. The collection also goes beyond these and include books, reports, historical and other relevant materials for the work of Parliament. In addition to print materials the Library does provide access to resources, such as the legal database software (Law Finder) and an automated library management software. Stapenhurst (2011) puts the collection of the library at 1,600 books. MPs have described the library collection as old and outdated (Alemna & Skouby 2000; Ofori-Dwumfuo & Addo, 2012; Osman & Agyei 2014; Stapenhurst, 2011). In some countries, Parliamentary Libraries are depository libraries. An example is the United States Library of Congress. Such libraries receive by law without charges either all or selected official publications especially government publications. This helps keep the collection up to date. The Ghana Parliament Library, like the House of Commons library is not a mandatory deposit library. The Parliament of Ghana not designated as a depository library however, affects the comprehensiveness of its collection.

The Research Department

The recognition of the need to set up a research unit within the Parliament of Ghana dates back to 1993. With the support of donor partners the Parliament of Ghana eventually established a research department in 2001. The unit was to complement the work of the Library and the Hansard department by specially providing independent research analysis for MPs and staff. Researchers have over the years identified MPs' request for a well-resourced

research unit in Parliament as a necessity for meeting their information need (Alemna & Skouby, 2000; Stapenhurst 2011).

The research unit in addition to performing the core mandate of providing information and conducting research analysis, also works directly, and with Parliamentary Committee staff, to support the information needs at the committee level as well as during plenary sessions.

Specifically, in relation to the Ghana Parliament, the Parliamentary Library and the Research Department, the key units that provide in-house information and expertise have not seen much investment and expansion over the years to correspond with the increasing number of MPs and to the changing trends in methods of production and dissemination of information.

The research department employs about 10 staff members serving 275 MPs as well as Committees. This number is low compared to Kenya and Uganda, each with about 30 research staff (Draman, Titriku, Lampo, Hayter, & Holden, 2017) serving 350 and 465 MPs respectively; and it is woefully inadequate compared to the USA congressional research service with about 600 employees serving 430 Members. It is also a common practice in well-resources legislatures for individual MPs to have resources to engage staff or to be assigned staff to support MPs. MPs of the UK House of Commons, for example, have resources to employ up to four researchers to support them. To make up for the limited number of in house researchers a number of parliamentary committees and individual MPs developed links with civil society groups and research institutions including the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG), the University of Ghana, and the

Parliamentary Centre (Stapenhurst & Alandu 2008; Stapenhurst 2011). While this may be beneficial it cannot replace the independent analysis that non-partisan in-house experts can provide. An initiative to provide each MP with a research assistant is yet to be well institutionalized to provide MPs with quality research support (Parliamentary Debates, 2018, June 14th). Efforts over the years to set up a budget/scrutiny office have not yielded the desired results (“Parliament to create Office of Scrutiny,” 2013).

The Table Office

The Table Office which literally refers to the table of the Clerk to Parliament is the hub of activities and everything related to parliamentary business. As such the Table Office provides both technical and procedural support for the conduct of parliamentary business. All Parliamentary business must be laid on the table of the clerk to Parliament. The Table Office supports the preparation of the agenda for the House, the vote and proceedings and the order paper. It provides technical and procedural support for business statements, processing of questions and motions and processing of bills (Parliament of Ghana, 2018). Petitions and committee report must be laid at the clerk table for consideration by the House. In essence the actual documentation for all parliamentary business namely content of bills, loan agreements, Budget Statements, questions among many others are presented to the Table Office for processing and subsequent distribution for work by the House. The Table Office is therefore a critical point for receipt and processing of all materials and documentation for parliamentary business, even though traditionally it is not considered as part of the information support system in the House. For this research the role of the Table Office is seen as vital if members’ information needs are to be met.

The Parliamentary Training Institute

Parliamentary training institutes are important in enhancing the knowledge and expertise of members and keeping MPs and staff up to date on issues as they play their role. Staff of the Parliamentary Service and MPs have always advocated the need for the Parliament of Ghana to set up its own training institute. In 2004, the deputy clerk John Agama made a strong case for the establishment of a Parliamentary Training Institute along the lines of the Bureau of Parliamentary Training in India (Parliamentary Centre, 2004). In 2009 the speaker of Parliament indicated the willingness of the Commonwealth Secretariat to support in the establishment of the Parliamentary Training Institute for the Parliament of Ghana. It was not until December 2016 that the Parliament of Ghana established a Parliamentary Training Institute – The Ghana Parliamentary Training Institute (PTI). The institute was set up: to provide, among others, institutional mechanisms for continuing education, learning, training and development for MPs and Staff; execution and promotion of research in Parliamentary democracy; provision of training and advisory services to the populace; and collaboration with national and international organization for the promotion of best practices (Parliament of Ghana (2018), p. 10).

Development Partners Support to Enhance Access to Information

Through a series of projects and interventions, development partners and donor communities over the years have worked with Parliament aimed at enhancing capacity as well as strengthening Members access to information, to independent analysis and to experts' advice. These have included the Canadian International Development Agency (now Department of Foreign Affairs Trade

and Development) through the Parliamentary Centre, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Stiftung).

Others such as the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), the African Development Bank, GIZ Germany, UNDP, USAID, DANIDA, and DFID have supported Parliament over the years (Tsekpor & Hudson 2009). The Parliamentary Centre especially, with funding from CIDA and the World Bank Institute and in collaboration with the Institute of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Finance supported committees such as the Public Accounts Committee by providing expert information resources to parliament (Parliamentary Centre, 2002). Such support continues to-date through organizations such as ACEPA and through Development Partner projects funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), UK Aid, STAR-Ghana projects phases I and II and others such as Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), African Development Bank (AfDB), the World Bank (Parliament of Ghana, 2018).

Summary

The history of the legislature of Ghana dates as far back as the 19th century, the days of the Gold Coast when the legislative power was exercised by the Queen of England. The post-independence Parliament of Ghana has experimented with the two main models of government, the Parliamentary and the Presidential system and is currently implementing its unique blend of the two systems by decoupling parliament from the executive yet tempering it with provisions such as Article 78(1) that require at least 50% of Ministers to be MPs.

After independence, the Parliament of Ghana suffered frequent setbacks when its work was truncated after each coup d'état. The 1992 Constitution has brought stability to the work of Parliament since 1993, and with a well-established committee system Parliament has been great at passing laws for Ghana. However, its overall effectiveness including its oversight of executive action has been questioned by numerous researchers. Also, certain provisions in the constitution have resulted in excessive powers for the executive. For example, parliament lacks financial autonomy and this, combined with increasing partisanship in its work and the negative effect of Article 78(1), has impacted negatively on its effectiveness.

With regard to MPs' access to and use of information, MPs generally need information if they are to be effective in carrying out their mandate. However, the Parliament of Ghana has been slow in addressing information asymmetry with the executive and within the legislature itself. For example, even with a well-established committee system, the committees are not fully utilizing their powers to call for documents and experts. Also, Parliament's information support systems such as the library and the research department remain in their infantile stages.

CHAPTER FIVE

MPS' INFORMATION NEEDS AND INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study in relation to the first two of the research objectives; namely, 1) Examine Ghanaian legislators' information needs in the performance of their mandate; 2) Investigate the information seeking behaviour of members of Ghana's Parliament;

The chapter is divided into three sections covering background information of the MPs, their information needs and their information seeking behaviour. The analyses were based on the conceptual framework for the study, the research objectives and questions.

The questionnaire data analysis comprised both descriptive and inferential analyses. For inferential statistical analysis and decision a confidence level of 95 % and a default alpha level of 5 percent (0.05) were adopted. The interview analysis captures key findings including the strategies and tactics of leadership that affect members' access to key documents and the use of relevant information in Parliamentary work. The data on loan agreements and also on Bills were analysed using both descriptive and inferential analysis.

Response rate

One hundred and sixty-one (161) questionnaires were distributed to the target respondents. Eight-one (81) completed questionnaires representing 50 percent were retrieved and analysed. The retrieval process was painfully

tedious. Response rate of 50 percent is considered adequate for the purpose of the study especially considering the fact that the target respondent group fall in the category of an elite group where access can be a challenge (Baker, 2011). Similar studies on the Parliament of Ghana and on other legislatures in Africa and globally have yielded response rates in this region or far below that. For example, a PhD research on parliamentary information systems and sources for South African MPs by Mostert (2004) had a response rate of 23 percent. Marcella et al., (1999) got a response rate of 34 percent in their study of United Kingdom MPs in the European Parliament and the widely cited study of MPs in Botswana by Thapisa (1996) had a return rate of 27.5 percent.

Background of Respondents

Background information gathered through this research included respondents' term in office, gender, highest level of education and professional background. Additional background information gathered included members' leadership position in the House, political party affiliation as well as their previous occupation before entering Parliament. The background information on each respondent was to provide insight that would help situate the Member of Parliament in the context of performance of their mandate in order to understand their information behaviour. Findings on the background characteristics of respondents presented below are mainly descriptive highlighting frequencies and percentages.

Term in Office

Term in office refers to the number of times a Member of Parliament has been elected into parliamentary office. It also reflects the number of years that they have had the mandate to serve the citizens of the country as legislators.

Each term is equivalent to four years with the exception of those who come to Parliament through bye-elections. Table 5 captures the term in office of MP. One-half of the respondents (50.6%) were first term MPs. While only a few were in either the third or fourth terms. This is reflective of the trend of proportion of first term MPs to continuing MPs for the Parliaments of the Fourth Republic of Ghana which has hovered between 40 percent and 65 percent. For the Seventh Parliament of the Fourth Republic data from the Hansard of 7th January 2017 shows that the proportions stand at forty-four percent (44.0%) first term MPs to fifty-six percent (56.0%) continuing MPs, (Parliamentary Debates, 2017 January 7th)

*Table 5:
Term in Office of Respondents*

Term	Frequency	Percent
1st Term	41	50.6
2nd Term	31	38.3
3rd Term	6	7.4
4th Term	3	3.7
Total	81	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

The reason for examining Members' Term in office is because research shows that MPs gain information and expertise and become better at performing their role as they spend more time in the legislature (Volden & Wiseman, 2008). This can be invaluable to other MPs and the legislature as a whole.

Position(s) held in the House

Respondents were also asked to indicate their position in the House, that is, whether they were part of the leadership of the House (majority or minority

leaders, committee chairpersons or ranking members) or simply members of a committee but not part of the leadership in the House. This was important because party leadership and chairpersons of committees have more staff at their disposal (Curry, 2011). Committees in the Parliament of Ghana have secretariats staffed by the clerk to the committee and other supporting personnel. The chairperson and leadership of the Ghana Parliament are also more senior in the organizational structure which gives them an advantage, since they are often the first group to receive important information before other MPs. About one-half of the respondents were members of committees (53.1%) and therefore were not part of the leadership neither were they chairpersons nor ranking members in the House (Table 6). The questionnaire responses therefore cover a good representation of ordinary members of committees as well as those in leadership positions namely: chairpersons, ranking members and leadership from both majority and minority caucuses.

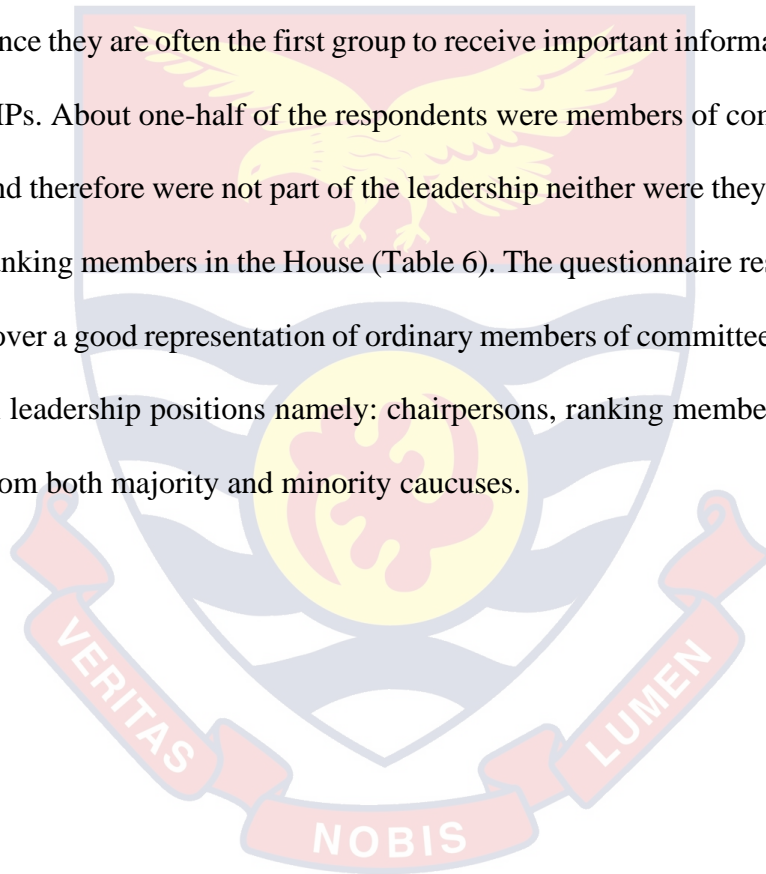


Table 6:

Position Held in the House by Respondents

Position held in the House	Frequency	Percent
Leadership (Majority includes whips)	2	2.5
Leadership (Minority includes whips)	7	8.6
Chairperson/Vice Chairperson of a Committee	16	19.8
Ranking /Deputy Ranking Member of a Committee(s)	13	16.0
Member of Committee(s)(not part of leadership)	43	53.1
Total	81	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Gender Distribution of Respondents

In addition to term in office and position held in Parliament, respondents were asked about their gender. Research shows that information needs and active information seeking varies across gender (Rowley et al., 2016, Nalumaga 2009, 2012, Nalumaga & Seldén, 2014, Chatman 2000). The findings show that 79.01% of the respondents were male while 17.28% were female. This is well within the representative sample proportion on males and females in Parliament since the population has thirty-five (35) women representing 12.73% out of the two hundred and seventy-five MPs (Table 7). While the study did not delve deep into issues related to gender, especially as it applies to female MPs, and their experiences when it comes to information behaviour in the legislature, it did disaggregate the data for analysis by male and female to explore any

differences that might exist in the responses of these subgroups in the target population.

Table 7:

Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	64	79.01
Female	14	17.28
Non- response	3	3.71
Total	81	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Political Party Affiliation of Respondents

Data was collected on the political party affiliation of respondents because political parties play a crucial role in shaping membership of parliamentary committees and setting agenda for Parliamentary Business and deliberations in the legislature (Cox & McCubbin, 1993, 2007). The results showed that 44 (54.31%) respondents were NPP members from the majority caucus, while 34 (41.98 %) respondents were NDC members in the minority caucus of the 7th Parliament (Table 8).

Table 8:

Political Party Affiliation of Respondents

Political Party	Frequency	Percent
NPP	44	54.31
NDC	34	41.98
Non-response	3	3.71
Total	81	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Highest Level of Education Attained

Level of education is one of the activating mechanisms or motivators in Wilson’s general model of information behaviour (Wilson, 1996, 1999) and in the model adapted for this research. Educational background is an important factor or barrier that can affect a respondent’s motivation to seek or not to seek information, as well as use information.

The results showed that with the exception of only three respondents (3.95%), all others were university graduates. This was made up of 23.7% of respondents with First Degrees; 61.8% with Master’s Degrees, and 10.5 % with PhD qualifications (Figure 6).

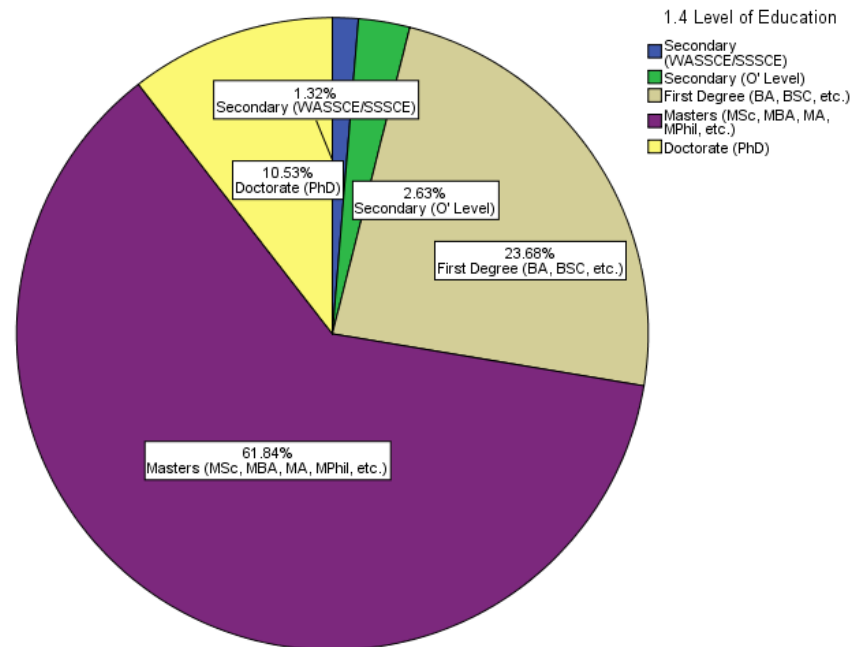


Figure 6: Highest Level of Education

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

The level of education of majority of the respondents is very high, similar to the findings from previous studies on earlier Parliaments of Ghana by Alemna and Skouby (2000) and Brierley (2010) that showed high level of

education of Ghanaian MPs. They contend that high level of education of MPs should give them an advantage intellectually to be critical when deliberating, scrutinizing and when performing related roles (Skouby, 2000; Brierley, 2010).

Professional Background of Respondents

To get a better insight into their areas of specialization, respondents were asked to indicate their professional background. From the findings the respondents possessed a wide array of professional backgrounds. These were clustered into nine main groups from finance professionals (18.5%) to agricultural professionals (4.5 %) (Table 9).

*Table 9:
Professional Background of Respondents*

Expertise/Professional Background	Frequency	Percent
Finance	15	18.5
Lecturers/ Teaching	12	14.8
Management	7	8.6
Business and Administration	7	8.6
Development Officers/Professionals	6	7.4
Land Surveyor/ Engineering	5	6.0
Lawyers	5	6.0
Health professionals/Medical Doctors	5	6.0
Agriculture	3	4.5
Non- Response	16	19.6
Total	81	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Information Needs of Ghanaian Legislators

This section presents findings related to objective 1: *examine Ghanaian legislators' information needs in the performance of their mandate.* Establishing information needs of individuals remains a highly debated matter especially because most scholars agree that the true information need is only known to the person who needs information; therefore, to measure information need researchers adopt proxies (Wilson, 1981, 1996; Savolainen, 2012, citing Naumer & Fisher, 2010). In this regard, this study measured the frequency with which respondents needed information to perform specific roles as MPs. Role-related information need was viewed as a good proxy for determining information needs of respondents.

Role-related Information Need

Previous studies have shown that members of Ghana's Parliament have high need for information to perform parliamentary roles such as debates and speeches (Alemna & Skouby, 2000; Osman & Agyei, 2014). The current study therefore focused on role-related information needs by asking MPs to indicate the frequency with which they need information to perform these roles. Officially identified roles of the Parliament of Ghana are Legislative/ Financial/ Oversight of the executive/ Representational / Deliberative. For the study, two additional roles were added based on the review of literature, namely Constituency Service and Personal Effectiveness/Party duties. In all, a total of 15 roles were considered for this study.

The following discussion, which is based on Table 10, highlights key findings of the data analysis. When asked how often they need information to perform their roles as parliamentarians, more than one-half (55.6 %) of the

respondents indicated that they always need information to *keep abreast with issues at national/international level*. This is not surprising since to be up-to-date on any issue one needs relevant information constantly. Other findings show that 51.9% of respondents always need information when *providing for the needs of constituents* and 49.4% of respondents always need information when *preparing for TV and radio appearances* (Table 10). These findings show that approximately one-half of the respondents “Always” need information to keep abreast, to carry out constituency duties and to prepare for TV and radio appearances as part of their party duties. These are all roles that must be performed by an MP as an individual, supporting findings in the literature that point to the importance of the performance of individual MPs especially at the constituency level (Barkan, 2009; Lindberg, 2000). They also highlight the value individual MP’s place on party affiliations; an MP’s performance at both the party level and at the constituency level are absolutely crucial for re-election in the Ghanaian context (Brierley, 2012; Lindberg, 2010).

From Table 10, it is evident that the top three roles for which respondents need information “Always” and “Often” are all related to financial control functions, that is, reviewing budgets and economic policy documents, scrutinizing loan agreements and monitoring expenditure of public funds. It is also noteworthy that none of the respondents reported that they “never” needed information for 9 out of the 15 roles presented in Table 10. Six respondents (7.4%) reported that they “rarely” need information for asking questions on the floor of the House and for vetting nominees.

Overall these results on frequency of information need to preform parliamentary roles show that even though respondents have needs for

information to perform their mandate, the frequency of need for oversight functions are lower compared to the frequency of need for information for the other functions. The three roles for which respondents had higher frequency of need for information were all related to financial control functions. This is encouraging especially because an enhanced financial scrutiny by the legislature during the entire budget process – from drafting and approval to implementation and auditing of the budget (Posner & Chung-Keun, 2007) – is seen as a means for achieving stronger accountability and reduction in corruption (OECD, 2002; Santiso, 2004; Stapenhurst 2011).

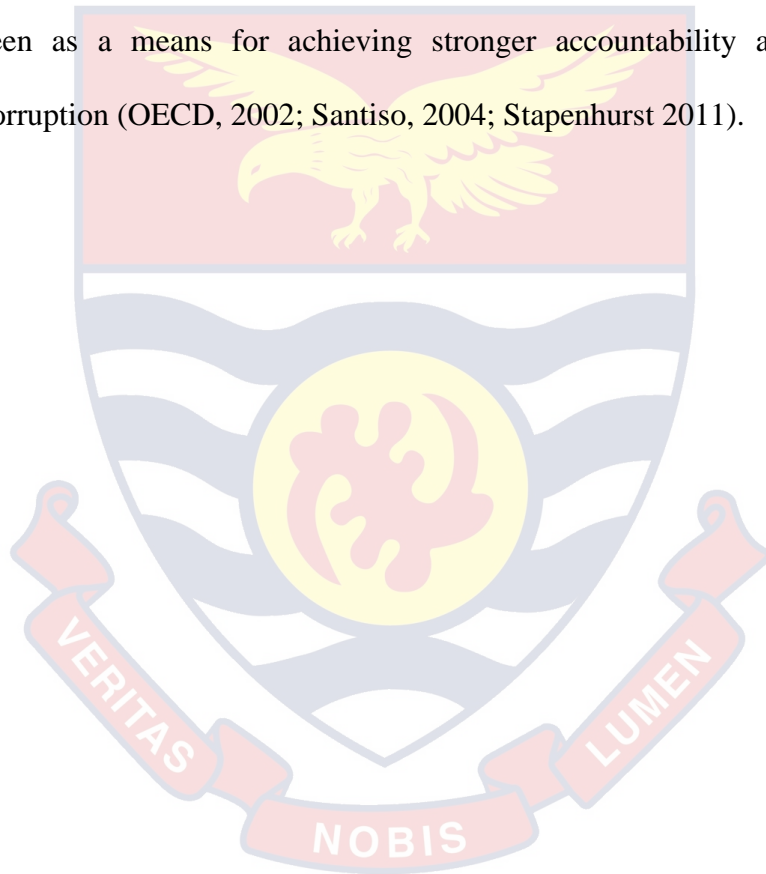


Table 10:

Frequency of Role-Related Information Need of Respondents

Roles/Tasks	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always		Non-response		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Reviewing budgets	0	0	1	1.2	10	12.3	29	35.8	38	46.9	3	3.7	81	100
Scrutinizing loans	0	0	3	3.7	7	8.6	29	35.8	37	45.7	5	6.2	81	100
Monitoring expenditure	0	0	3	3.7	9	11.1	31	38.3	35	43.2	3	3.7	81	100
Providing for constituents	0	0	2	2.5	11	13.6	24	29.6	42	51.9	2	2.5	81	100
Keeping abreast	0	0	0	0	14	17.3	20	24.7	45	55.6	2	2.5	81	100
Preparing for TV	1	1.2	1	1.2	12	14.8	23	28.4	40	49.4	4	4.9	81	100
Making statements	1	1.2	2	2.5	14	17.3	24	29.6	35	43.2	5	6.2	81	100
Scrutinizing Bills	0	0	3	3.7	7	8.6	29	35.8	37	45.7	5	6.2	81	100
Debating matters	0	0	1	1.2	17	21.0	27	33.3	34	42.0	2	2.5	81	100
Scrutinizing MDAs	1	1.2	0	0	18	22.2	36	44.4	24	29.6	2	2.5	81	100
Identifying needs of constituents	1	1.2	3	3.7	15	18.5	24	29.6	35	43.2	3	3.7	81	100
Monitoring Visits	0	0	3	3.7	16	19.8	27	33.3	32	39.5	3	3.7	81	100
Articulating constituents' interest	1	1.2	3	3.7	17	21.0	28	34.6	30	37.0	2	2.5	81	100
Vetting nominees	0	0	6	7.4	16	19.8	23	28.4	31	38.3	5	6.2	81	100
Asking questions	2	2.5	6	7.4	18	22.2	24	29.6	28	34.6	3	3.7	81	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Further tests were carried out to determine what differences there were, if any, when it comes to the information needs of the different categories of respondents based on their background characteristics such as political party, gender, term in office and educational background. The Mann Whitney test was based on analysis of data on how often respondents needed information to perform their roles as MPs. To show how often respondents needed information, they had to choose the appropriate number on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 indicated never and 5 indicated always.

The Mann Whitney test background characteristics such as gender and term in office did not show any significant difference. However, that for the political party affiliation – the two political parties in the 7th Parliament – showed a statistically significant difference (Table 11). Table 11 shows that the mean rank for NPP respondents was 33.45 and that for NDC respondents was 46.0. It reveals a higher mean rank for respondents from the minority NDC party implying that they needed information more often compared to respondents from the majority NPP respondents when it comes to performing their roles. This difference is statistically significant (Mann-Whitney $U=492.5$, p value=.014).

Respondents from the minority NDC party needed information more often to perform their roles compared to respondents from the majority NPP. This finding is contrary to Raudla's (2012) finding when studying information use among legislators in Estonia. The research found no significant differences between legislators from governing and opposition parties pertaining to their interest in performance information.

The difference between the minority NDC and the majority NPP respondents may be because opposition members invest more efforts into ensuring that they can adequately critique executive proposals before the House as part of their agenda to endear themselves to the voting public. This strategy could further be aimed at improving their chances of their return to power. Also members of the opposition in Ghana's Parliament often have relatively more time to devote to parliamentary work, since the hybrid system results in a significant number of the ruling party MPs serving as ministers, which take them away from parliamentary work (Sakyi, 2010). Therefore, the opposition MPs need information more often to perform their roles.

NPP MPs of the 7th Parliament as members of the ruling party, on the other hand, are likely to be the lead persons, as ministers and chairpersons who present the executive's agenda in parliament. In this regard, they already have access to critical information; hence, their less frequent need for information. This is supported by Sevenans, Walgrave, and Vos (2015) who highlight the fact that opposition MPs are "information poor" and have fewer alternative sources of information compared with government MPs, who for instance can get inside information from the cabinet and from ministers, a plausible reason for higher frequency of need for information for the Minority NDC MPs.

Table 11:

Mann-Whitney Test of Difference: Political Party Affiliation and Information Need

	Political Party	Freq.	Mean Rank
Information need	NPP	43	33.45
	NDC	34	46.01
	Total	77*	

Mann-Whitney U=492.5, p value= .014 *lower due to non-response

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

As mentioned earlier the Mann Whitney for first term MPs and continuing MPs showed no statistically significant difference in their responses. The Mann-Whitney U test for male and female respondents also showed no statistically significant difference in information need (Mann-Whitney U = 386.000, p value =.417 (not statistically significant)).

Table 12 shows that the mean rank on how often respondents needed information to perform mandated roles in Parliament for first term MPs was 43.54 and that for respondents serving second term or more terms was 37.31, these differences were not significant (Mann-Whitney U = 675.000, p value =.230).

Table 12:

Mann-Whitney Test of Difference: Term of Office and Need for Information

	Term in office as MP	Freq.	Mean Rank
How often you need information to perform roles	1st Term	41	43.54
	2nd Term or more	39	37.31
	Total	80	

Mann-Whitney U = 675.000, p value =.230 (not statistically significant)

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

A plausible explanation for these findings could be gleaned from the fact that political party affiliation was a far stronger influence on members' frequency of information need than any other background characteristic. Ghana has a strong two-party political system with "increasingly intense polarisation of Ghana on partisan lines over certain issues" (Ayee, 2008, p.208) which is also visible in Parliament (Ayee, 2008; Brierley, 2012).

Respondents who were interviewed highlighted the fact that MPs need information and technical support if they are to perform their mandate well. This was articulated by Interviewee 8 as follows:

"you know that parliament as an arm of government performs very critical functions. By the nature of the institution of parliament, a representative body of the people, you will not expect that those representatives will have technical knowledge in all areas or subject matter".

Explaining ways in which members needed information another interviewee was of the view that MPs

"need people to analyse ... information, ...you need someone to advise you particularly on the loan agreements and the laws that are brought which are in technical areas, you need somebody to explain the background". Citing a specific example, the interviewee said that "for instance there is this taxation ...bill in parliament right now ... as a member of Parliament unless you have commercial background and you know [what it is] about, you will need somebody to explain it to you" (Interviewee 5).

Studies show that as part of their role, MPs require information to project the effect of policies during the legislative processes (Krehbiel, 1991). They need information for monitoring the implementation of on-going programmes (IPU, 2009; Mostert, 2004). They also need independent budget analyses for reviewing national budgets (Folscher, 2006; Wehner, 2004). Furthermore, they need reliable facts and analyses for more realistic and effective legislative solutions (Miller, Pelizzo, & Stapenhurst, 2004; Robinson, 2002).

To summarize, the findings on the information need of Ghanaian legislators show that overall respondents frequently need information to perform their key roles namely: legislative, financial, oversight, deliberative, and representational function, constituency service and personal effectiveness/ party duties. More respondents had higher frequency of need for information for financial control functions compared with their frequency of need for information to perform oversight functions. While respondents from the two major political parties in the Parliament of Ghana differed in their responses, with the minority having a higher frequency of need for information to perform their mandated roles, there was no statistically significant difference in responses on the frequency of information need for male and female respondents. Members of Ghana's parliament need information and the support of technical experts in order to deliver on their mandate.

Information Seeking Behaviour of Members of Ghana's Parliament

This section presents findings related to objective 2: *investigate the information seeking behaviour of members of Ghana's Parliament*. Information seeking behaviour is the most widely studied concept of information behaviour

(Nickpour, 2012) and the most common term in use (Case, 2007). Its definition ranges from narrow definitions such as Johnson's (1997) definition of information seeking as the purposive acquisition of information from a selected information carrier to much broader definitions and perspectives such as Wilson's (1999, p. 263) description of information-seeking behaviour as "concerned with the variety of methods people employ to discover, and gain access to information resources".

For this study respondents were asked about their i) strategies for meeting their information need, ii) about the sources they used when looking for information and iii) about the importance of key information source characteristics which covered 1) trust in external sources that they used 2) level of satisfaction with access to key documents and 3) how they established credibility of information. Informed by the conceptual framework, the study also looked at iv) intervening variables especially the barriers to respondents' access to information and v) their preferred format for receiving information. More insight was also obtained through interviews.

Interviews with key individuals at the Parliament of Ghana were necessary to unearth and help increase our understanding of the historical trends and the evolution of the Parliament of Ghana especially as they relate to the current state of affairs concerning members' need for information, the recurring lack of access to research/analysed technical information in-house and Parliament's reliance on the Executive for information.

Interviewees pointed out that the First Parliament of the Fourth Republican Parliament in 1993 had to start from scratch with limited facilities.

Parliament for example did not have office space for its members; lacked appropriate meeting spaces for its committees; neither did it have technical support for its work. For guidance and support on matters relating to procedures and rules, for example, Parliament relied on former staff of the previous Republic Parliaments such as Mr. S.N. Darkwa (former Clerk).

With regard to the information support system for plenary and committee work, as well as providing MPs with information, the Fourth Parliament had little to build on. This and the fact that the first parliament of the fourth republic was made up almost entirely of one-party membership, same as the party of the executive, also helped create strong bonds and high levels of trust between these two arms of government. The newly recruited staff of parliament had virtually nothing to fall on as far as Parliament's own institutional memory and research support were concerned. Therefore, they relied on the executive and its experts for the much-needed information to be able to do their work, especially to push through the constitutionally mandated laws that needed to be passed (Interviewee 4). This historical trend now seems entrenched in the work process of the Parliament of Ghana. Asked whether committees rely on the executive for information for its work, an interviewee had this to say

“That happens. It is not the best governance wise, but it doesn't really influence that much the bill itself. As I said, with loan agreements it can have an effect but with the bills they are generally very critical. Because the sponsoring ministry wants the bill to be passed as quickly as possible, they would say ok we want to take you to a place, a specific location and would pay for accommodation and everything so that you

can be there for 3 or 4 days so that we can be able to go through the bill from beginning to the end. I think there are situations where even the ministries/ ministers and the committees have disagreements but at the end of the day there is always a compromise and the review is not always influenced by what the ministry has provided”

Another interviewee (interviewee 5) said that “because we don't have the proper systems setup (...) When a bill is laid they refer it to a committee and the committee will then organise a kind of workshop first so that you get the promoters of the bill to come and explain why the law is to be enacted in the first place. If there are technicalities, then they explain.”

Strategies for Meeting Information Needs

Respondents were asked two main questions on their strategies for looking for information. These were i) personal efforts adopted by respondents to satisfy their information need and ii) the use of intermediaries within the Parliamentary service.

Personal Efforts

Respondents were asked about personal efforts they make to get information ranging from i) searching for information personally, ii) using own information collection (e.g. books, articles), iii) contacting personal networks of experts and trusted sources and iv) using own knowledge/experience. The findings were that respondents use all these personal effort strategies. The most used personal efforts strategy is to search for information personally. Thirty-two point one (32.1%) of respondents indicated that they always search for

information personally and an additional 49.45% said they often search for information personally. When it comes to using own knowledge and experience 28.4 % said sometimes, 48.1% selected often while 19.8% indicated that they always use knowledge and experience (Table 13).

Table 13:

Seeking Information: Personal Efforts

Strategies for looking for information	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always		Non-response		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Search for information personally	0	0.0	2	2.5	8	9.9	40	49.4	26	32.1	5	6.3	81	100
Use own information collection (e.g. books, Articles)	0	0.0	3	3.7	11	13.6	45	55.6	19	23.5	3	3.7	81	100
Contact personal networks of experts and trusted sources	0	0.0	7	8.6	14	17.3	37	45.7	20	24.7	3	3.7	81	100
Use own knowledge/experience	0	0.0	0	0.0	23	28.4	39	48.1	16	19.8	3	3.7	81	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Use of Intermediaries

The other main strategy for looking for information that the target respondents were asked about related to their use of intermediaries. Case (2007) points out that in almost any information seeking context, there is a strong preference for information that comes directly from other people. The literature on information seeking among MPs point to the important role of intermediaries (Mostert, 2004; Mostert & Ocholla, 2005). The study focused on intermediaries that are available within Parliament. Respondents were asked to indicate how often they utilized the service of six categories of staff within Parliament when they needed information. The results showed 25.9% “always”,

while 42.0 % “often” use their official personal assistants, giving them the highest frequency value for use of intermediaries (Table 14). These findings are similar to findings of studies on South African Parliamentarians which showed that while respondents preferred to look for information themselves, a large group also used their Personal Assistants to do their information searches for them (Mostert, 2004; Mostert & Ocholla, 2005).

The findings also revealed that Parliament Library staff were among the least used intermediaries out of the six intermediary groups, with 9.9 % “always”, 17.3% “often”, and 7.4% “never” using library staff (Table 14). This is not unexpected given the fact that the Library of the Parliament of Ghana until the commencement of the Seventh Parliament was housed in a single room, with a small collection (Stapenhurst 2011), and limited number of library staff (Ofori-Dwumfuo & Addo, 2012). An interviewee, who is in a senior position at the Library also revealed that some MPs including those who had served multiple terms in Parliament did not know the location of the library (Interviewee 3).

The results for respondents’ use of Parliament Research staff as intermediaries when looking for information shows that at least 6.2% of the respondents had never used parliament research staff, and 18.5% rarely use parliament research staff as intermediaries. This means that almost a quarter of respondents hardly use the institution’s mandated researchers to meet their information needs. These findings confirm Stapenhurst and Alandu’s (2009) study in which they reported that as a consequence of the limited capacity of the Research Department and the general inadequacy of information support services, members of Ghana’s Parliament (and, by extension, Committees)

needed to rely on their own expertise and knowledge as well as access to resources from alternative sources such as academic institutions and think-tanks.

The Research Department employs about 10 staff serving 275 MPs. These numbers are low when compared to other African parliaments such as Kenya and Uganda with over 30 research staff (Draman, Titriku, Lampo, Hayter, & Holden, 2017). The USA congressional research service for example has about 600 employees (Library of Congress, 2018) serving about 535 congress men and women.

Table 14:

Seeking Information: Using Intermediaries

Strategies for looking for information	Never No. %	Rarely No. %	Sometimes No. %	Often No. %	Always No. %	Non-Response No %	Total No. %
Use official personal assistant	0 0.0	4 4.9	19 23.5	34 42.0	21 25.9	3 3.7	81 100
Use parliament research staff	5 6.2	15 18.5	27 33.3	21 25.9	11 13.6	2 2.5	81 100
Use committee clerks	1 1.2	12 14.8	35 42.0	27 33.3	4 4.9	2 2.5	81 100
Use parliament Hansard office staff	5 6.2	12 14.8	34 42.0	21 25.9	8 9.9	1 1.2	81 100
Use parliament ICT dept. staff	6 7.4	18 22.2	28 34.6	20 24.7	7 8.6	2 2.5	81 100
Use parliament library staff	6 7.4	13 16.0	39 48.1	14 17.3	8 9.9	1 1.2	81 100

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

To sum up, the results presented in Tables 13 and 14 show that the most used personal efforts strategy when respondents are seeking information was to search for information personally. Other personal efforts strategies adopted by

respondents when looking for information in a descending order of frequency shows that the respondents use their own information collection such as books, contact personal networks of experts and trusted sources, and use own knowledge/experience.

In respect of using intermediaries within Parliament, Parliament's research staff were hardly used by a quarter of respondents, when they were seeking information. The most frequently used intermediary from among the parliamentary staff were committee staff and the least used were the Library staff and National Service Personnel.

Sources of Information

There is a wide array of information sources that are available to individuals when they are seeking information. For this study information sources were clustered into two major groups. These were: 1) internal sources – that is source inside parliament; 2) external sources – these are sources outside parliament. Respondents were asked how often they relied on these categories of sources to meet their information needs. The findings were as follows:

Sources of Information inside Parliament (Internal Sources)

Table 15 shows frequencies for MPs' use of internal sources to meet their information needs. From the Table, it is evident that more than one-half of the respondents "always" or "often" depended on their fellow MPs as sources of information. These were *Parliament Leadership (including whips)*, more *experienced MPs*, *Committee chairpersons/ Ranking members* and *MPs with demonstrated expertise in the subject area*. Issues related to reliability are addressed in later sections of the thesis.

The literature shows that different categories of people have their preferred sources of information (Wilson and Walsh, 1996). Clearly from the findings of this study, the trend shows that when it comes to internal sources of information, that is, sources within Parliament, MPs preferred their colleagues as sources of information. Later sections of the thesis look in more detail at how important information from parliamentary leadership was to respondents. It also examines leadership information control tactics in the Parliament of Ghana.

It might be beneficial for information support systems in the Parliamentary Services to take advantage of respondents' preference for their colleagues as sources of information by targeting specialist MPs (MPs with expertise in identified subject areas), leadership of the House including committee chairpersons and ranking members and experienced MPs as first point of contact when disseminating information to MPs. Watts (2010) for example had advocated for Parliamentary libraries to focus on information for specialist members. He argues that this may have more impact on the quality of information actually used by MPs than efforts by information units to improve the quality of their products and services.

The other categories of internal sources available to MPs are staff of Parliament. The analysed data showed that the most frequently used source of information from among the parliamentary staff are committee staff. It must be noted that the percentages of respondents who indicated that they use staff as sources of information drops to 37.0% who always or often used committee staff compared to percentage values that were above the 50% range of respondents who used fellow MPs. Parliamentary library staff and National Service personnel assigned to MPs were used the least as sources of information

(Table 15). This is similar to the findings reported earlier which showed that library staff were the least used intermediaries out of the six categories of intermediaries.

While the library staff may be among the least used intermediaries, data from interviews and analysis of questionnaire data on Members' level of satisfaction with access to key documents presented later in this thesis, shows the Library is crucial in meeting the information needs of MPs and Committees.



Table 15:

Sources of Information inside Parliament (Internal Sources)

Sources inside parliament (Internal Information sources)	Never No. %	Rarely No. %	Sometimes No. %	Often No. %	Always No. %	Non- Response No. %	Total No. %
Parliament Leadership (including whips)	2 2.5	7 8.6	26 32.1	33 40.7	11 13.6	2 2.5	81 100
More Experienced MPs	1 1.2	9 11.1	24 29.6	31 38.3	12 14.8	4 4.9	81 100
Committee chairpersons/ Ranking members	3 3.7	5 6.2	29 35.8	29 35.8	13 16.0	2 2.5	81 100
MPs with demonstrated expertise in the subject area	2 2.5	7 8.6	27 33.3	24 29.6	18 22.2	3 3.7	81 100
MPs who are ministers/ deputy ministers	1 1.2	11 13.6	30 37.0	32 39.5	5 6.2	2 2.5	81 100
Parliament committee Clerks	4 4.9	13 16.0	31 38.3	20 24.7	10 12.3	3 3.7	81 100
Parliament research department staff	7 8.6	16 19.8	27 33.3	25 30.9	4 4.9	2 2.5	81 100
Parliament IT dept. staff	5 6.2	21 25.9	30 37.0	17 21.0	5 6.2	3 3.7	81 100
Parliament Hansard department staff	8 9.9	19 23.5	30 37.0	18 22.2	3 3.7	3 3.7	81 100
Witnesses appearing before parliamentary committee	8 9.9	20 24.7	30 37.0	17 21.0	4 4.9	2 2.5	81 100
Experts from Executive branch assigned to parliament	10 12.3	18 22.2	31 38.3	18 22.2	2 2.5	2 2.5	81 100
Parliament library staff	3 3.7	26 32.1	30 37.0	13 16.0	6 7.4	3 3.7	81 100
National Service Personnel assigned by parliament	12 14.8	23 28.4	25 30.9	12 14.8	6 7.4	6 7.4	81 100

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Importance of Information from Leadership

The study examined how important information from leadership including committee chairpersons were to respondents when performing specific parliamentary roles. This is because research has established that Party Leadership and chairpersons of committees are important sources of information for other MPs especially rank and file MPs (Curry, 2011).

Table 16 illustrates how MPs view the importance of information from leadership of the House. On the whole, the highest number of respondents (55.6%) regarded the leadership of parliament as a very important source of information especially with respect to *reviewing bills/loan agreements*. However, with regard to *scrutinizing financial/audit reports*, the numbers dropped with only 32.1% considering leadership (including chairpersons of committees) as very important source of information. This is understandable considering the fact that the Auditor-General's reports are presented to the Ghana Parliament on a routine basis and is available to all MPs. They therefore do not need leadership to get access to the audit reports. On the other hand when it comes to loan agreements, for example, interviewees confirmed that there are instances when these were not easily available to all MPs. In these instances leadership becomes a crucial source of information for members.

A small minority of respondents (4.9%) did not see leadership of parliament as an important source of information when *debating on the floor of the House*. This contrasts considerably with the number of respondents that had a different opinion (43.2%) who indicated that leadership of the House (including chairpersons of committees) were very important sources of information when *debating on the floor of the House*.

Table 16:

Importance of Information from Leadership of the House

Importance of information from Leadership	Not Important No. %	Slightly Important No. %	Moderately important No. %	Very important No. %	Extremely important No. %	Non-Response No. %	Total No. %
Reviewing bills/ loan agreements	0 0.0	4 4.9	8 9.9	45 55.6	17 21.0	7 8.6	81 100
Reviewing national budgets and economic policies	1 1.2	2 2.5	12 14.8	38 46.9	21 25.9	7 8.6	81 100
Considering Government appointees for approval	1 1.2	4 4.9	14 17.3	36 44.4	19 23.5	7 8.6	81 100
Questioning ministers on the floor of the House	1 1.2	8 9.9	11 13.6	37 45.7	17 21.0	7 8.6	81 100
Scrutinizing Government Ministries work	1 1.2	7 8.6	12 14	32 39.5	21 25.9	8 9.9	81 100
Scrutinizing financial/ audit reports	1 1.2	4 4.9	17 21.0	26 32.1	26 32.1	7 8.6	81 100
Debating on the floor of the House	4 4.9	5 6.2	13 16	35 43.2	17 21.0	7 8.6	81 100

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Sources of Information outside Parliament (External Sources)

Table 17 presents the results of the analysis on external sources of information. The analysis indicates that generally MPs consult sources external to Parliament in varying degrees. Almost 30% of the respondents often use *Members of their constituency as a source of information*. A number of respondents sometimes used *experts from professional bodies/private sector, the universities and think tanks*. This trend confirms Stapenhurst’s (2011) comparative study of Nigeria and Ghana in which he discovered that Ghanaian Parliamentarians used available information from alternative sources such as think tanks when compared to Nigeria where their use is limited.

Table 17:

Sources of Information Outside Parliament (External Sources)

Sources outside Parliament (External Sources)	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Non-Response	Total
Members of constituency	2 2.5	18 22.2	27 33.3	24 29.6	8 9.9	2 2.5	81 100
Experts from Universities/ Think tanks/ NGOs/ CSOs	3 3.7	18 22.2	32 39.5	21 25.9	5 6.2	2 2.5	81 100
Experts from professional bodies/ private sector	3 3.7	12 14.8	39 48.1	16 19.8	8 9.9	3 3.7	81 100
Family and Friends	6 7.4	21 25.9	29 35.8	17 21.0	5 6.2	3 3.7	81 100

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Characteristics of Information Sources

This section looks at information source characteristics. Examining information source characteristics was necessary because the actual search and acquisition of information are shaped by information carrier factors encompassing the characteristics and utility of the information channel selected

and used by individuals seeking information (Case, 2007). For this study emphasis was on information source characteristics and these were clustered into three groups. These were access, trust and credibility.

Table 18 captures the responses of the MPs. Asked how important these characteristics were when using an information source, the highest number of respondents (44.4%) identified “trust” as extremely important, 39.5% selected “credibility” as extremely important and 29.6% selected “access” as extremely important. When the frequency values for respondents for two categories of responses “extremely important” and also for “very important” for each source characteristic is summed up, the value for trust is 76.5% of respondents. When repeated for the other two the sum value is the same, 76.5% of respondents for both access and for credibility. It can be said then that respondents view all three characteristics as important when using a source, but out of the three, as indicated earlier, the highest number of respondents 44.4% identified trust as extremely important.

Trust is important in the context of legislatures. As Weiss pointed out in her study of the use of analysed information by staff of Congress for example “*staff value information more when they know and trust its source and understand its political motivations*” (Weiss, 1989, p. 411). In the broader scheme of things it has been established that one of the main reasons why the US Congress, for example, pushed to build its internal capacity to do analysis and provide congressmen and women with alternative sources of information was because of their distrust of the information they were receiving from the executive and its agencies (Weiss, 1989, Bimber, 1991). This scenario is not unique to the USA and indeed it can be said to be the basis for why most

legislatures push for independent sources of analysed information for their work.

Table 18:

Importance of Information Source Characteristics

Importance of Source Characteristics	Not Important No. %	Slightly important No. %	Moderately important No. %	Very important No. %	Extremely important No. %	Non-response	Total No. %
Trust	0 0.0	1 1.2	10 12.3	26 32.1	36 44.4	8 9.9	81 100
Credibility	0 0.0	3 3.7	7 8.6	30 37.0	32 39.5	9 11.1	81 100
Access	1 1.2	1 1.2	9 11.1	38 46.9	24 29.6	8 9.9	81 100

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

This section looks more in-depth at each of the three source characteristics. Respondents were asked about their level of trust in sources outside Parliament; how they establish credibility of information they have obtained or received and their level of satisfaction with access to key documents they need for parliamentary work.

Level of Trust of Information Sources outside Parliament (External Sources)

Respondents were asked to indicate how much trust they had in information from sources outside parliament on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicated “no trust” and 5 indicated “very high trust”. The findings presented in Table 19, in a descending order for frequency values, show that a higher percentage of respondents (16%) have “very high trust” in development partners, followed by citizens of their constituency (9.9%), think tanks and university experts (6.2%). Frequency values of responses for “very high trust” for private sector/ professional bodies and CSOs/ NGOs were both 3.7%.

What this demonstrates is that of the five sources of information from outside Parliament covered in the study, more respondents have “very high trust” in development partners as sources of information compared to the number of respondents that have “very high trust” in the other external sources including universities and think tanks as well as NGOs and CSOs. Plausible reasons for this state of affairs stem from the following – the fact that Ghana’s economy largely allows development partners to be key contributors to the national budget and also major players in the management of the economy through the numerous international and bilateral agreements. In the 2019 budget of Ghana for example, considerably high percentage of the allocation for capital expenditure was expected from development partners (Adjei, 2018). The *Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana* for the 2019 fiscal year indicated that the “Capital Expenditure is projected at GH¢8,531.0 million, equivalent to 2.5 percent of GDP and a growth of 55.7 percent over the 2018 projected outturn. Of this amount, Domestic financed Capital Expenditure is estimated at GH¢3,222.2 million or 0.9 percent of GDP. An amount of GH¢5,308.8 million has been budgeted for Foreign Financed Capital Expenditure and this will be funded by a combination of Project Grants and Loans” (Parliament of Ghana, 2018, p. 26).

Research shows that countries that depend on development partners open themselves up for undue control (Lembani, 2013). International actors including diplomats who have resources and political control over poorer-donor dependent democracies derive their power from international and bilateral agreements. They influence specific local policy choices and constitutional amendments, and influence political outcomes through diverse ways including

threats to suspend aid, contact with legislators, and supporting local advocacy and lobbying groups (Lembani, 2013).

An example is Malawi whose annual budget largely depends on such support rendering the country “duty-bound to comply and act according to the set agreements entered into, or risk aid suspension, freeze of project support or international alarm by the IMF and WB that give alert cues to other international agencies and diplomats to deal cautiously with Malawi” (Lembani, 2013; p 176). Such donors (international actors including diplomats) invariably become key players in legislative decision in these poorer-donor dependent countries, as was the case in Malawi (Lembani, 2013). It is conceivable that a similar situation pertains in Ghana when it comes to the role of development partners in the country’s legislative decision-making process.

Table 19:

Trust in External Sources of Information

Trust in External Sources	1		2		3		4		5 indicates		Non-response	Total		
	indicates		No Trust						Very High Trust					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Development Partners	2	2.5	2	2.5	21	25.9	36	44.4	13	16.0	7	8.6	81	100
Experts from private sector/ professional bodies	2	2.5	0	0.0	24	29.6	45	55.6	3	3.7	7	8.6	81	100
Experts from universities / think tanks	1	1.2	3	3.7	25	30.9	40	49.4	5	6.2	7	8.6	81	100
Experts from CSOs/ NGOs	2	2.5	0	0.0	33	40.7	36	44.4	3	3.7	7	8.6	81	100
Citizens of your constituency	2	2.5	4	4.9	29	35.8	31	38.3	8	9.9	7	8.6	81	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Further analysis was carried out to determine what differences there were in responses for the different categories of respondents based on their background characteristics including political party affiliation, gender, term in

office and educational background. The *Kruskal Wallis H Test of difference* results (as illustrated in Table 20) showed that there is a statistically significant difference in responses from respondents who occupy different positions in the House on how much trust they have in sources of information from outside Parliament ($\chi^2=9.479$, p-value = 0.50).

The *Kruskal Wallis H Test* results indicate that while the mean ranks varied for leadership of the majority and minority caucuses as well as members of committees with no leadership positions, the mean ranks for committee chairpersons and ranking members were very close in value. Though the *Kruskal Wallis* test, as an analytical tool, compares these groups to determine if there is a statistically significant difference in their responses, it does not show which specific groups are different.

Table 20:
Kruskal Wallis Test of Difference: Trust in External Sources of Information

	Position	Freq.	Mean Rank
Trust in external information sources	Leadership (Majority includes whips)	1	10.50
	Leadership (Minority includes whips)	7	20.36
	Chairperson/Vice Chairperson of a Committee	14	44.54
	Ranking Member/Deputy Ranking	12	45.42
	Member of Committee	40	36.34
	Total	74	

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Additionally, the analysis from the study also showed that male and female respondents differed in their responses when asked how much trust they had in information from sources outside parliament. Table 21 shows that the mean rank for males (38.95) was higher than that for females (25.38). The results reveal males had significantly higher levels of trust than females in sources outside Parliament. (Mann-Whitney U = 239.000, p-value = .032). This difference in levels of trust in sources by gender is not surprising. Research, especially in health information behaviour, indicate through the lens of trust judgments that gender is a determinant of the information evaluation process of users of such information (Rowley et al., 2016). For legislators, Nalumaga (2009) through her research work, established that male and female legislators in the Ugandan Parliament differed in their experiences with regard to information when it comes to the performance of their roles.

Table 21:

Mann Whitney Test of Difference: Male and Female Respondents and Trust in Information Sources outside Parliament

	Gender	Freq.	Mean Rank
Trust in external sources	Male	59	38.95
	Female	13	25.38
	Total	72	

Mann-Whitney U = 239.000, p-value = .032

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Credibility of Sources of Information

To examine credibility of sources of information respondents were asked how they establish credibility of information they have obtained or

received. As captured in Table 22, the findings show that most respondents selected sometimes, often or always. They established credibility by checking the authority and credentials of the source, consulting relevant state institutions, consulting experts or asking other MPs. Forty-eight point one percent of respondents “often” established credibility by checking the authority and credentials of the source, while 19.8% “always” consult relevant state institutions.

Table 22:
Establishing Credibility of Information

How do you establish credibility of information you receive or obtain?	Never No. %	Rarely No. %	Sometimes No. %	Often No. %	Always No. %	Non- response No. %	Total No. %
Check source authority/credentials	0 0.0	2 2.5	18 22.2	36 44.4	16 19.8	91 1.1	81 100
Consult relevant state institutions	1 1.2	4 4.9	20 24.7	39 48.1	9 11.1	8 9.9	81 100
Consult in-House parliamentary staff/experts	1 1.2	9 11.1	23 28.4	35 43.2	5 6.2	8 9.9	81 100
Consult external experts (think tanks/ universities)	0 0.0	6 7.4	28 34.6	29 35.8	10 12.3	8 9.9	81 100
Ask other Members of Parliament about it	1 1.2	4 4.9	32 39.5	32 39.5	4 4.9	8 9.9	81 100

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Further tests were carried out using the background characteristics of respondents aimed at determining any differences that might exist in the way the different groups responded to the question on credibility. The test covered political party affiliation, gender, term in office, educational background, position in Parliament and professional background. While there was no statistically significant difference in responses based on most of the other background characteristics including gender and political party, the Kruskal

Wallis analysis indicated that there was a significant difference in the responses among respondents with different education levels on how they establish the credibility of information they receive or obtain ($\chi^2=11.992$, p-value = 0.17). The Mean Ranks for the different categories of respondents based on their educational level is presented in Table 23.

Table 23:

Kruskal Wallis Test of Difference: Level of Education and Establishing Credibility of Information

	Highest Level of Education	Freq.	Mean Rank
Establish Credibility of information	Secondary (WASSCE/SSSCE)	1	16.50
	Secondary (O' Level)	2	50.50
	First Degree (BA, BSC, etc.)	16	32.69
	Masters (MSc, MBA, MA, MPhil, etc.)	42	38.37
	Doctorate (PhD)	7	13.43
	Total	68	

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Since the Kruskal Wallis test only compares the groups to determine if there is a statistically significant difference, but does not show which specific groups are statistically significantly different, further analysis was carried out using Mann Whitney test.

To do the Mann Whitney test respondents were placed into two categories (PhD Holders and Non-PhD Holders). The test results in Table 24 show that the Mean Rank for respondents with PhD degrees (Mean rank = 13.86) was lower than that for Non-PhD holders (Mean rank =39.45). This was highly significant (Mann-Whitney U=69.000, p value=.002), implying that

respondents who did not have PhD degrees established credibility of information by consulting others more often than those with PhDs. This could likely be due to the fact that PhD holders believe they were knowledgeable enough and had the relevant skills to establish the credibility of information they obtain or receive without consulting external experts or asking their colleagues. The literature has established that the level of education is an important intervening variable that may motivate or hinder information seeking and use in information behaviour models (Askim, 2008, Case, 2007; Mostert, 2004; Wilson 1996).

Table 24:

Mann Whitney Test of Difference: PhD holders and Non-PhD holders on Establishing Credibility of Information

	Highest Level of Education	Freq.	Mean Rank
Establish credibility of Information	PhD Holders	7	13.86
	Non-PhD holders	66	39.45
	Total	73	

Mann-Whitney U=69.000, p value=.002

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Access to Key Documents and Related Information

Members of Parliament routinely need access to information including access to key documents including bills and loan agreement. They also need access to expert analysis on highly technical subject matters that come before the House in order to perform their role.

Level of Satisfaction with Access to Key Documents

The study sought to find out about MPs' level of satisfaction with access to key documents such as loan agreements/international agreements. Table 25 illustrates MPs' level of satisfaction with access to key documents and related information. From the table it is evident that a small majority of MPs (54.3%) were either "extremely satisfied" or "very satisfied" with documents from the Parliament's library. MPs' satisfaction with access to other documents varied. These findings place the library as a valuable source for information for respondents even though findings on MPs' use of intermediaries showed that the staff of the library were among the least used as intermediaries when respondents were seeking information.

An interviewee described the Library of the Parliament of Ghana as "*the first port of call for MPs, Committees, Leadership and staff*" when they need important documents and information including parent laws, related amendments and committee reports (Interviewee 2). The library also serves as the only source for important documents such as previous budget statements as well as historical documents. The findings highlight the strength of the library in its potential to serve as a valuable repository of valuable information and documents.

Table 25:

Satisfaction with Access to Key Parliamentary Documents

Level of satisfaction with access to key documents	Not at all satisfied	slightly satisfied	Moderately satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely Satisfied	Non-response	Total
	No. %						
Documents from Parliament's library	2 2.5	4 4.9	23 28.4	37 45.7	7 8.6	8 9.9	81 100
Memorandum of bills	0 0.0	7 8.6	27 33.3	31 38.3	9 11.1	7 8.6	81 100
Analysed documents on bills (by in-House experts)	0 0.0	6 7.4	27 33.3	32 39.5	8 9.9	8 9.9	81 100
Evidence based documents on social services (e.g. Education)	1 1.2	5 6.2	30 37.0	32 39.5	6 7.4	7 8.6	81 100
Content of loan agreements	0 0.0	7 8.6	33 40.7	28 34.6	5 6.2	8 8.6	81 100
Analysed documents on loan agreements (by in-House experts)	1 1.2	5 6.2	33 40.7	24 29.6	9 11.1	9 11.1	81 100
Briefing/ reports by ministries/department	2 2.5	6 7.4	36 44.4	25 30.9	4 4.9	8 8.6	81 100
Petitions from public/ groups	2 2.5	6 7.4	38 46.9	22 27.2	6 7.4	7 8.6	81 100

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Regardless of this positive finding on the value of the library as a crucial source for members when it comes to key documents, information from the interviews showed that there are gaps in the library's collection, especially with documents such as bills, loan agreements that need to be kept for future reference (Interviewees 2, 3). Interviewees pointed to a number of factors that have contributed to the current state of affairs.

The first is the lack of consistency and the absence of an efficient system for ensuring that copies of all documents and related important materials are deposited at the library without fail. The second is as a result of clientele of the library particularly MPs borrowing materials and not returning them. These affect timeliness of services and ability to meet needs of members. Staff of the library are negatively affected when they are unable to find information especially historical documents for members (Interviewees 2, 3). Previous studies had described the library's collection as old and outdated (Osman and Agyei, 2014; Stapenhurst, 2011). It is therefore encouraging that the current findings point to the fact that the library plays a key role in providing members access to information and key documents. Parliamentary libraries are established to provide research analysis and information services in all its varied forms for the Parliament (Alemna & Skouby, 2000; May, 1997).

Further analyses were carried out to determine what differences there were in responses for the different categories of respondents based on the background characteristics such as political party, gender, ^{and} educational background and their level of satisfaction when it comes to access to key documents. While the analysis based on political party and gender showed no

difference statistically, the Kruskal Wallis Test for educational background was statistically significant.

A Kruskal Wallis Test of difference (Table 26) showed that respondents with different levels of education differed statistically in rating their level of satisfaction when it comes to access to key documents ($\chi^2=10.607$, p-value = .031).

Table 26:

Kruskal Wallis Test of Differences: Education and Level of Satisfaction with Access to Key Documents

	Highest Level of Education	Freq.	Mean Rank
Level of satisfaction with access to key documents	Secondary (WASSCE/SSSCE)	1	34.50
	Secondary (O' Level)	2	33.25
	First Degree (BA, BSC, etc.)	16	31.22
	Masters (MSc, MBA, MA, MPhil, etc.)	43	39.86
	Doctorate (PhD)	7	14.36
	Total	69*	

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

*Lower because of non-response

The mean rank for respondents with PhDs when it comes to their level of satisfaction with access to key documents was 14.36. All the other categories had mean rank values above 30. To explore these findings further the data of the response to the question were put in two categories: PhD holders as one category and all other respondents in a second category (Non-PhD holders).

A Mann-Whitney U test (Table 27) that compared the two groups showed that there was statistically significant difference in the responses of PhD holders compared with the responses of the non-PhD holders when it comes to level of satisfaction with access to key documents (Mann-Whitney U=75.000, P value=.003). The mean rank for PhD holders (14.71) was lower than the mean

rank for Non-PhD holders (39.88), implying that respondents with PhDs were less satisfied with access to key documents that they needed for their work compared with other respondents. A plausible reason could be that by their training PhD holders have been exposed to the value of the availability of, and access to information as key to accomplishing one’s goals and may therefore have higher expectations in the context of their work as legislators.

Table 27:

Mann Whitney Test of Differences: PhD Holders and Non-PhD Holders and Level of Satisfaction with Access to Key Documents

Highest Level of Education	Freq.	Mean Rank
Doctorate (PhD)	7	14.71
Non-PhD Holders	67	39.88
Total	74	

Mann-Whitney U=75.000, P value=.003

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Summary

Respondents’ need for information spreads across all their core mandates namely: Legislative, Financial, Oversight, Representational, Deliberative, Constituency Service, and Party Duties and also for Personal Effectiveness. Respondents’ frequency of need for information for performing financial control related roles was higher compared to the others, while the frequency of need for information for oversight related functions such as scrutinizing MDAs was among the lowest. The findings also revealed that Members of Parliament from the two main political parties NPP (majority caucus and same party as the ruling executive) and NDC (minority caucus and opposition party), differed in their responses with regard to how often they need

information to perform their mandated roles. Respondents from the minority NDC party needed information more. On the other hand, there was no significant difference in responses for male and female respondents, nor for first term MPs and continuing MPs

When it comes to information seeking behaviour most respondents used personal efforts strategy and searched for information by themselves. About a quarter of respondents hardly use the institution's mandated researchers, that is, parliament's research staff. A wide variety of sources was used by respondents ranging from sources within parliament such as i) Parliament leadership (including whips) (ii) more experienced MPs (iii) committee chairpersons/ranking members (iv) MPs with demonstrated expertise in the subject matter, and v) ministers/deputy ministers to Sources of Information outside Parliament such as i) Universities, Think Tanks, ii) Professional bodies/Private sector, and (iii) members of constituency.

With respect to Information Source Characteristics, respondents viewed all three information source characteristics investigated namely: access, trust and credibility as important. Out of the three, the highest number of respondents (44.4%) identified trust as "extremely important", Respondents also had "very high trust" in development partners as a source of information compared to other external sources such as Universities and Think Tanks. Female respondents had lower trust in outside sources compared with male respondents. There were also differences in responses from respondents who hold different positions in the House on how much trust they have in sources of information from outside parliament. As to how respondents established credibility most did so by checking the authority and credentials of the information source.

CHAPTER SIX

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND MEMBERS'

INFORMATION BEHAVIOUR

Introduction

This Chapter presents findings related to objectives 3 and 4:

Objective 3: *To analyse how current institutional arrangements in the Parliament of Ghana, especially the leadership structure, affect members' access to information in the performance of their mandate.* Objective 4: *To examine how current institutional arrangements in the Parliament of Ghana, especially the leadership structure affect members' use of information in the performance of their mandate*

The findings cover the institutional arrangements focusing on the leadership structure, as well as the rules and procedures and practices in the Parliament of Ghana and how these shape members' access to and their use of information for their work. As Hall and Taylor (1996) point out “central to any institutional analysis is the question: how do institutions affect the behaviour of individuals? After all, it is through the actions of individuals that institutions have an effect on political outcomes” (Hall & Taylor, 1996 p.939).

As institutions constrain the actions of their members, so do the individuals shape the institutions within which they function (Peters, 2012). Also, the institutional arrangements shape the relevance of information and expertise to political outcomes (Bimber, 1991, 1996). The section among other things, looks at the committee system as a source of information and the use of urgent business rules and procedures in the Parliament of Ghana and how these

impact members' access and use of information. The findings presented in this chapter also cover how institutional arrangements shape members' use of information toward collective decisions and actions as well as for individual actions. It also presents findings on how rules and procedures shape members' use of information for debates and explore the circumstances that lead to MPs' ignoring information or being unable to use relevant information at their disposal.

The Committee System as a Source of Information

The Parliament of Ghana has the power to appoint committees. Committees are an integral part of the way in which Parliament is organized to perform its mandate. Parliamentary committees have the mandate to investigate and inquire into activities and administration of government ministries and departments. Committees of the Parliament of Ghana also have “the powers, rights and privileges of the High Court or a Justice of the High Court at a trial for” (Article 103) enforcing the attendance of witnesses, examining witnesses under oath, and compelling the production of documents, as well as issuing a commission or request to examine witnesses abroad (Article 103(6) of the 1992 Constitution; Standing Orders 155).

The study sought to investigate how MPs and Parliament benefited from this power to call for documents and witnesses when performing their roles. As appropriately stated by one interviewee “parliament works through its committees ... [and a] ...parliament is as good as its committees” (Interviewee 9). The expectation is that committees will rely on their power to enforce the attendance of witnesses, and compel the production of documents to get the needed information. Most studies highlight the lack of/inadequate number of

in-house technical experts and the overall limited access to the needed alternative technical information (Stapenhurst 2011; GINKS, 2015), a fact that is confirmed by the findings of this study.

Asked if Parliament and its members get the needed information to do the work Parliament is mandated to do, some interviewees noted that it is the duty of the committees to do all the necessary investigations and call individuals with the expertise in that subject matter to assist the members to understand the document and the issues before them (Interviewee 8, 9). An interviewee pointed out that whether a committee gets information or not depends on the committee (Interviewee 9). Another interviewee also stressed the fact that committees in parliament do get the necessary information if they really want it (Interviewee 10). These findings highlight the fact that it is well within the powers of a committee to serve as a critical point where Parliament can obtain valuable information needed for its work.

There is evidence to support the fact that when Parliament wants to make use of this provision and as well as use other avenues available to Parliament to get the needed information for its work it will do so. For example, evidence exists to show that there have been instances when Ghana's Parliament called for memoranda from the public for it to consider in reviewing bills before the House. An example was the call for memoranda for the Right to Information Bill through a press release dated 4th April 2018.

The work of the Parliament of Ghana during its consideration of the Zongo Development Fund Bill (2017), serves as another example of a committee exercising its power to call for information. The committee used the

expertise and experience of its members and also sought alternative views from experts who were not from the sponsoring ministry. In view of this extensive scrutiny, about 86 amendments were proposed at the initial stage of the law-making process leading to withdrawal of the bill to allow the Attorney-General's office to incorporate and then re-lay the bill before the House. The end result was a better bill which was read for the third time on Friday 10th November 2017 and subsequently assented to by the President.

The findings also show that there are other instances when Parliament does not use these provisions and powers of its committees to call witnesses and compel the production of documents. Ala-Adjetey (2006) lamented that committees did not use this provision enough, while the public responses to the occasional calls for memoranda were often unimpressive. The review of the Hansard and of Votes and Proceedings of the Parliament of Ghana showed that this trend might not have changed much. This is because these documents often reveal that committees meet with representatives and experts of the sponsoring Ministry, Department or Agency. Occasionally the Votes and Proceedings capture the details of other participants at meetings who are not from parliament or from MDAs but the documents do not provide any indication as to what expert support they gave the committee, if any. Committee reports also capture what they term "references" which lists documents that committees referred to during their deliberations.

Committee reports as captured in the Hansard do not capture committees' use of alternative sources of information including use of experts who are not from the executive arm of government. If Parliamentary committees are using alternative sources of information and expert advice then

this is not well reflected in official documentation. The tenets of the social contract theory require that citizens have a stake in the state as well as a right to participate in its affairs, directly or representatively. Based on these findings, the Parliament of Ghana which ought to provide the avenue for representational participation for Ghanaian citizens is not operating at its optimum to realise these ideals.

Parliament's Dependence on the Executive for Crucial Information

An interviewee explained that, in practice, there remains a challenge with committees calling for papers and for witnesses and getting alternative expert inputs. While parliamentary committees sometimes call for papers and witnesses, in the end, the common practice is for most committees to rely on technical experts from the executive. *“The technical officer who supports parliament to [get expert input], is the officer of the executive”* (Interviewee 8). A number of interviewees saw this state of affairs, where Parliament relies on technical officers of the executive for their information, as wrong especially because Parliament has the mandate to oversee executive work and to promote accountability in the country (Interviewees 5, 6, 8, 9).

An interviewee elaborated on how the current practice of committees relying on executive experts deprive parliament of alternative advice. According to the interviewee, government technical experts as appointees of government would normally hold discussions on the central issues with the executive for a government position to be taken before the bill or loan agreement is presented to the House. Therefore, when these same experts appear before a parliamentary committee, some of these experts become intimidated, especially when senior government officials such as the chief

directors and the ministers are present at such meetings. These experts therefore echo the government position at the meeting and fail to share with the committee their alternative views or their initial positions on these issues even if they have them (Interviewee 8). Information from the interviews and a review of some of the Hansard show that committees rarely obtain alternative information from experts outside the executive. According to interviewees rarely do committees invite other experts, except the few occasions when the committees are not satisfied with the explanation that the promoters of the document share with them (Interviewees 5, 8, 10).

In sum Interviewees agree that members of Parliamentary Committees do not get enough alternative views on matters that come before them (Interviewees 5, 6, 8, 9). For example, Interviewee 6 asserts that *“it is just the proponents [of the Bill or Loan Agreement] who’ll come to you and say ..., this is what we have to do”*. This dependence on the executive and its technocrats and experts seems entrenched especially in the law-making process and in the budget review process, where the proponents of the bills, or presenter of the loan agreements who happen to be members of the executive and the ministry, organize workshops often outside Accra for the members of the committee. Called *“Facilitation”* (Interviewee 9), the sponsors of the bill or loan agreement pay for the workshop and most of the related costs. While this in itself may not be wrong an ideal situation would have been for parliament to use its own resources to cover such meetings so as to maintain its independence and autonomy.

These meetings create the opportunity for the sponsors of the bill to provide information, explain the terminologies and technicalities involved and

why the law needs to be enacted. Two interviewees were of the opinion that in the majority of the cases this facilitation does not influence the content of committee reports presented to parliament. Both acknowledged that this practice of facilitation is often accompanied by executive pressure which prevents committees from having more time and hence members have limited opportunity to get inputs from other experts. (Interviewee 9, 10).

In spite of some advantages outlined by some interviewees, it is obvious that the committees and members of the Parliament of Ghana, without access to pertinent technical information and alternative expert advice have become dependent on the advice and information from the very group the legislature is tasked to oversee. This is corroborated by previous research works which point out that without adequate access to alternative expert advice and information, MPs become dependent on the expert advice and information from the executive and government bureaucrats, the very group the legislature is tasked to oversee (Sabatier & Whiteman 1985; Stapenhurst, 2011).

Members Access to Key Documents

Respondents were asked about access to key documents that come before the House. They identified timely access to documents including access to committee reports and loan agreements as a challenge. The findings revealed that the common practice when it comes to making documents available to members and staff in Parliament, is for the Ministry or Agency presenting a bill or loan agreement to bring to the Table Office of the Parliament enough copies, ideally about 300 copies, of the document for onward distribution. Usually the proponents of bills present enough copies to Parliament for distribution.

However, for loan agreements there are often far fewer copies presented to Parliament by the sponsoring government agencies. Some interviewees explained that these shortfalls happen primarily because loan agreements are “*very voluminous*” or “*bulky*” documents (Interviewee 9, 10). An additional explanation (as offered by Interviewee 10) was that even in instances where enough copies are brought to the House for all members, less than one percent (1%) of MPs would actually read the document hence the trend. A plausible reason could be because these documents are voluminous and highly technical. They are also often associated with short layover time before debate on the floor of the House.

Members of Parliament also sometimes do not get timely access to key documents. This is evident in parliamentary records which show that there are instances when members get key documents such as committee reports, very late often because they are presented as urgent business. The following excerpt from the *Parliamentary Debates of 6th February 2018* of the Seventh Parliament highlights such an instance when members received copies of a committee report very late.

...Mr Speaker, I got my copy of the Report only this morning -- [Interruption] -- and all Hon Members got their copies this morning, so why the rush? Why are they in a hurry? [Interruption.] Mr Speaker, a 146 page Report. In the interest of transparency and accountability, this matter cannot be railroaded through Parliament... (Minority leader – Parliamentary Debates, 06 February 2018).

According to Interviewees 4, 8, 9 the late submission of key documents such as committee reports, is a strategy sometimes used by the leadership of the majority in Parliament to deal with contentious issues or when the majority

wants to get things through without much scrutiny. This strategy has been used by both major political parties in Ghana, that is, the NPP and the NDC when they were the majority in Parliament (Interviewees 4, 8). In these situations, the minority leadership will sometimes complain on the floor of the House or stage a “walkout” which then puts the matter in the public domain.

There have also been instances when the circumstances or deadlines involved compel the leadership of parliament to present such Bills or agreements as urgent business. Such situations can result in late or limited access to key documents (Interviewee 4). The late access to key documents together with members sometimes not getting key documents such as loan agreements at all remains a recurring challenge.

Parliamentary Committees Minutes as Sources of Information

Minutes of committees constitute an important aspect of documentation for Parliaments. Committee minutes capture crucial information including evidence provided by witnesses (Erskine May, 1997). In Ghana’s Parliament, committees are required to submit to the Table Office minutes of proceedings with the report of the committee (Standing Order 212 (2)). Minutes of evidence ought to be made available to members of the committee and to the House, if necessary, provided the issue of confidentiality and the power to share among members as defined in the Standing Orders are followed. In practice this is rarely done, a practice an interviewee described as dangerous (Interviewee 10).

It is unclear why the fundamental task of writing committee minutes is not being practised by the Parliament of Ghana. Without taking and producing minutes for committee meetings, the Parliament of Ghana continues to lose out

on a huge treasure trove of information and knowledge that could serve as sources of valuable information for MPs especially those who are not members of the committee to help them make meaningful inputs during debates. Such information can also be important for future work as well as contribute to building a depository of institutional memory for the Parliament of Ghana. The votes and proceeding of the parliament which is produced after each sitting of the House provides a list of all the people who attended a committee meeting including experts and those who might have appeared as witness. It however does not capture their contributions to the meeting neither does it capture the debates held during the meeting.

Nature of Parliamentary Business and Information Overload

Paradoxically, though members of Ghana's parliament sometimes do not get access to key documents and analysis they need for their work, they also experience information overload. Information overload is a challenge that confronts parliamentarians in this modern era (IPU, 2009, Nalumaga 2012,). With increasing competition from lobbyists in more advanced democracies and organizations offering their own version of information assistance for parliamentarians (IPU, 2009), the tendency to produce more information for political deliberations (Demaj 2015), and voluminous inflows of information for parliamentarians (Nalumaga 2012), Members of Parliament do experience information overload.

As indicated by one interviewee there are situations when the volume of information coming in daily especially the documents that MPs receive, information received from members of the constituency and the plurality of information from media houses lead to MPs' increasingly experiencing

information overload. As the interviewee aptly describes it *“There are lots of documentation in parliament and sometimes I would rather say that we have an overload of information. These documents you see (interviewee pointing to a pile of documents on the desk) all of them have information for our work and some of these require some reading”* (Interviewee 5).

The challenge though, as recognized by interviewees 5 and 6, is not necessarily the volumes of materials but the unstructured nature of all the information members receive contributing to this overload *“we get a lot of information which is not structured, so you need someone to analyse the information for you”* (Interviewee 5). “Unstructured information” poses a real difficulty for MPs especially in this modern world, where there is advancement of technology, explosion of social media, fast and easy dissemination of information coupled with the challenges of misinformation from “fake news” (fabricated news) and “deepfakes” (fake footages, images, audios and videos).

When linked to information presented earlier, which portrayed the limited number of technical experts in Ghana’s Parliament, it becomes clear that the absence of the full complement of experts, assistants and research support system in the Parliament of Ghana has resulted in members having to contend with making sense of voluminous information on their own, creating information overload. Other African parliaments such as Uganda, Kenya and South Africa have better equipped information units with subject matter experts who analyse documents for MPs to use (Draman et al., 2017). Such support would minimise the “unstructured information” MPs have to deal with. The absence of a similar support system for members of Ghana’s Parliament places them at a disadvantage.

Intervening Variables – Barriers when Accessing Information

Identifying intervening variables in members' information behaviour is important in understanding the factors that either support or hinder members' access to information and use of such information. In the context of this research, most of the factors identified through the literature and also through interviews were barriers associated with access to information and the use of such information. This section therefore focuses on institutional and resource factors that impact MPs' access to information. Subsequent sections look more in-depth at how layover time not only affects access but ultimately limits timeline for use of relevant information for important actions and decisions of the House. In this section the findings on how important respondents found specific institutional and resource barriers when accessing information are presented.

Table 28 shows the frequencies of types of barriers that hinder MPs' access to information. As is evident from the table, about one-third of respondents described as somewhat of a barrier the following: the limited access to analysed technical documents, limited number of in-house experts in the research department, lack of appropriate facilities at the library and sometimes no access/limited access to loan agreements.

While 17 respondents (21.1%) saw *limited or no access to content of bills* as “an important barrier”, 11 respondents (13.6%) also identified *limited access to loan agreement* as “an important barrier. These findings are supported by the interview findings which revealed that on some occasions not all members get copies of loan agreements presented to the House partly because

such documents tend to be very bulky, so agencies presenting them submit fewer copies.

Concerning lack of appropriate facilities for optimal use of the parliamentary library, while some respondents identified lack of facilities in the library as a very important barrier others thought it was not a barrier at all. Previous research had revealed that the patronage of services of the library overall was very low (Alemna & Skouby, 2000; Ofori-Dwumfuo & Addo, 2012; Osman & Agyei, 2014) in spite of the fact that the library provides relevant services to meet the needs of MPs (Ofori-Dwumfuo & Addo, 2012). Some of the reasons identified by researchers were that the library had old and outdated materials (Alemna and Skouby, 2000; Ofori-Dwumfuo & Addo, 2012; Osman & Agyei, 2014); MPs were not satisfied with the services (Alemna and Skouby, 2000); and MPs' busy schedules made it near impossible for them to use the library (Ofori-Dwumfuo & Addo, 2012).

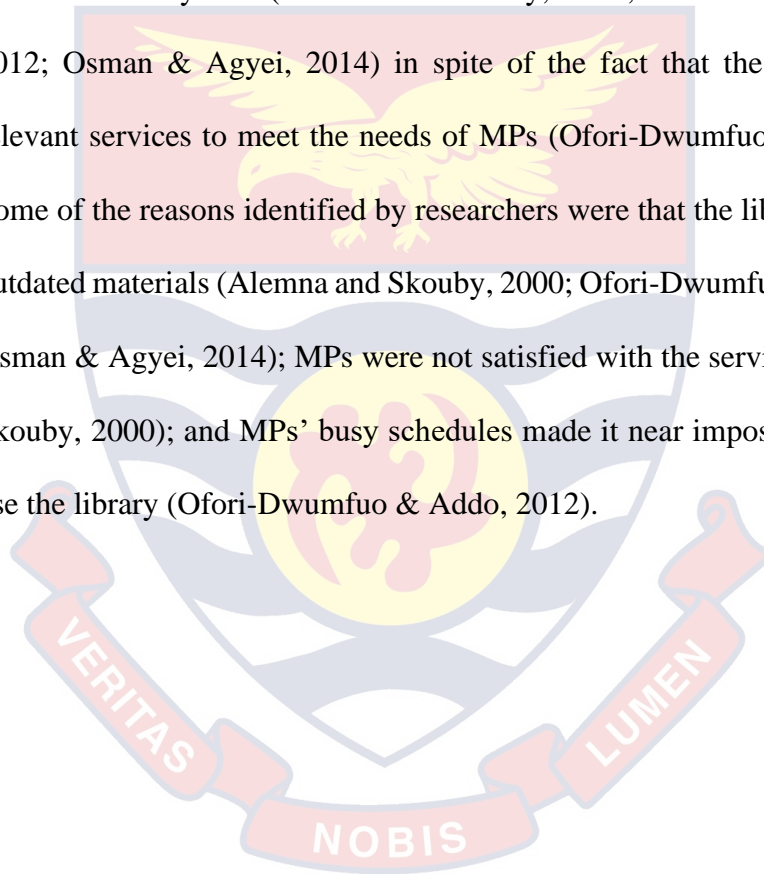


Table 28:

Barriers to Accessing Information

Intervening Variables - <i>barriers when accessing information</i>	1 indicates Very Important Barrier No. %	2 No. %	3 No. %	4 No. %	5 indicates Not a barrier at all No. %	Non- response No. %	Total No. %
Limited or no access to analysed technical documents	8 9.9	20 24.7	27 33.3	13 16.0	3 3.7	10 12.3	81 100
Limited or no access to content of bills	8 9.9	17 21.0	19 23.5	17 21.0	9 11.1	11 13.6	81 100
Limited number of in-House experts in the research department	9 11.1	15 18.5	30 37.0	9 11.1	8 9.9	10 12.3	81 100
Limited or no access to loan agreement documents	11 13.6	11 13.6	26 32.1	15 18.5	8 9.9	10 12.3	81 100
Lack of appropriate facilities for optimal use of the parliamentary library	9 11.1	10 12.3	26 32.1	15 18.5	10 12.3	11 13.6	81 00

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Additional analysis of the data also shows that with respect to the question of intervening variables especially institutional and resource barriers when accessing information, male and female respondents differed in their responses (Mann Whitney U = 219.500, p-value = .045). Male respondents had a mean rank of 37.72 and female respondents had a mean rank of 24.79 (Table 29). Female respondents identified the lack of access to key documents, in-house experts, and lack of appropriate facilities for optimal use of the library as important barriers more than their male counterparts.

As pointed out earlier, research, often focusing on women, show that the experiences of male and female with regard to information differ (Rowley et al., 2016; Nalumaga & Seldén, 2014; Nalumaga, 2009, 2012). A 2014 study of

Ugandan female MPs for example, revealed that “gender manifested in the sexual division of labour, the unequal expectations of female MPs and interactions in the home”. This had implications for information acquisition and information activities of women MPs (Nalumaga & Seldén, 2014, p. 221). This is not surprising when viewed from a broader context of the dynamics of gender issues as they relate to the legislature. Advocates on the international stage especially have called for legislatures to move toward becoming “Gender-sensitive parliament”, which is defined as a parliament that responds to the need and interest of both men and women in its structure, operations methods and its work (Munn-Rivard, 2012). Gender-sensitive parliaments remove barriers to women’s full participation and offer a positive example or model to society at large. The objective is to improve male and female experiences, including their access to and use of information in the performance of their mandate.

Table 29:

Mann Whitney Test of Difference: Barriers to Accessing Information

Gender	Freq.	Mean Rank
Male	58	37.72
Female	12	24.79
Total	70	

Mann Whitney U = 219.500, p-value = .045

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Access to Information for Oversight Function

The findings from the interviews show that interviewees overwhelmingly acknowledged that committees of the Parliament of Ghana were not doing very much in the area of oversight (Interviewees 4, 5, 8, 9, 10). Described by one respondent as “*the area we are still wobbling ... except for*

the political high profile cases” (Interviewee 4), the findings point to the fact that Parliament is not holding most of the Ministries, Departments and Agencies as accountable as it should. Interviewee 8 points out that

“there is a lot of work to be done ... our parliament has been adjudged as one of the best when it comes to passing laws, but [when it comes to] oversight we are [ranked] last but one”. This view is supported by a study that showed that Parliament’s oversight and legislative capacity seems “generally weak in some areas” (NCCE 2015 p.3).

The inadequacies in parliamentary oversight function of the Parliament of Ghana is evident in the work of the parliamentary committees. Parliamentary committees have moved from a position of strong bipartisanship in their work (Parliamentary Centre, 2004) to a place where party discipline is often invoked to ensure the majority party supports executive position (Brierley, 2012). Stapenhurst cites the example of a senior member of the Ghanaian Public Accounts Committee (PAC) who pointed out that the PAC, one of the most active committees in parliament, will only be successful tackling minor corruption infractions because if “the committee tried to investigate cases of grand corruption, party discipline would be invoked to ensure that the majority [governing] party MPs on the Committee would squash enquiries” (Stapenhurst, 2011 p. 111).

Parliament and its committees also lack access to adequate resources especially access to the requisite information for their work. “We [the Parliament of Ghana as an institution] are expected to have the capacity to scrutinize government at any given time but unfortunately, our information

capacity by way of what we are able to access and what we already have is so poor that we cannot hold people in check” the Speaker of the 7th Parliament at the launch of the Research and Information week of IDRIG, Parliament, (Annoh & Kwakye, 2018).

Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government mandated by laws/Acts to report regularly to Parliament rarely comply. The few that do, present these reports very late. An example that gained public attention were the delays in reporting to parliament by intelligence agencies in the country as mandated by the Security and Intelligence Agencies Act (Act 526).

Parliament’s oversight work is carried out through oversight tools at the disposal of Parliament. These include the committee system, questions members ask ministers of state and the vetting of senior government appointments. The various committees of parliament also have the authority to oversee the work of Ministries, Department and Agencies including monitoring progress in the implementation of approved policies and programmes.

One area in which the Parliament of Ghana seems to have made some progress in getting access to relevant information for monitoring is the regularity of reports of the Auditor-General. Members of the Public Accounts Committee and other members of Parliament do receive the Auditor-General’s report regularly. The Public Accounts Committee also through its public hearings utilizes its power to call for witnesses and compel the production of documents. The PAC is one of the few committees in the House that receives the needed information for its members to perform its oversight role, the same cannot be said for the other committees especially the subject-matter related

select committees of Parliament. Though the 1992 Constitution and Standing Orders make provisions for committees to call witnesses and ask for documents this is rarely enforced.

Follow-up mechanisms to track how MDAs are implementing committee recommendations and observations is also quite weak. In other parliaments, for example in Zambia and in the United Kingdoms, after the House has adopted committee reports, copies with the appropriate covering letters are forwarded to the relevant ministries to take the necessary action based on the comments and recommendations made by the committees (National Assembly of Zambia, 2019; House of Commons UK, 2019). The MDAs are then expected to submit to the National Assembly and table in the House “Action-Taken Reports”. A similar practice in the UK House of Commons, for example, is for Government to respond to reports of the Public Account Committee and published these in the form of Treasury Minutes (National Assembly of Zambia, 2019; House of Commons UK, 2019).

Interviewees identified a number of contributory factors for the poor performance of oversight role by the Parliament of Ghana. Some of these factors also affect parliament’s performance of other mandates.

The findings showed that committees have the budget and can hire technical persons they need to explain bills and other important matters before them, but unfortunately parliament hardly used the budget (Interviewees 5, 10). In the words of interviewee 5 “*There is a budget line resource for papers, research work and other pieces of information, but the reality is that it is scarcely used. We scarcely use that budget*” (Interviewee 5).

Interviewees 9 and 10 contended that the constitutional provision in Article 78(1) of the 1992 Constitution negatively affects parliamentary oversight. The constitutional provision requires the appointment of at least fifty percent of ministers from the Parliament which they argue, deprives Parliament of its “best material”. *“It appears that the government will always take the cream and appoint them as ministers”* (Interviewee 10). The provision to appoint such a large number of ministers from Parliament also creates a situation where MPs want promotions [appointment as ministers and as members of Boards] (Interviewee 9). According to Interviewee 9, these MPs are therefore not critical of the executive branch and the bureaucracy.

Another contributory factor identified relates to the provisions of the Standing Orders of parliament and the practice of composing committees in the fourth republic parliaments. This results in most of the committees being chaired by the majority caucus. Since the beginning of the Fourth Republic the majority in Parliament have been from the same party as the ruling government. As a result of this, the majority of government ministers are from parliament, while most chairpersons of committees are also from the majority (the ruling party). There is therefore the tendency for some chairpersons to see themselves as subservient to the minister of the ministry they oversee; they are therefore not critical of the minister/ministry (Interviewee 10).

An overarching problem identified by interviewees was excessive partisanship in the work of Ghana’s Parliament. When asked what the greatest challenge facing Ghana parliament was, a very senior former member of the leadership of Parliament had this to say: “the greatest challenge that I think is bedevilling parliament ... is partisanship” (Interviewee 9). Another interviewee

lamented that “ultimately the positions we [MPs] take are partisan positions... [which] becomes overbearing and clouds everything (Interviewee 6). This corroborates findings from other studies that have highlighted the fact that excessive partisanship in the Parliament of Ghana constrains the House (Aggrey-Darkoh, 2012; Brierley, 2012) in the performance of its mandate and provides the executive with “extra leverage to control the parliament” (Brierley p. 419).

Research has established that party loyalty is strong in the Parliament of Ghana because of the range of benefits that the political party can offer MPs. MPs of the majority caucus (also the governing party) have an advantage. They are often rewarded with appointments to ministerial portfolios, committee chairmanships, foreign travel, membership of international governmental associations, leadership positions, board memberships of public and private corporations, and protection of their seat during primaries. Members of the minority caucus MPs (opposition party), also get some rewards. They include appointment as ranking members in committees, support during re-election, and opportunities to speak on behalf of the party (Stapenhurst, 2011). These strong party affiliations therefore cloud the effective execution of parliamentary mandate especially parliament’s oversight of the executive branch.

Access to Information for Financial Control Functions

Another mandate of parliament that emerged as important when it comes to information and parliament is the financial control role. The findings from the questionnaire had established that the MPs frequently needed information for financial control related roles. The next section therefore delves deeper into this to ascertain members’ access to information for financial

control functions especially budget approval and financial oversight. Parliaments play a role in the entire budget process from drafting or formulation to approval, implementation and auditing. A number of international organizations and groups recognize that improving parliaments' scrutiny of budgets is needed for stronger accountability and reduction in corruption (Santiso, 2004; OECD, 2002). In reviewing national budgets and economic policies, members need access to independent budget analyses to evaluate the budgetary implications of proposed amendments among other things (Wehner, 2004; Folscher, 2006).

While the study shows that, overall, members lack access to alternative technical analysis, it also highlights the fact that members' lack of technical knowhow when it comes to the budget and financial matters makes their need for budget information extremely high. As an interviewee described it "*MPs are not able to disaggregate the various issues in the budget*" to assess if for example, the budget is gender sensitive, or if it is a pro-poor budget (Interviewee 8). This is not unusual and not unique to Ghana's parliament. That is why, as Wehner (2004) highlights, access to independent budget analysis to support legislators is important. Legislators in Africa and indeed in Ghana, need such information (Draman et al., 2017; Stapenhurst 2011; Parliament of Ghana (PoG), 2018).

Budget Office / Scrutiny Office

Access to independent budget analysis to support legislators' work on the budget and financial matters is important. This is because legislators need such information to help them understand the content of such financial documents, in order to assess the integrity of the figures, as well as evaluate the

implications of amendments they might propose (Wehner 2004). Most parliaments in OECD countries, for example, have access to several sources of technical capacity for budget analysis (OECD, 2011). Also, a number of African countries including Kenya, South Africa and Uganda, unlike Ghana, have functional Budget offices that support MPs with budget analysis for review of economic policy statements and budgets.

To improve MPs' access to quality analysis on the budget and other financial matters several efforts have been made by the Parliament of Ghana dating back years. It started with efforts to establish a Budget Office and in more recent times emphasis has been on the concept of setting up a Scrutiny Office in the Parliament of Ghana. These efforts date back to the beginning of the Fourth Republican Parliament and yet the study findings show that the Parliament of Ghana today does not have a well-established functioning Budget office/Scrutiny office. Appendix 4 gives a detailed chronicle of some key events and timelines on efforts at setting up a Budget Office/Scrutiny office.

In spite of efforts by previous Speakers of Parliament and a number of very senior MPs including leadership of the House, minimal progress has been made in setting up the Budget Office. Previous efforts led to a draft Budget Act which was never enacted. The newer concept of a Scrutiny Office, led to a policy document that was approved by the Parliamentary Service Board and the assignment of an Acting Director to the Scrutiny Office (Interviewee 5, 8, 9). Yet neither the Budget Office nor the Scrutiny Office is operational today.

The two major political parties in Ghana over the years have been in leadership in Parliament, in the executive and at the Ministry of Finance.

Different challenges have emerged and different reasons have been given by both political parties. Ultimately both political parties delayed the set up and operationalization of a non-partisan independent expert analysis division in the Parliament of Ghana. Other countries that started their efforts later than Ghana, have already set up such independent units. These include Nigeria which set up a unit in 2012 and South Africa which set up its unit in 2013.

Interviewees made a number of observations that seem to shed some light on why in spite of continued financial support from key development partners over the years, and with champions of the idea who were very high-ranking members of the leadership of the House, neither the Budget Office nor the Scrutiny Office is a reality today (Interviewees 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10).

One of the observations was that the policy was not clearly defined at the onset when there was a push for a Budget Act and a budget office. Also, such initiatives stalled once the proponents or key persons left their positions. With regard to the budget office, for example, the lead person at a point was made a Minister of State and was replaced as a Leader of the House. With the scrutiny office, there was a change of the party in the majority in the Seventh Parliament, and when key leadership members pushing the scrutiny office idea failed to return to Parliament the momentum declined (Interviewee 5, 8). Additionally, in spite of ready financial support from development partners, priorities of parliament seem to change after each election. For example, the current Parliament is focusing more on setting up a Legislative Drafting Office (Interviewee 7).

Another observation was that after elections, when a new parliament is formed with changes in parliamentary leadership including speakers, the tendency is for the new Speaker to adopt a different approach in order to earn personal credit. Furthermore, there always seemed to be a conflict between the executive and the leadership of Parliament in pushing for a Budget or Scrutiny Office (Interviewee 5). Also, relying on the interpretation of Article 108, the executive, when it suits it, would argue that the process of enacting a budget act falls within the private member's bill category because it has financial implications.

In sum, the findings show that two approaches on providing independent technical information support especially on budget and financial issues to the Parliament of Ghana have been pursued over the years. The first is the setting up of an in-house budget office and the enactment of a budget act to enhance the role of parliament in the Budget Process.

The second is the setting up of a Scrutiny Office with the mandate to identify and hire experts on a need-be basis to execute specific requests for technical analysis for parliament and committees as they play the different roles including law-making. Regardless of the approach to be adopted it is not clear if there will be enough political will on the part of parliamentary leadership and the Executive to get Ghana's Parliament a fully functional and independent source of expert advice and information.

Debates on the government's Financial Policy (National budgets) continue to be along strong partisan lines. The debates on the 2019 Budget and Economic Policy Statement for example, had accusations and counter

accusations from both sides of the House about inaccuracy of facts and information presented by members, as well as the constant back and forth as to which regime had performed better when it comes to the country's economy (Parliamentary Debates, Official Report, November 20th 2018).

Records Keeping and Access to Information

Poor records keeping especially at the committee level impacts negatively on access to historical and important documents that are needed for continuity in the work of the legislature. An interviewee attributes this trend to the way meetings are conducted and also to the large number of committee membership (Interview 10). Another interviewee recounted how important documents could not be traced for further work. These included the draft Budget Act that Parliament after years of work had produced as well as other important historical documents. These, in most cases, were borrowed by members who either misplaced them or never returned them, or were in the custody of staff who later said they could not locate them (Interviewee 2, 8).

Urgent Parliamentary Business and Members' Access to Information

The Standing Orders of the Parliament of Ghana has certain provisions that ensure members have adequate time to work on issues that come before them. These provisions give members adequate time to seek information to meet their information needs as they play their role. One of the most crucial of these provisions is Standing Order 80 (1). The order states that: “ Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this Order, no motion shall be debated until at least forty-eight hours have elapsed (this period not including days on which the House does not sit) after notice as prescribed in Order 76 (Notice of Motions) has been given” (Standing Order 80 (1)).

The provision is particularly important when committee reports are presented to the House. This is because it gives all members an opportunity to study the committee's detailed analysis and recommendations on the matter. For members, especially those who were not on the committee, this provides a valuable source of information and analysis that can guide their contribution on the issue. The 48-hours gives ample time for members to review such information.

There are also other provisions in the Standing Orders that allow the House to carry out business that is deemed urgent. Examples include Standing Order (64) for urgent questions and Standing Order 119 for urgent bills. Furthermore, there are provisions that make it possible for any member to suspend a standing order with the consent of the Speaker. In practice when deemed urgent, the House can set aside Standing Order 80 (1) and proceed with business without the 48-hour length of notice before debates.

An interviewee points out that the Standing Order 80 (1) "*is to give every MP enough time to peruse the document properly*" (Interviewee 5). Yet, as pointed out by another interviewee, these provisions are regularly set aside, referring to a common phrase in the Order Papers and the Hansard of Parliament "*...notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order 80 (1)*" (Interviewee 6). And in this respect, Interviewee 6 asserts that "*... You know ... we are 25 years as a democracy we shouldn't be doing this, it should be the exception rather than the norm*" (Interviewee 6). Here is an example of a Chairman of a Committee seeking approval for the suspension of Standing Order 80 (1).

“Mr Speaker, I beg to move, that notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order 80 (1) which require that no Motion shall be debated until at least forty-eight hours have elapsed between the date on which notice of the Motion is given and the date on which the Motion is moved, the Motion for the adoption of the Report of the Finance Committee on the Request for waiver of Import Duties, Import VAT, ECOWAS Levy, EXIM Levy, Special Import Levy and other approved imports of up to the Ghana Cedi equivalent of one hundred and seventy-six million, seven hundred and ninety-nine thousand, one hundred and ninety-three United States dollars (\$176,799,193.00) for fifteen years on equipment and materials to be procured for the Implementation of the National Identification Project *may be moved today*” (Parliamentary Debates, 23rd March 2018- Chairman of the Committee).

These provisions and practice as pointed out by interviewees do not only prevent members from getting access to content of bills, loan agreements and committee reports, but also limit the ability of committees to call experts to provide additional information for consideration. Furthermore, as already indicated, they limit the time available for MPs who may not be members of the committee but might want to contribute to the matter, to review committee reports and make inputs into the matter at hand.

When parliamentary business is presented as urgent or under a certificate of urgency, the effect with regard to access to information can also vary for the majority caucus members as against its effect on the members of the minority caucus. While the majority party would rely on the ministers who presented the matter to the House to provide them with information, the minority now have to hurriedly make arrangements through their information support base to get the needed information to interrogate the urgent matter (Interviewee 4). Under certificate of urgency, it may not always be possible for

the minority to get such information on time. The results from interviewees showed that they were of the opinion that the provisions in the Standing Orders for urgent business especially the provision that sets aside the 48-hour timelines required before debates, ought to be used sparingly when passing bills and approving loan agreements (Interviewees 5, 6, 9).

“Back loading” of Parliamentary Calendar and Members’ Access to

Information

Another recurring challenge identified by interviewees as hindering scrutiny and review of very important issues and matters that come before the House is the “back loading” or “end loading” of the parliamentary schedule. Back loading or end loading refers to a situation where in the last two weeks or so of the parliamentary schedule, the order papers are loaded with many loan agreements, bills and several other important matters that need to be acted upon within a short period of time prior to parliamentary recess.

Generally, the workload of the Parliament of Ghana during any given meeting can be very heavy. For example, during the eleven-week period of the second meeting of the Seventh Parliament, records show that Parliament worked on 60 statements, 12 bills, passed into law 5 bills, 3 Constitutional/legal Instruments, 30 conventions and loan agreements, 99 questions; 10 urgent questions; and tabled 66 committee reports and 99 Motions.

To improve its efficiency, the Parliament of Ghana has in place procedures that allow it to schedule Parliamentary business. Routinely, on Fridays, the Majority Leader who chairs the Business Committee submits to the House the order in which the Business of the House shall be taken during the

upcoming week (Standing Order 53). In practice the spread of the workload over the weeks of a meeting however is not even. The trend often is that during the initial weeks of sitting of Parliament its schedule is relatively light while the final few weeks of the Parliamentary schedule is loaded with many loan agreements, bills and several other important matters. An interviewee shared his frustration with this trend

“In fact when I first entered parliament I got so angry about waste of public time. You come first 3 weeks or so no serious work is done, then a week before rising all the loan agreements are coming ... certain bills are brought” (Interviewee 5).

The following highlights this phenomenon of back loading of the Parliamentary Business. Appendix 5 shows a comparison of scheduled items on the Order Papers for first day of sitting compared with the items scheduled for the last day of sitting for all 3 Meetings in 2018. Repeatedly there are more business items for the last day than there are for the first day of sitting.

A closer look at the order papers for two sittings during the Second Meeting of the Second Session of the Seventh Parliament clearly highlights this phenomenon. The Order paper of the first day of sitting, May 15th 2018, had a total of 10 items on the Parliamentary Business for that day including 2 scheduled committee meetings. There were no motions to be filed, no bills at the consideration stage, no conventions or loan agreements and no questions for ministers. The order paper for the last day of sitting for the second meeting dated 27th July 2018 on the other hand showed a different picture. There were a total of 36 items listed for Parliamentary Business compared to only five items on the first day of sitting. These included 6 papers to be presented, 5 bills at

consideration stage, 7 questions to be asked, statements, 2 committee meetings and 16 different motions to be moved (Appendix 6).

Parliament had to extend sitting by an additional day in order for it to complete business on this order paper. One of the key agreements considered by Parliament on that day was the Master Project Support Agreement (MPSA) between the Government of the Republic of Ghana and Sinohydro Corporation Limited of China. The MPSA was for approximately two billion United States Dollars (US\$2 Billion) for the Construction of Priority Infrastructure Projects. Described as a barter and not a loan, the arrangement required Ghana to mine and refine bauxite (alumina or aluminium) from the Atewa and other forest reserves in the country and use this to offset \$2 billion worth of priority infrastructure projects to be built by the Chinese. This important agreement was presented to Parliament during its last week of sitting. The timelines from the date of presentation of the MPSA to its resolution by the House was five days. It is a practical example not only of back loading of the agenda but also demonstrates the short timeline Parliament has to scrutinise important agreements that have major impact on its citizens.

Interviewees see the back loading of the parliamentary calendar as a strategy sometimes used by the executive and the leadership of parliament to get certain things through without too much scrutiny (Interviewees 4, 5, 8, 9, and 10). This is a situation well recognised by the leadership of the House. The Minority Chief Whip of the Minority caucus, for example, at a press briefing on 31st January 2019 cited back loading of the parliamentary business as a challenge. This echoes earlier complaints by other members who questioned the

heavy workload scheduled for Parliament usually a few days before the House goes on recess.

Interviewees gave other reasons why the back loading of the parliamentary calendar persists. One interviewee was of the view that while it may be true that leadership and the executive take advantage of the situation to push through their priority agenda, the back loading of the agenda was also as a result of a weak public sector in the country. The interviewee argued that because the public sector is weak, processing of critical matters is not fast enough creating the urgency to meet deadlines which in turn leads to back loading of the legislature's agenda. The interviewee cited the example where staff in senior managerial positions and ministers of these ministries often contend with having to sign documents and authorise important work agreements at the very last minute (Interviewee 8). The detrimental effect of the back loading of the parliamentary calendar is well appreciated among the parliamentary leadership. On a number of occasions leadership of Parliament have lamented that MPs were not given the required opportunity to subject loan agreements and bills to in-depth scrutiny before they were approved – Minority Leader – 6th Parliament, November 2016, Minority Chief Whip – 7th Parliament, March 2019 (“Long hours of parliamentary sittings health risk,” 2019; “Parliament Didn’t Scrutinise Many Items Before They Were Approved,” 2016).

It is clear from the findings that while it may not be the original intent, the leadership of the majority in parliament does take advantage of the i) heavy workload of the House a few days before recess, as well as use the ii) provision for urgent business especially the provision for suspending the 48-hour layover

required for debates of motions, to quickly get through critical bills and loan agreements without much scrutiny.

In sum, parliamentary committees work on bills, loan agreements, international agreements statutory instruments and many other key issues. In addition to routine meetings often held on the premises of parliament, there are also meetings often in the form of working sessions/workshops held outside parliament mainly funded by the MDAs sponsoring the bill or loan agreement that the committee is working on. The findings show that there is limited alternative experts' input in general in the work of committees. There is also a lack of consistency in the extent to which committees exercise their power to call for documents, witnesses and information. The call for inputs through memoranda from the public to inform committee work is also irregular. These current practices create a situation where often experts from the executive become the sole providers of technical advice and input for committee members in scrutinizing bills, loan agreements and other important matters that come before the House.

Successive Speakers, leadership of Parliament and members of Parliament are well aware of these deficiencies facing committees, MPs and Parliament as an institution. There have therefore been numerous initiatives in the past to enact a budget Act, set up a budget office and a scrutiny office all aimed at providing the Parliament of Ghana with access to alternative expert advice. Unfortunately, these initiatives have not materialised.

The Speaker of the Seventh Parliament in his inaugural speech to the House acknowledged that parliament needs researchers beyond national service

personnel. Interviewees also attested to the fact that the Speaker of the Seventh Parliament encourages committees to get experts to assist them when working on bills and other matters. The empowerment of committees to use specialist advisors to provide information that is not readily available or to “elucidate matters of complexity” (Erskine May, p. 662) is the ideal expected of Parliamentary Committees.

Lack of Financial Autonomy and Access to Information

Access to adequate resources – financial, human and organizational – is viewed as one of the critical components of the power dynamics of political systems impacting the overall effectiveness of the legislative arm of government (Beetham 2006). In the context of this study, availability of resources is crucial because the best practice expected of legislatures towards curbing information asymmetry which includes engaging independent subject experts, establishing library and research services and creating strong committee systems is costly. A study by the IPU (2017) revealed that, for legislators, challenges relating to resources were by far the most widely cited category, particularly among African parliamentarians. Financial constraints are felt at the level of the parliament and the individual MP.

With regard to the Parliament of Ghana, the 1992 Constitution guarantees the financial autonomy. Specifically, Article 197(2) (b) of the Constitution provides “that the financial estimates of public services whose expenditure are a charge on the consolidated fund either by the Constitution or by an Act of parliament are not to be voted on but are to be laid before Parliament for the information of members only” (Parliament of Ghana, 2004, p.15.) In addition to this constitutional provision, the Act that sets up the

Parliamentary service also provides that administrative and operational expense of the services such as salaries and allowances are charged on the consolidated fund. With these provisions the expectation then is the budget of the Parliamentary service and Parliament will not be subjected to the routine procedure of review and control by the Ministry of Finance and the executive (Parliament of Ghana, 2004). The reality however is the exact opposite. For years the Parliament of Ghana has had to present its budget to the Ministry of Finance, like any other government ministry, giving the Ministry the opportunity to decide how much the parliament eventually gets. Efforts by Parliamentary leadership, a notable example being that of Rt. Hon. Ala-Adjetey, to enforce the constitutional provision towards financial autonomy have largely been unsuccessful.

The Parliament of Ghana therefore lacks financial autonomy regardless of the constitutional provision and provisions in the Parliamentary Service Act that guarantee the financial autonomy of the Parliament of Ghana. This negatively impacts the capacity of the institution when it comes to adequacy of resources: human, financial and organizational. Efforts towards financial autonomy in the past have not been successful. Notable among these were the team efforts by Speaker of the 3rd Parliament and the Majority leader of the Parliament at that time.

Some progress was made through the enactment of a law that allows parliament to present its budget directly to the president for comments (Djietror, 2013). Though this is better than the previous situation, it still creates the circumstance where the institution mandated to oversee the work of the executive has to go to the executive for the “approval” of the financial resources

to perform its mandate. In addition to the challenge associated with the financial approval process, Parliament must also contend with persistent late and unpredictable nature of the release of approved funds which negatively impacts the work of the legislature (Djietror, 2013).

There is some positive upward trend with regard to the total amount of funds the Parliament of Ghana received as its budget for the 2016, 2017 and 2018 financial years. According to the Majority Leader of the Seventh Parliament, parliament's budget over the past three years has been as follows: 2016 – 255,865,717 GHc; 2017 – 308 565 444 GHc; and 2018 – 406, 210, 190 GHc (Parliamentary Debates, 2018 March 23rd). This shows a marked increase when compared to the 2015 budget for parliament, for example, which was GHc 185, 194, 573 (Parliament of Ghana (PoG), (2015).

The Parliament of Ghana needs financial autonomy to improve its resources including improving access to highly qualified experts spanning the broad spectrum of subject matters MPs must work on. Research has shown that, among other factors, the resources at the disposal of a legislature also affect its work (Barkan, 2009; Bolarinwa, 2015; Nijzink, Mozaffar & Azevedo, 2006; Stapenhurst 2011). It ought to be stressed that although the lack of financial autonomy of the Parliament of Ghana is a significant hindrance to its effectiveness that needs to be addressed, the findings of this study has also revealed that financial support for committee work, though not at its optimum need not stop committees from using their power to call for witnesses, documents, and seek expert advice. The findings point to the fact that funds available at the moment for committees to obtain alternative expert advice are underutilized (Interviewees 9, 10).

On the next steps towards financial autonomy an interviewee believes that Parliament would have to tread cautiously. “If parliament is to seek financial autonomy it must come with education of the citizenry. Any attempt to get more money for Parliament at this time will be misread by the citizens.... Parliament must carry the people along with them, the media in particular” (Interviewee 8).

Information Support System in the Parliament of Ghana

There are a number of information units that have been set up over the years to provide Parliament with the necessary information for the performance of its mandate, details of which have been presented earlier in this thesis. These include the Library, Hansard Department, Research Department and ICT department. These departments provide publications, research and information to support the work of Parliament. There are also other units whose work encompass management of information and capacity enhancement such as the Training Institute, the Public Affairs Directorate and the Table Office.

Library of the Parliament of Ghana

The history of the library of the Parliament of Ghana is tied to the evolution of the legislature in the country. It has therefore suffered similar fates as the parent organization, with its operation coming to a halt any time there was a military coup d'état. This hindered the development of the library. The library of the Parliament of Ghana has been described in the past as minuscule (Stapenhurst, 2011) and was housed in a single room for years. In 2017, the library was moved from its single room to a modern purpose-built space at Parliament House. It now has adequate shelf space, offices for staff of the library, properly furnished with modern furniture and state-of-the-art touch-

screen computers and serves as a conducive modern environment for research and reading for its users. It had in the past struggled with space and with an inadequate outdated collection.

Recommendations and suggestions over the years for addressing these challenges and improving library services to members of Parliament have included calls for resourcing the library by engaging more information professionals, re-equipping it with modern materials (Alemna & Skouby (2000), fully equipping the library with the latest information technology facilities (Osman & Agyei, 2014) and providing adequate space to house the library, which has now been resolved. These recommendations are important to guarantee the value and usefulness of the products and services provided to MPs and staff.

Research Department

Findings show that current services of the research department mainly revolve around processing and packaging secondary data in a format that is meaningful and useful to members. The department does not undertake primary research. The Research Department provides anticipatory services which cover bill digests, policy briefs and budget briefings. The department also responds to members' request for information, for papers, statements and also for participation in workshops or international conferences. Because research staff are also attached to committees, their services also include providing some support to chairpersons and other members of committees as the need arises. Occasionally staff are able to prepare committee briefs on matters of interest to the committee.

Although these units work to the best of their ability to provide the needed support, the findings of the study and that from previous studies on Ghana Parliament reveal some challenges the most crucial being the inadequate numbers of staff in these units.

The Parliament of Ghana has a number of initiatives targeted at improving members' access to experts and enhancing information support systems in general. Some of these initiatives are funded by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), The African Development Bank (AfDB) and the World Bank. The findings show that these efforts to improve information support system in the legislature in general are yielding some positive results. The Westminster Foundation, a United Kingdom semi-quasi government charity institution for example, has been supporting Ghana in a number of areas. The foundation has been supporting information units in parliament including the Research Department, Hansard, ICT, Library, Committees Department and other units to implement a number of activities aimed at improving information and research systems in the Parliamentary Service. This partnership has been successful in forming IDRIG, an inter-departmental research and information group. IDRIG has facilitated coordination among information units in Parliament by regularly bringing together the directors and officers of these units. It also promotes other activities including annual exhibitions aimed at promoting visibility and the services of information units within parliament.

The Speaker of the Seventh Parliament in his inaugural address articulated a number of ideas and ways to address some of these issues with information support system especially by encouraging committees to be more

proactive. For example, he insists on every committee bringing a report to the House and supports committees by directing that Government brings the needed information for the work of committees (Interviewee 5).

It remains to be seen how these interventions can contribute to an attainment of the ideal whereby committees of the Parliament of Ghana routinely use specialist advisors, who are not from the executive, to provide information to, and explain complex and technical matters before the House.

Caucus Specific Information for the Parliament of Ghana

Caucus-based information support systems are commonly used in legislatures; examples are in Canada and Germany. While the Parliament of Ghana does not as yet have such a system, there is an initiative supported by a development partner aimed at setting up an information and research support system for the Majority and Minority caucuses in Parliament. This will entail engaging high-level technical staff as policy analysts to deliver timely the partisan perspective on matters before the House for the use of leadership and members (Interviewee 4, 7).

Research Assistants for Members of Parliament.

The Parliament of Ghana, in principle, agrees that every Member of Parliament needs a research assistant. The idea is for each MP to identify their research assistant. The assistant is then to be vetted and recruited by the Parliamentary Service and then assigned to that MP. This arrangement is seen as the best way to satisfy individual MPs while maintaining Parliamentary Service control of the engaged staff. In furtherance of this goal, on the 14th of June 2018 the Speaker asked members to identify and present to the Clerk an

assistant of their choice based on set standards developed by the Speaker and the Parliamentary Service Board. He gave Monday 18th June 2018 and Tuesday 19th June 2018 as timelines for letters to be issued for engagement of qualified research assistants (Parliamentary Debates, 2018, June 14th). However, processes for engaging such assistants for the members of the Seventh Parliament have been fraught with some challenges leading to delays (Appendix 6 provides more details).

Information Processing and Use – Application and Non-Use of Information by members

The study examined two categories of the concept Information use, these were *Application* and *Non-use*. Both categories of the concept were based on the basic assumption that the respondents had received or obtained relevant information. “Application” was used in this study to refer to those instances when respondents were *able to use* relevant information they had, while “Non-use” was used in the study to refer to those instances when respondents were *not able* to use or *ignored* relevant information they had.

For “Application” of information the study was interested in MPs’ use of information both at the individual level and also at the collective action level. Two questions were asked. These were:

1. Based on your experience in Parliament to date how intensely have you been able to use information received or obtained to contribute to collective actions and decisions?

2. Based on your experience in Parliament to date how intensely have you been able to use information received or obtained for specific actions as individual MPs.

For “non-use” of information, respondents were asked three questions. The first sought to establish if there were instances when members had information but could not use it; the second was a follow-up question about the circumstances under which they were unable to use relevant information they had for parliamentary work. The third question focused on the circumstances when members had relevant information but they chose to ignore that information. For the “non-use” of information the specific questions were:

1. Are there instances when you have relevant information but you are unable to use it for parliamentary work?
2. Under what circumstance are you unable to use relevant information you have in performing your role in Parliament?
3. Under what circumstances do you ignore relevant information available to you?

Members’ Use of Information (Application of Information)

This section presents findings about MPs’ experiences in parliament relating to how intensely (fully) they were able to use information received or obtained; first, to contribute to collective actions and decisions, and second, as individuals in their decision making and in taking certain actions. Both perspectives are important because it is through the actions of individuals that institutions have an effect on political outcomes (Hall & Taylor, 1996).

Information Use for Collective Decisions/Actions

Table 30 presents the results on respondents' ability to intensely (fully) use information they have received or obtained to contribute to collective actions and decisions in the House. These collective decisions and actions in the House straddle passage of bills/legislative instruments, adoption of motions and resolutions on loan agreements, motions on government appointees and on international agreements, oversight of MDAs and recommendations for improving public financial management.

Forty-three point two percent (43.2%) of respondents often used information to contribute to motions/resolutions on loan agreements. This number is not unexpected since the study has revealed that MPs had more frequent need for information for financial control functions. Besides, the data on the volume of work presented to the Parliament of Ghana shows that it is presented with lots of loan/international agreements for consideration. In the Sixth Parliament, for example, Parliament was presented with 303 agreements compared to the 117 bills it worked on.

Table 30 shows that approximately one-half of respondents were able to use information they had to contribute to motions/resolutions on loan agreements, motions/resolutions on recommendations for improving public financial management, and for the oversight role of summoning ministers to the House and the passage of legislative instruments. It is also noteworthy that Table 30 indicates that 5 MPs responded that they rarely used information available to them to contribute to motions on loan agreements.

Table 30:

Ability to Use Information to Contribute to Collective Decisions/Actions in the House

Informed contribution to collective decisions/actions	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always		Non- Response		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Motion/resolution on Loan agreement passed	0	0	5	6.2	21	25.9	35	43.2	8	9.9	12	14.8	81	100
Motion/resolutions on recommendations for improving public financial management AG’s report passed	0	0	3	3.7	25	30.9	31	38.3	11	13.6	11	13.6	81	100
Oversight – Ministers summoned to the House to respond to issues	1	1.2	4	4.9	22	27.2	29	35.8	13	16.0	12	14.8	81	100
Legislative Instruments (LI), others instruments passed	1	1.2	3	3.7	24	29.6	30	37.0	11	13.6	12	14.8	81	100
Oversight of Government – Parliament recommendations passed and forwarded to MDAs	0	0	4	4.9	26	32.1	31	38.3	9	11.1	11	13.6	81	100
Bills/Laws that are passed (including appropriation bills)	0	0	2	2.5	28	34.6	31	38.3	9	11.1	11	13.6	81	100
Motions/resolutions on international agreements etc. passed	0	0	3	3.7	25	30.9	28	34.6	10	12.3	15	18.5	81	100
Motions/Resolutions on Government appointees passed	0	0	3	3.7	31	38.3	27	33.3	8	9.9	12	14.8	81	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Information Use for individual /Decisions/Actions

The second perspective focused on how individual respondents were able to use information available to them for specific actions/decisions as they played their roles. It is evident from Table 31, that consistently there are higher values for individual MPs' ability to use information for individual actions/decisions when compared with their ability to use information to contribute to collective decisions/actions in the House as presented in Table 30.

Table 31 presents the findings on the ability of individual members of parliament to use information for specific actions. Most respondents selected "always" or "often". The results reveal that the highest number of MPs, 32.1%, always used information they had to address constituency problems. Looked at from a decreasing order, the findings show that MPs used information to achieve personal effectiveness, make statements on the floor of the House and for input to debates both at the committee level and on the floor of the House. Table 31 also reveals that one MP responded that he/she never used information available to make a statement on the floor of the House, and three MPs had never used information available to ask ministers questions.

Table 31:

Ability to Use Information for Individual Decisions/Actions

Application of information for specific actions/outcomes as individual MP	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Non-Response	Total							
Constituency problems identified and addressed	0	0	2	2.5	12	14.8	30	37.0	26	32.1	11	13.6	81	100
Personal effectiveness achieved	0	0	0	0	17	21.0	31	38.3	22	27.2	11	13.6	81	100
Statement made on the floor of the House	1	1.2	0	0	16	19.8	32	39.5	21	25.9	11	13.6	81	100
Input made to debates at committee level	0	0	1	1.2	17	21.0	32	39.5	20	24.7	11	13.6	81	100
Input made to debates on the floor of the House	0	0	2	2.5	19	23.5	38	46.9	11	13.6	11	13.6	81	100
TV/Radio/public appearances made	0	0	2	2.5	19	23.5	35	43.2	14	17.3	11	13.6	81	100
Questions to ministers asked/answered	1	1.2	3	3.7	23	28.4	27	33.3	16	19.8	11	13.6	81	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Mann Whitney tests on background characteristics of respondents to determine whether there were any differences, showed that while there were no statistically significant differences by gender, term in office or level of education, the difference for political parties was statistically significant.

The Mann Whitney test results presented in Table 32 show that with regard to collective decision making/actions in the House, respondents from the two major political parties differed in their responses when it comes to their ability to use information they have (Mann-Whitney $U=402.000$, p value = .045). The mean rank for NPP respondents (29.32) was lower than that for NDC

respondents (38.82) implying that respondents from the minority caucus were able to use information available to them more often to contribute to collective decisions and actions compared with members of the majority caucus. There were similar results for an individual MP's ability to use information for specific actions.

Table 32:

Mann Whitney Test of Difference: Political Party Affiliation and Ability to Use Information to Contribute to Collective Decisions/Actions

Use of information to contribute to collective decisions/actions	Political Party	Freq.	Mean Rank
	NPP	34	29.32
	NDC	33	38.82
	Total	67	

Mann-Whitney U=402.000, p value = .045

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

The results of the Mann Whitney test on respondents' ability to use information obtained for individual actions and decisions also showed that respondents from the two political parties differed significantly in their responses (Table 33). (Mann-Whitney U=384.500, p-value =0.026). The mean rank for NDC respondents (39.35) was higher than that for NPP respondents (28.81). Respondents from the minority NDC caucus of the Seventh Parliament were able to use information they had obtained or received more intensely towards individual actions and decisions compared to respondents from the Majority NPP Party.

Research shows that the use of information in decision making in the context of the legislature correlates with the degree of partisan conflict

associated with a particular policy/bill/issue before the committee or House (Demaj, 2015; Sylan et al., 1990; Whiteman, 1985). As Whiteman (1985) points out, substantive use of expert analysis by legislators occurs in the absence of a strong commitment to a specific solution, as they search for more information to help them come to a satisfactory issue position. This reflects the position of the members of the minority caucus in Parliament as they try to critique executive/leadership bill/issues before them; hence, their use of information obtained or received more extensively compared to the majority caucus members. As established in this study, members of the majority caucus show less interest in alternative expert analysis since they are keen to push through government agenda when such matters come before the House. The strong partisan influence in the Parliament of Ghana and the accompanying expected rewards that members of the majority party especially can reap for toeing the party lines, most likely accounts for the disproportionate use of information along party lines as evident in the research findings.

Table 33:

Political Party Affiliation and Ability to Use Information for Individual Decisions/Action(s)

	Political Party	Freq.	Mean Rank
Ability to use information for specific action(s)	NPP	34	28.81
	NDC	33	39.35
	Total	*67	

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

*Lower because of non-response

Debates during Plenary Sessions: Members' Opportunity to Use Information

The study further examined members' opportunity to use information during plenary sessions. Respondents were asked about the opportunity to contribute to debates on the floor especially in situations when they had relevant information and the requisite knowledge. In Ghana's Parliament, inadequate time has been identified as one of the main obstacles impacting negatively on parliamentary debates (Aggrey-Darkoh, 2012).

It is often said that for an MP to contribute to debates or speak on the floor of the House in the Parliament of Ghana the member must first "catch the eye of the speaker" which is based on the provision in the Standing Orders, Order 84(1). Results from this research show that this general principle is applied, and in addition to that the speaker per the Standing Orders has the discretionary power to decide who should speak at any given time and for how long.

Another insight from the interview findings is the fact that on most important issues that come before the House, the caucuses discuss and strategize as to who should speak during the plenary session (Interviewee 4, 8, 9). In responding to a question as to whether it was therefore not fair to criticize the twenty MPs who were identified in a study on the Sixth parliament as not speaking on the floor of the House during their four-year term (Sagoe, Armah & Sarfo-Kantanka, (2016), one interviewee had this to say "*but why didn't you [the MP] see leadership because there are some debates that leadership encourages people to speak*". He added that opportunities exist for new members especially to contribute to debates on the floor. The interviewee

believes that the individual's attitude matters. "Some people just don't want to speak they don't even want to come to the House. They go chasing money and chasing projects for their constituencies..." (Interviewee 9).

The findings show clearly that not only do leadership and chairpersons have greater opportunities to speak on issues on the floor of the House compared to other members, they also control the opportunity given for other members to speak on the floor especially on key matters. On less critical/contentious issues that come before the House, other MPs who are not part of the leadership then get greater opportunities to make inputs on the floor of the House.

Non-Use of Information by Members of Parliament

A number of studies especially those that focus on the use of performance information by legislators have established that there are instances when MPs ignore information they have at their disposal or instances when they are unable to apply the information they have due to some prevailing factors, such as not trusting the source (Demaj, 2015; Raudla, 2012; Askim 2007). The study examined the circumstances under which members of Ghana's Parliament were either unable to apply information they had or simply ignored information at their disposal.

Non-Use: Inability to Use Relevant Analysed and Evidence-Based Information

When asked whether there were instances when respondents had relevant information, but they were unable to use it for parliamentary work about one-half of the respondents (58.0%) said that *sometimes* they were unable to use relevant information they have for parliamentary work. One respondent

(1.2%) indicated this was “Always” the case, meaning that this MP was unable to use available information for parliamentary work. On the other hand, three respondents (3.7%) indicated that there had never been instances when they had relevant information but they were unable to use it for parliamentary work (Table 34).

Table 34:

Inability to Use Relevant Information

	Freq. (N=81)	Percent
1-Never	3	3.7
2	12	14.8
3	47	58.0
4	8	9.9
5-Always	1	1.2
Non-response	10	12.3
Total	81	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

When respondents were asked the circumstances under which they were unable to use relevant information, a little over one-half of MPs said *when the timeline for reviewing and passing the Bill or Loan Agreement is very short* (55.6%). This finding further supports the fact that short timelines, through suspension of Standing Order 80 (1) and the use of provisions for urgent business negatively impact MPs’ ability to apply information available for a thorough job as mandated.

About forty percent of respondents indicated that under the following circumstances they were unable to use relevant information that they had: when they were not members of the committee working on the bill/issue (44.2%); when the decision making is driven by political considerations (43.2%); and when the information is too technical (42.0%). Comparatively fewer number of

respondents, 21.0%, responded that they were unable to use information when the information did not reflect their interest and their view of the world (Table 35). The inability of MPs to use information they have when they are not members of the committee working on the bill/issue further shows how important it is for parliament to observe the 48-hour length of notice before debates so as to give most MPs the opportunity to fully participate in the work of the House.

*Table 35:
Inability to Use Relevant Information – Circumstances
(n=81) (Note: Respondents were allowed to select more than one response)*

Circumstances	Freq.	Percent
Timeline for reviewing/ passing the Bill or loan agreement is very short	45	55.6
Not a member of the committee working on the Bill/issue	36	44.4
Decision making is driven by political considerations	35	43.2
Information is too technical	34	42.0
Not able to catch the eye of the Speaker	30	37.0
Information does not reflect interest/view of the world	17	21.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Barriers to the Use of Information (Intervening Variables)

The study sought to find out from respondents how important the procedural and time constraints under which they worked were barriers when it comes to the use of analysed and evidence-based information (Policy information). Schneier (1970) has established that the problem of time is a critical variable in understanding the legislative flow of information. The findings showed that for about one-half of the respondents, limited time was an important barrier to the use of information. Fifty-one point eight percent

(51.8%) of respondents indicated that *limited time for scrutinizing bills* was a barrier to the use of information, while 50.6% of respondents considered the *limited time for scrutinizing loan agreements* a barrier.

While 30.8 % of respondents saw the *current rules and procedures for contributing on the floor of the House* as a barrier, 29.6 % did not regard either the *current rules or procedures for reviewing and passing loan agreements* or for *contributing on the floor of the House* as a barrier. It is interesting to note that 33.3% of respondents felt the current rules and procedures for urgent bills was not a barrier to the use of information (Table 36).

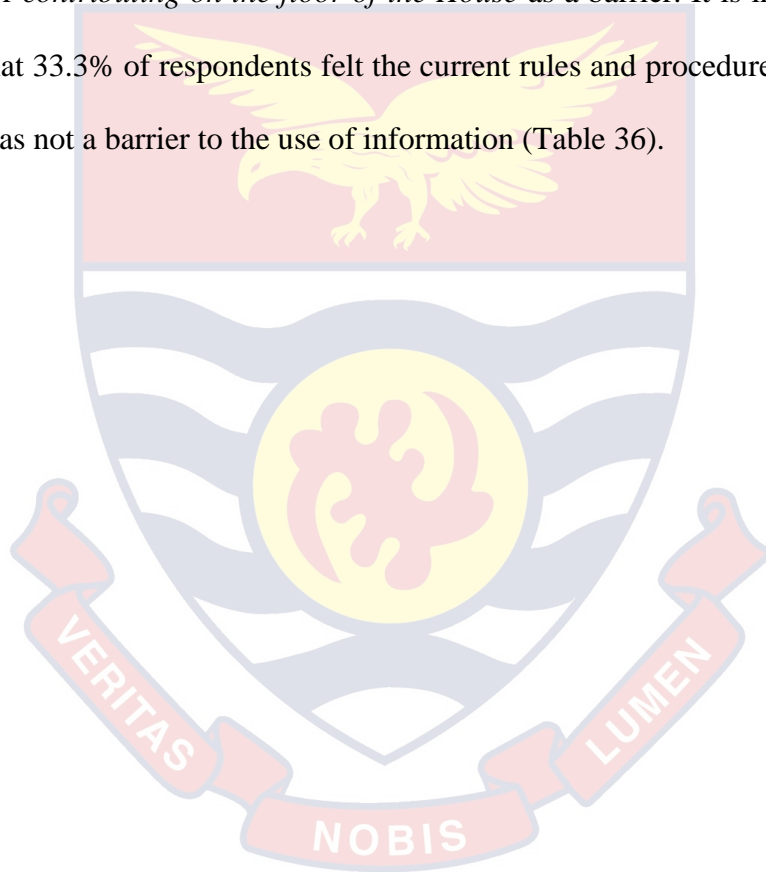
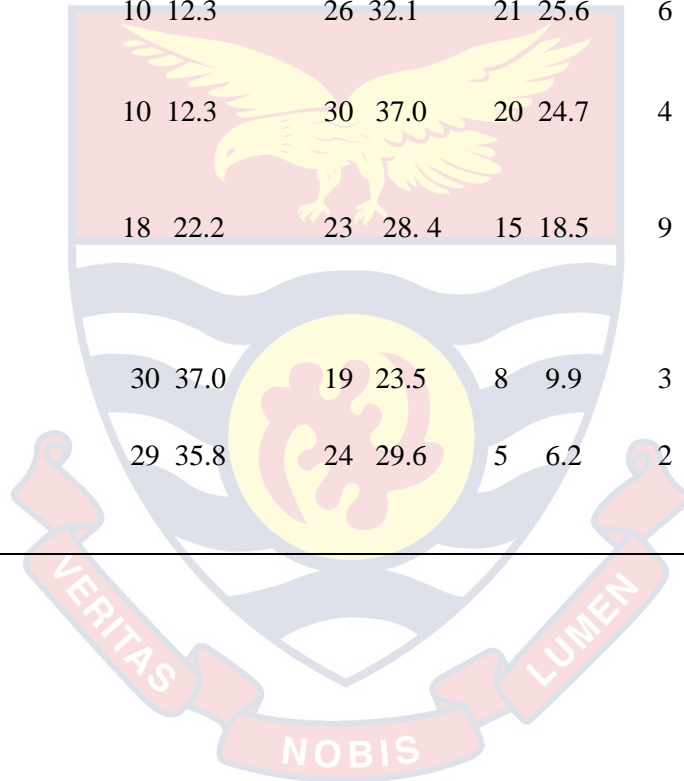


Table 36:

Procedural and Time Constraints as Barriers to the Use of Information

Intervening variables Barrier to use of information	Very important Barrier	Important Barrier	Somewhat of a Barrier	Rarely a barrier	Not a barrier at all	Non- Response	Total
Current rules and procedures for urgent bills	9 11.1	10 12.3	26 32.1	21 25.6	6 7.4	9 11.1	81 100
Current rules and procedures for loan agreements	8 9.9	10 12.3	30 37.0	20 24.7	4 4.9	9 11.1	81 100
Rules and procedures for contributing on the floor of the House	7 8.6	18 22.2	23 28.4	15 18.5	9 11.1	9 11.1	81 100
Limited time for scrutinizing bills	12 14.8	30 37.0	19 23.5	8 9.9	3 3.7	9 11.1	81 100
Limited time for scrutinizing loan agreements	12 14.8	29 35.8	24 29.6	5 6.2	2 2.5	9 11.1	81 100

Source: Fieldwork, 2018



Non-use: circumstances when respondents ignore relevant information

Admittedly, there may be circumstances when respondents with relevant information may not have the opportunity to use the relevant information to inform parliamentary work, and there could also be situations where political actors just do not use information available to them. An interviewee highlights such a situation in the Parliament of Ghana: *“I also know that there are some areas where clerks give advice and the chairperson will refuse [ignore the advice]. You even do research papers, do some analysis of things to give to them and they just throw it somewhere”* (Interviewee 10). While it could be likely that the quality of the information in those instances might not have been up to the level the chairpersons required, there is also the possibility of a general lack of interest on the part of chairpersons/members in using any additional information beyond what they have been provided by the executive.

The latter explanation is in line with the opinion of another interviewee who described the non-use of information by Ghanaian MPs as a bigger problem compared to access to information especially for committees. He argues that committees have all the power to obtain the information needed to do their work, if they so wished. According to the interviewee, most of the subject-matter committees are chaired by the majority caucus in Parliament which coincidentally has been the same party as the ruling government and the president of the Republic since 1993. Therefore, when the government wants a particular result, committee members/MPs are not interested in information that is put at their disposal. Rather, they are interested in the passage of the

matter/document before them to satisfy the executive arm of government (Interviewee 9).

Individual MPs were asked through the questionnaire to indicate circumstances under which they ignored information. A list of six of these circumstances were provided and respondents were given the option to select as many as were applicable to them. Respondents were also given the option to add on to the list if they had been faced with some other circumstance not included in the list.

Table 37 displays the results and reveals that a little over one-half of the respondents said that they ignore information when the information was biased, while 54.3% of the respondents ignored information from a source they deemed unreliable. Interestingly, only a few respondents selected the option *when the information is not in line with my party position* (13.58%).

Bourdeaux and Chikoto (2008) as cited by Raudla (2012), argue that legislators, for example, do not use ‘unmediated’ Performance Information (i.e., written performance reports submitted by the executive branch) because they do not consider such information trustworthy. The non-use of information from the executive due to lack of trust is in contrast to the findings of this study which has revealed that at the committee level especially, members of Ghana’s Parliament often relied on information from the executive to perform their role.

Table 37:

Respondents Ignore Relevant Information – Circumstances

(n=81). (Note: Respondents were allowed to select more than one response)

Circumstances	Freq.	Percent
Information is biased	45	55.6
Information is from an unreliable source	44	54.3
Information not in the national interest	39	48.1
Bill or matter before the House is presented at short notice	29	35.8
Information is too technical	21	25.9
Information not in line with party position	11	13.58

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Leadership Information Control Tactics and Members’ Access to and Use of Information

The third component of this research comprehensively examined information control strategies identified from the interviews, especially the use of short lay over time. Time is a crucial factor when it comes to the extent of scrutiny members can carry out. It directly affects access to information and can also affect the use of information in the work of Parliament. As established in the literature leadership can use tactics of shorter lay over time to restrict access to information and through that push through their priority bills (Curry 2011).

Findings from interviews conducted for this research (the second component of the study) and from questionnaire administered (study component one) revealed that leadership of the Parliament of Ghana sometimes back-load parliamentary business as well as use urgent business provisions of the Standing Order to push through priority matters. In such situations, respondents report that the ability of members to get the needed information and do a more thorough scrutiny is limited.

Study component three analysed dataset on loan/international agreements to empirically establish the extent of this practice in the Parliament of Ghana. Regression analysis was also carried out on data on Bills presented to the Sixth (NDC Majority) and the Fourth (NPP Majority) Parliaments to determine the extent of the use of these information control tactics and to establish if indeed the leadership of the Parliament of Ghana shorten layover over time for priority bills. The 4th and the 6th parliaments, provided information on bills covering the four-year term of parliament, one for each of the two main political parties in Ghana. For the dataset on loan agreements frequencies and percentage of layover time were computed for the 6th and 7th Parliaments.

Layover Time and Members' Access to Information – Loan/International Agreements

The analysis of data on loan agreements and other international agreements was to establish the lay over time members of Ghana's Parliament had when approving these loan agreements. Data on loans, treaties and conventions presented to parliament were analysed because of the important role the Parliament of Ghana plays especially in the authorisation of loan agreements (Article 181 of the 1992 Constitution). Ghana's total debt stock has been increasing with the country's stock of public debt at the end of November 2018 standing at 57.9% of GDP (Ghc 172.9 billion) compared to 54.5% of GDP (GHc140.0 billion) in the same period of 2017 (Parliamentary Debates, 5th June 2018; "Bank of Ghana Monetary Policy Committee Press release", 2019).

Without the approval of Parliament, the government of Ghana cannot enter into loan agreements or other international agreements. Parliament,

through the Finance committee has the power to investigate and inquire into activities of the Debt Management Division of the Ministry of Finance (Public Debt Management Office) and can enforce the attendance of witnesses, compel the production of documents, and issue a commission or request to examine witnesses abroad. Other Parliamentary Committees have similar powers to call witnesses and compel production of documents. The role of Parliament in authorising these loans and ensuring efficient management of the national debt stock is therefore very important.

The analysis focused on the timelines from the date a committee presents its report to the House (Date of committee Report) to the date a motion is taken (Date of motion/ resolution/ approval) of the loan agreement by the House. This shows the total number of hours members had at their disposal for thorough scrutiny. The analysis of the data revealed that a large number of agreements (loans, treaties and conventions) come before the House.

The Sixth Parliament (Jan 2014 to Jan 2017) was presented with three hundred and three (303) loans, treaties and conventions over its four-year period, out of which two hundred and fifty-one (251) were approved by the House. The data for the Seventh Parliament also showed that by July 2018 the 7th Parliament had been presented with sixty-two (62) loans, treaties and conventions/agreements out of which (49) had been resolved and concluded.

Most of the loans, treaties and conventions in the 6th Parliament were mostly presented to the House by the Ministry of Finance (Figure 7), depicting the high volume of work that the Finance committee, especially, had to undertake.

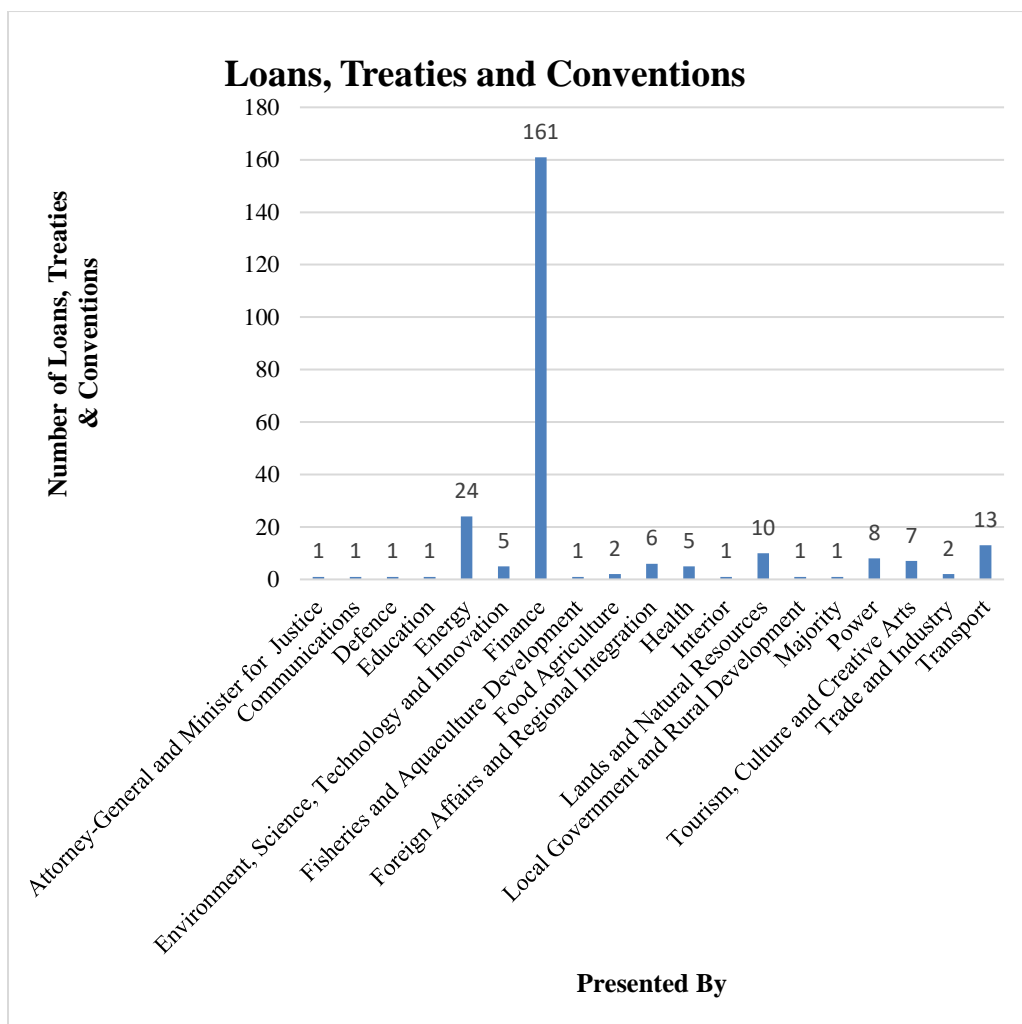


Figure 7: Sixth Parliament: Number of Loans, Treaties and Convention Presented by Ministries (Source: Field work, 2018)

Timelines for Authorisation of Agreements (Loans, Treaties and Conventions)

Members of Parliament of Ghana recognise the importance of assigning adequate time to each business especially the approval of loans and other important agreements in order to do diligent work even in the face of their heavy load. This was evident when the Majority Leader of the Seventh Parliament on June 5, 2018 during debates in the House on the 2017 Fiscal Year Annual Public Debt Management Report cautioned his colleagues and the House to be cautious and not rush to approve loans before the House (Parliamentary Debates June 5, 2018). It was an affirmation of the fact that devoting adequate time was

fundamental to the legislature performing well its mandate for the authorisation of loans and the management of the national debt stock.

Table 38 shows the layover timelines for loans and international agreements presented to the Sixth Parliament (Jan 2013 – Jan 2017). From the table, it is evident that about one-third (37.1%) of the agreements were passed on the same day, while 28.3% were passed within twenty-four hours. Together they represent 65.4% of the agreements, and these were passed/authorised by the Sixth Parliament without meeting the 48-hour length of notice requirement per the House rules.

Table 38:

Loan/International Agreements (6th Parliament) – Layover Time

Days	Frequency	Percent
0*	93	37.1
1	71	28.3
2	14	5.6
3 and more	73	29.1
Total	251	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

*0 means approved same day

The findings presented in Table 39 from the analysis of data for the 7th Parliament (Jan 2017 up to July 2018), depicts a similar trend to that for the Sixth Parliament. As at July 2018, of the 49 loan and international agreements that had been passed/authorised, about one-third of the agreements (32.6%) were passed the same day, while 28.6% were approved in twenty-four hours. In total 61.2 % of the agreements did not meet the 48-hour period of notice criterion for motions.

Table 39:

Loan/International Agreements (7th Parliament) – Layover Time

Days	Frequency	Percent
0*	16	32.6
1	14	28.6
2	4	8.2
3 and more	15	30.6
Total	49	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

*0 means approved same day

In sum, Parliament's own rules on the length of notice required for motions, Standing Order 80 (1) was rarely followed. What this implies is that the Standing Order provision for exceptions to this rule, which is to cater for unique situations has instead become the norm. The reality then is that more often than not members of Parliament work within extremely limited time. MPs, especially those who were not members of the committee, have a few hours available to them, to get access to committee report, read the content in order to digest the findings and recommendations prior to contributing to debate on the loan agreement. The findings reveal that in the Sixth and Seventh Parliaments the practice is to "*rush to approve loans*", something the Majority Leader of the Seventh Parliament has cautioned his colleagues against (Parliamentary Debates, June 5, 2018). The literature shows that different parliaments have different procedures, but these rules and procedures are supposed to give members adequate time to gather the needed information to enable them to properly review the issues and contribute to debates.

In Zambia, for example, provisions of Standing Order 36(2) on Private Members' Motion provide for not less than three days' notice ahead, and where notice is given on Fridays, not less than four days ahead (National Assembly of

Zambia, 2016). In the US Congress “all bills must layover” for three calendar days after committee passage before they can be brought before the Committee of the Whole for consideration” (Curry, 2011 p. citing Rybicki, 2005). Botswana also makes provision for motions to be moved after a notice has been given and at least three clear days have elapsed (Parliament of Botswana, 2019). All three examples provide additional 24-hour length of notice compared to the timeline for Ghana’s Parliament. It affirms the importance of adequate length of notice for parliamentary work.

Layover Time and Members’ Access to Information – Bills Presented to Parliament

This section presents findings from the analysis of Bills. It is important to highlight here that the Right to Information Bill for Ghana is on record to have had the longest duration in parliament prior to its passage spanning the term of three Parliaments. Drafted in 1999 the bill was first presented to Parliament in 2010 and was passed in March 2019. It is also arguably the bill that received the most input for amendments from the general public and from professionals and organized groups in the Country (Appendix 3 chronicles timelines on the Right to Information Bill).

For this research a multivariate regression analysis was carried out to analyse the layover time for bills presented to two Parliaments, the 4th and 6th Parliaments of the Fourth Republic. What this meant was that for each bill that was presented to these two Parliaments details were computed on the timelines in hours from when the committee report on the bill was presented to the House to when the second reading, which allows debate on the substance of the bill took place (Layover time). The following hypothesis were tested.

Hypothesis 1:

Leaders may use information control tactics to advance executive/leadership priority bills.

Hypothesis 2:

Leadership may be less able to restrict information on bills when public interest in the bill is high.

Analysing the layover time allowed an in-depth examination of members' access to and use of information especially committee reports during the law-making process. The layover time as indicated earlier is the crucial period that MPs have access to additional information through committee reports that can then aid them during full debates on the principles of the bill. Leadership of Parliament can control layover time as a tactic to restrict access to information. The following presents the empirical analysis.

As presented earlier, for research component three, the dependent variable for the regression analysis was the layover *time*. The independent variables included were *Priority bills* covering executive/leadership priority bills, public *salience* of bills (that is, how important issues/subject matter of the bill were with the voting public), the *Parliament*, comparing bills presented during the Sixth (NDC Majority) and Fourth (NPP Majority) Parliaments, *Appropriation Bills* categorising bills either as appropriation or not appropriation bills. The other variable was "*Bill Schedule*" that grouped bills into those that were scheduled in the last two weeks of a parliamentary meeting versus all other bills scheduled prior to the last two weeks of a meeting.

Table 40 provides a summary of the variables and how they were measured.

Table 40:

Measurement of Variables: Study Component Three

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Measurement</u>	<u>Code</u>
Dependent Variable <i>Layover time</i>	Excel computation of the duration in hours from <i>date of committee report</i> to <i>date of second reading</i>	
Independent Variables <i>Salience</i>	Measured by categorizing bills (based on the issue they covered) either as High salience (HS) or low salience (LS). The coverage an issue received in the media was used to measure salience	HS (1) LS (0)
<i>Appropriation</i>	Measured by placing bills into two groups, Bills on appropriation (Yes) ; Bill not on appropriation (No)	NO (1) YES(0)
<i>Parliament</i>	Measured by placing bill in two groups. Bills presented to the Sixth parliament in Group 1; bills presented to the Fourth Parliament in Group 0	6 th Parl NDC (1) 4 th Parl NPP (0)
<i>Bill Schedule</i>	Measured by placing bills into two categories. Bills presented during the last two weeks of a Parliamentary Meeting (1); all other bills presented before the last two weeks of a Parliamentary meeting (0)	Last 2 weeks (1) Others (0)
<i>Priority Bill</i>	Measured by tallying the number of mentions of the issue/topic in the president's state of the nation address	

Source: Compiled by Author, 2018

Table 41 shows the frequencies and coding of the variables. Bills were categorised as either high salience (HS) or low salience (LS), Appropriation bill – (Yes) or not an Appropriation bill (No). All bills presented to the 4th Parliament were coded as 0 while those presented to the 6th Parliament were coded as 1. Likewise bills scheduled during the last two weeks of a parliamentary meeting were coded 1. Since priority was computed by tallying the number of mentions in the president’s state of the nation address, the numerical values were used for the analysis. Table 41 reveals that 82 bills (35%) presented to the house were high salient bills. Ninety bills (38%) were “back loaded”– presented during the last two weeks of meetings.

Table 41:

Cox Regression

Categorical Variable Codings^{a,c,d,e}

		Frequency	Codes
Salience ^{3b}	HS	82	1
	LS	152	0
Appropriation ^{2b}	NO	223	1
	YES	11	0
Parliament ^b	6 th Parl NDC	117	1
	4 th Parl NPP	117	0
Bill Schedule ^b	Last 2 weeks	90	1
	Other	144	0

Source: Fieldwork, 2018 * Note: Table 3 shows how the variables were measured

- a. Category variable: Salience
- b. Indicator Parameter Coding
- c. Category variable: appropriation
- d. Category variable: Parliament
- e. Category variable: Bill Schedule

The results of the regression analysis presented in Table 42 shows that, Priority, Saliency, Parliament and Appropriation were all found to be highly significant. On the other hand the variable (*Bill schedule*) was not significant. Variable “*Bill schedule*” was used to statistically test the significance of back loading of Parliamentary Agenda. It should be pointed out that, though the regression indicated it was not statistically significant, anecdotal evidence from the interviews presented earlier in this study had established back loading as one of the main concerns of MPs, because of how it negatively affected the depth of scrutiny and attention given to matters scheduled in those times. Back loading ought to be viewed as a problem for members with regard to access to and use of information.

For three of the variables that were found to be highly significant, *Saliency*, *Appropriation*, and *Parliament*, the coefficients (B) were all negative. The coefficients of the variable *Priority* of Bills on the other hand was positive. This means that for *Saliency* the Bills that were coded High Saliency (HS) had longer layover time compared to those that were coded Low Saliency (LS). In effect high public interest in bills is associated with longer time MPs had to scrutinise the Bill.

Appropriation variables that were tagged ‘No’ will be associated with lower hazard and longer survival, implying that Bills that were not Appropriation bills had longer layover time. The variable *Priority* Bills had a positive coefficient of 0.031 (Table 42 column B) which meant that the greater *Priority* Bills values were associated with greater hazard and therefore shorter survival meaning that for Bills that were high priority, the layover time was significantly shorter. This is an empirical confirmation that the leadership of the

majority in parliament adopt the strategy of reducing timelines members have to scrutinize bills. These findings support interview findings that had pointed to the fact that the strategy of reducing timelines was used sometimes when the matter before the House had become contentious or when the majority wanted to get things through without much scrutiny.

The analysis also showed that The Hazard Ratio (ExpB in Table 42) for Priority of Bills is 1.023. What this means is that an increase of 1 in the Priority of bills will be associated with a decrease of 1.023 in the layover time (in statistical terms, an increase of 1 in the Priority of bills will be associated with a 1.023 fold increase in Hazard and a decrease in survival).

The Hazard Ratio (HR) for Saliency is 0.535; therefore, those bills with High Saliency (HS) have 0.535 times layover time compared to Low Saliency Bills (in statistical terms those bills with High Saliency (HS) have a hazard of 0.535 than those bills with Low Saliency (LS)).

The Hazard Ratio for Appropriation Bill is 0.404 which also means that, Bills which are not Appropriation Bills will have 0.404 times to get passed compared to bills that were Appropriation Bills.

The Hazard Ratio for Parliament is 0.598 so Sixth (NDC Majority) Parliament bills had 0.598 times layover time compared to Fourth (NPP Majority) Parliament bills.

Table 42:
Variables in the Equation

	B	SE	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95.0% CI for	
							Lower	Upper
Saliency	-.626	.173	13.092	1	.000	.535	.381	.751
Priority Bills	.031	.004	50.486	1	.000	1.032	1.023	1.040
Appropriation	-.907	.330	7.546	1	.006	.404	.211	.771
Parliament	-.513	.175	8.628	1	.003	.598	.425	.843
Bill Schedule	.018	.162	.012	1	.913	1.018	.742	1.397

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

When these findings are looked at in addition to the findings that show that MPs have frequent need for finance related information it can be deduced that Parliament will benefit from improving its access to relevant information especially financial information. It will also benefit from an increase in timelines for scrutiny of matters before it especially budgets and loan agreements.

A reform process can start with the review of the timelines for budget review process, but most importantly there is the need for Parliament to revisit the processes for enacting a Budget Act and setting up a Budget Office or Scrutiny Office to enhance access to independent financial information for members and improve its financial control role overall. Research shows that countries such as Kenya and Uganda have benefitted immensely from the expertise of staff from their Budget office by improving Parliaments' capacity in the budget process (Parliamentary Centre, 2011). The lack of access to

alternative financial analysis / information and the limited timelines for MPs to do their work ought to concern parliamentary leadership. Without a change Parliament cannot pursue its “power of the purse”.

Suggestions from Interviewees and Respondents

Interviewees and respondents had a number of suggestions not only for improving members’ access to information but for improving the work of the legislature overall. They included the following:

Leadership of the House needs to give direction to staff of information units on their information needs and what will benefit them, staff of information support units in parliament ought to be more proactive in providing information services to members.

The Parliament of Ghana needs to introduce an integrated information request system since there is no centralized information request system to serve all the information units in the House. This suggestion is legitimate because research has established a lack of coordination among the different information support units in the parliamentary service (GINKS 2015). Though this has improved since the establishment of IDRIG, an integrated information request system will be of great benefit.

Parliament’s orientation programme for new MPs should incorporate a session dedicated to information and research support systems where Heads of Departments/Units from these units and their staff can share with MPs services that they provide. This can well complement the Parliament Librarian’s calls for stronger interaction and well-functioning feedback system between staff and

MPs to help improve quality and service of the library (Insaidoo, 2008) and other information support systems in the House.

Ghana's Parliament needs to implement an efficient records management system not only to properly manage current records but to also expand to cover a digital archiving system that can cover important historical documents. The 2017 Financial Year Budget presented in March 2017 captures the fact that "*a new records management and archival policy will be developed and implemented to secure and preserve important national records and facilitate responses to requests for information*" (Parliament of Ghana, 2017, p. 54). Successful implementation of this policy should help improve record management in the House.

Parliament should introduce a system that requires committees to get expert advice and inputs in the work they do, and additionally requires committees to include in their reports justification as to why certain inputs are incorporated and why others have not been used.

Overall research and technical support to parliament needs to be improved. Any research and technical support system that is developed for parliament must engage experts and experienced individuals from various backgrounds and with expertise in a wide variety of subject matters.

Apart from these suggestions that relate directly to information provision, interviewees made recommendations for improving the general effectiveness of the Parliament of Ghana. These include the following:

The Parliament of Ghana should reduce the size of committees and apply parliament's own convention of using the ratio of majority to minority

caucus in the House when composing committees to also select chairpersons. The suggestion is to replace the current system where the majority party chairs almost all committees, and minority MPs serve as ranking members, with a proportional system. This can then be complemented with a provision where the chairperson position of committees that are deemed critical for the work of the ruling government such as the finance committee can be reserved for the ruling party. This, it is argued, would enhance the quality of the leadership of committees of Parliament.

Another recommendation that was made was that there should be strict separation of powers; in other words, they called for a move from the current hybrid system to a presidential system. This is a suggestion that has also been made by a number of researchers in the past (Aggrey-Darkoh, 2012; Amoateng 2012; Ninsin, 2008) as the sure way to promote parliamentary independence and increase the institutional capacity of the Parliament of Ghana.

Respondents recommended that Ghana parliament should address the current state of excessive partisanship that it is experiencing in its work. They suggest that this should start with the political parties. Political parties need to work towards addressing this imbalance, by limiting excessive partisanship in their work and in their contribution to the governance system in the country. While the political parties have a role to play it is clear that the conflicts along party lines, and the majority party's use of its agenda powers to influence the work of Parliament is well engrained in the norms and practices of the Fourth Republican Party. The literature shows that even with the same 1992 Constitution and the Standing Orders, the Second Parliament of the Fourth Republic promoted co-operation and bi-partisanship in its work (Ninsin 2008,

Parliamentary Centre 2004). The lessons then and the practices during that era ought to be brought back. This will require champions and self-less leadership (Barkan, 2009) among members of parliament themselves. A change of the form of government for Ghana from the hybrid system to a presidential system (Aggrey-Darkoh, 2012; Amoateng 2012) with proportional representation (Ninsin, 2008) as advocated by a number of researchers has an even stronger potential for building an independent and effective parliament for Ghana.

Summary

The main findings on access to key documents needed for parliamentary work, revealed that MPs' access to bills was relatively better compared to access to key documents such as loan agreements and committee reports. Instances when key documents are submitted or distributed late to MPs, the finding showed that this is sometimes part of the strategy used by the leadership of the majority in parliament to deal with contentious issues or to limit scrutiny, a strategy that has been used by both major political parties in Ghana. The study also showed that MPs sometimes experience information overload especially because they have to deal with large volumes of information as well as manage information from constituents and from the media.

Respondents experience a number of "barriers" including limited or no access to analysed technical documents; almost a quarter saw it as a "very important barrier". A number of respondents also identified limited number of in-house experts in parliament's research department as a barrier. Members and staff of the Parliament of Ghana stressed the importance of creating a functional unit within parliament dedicated to providing independent technical analysis for Members.

The finding on members' *Application* as well as *Non-Use of Information* unearthed the following: 1) with regard to application of information for collection decision/actions

- a) Majority of respondents used information received/obtained often to contribute to such collective decisions/actions of the House.
- b) With regard to use of relevant information by individual MPs for specific Actions/Decisions. Respondents used information often for debates on the floor, during TV/Radio appearances. and for addressing constituency problems.

The finding also revealed that respondents from the two major political parties in the Parliament of Ghana differed in how intensely they were able to use information for specific actions/decisions as individual MPs and also towards collection decisions/action of the House. Members from the NDC party were able to use such information more often than NPP respondents.

2) With regard to Non-Use of Relevant Information – The research findings revealed that more than one-half of the respondents sometimes were unable to use relevant information available to them for parliamentary work. Limited time, especially for scrutinizing bills and loan agreements, was identified as an important barrier to the use of information. There were also certain circumstances under which respondents ignored information available to them. For instance, when the information was biased and when the information was from an unreliable source.

The main findings on the strategic use of reducing *layover* time of bills presented to the House (an Information Control Tactics) by Leadership of

Parliament established the following: Regression analysis (cox proportional analysis) of *layover* of Bills (dependent variable) presented to the 4th and 6th Parliaments of the Fourth Republic of Ghana showed that a number of independent variables including Public *Salience*, *Priority Bills* and *Parliament* (4th and 6th Parliaments) were all highly significant.



CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary and conclusions from the main findings of the study and makes recommendations. The chapter also explains the contribution of this study to knowledge and proposes possible areas for future research.

Summary of Main findings of the Study

The main objective of the study was to investigate the information behaviour of members of Ghana's parliament and how current institutional arrangements such as leadership structure shape access to and the use of information in the performance of their mandate.

In order to situate the research in its proper context, the study provided an analytical overview of the history, mandate and structure of the Parliament of Ghana. Also, though the study targeted members of the Seventh Parliament of the Fourth Republic of Ghana, it was equally important to analyse data on bills that had been presented to two previous parliaments, the Fourth (4th) and the Sixth (6th) Parliaments of the Fourth Republic to empirically establish how leadership of Parliament strategically use information control tactics such as layover time to restrict members' access to information. The following is a summary of the main findings from the study:

Role-related Information Needs of Members of Ghana's Parliament

Overall, respondents had need for information when performing all their core mandates namely: Legislative, Financial, Oversight, Representational,

Deliberative, Constituency Service, and Party Duties and also for Personal Effectiveness.

- Ghanaian Parliamentarians' frequency of need for information for performing financial control related roles was higher compared to the need for other roles. MPs needed information more often for scrutinizing loan agreements, reviewing budgets and monitoring expenditure of public funds.
- The frequency of need for information for oversight related functions was among the lowest when compared with the need for information for the other roles. The oversight related functions included scrutinizing Ministries Departments and Agencies, monitoring and field visits at the committee level and approving presidential nominees.
- Members of Parliament from the two main political parties NPP (majority caucus and same party as the ruling executive) and NDC (minority caucus and opposition party), differed in their responses with regard to how often they need information to perform their mandated roles. Respondents from the minority NDC party needed information more often to perform their roles compared to respondents from the majority NPP. This is possibly because opposition members invest more efforts to scrutinize executive proposals to win the favour of the voting public and as a way of improving their chances of re-election. Opposition MPs in Ghana's Parliament have relatively more time to devote to parliamentary work, compared to MPs of the ruling party who are ministers. Also members of the ruling party have direct access to critical information. Hence, their less frequent need for information. Opposition members of Parliament are "information poor" and have fewer alternative sources of information compared with government

MPs, (Sevenans, Walgrave, & Vos, 2015) which may be a plausible reason for higher frequency of need for information for the Minority NDC MPs.

- There was no significant difference in responses for male and female respondents, neither was there a significant difference between first term MPs and continuing MPs with regard to their frequency of need for information for performing their mandated roles. Political party affiliation of members, on the other hand, showed significant difference, and seems to be a far strong factor than the other background characteristics when it comes to MPs' need for information.

Information Seeking Behaviour

Strategies for Looking for Information (Personal Efforts and the Use of Intermediaries)

- The most used personal efforts strategy by MPs when seeking information was to search for information by themselves.
- As regards using intermediaries, about a quarter of respondents hardly use the institution's mandated researchers, that is, parliament's research staff.
- Approximately a quarter of respondents use official personal assistants as intermediaries to meet their information needs.

Sources of Information within Parliament.

- The most frequently used sources within parliament (internal sources of information) by the majority of the respondents were i) Parliament leadership (including whips) (ii) more experienced MPs (iii) committee chairpersons/ranking members (iv) MPs with demonstrated expertise in the subject matter, and (v) ministers/deputy ministers.

- Parliamentary leadership including chairpersons are extremely important sources of information for MPs when performing mandated roles. Approximately three-quarters of respondents identified leadership as (extremely/very important) sources of information in their performance of mandated roles especially when reviewing bills and loan agreements before the House.
- Among the parliamentary staff, committee clerks were the most frequently used source of information by MPs.

Sources of Information outside Parliament (External Sources)

- The findings showed that a sizeable number of respondents use experts from i) Universities, Think Tanks, ii) Professional bodies/Private sector, and iii) members of constituency as sources of information.

Information Source Characteristics

Respondents were asked how important three source characteristics were to them when they were using an information source namely: access, trust and credibility.

- Respondents viewed all three information source characteristics as important when using an information source. Out of the three the highest number of respondents 44.4% identified trust as “extremely important”.

Trust of Sources of Information outside Parliament (External Sources)

The results showed that of the five external sources covered in the study, more respondents have “very high trust” in development partners as a source of information compared to the number of respondents that have “very high trust” in the other external sources such as Universities and Think Tanks. The

literature has established that development partners are major players in the economies of donor-dependent countries (Lembani, 2013). Development partners are key contributors to Ghana's national budget, supporters of key sectors such as agriculture (Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER), 2017) and also major players through the numerous international and bilateral agreements that they have with Ghana; therefore, they wield substantial power. The literature shows that countries that depend on development partners open themselves up for undue control. Development partners influence local policy choices, constitutional amendments and many others through a number of ways including threatening to suspend aid, making contact with legislators, and supporting local advocacy and lobbying groups (Lembani, 2013).

- Male and female respondents differed in their responses when asked how much trust they had in information from sources outside parliament. Female respondents had lower trust in outside sources compared with male respondents. Research, focusing on women, show that the experiences of male and female with regard to information are different (Rowley et al., 2016; Nalumaga & Seldén, 2014; Nalumaga, 2009, 2012). Gender is a determinant of the information evaluation process of users of information (Rowley et al., 2016)
- A Kruskal Wallis test showed there were differences in responses from respondents who hold different positions in the House on how much trust they have in sources of information from outside parliament.

Credibility of Source

- The results indicated that the majority of respondents established credibility by checking the authority and credentials of the source.

Respondents with PhDs differed significantly statistically from other respondents in how they establish credibility of information they receive. Non-PhD holders frequently establish credibility of information they receive by asking, consulting or checking source authority more often than respondents with PhDs. This is most likely because PhD holders believed they were knowledgeable enough and had the relevant skills to establish the credibility of information they obtain or receive without consulting external experts or asking their colleagues. The level of education is important in motivating or hindering information seeking and use (Askim, 2008, Case, 2007; Mostert, 2004; Wilson 1996).

Institutional Arrangements and Members' Access to Information

- On access to key documents needed for parliamentary work, about one-half of the respondents were satisfied with access to documents from Parliament's library. The Library of the Parliament of Ghana serves as "*the first port of call for MPs, committees, leadership and staff*" when they need important documents.
- Interviewee findings revealed that MPs' access to bills was relatively better compared to access to key documents such as committee reports and loan agreements.
- The late submission and distribution of key documents is sometimes part of the strategy used by the leadership of the majority in parliament to deal with contentious issues or when the majority wants to get things through without

much scrutiny. This strategy is used by both major political parties in Ghana that is, the NPP and the NDC when they are the majority in parliament.

- There are also circumstances or deadlines associated with bills or loan agreements that compel the leadership of parliament to present such Bills or agreements as urgent business under Certificate of Urgency. In these instances, the short time for consideration and action results in late or limited access to relevant documents.
- A Mann Whitney test showed statistically significant difference between PhD degree holders and non-PhD holders regarding their level of satisfaction with access to key documents. Respondents with PhDs were less satisfied with access to key documents needed for their work. Possibly because by their training PhD holders have been exposed to the value of the availability of, and access to information as key to accomplishing one's goals and may therefore have higher expectations in the context of their work as legislators.
- Members of Ghana's Parliament do experience information overload because they have to contend with making sense of large volumes of information including documents, information from constituents and from media houses. While the work of all MPs involves dealing with large volumes of information, best practices require provision of support services including access to personal assistants and support of technical experts who can analyse and present the relevant information to MPs in a simplified and easy to manage format (Beetham 2006). However, the limited research support for Ghanaian MPs implies that often individual members have to sift through information with little support leading to information overload.

- There are gaps in the collection of the Parliament Library especially, in the collection on key documents such as bills, loan agreements and committee reports. This impacts negatively members' satisfaction with access to these key documents. There is no formal policy that compels staff and MPs to deposit at the library, without fail, all such important documents. The second contributory factor is due to clientele's attitude, particularly some MPs borrowing materials and not returning them.

Barriers when Accessing Information

- Respondents described as a “very important barrier” members sometimes limited or no access to loan agreements that the House was working on. On the other hand, members' access to bills was “not a barrier at all”. The voluminous nature of most loan agreements and sometimes the short notice for scrutiny by the House, all contributed to members not getting access on time or in some instance not getting access at all to these documents.
- Limited or no access to analysed technical documents was a barrier for a number of respondents. Almost a quarter saw it as a “very important barrier”.
- Limited number of in-house experts in the research department was a barrier for a number of respondents.
- A Mann Whitney U test showed that male and female respondents differed in their responses on barriers when accessing information. Female respondents identified the lack of access to key documents, in-house experts, and lack of appropriate facilities for optimal use of the library as important barriers than their male counterparts. Evidently, male and female MPs' experiences with information differ with implications for information

acquisition and information activities of women MPs (Nalumaga & Seldén, 2014, Rowley et al., 2016; Nalumaga & Seldén, 2014; Nalumaga, 2009, 2012). In this regard, some advocates have called for legislatures to be more gender-sensitive parliaments responding to the needs and interest of men and women in the way they work ((Munn-Rivard, 2012; Palmieri & Inter-parliamentary Union, 2015). This would mean removing obstacles to women's full participation, and generally improving male and female experience including improving their access to information and use of information in the performance of their mandate.

Access to Independent Alternative Sources of Information

- The study established that Parliament and its members were not getting enough alternative views from experts outside the Executive branch of government. The study revealed that Parliament, especially its committees, excessively depended on the executive and its technocrats for expert advice and information when performing their mandated roles, especially during the law-making process, scrutinizing loan agreements and during the budget review process. The proponents of the bills, and presenters of the loan agreements organized and covered the cost of workshops often outside Accra for the Members of the committee (facilitation). This practice of “facilitation” is often accompanied by Executive pressure and limited timelines and opportunity for thorough scrutiny. Over the years there have been recurring calls for Parliament, especially committees to establish clear timelines for committees to perform their job and resist pressure from the executive (Parliamentary Centre, 2004; Parliamentary Debates, 23rd March 2018). However, these practices persist.

- Members, and staff of the Parliament of Ghana asserted the importance of setting up a unit in parliament to support the provision of independent technical analysis especially on budget and financial matters. The study revealed that over the years there have been two major initiatives aimed at setting up a Budget Office and a Scrutiny Office, spearheaded by leadership in Parliament including past Speakers of the House. Both have been delayed in their establishment and operationalization.

The reasons identified for the lack of progress in the Parliament of Ghana setting up a functional unit that can provide quality analysis and information on the budget and other subjects to MPs included the following:

- The policy was not clearly defined at the onset when there was a push for a Budget Act and a Budget office.
- Lack of continuity of initiatives in the Parliament of Ghana once the proponents or key persons leave their positions.
- When a new parliament is reconstituted with changes in parliamentary leadership including changes of Speakers, previous initiatives are delayed or abandoned.
- Each Speaker seeking to get credit for their ideas resulting in delays or complete abandonment of existing initiatives.
- The changing priorities of Parliamentary leadership after Parliament re-composition following elections. For example, the Seventh Parliament is focusing more on setting up a Legislative Drafting Office.
- The strict interpretation of Article 108 implies that enacting a Budget Act as a private member's Bill is not feasible since it is considered to have financial implications. For it to pass the Bill has to be presented by a

Ministry/ Department/ Agency. The Speaker of the 7th Parliament interprets article 108 differently and has stated in principle that Private Members bills are possible. Nevertheless, the Standing Orders and other procedural rules are yet to be modified to make the passage of private members bill possible in the Parliament of Ghana.

- Conflicts between the executive and the leadership of Parliament in pushing for an in-house unit to support independent quality analysis on the budget and other financial matters for use by MPs has greatly contributed to delays and has sometimes led to complete abandonment of such initiatives.

Information Processing and Use (Application and Non-Use of Information)

Application of Relevant Information – Informed Contribution to Collective Decisions and Actions

- Majority of respondents were able to use information received or obtained often to contribute to key collective decisions and actions of the House.
- The two major political parties (NDC and NPP) differed in their responses with regard to how intensely (fully) respondents were able to use information to contribute to collective decisions and actions in the House. The NDC respondents were able to use information that they had obtained or received more often to contribute to collective decisions and actions compared to NPP respondents. The findings reflect the literature which shows that the level of partisan disagreement with a bill or issue before parliament correlates with the use of information in decision making (Demaj, 2015; Sylan et al., 1990; Whiteman, 1985). Members of the minority caucus in Ghana's Parliament in critiquing executive/leadership

bill/issues are more likely to use information available to them more extensively compared to the majority members of the House.

Application of Relevant Information – Use of Information by Individual

MPs for Specific Actions/Decisions.

- Respondents were able to use information they had often for debates on the floor and for TV/Radio appearances. Majority of the respondents were also able to use information for individual actions/decisions and for addressing constituency problems. Constituency duties are the responsibility of individual MPs. Together with the fact that visibility in the constituency is a very important factor for endearment to constituents and also for re-election, it is understandable that individual MPs seek and use information often in performing party and constituency duties.
- Respondents from the two major political parties differed in how intensely they are able to use information for specific actions/decisions as individual MPs. Members from the NDC party were able to use such information for specific actions/decisions as individuals more than NPP respondents. As earlier indicated, members of the opposition party have more time available when compared with their counterparts who are ministers/MPs. Coupled with their desire to work towards improving their chances for re-election, opposition MPs are likely to devote more time to seek information and use such information to push forward their agenda.

Non-Use of Relevant Information

- More than one-half of the respondents indicated that sometimes they were unable to use relevant information they had for parliamentary work and

about one-half identified limited time as an important barrier to the use of information especially for scrutinizing bills and loan agreements.

- Under certain circumstances respondents also ignored information available to them. A higher number of MPs indicated that when the information was biased and when the information was from an unreliable source they ignored such information. Research shows that legislators, for example, do not use written performance reports submitted by the executive branch because they do not consider such information trustworthy (Bourdeaux and Chikoto, 2008).

Strategic Use of Information Control Tactics by Leadership of Parliament

The main findings from the analysis of the *layover* time of bills presented to Parliament to establish leadership's strategy of restricting access to information were as follows:

- Regression analysis (cox proportional analysis) of layover (dependent variable) of Bills presented to the 4th and 6th Parliaments of the Fourth Republic of Ghana showed that *Salience* (Bills on topics of great importance to the public), *Priority* (Executive and leadership priority bills), *Appropriation* (Bills on Budgets and Economic Policy) and *Parliament* (4th and 6th Parliaments), all independent variables, were all highly significant.
- On the other hand, the independent variable *Bill schedule* (*bills presented during last two weeks of parliamentary meeting- back loading*) was not significant, meaning that the layover time for bills presented during the last two weeks of "Bill Schedule" of Parliament as against those presented earlier during the parliamentary "Bill schedule" was not significant statistically.

- *Priority* Bills were found to be highly significant statistically meaning executive/leadership priority bills had significantly shorter layover time.
- Public *Salience* was highly significant statistically implying that high public interest in bills (Public *Salience*) was associated with longer time MPs had for scrutinizing bills.
- Bills that were not *Appropriation* bills had longer layover time. What this means is that the length of time for scrutinizing National Budgets and Economic Policy statements were shorter compared to the length of time used to scrutinize other bills.

Conclusions

From the findings, it can be concluded that leadership of the Parliament of Ghana strategically use information control tactics of shortening the layover time, that is, *duration from date of presentation of committee reports to when debates start* – which literally impacts how much time members have access to key information from committees. The research has established that the leadership of the Parliament of Ghana strategically use short layover time to shorten scrutiny and to push through executive/leadership priority Bills.

It can also be concluded based on the findings that instances when there is high public interest in bills and issues/subject matters before the House is associated with longer layover time – which gives MPs access to key information such as committee reports for a longer period. This implies that Parliamentary leadership is strategic in not using information control tactics to shorten the layover time when they know that the public interest in the bill is high. What this further implies is that should the general citizenry through CSOs, Think Tanks, Universities, private sector, and related organisations

express more interest and attach greater importance to the issues before the legislature, it would lengthen the layover time members have, and through that the length of time members have access to key information to scrutinize matters that are before the House prior to decisions.

Another conclusion from the study is that members of Parliament frequently need information especially when performing financial control roles such as scrutinizing loan agreements presented to the House. However, when it comes to setting up either a Budget Office or a Scrutiny office to provide the needed independent analysis and information to members there is inertia on the part of parliamentary leadership from the two main political parties who have controlled parliamentary business in the past. By their inaction, the status quo, where MPs depend on executive experts and are deprived of access to alternative analysis especially on financial matters continues. The trend invariably makes Ghanaian MPs and the Parliament of Ghana subservient to the executive on matters that relate especially to the nation's finances. Parliament is not effective as a check and balance over the executive arm of government, thus oversight is not rigorous. Current trends do not point to a change anytime soon to address the major information deficit that members of Ghana's Parliament face.

The Parliament of Ghana continues to grapple with its relational power with the Executive Branch of Government and it has been extremely slow at addressing issues associated with power dynamics and capacity issues within the Parliament. In effect the problems of asymmetries of information between the legislature and the executive, as well as within the legislature among its members have not been adequately addressed.

Efforts to develop effective systems that ensure that members at all times get access to the information needed especially access to content of priority loan agreements and bills and most importantly access to alternative expert advice on such matters remain elusive more than twenty-five years after the country's return to liberal democracy. This state of affairs is not because of lack of efforts on the part of the leadership and MPs of previous parliaments, but it is because in all previous instances there never appeared to be enough momentum to push these reforms through. The study identified a number of reasons that may have contributed to the current situation where the Parliament of Ghana has not set up a budget or scrutiny office. They include the following: Elections and the re-composition of parliament and its leaders, the changing priorities of leadership of Parliament after such changes, Speakers seeking credit for their own unique ideas, and the conflicts between the executive and the legislature.

Unless these obstacles from within Parliament and its leadership and most importantly the obstacle from the president and his ministers, are overcome the status quo is likely to persist for the foreseeable future. Until the root causes of the complex power dynamics of the hybrid system of government that tilts power and resources in favour of the executive arm of government are addressed, Ghana's Parliament is likely to continue to apply patchy remedies to address these shortfalls and asymmetries of information.

It can be concluded that the information behaviour of members of Ghana's Parliament is complexly intertwined with the power dynamics of the hybrid system of government practised in the Parliament of Ghana. This impacts members' access to important information including their access to key

documents, alternative factual analysis and the use of such information especially towards contributing to informed collective decisions and actions in the House. The decision-making process in a political context is always located along a spectrum with political mechanisms and information mechanisms at opposite ends. Specific decision-making instances are always a particular mix of these two (Demaj, 2015; Sylan, et al., 1990). While there may be some instances where there is a balance, the research findings show that in most instances the pendulum seems to move towards political mechanisms because of the excessive partisanship in the Parliament of Ghana. Political mechanisms therefore appear to overshadow information mechanisms in the decision-making process in the Parliament of Ghana.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made based on the findings and the conclusions of the study:

- The Parliament of Ghana and its committees should consider introducing the production of *Action-Taken Reports*. This will require respective MDAs to submit to the Parliament of Ghana Action-Taken reports. These are reports that capture actions taken by MDAs in response to observations and recommendations made by respective parliamentary committees.

This recommendation derives from the literature and the findings of this study which revealed that respondents demonstrated less need for information for oversight work compared to their need for information when performing other roles such as law-making, most probably because the Parliament of Ghana is less active in exercising its control of executive actions. Action-Taken Reports by MDAs presented to parliament and tabled

on the floor of the House will ensure that the government and its ministries routinely provide parliament responses to observations and recommendations made by parliamentary committees as they perform their oversight activities. The practise in the Parliament of Zambia can serve as a good example that can be adapted for the Parliament of Ghana to follow.

- It is recommended that in working to help MPs meet their information needs, providers of such information from both in-house and external sources ought to take into consideration the Political Affiliation of the MPs they are assisting to better serve their need. This is necessary because the research findings revealed that members of the minority in parliament need information more frequently to perform their roles than majority caucus members.
- The Parliament of Ghana should set up a Budget Office or a Scrutiny Office as a matter of urgency. The recommendation is based on the findings of the study and on the suggestion by respondents for parliament to improve research and technical support to members. It is within Parliament's power to overcome the obstacles hindering progress. The reasons why establishing a Budget office or a Scrutiny office is not a priority for the Seventh Parliament of Ghana ought to be interrogated in a dispassionate manner if any progress is to be made. A Budget Office or a Scrutiny Office would provide members with credible alternative sources of information, and help limit parliament's over reliance on executive experts when performing their mandate. The findings demonstrated that members of Ghana's Parliament hardly use parliament's research staff but routinely receive information and expert advice from experts from the executive branch, the proponents of

bills/ loan agreements who also double as expert advisers for committees and parliament. This is contrary to the ideal global standard that encourages parliaments to have alternative sources of information and expert advice. A Budget Office or a Scrutiny Office will improve the number and range of experts available to assist MPs in their work.

- Experts, especially those outside the parliamentary system, who seek to disseminate or share information with parliament are encouraged to do so through committees, especially the chairpersons, ranking members and specialist MPs (the subject matter experts) in parliament. The leadership of parliament (both majority and minority including their whips are also an important point of contact for disseminating information to members of Parliament. This is supported by the findings of the study which revealed that fellow members of parliament especially leadership are a very important source of information for MPs when performing their mandate.
- Information units within parliament should include committee clerks in their activities and in the work of the inter-departmental research and information group. The study established that committee clerks are the preferred source of information of members of Parliament from among the parliamentary staff (intermediaries). Committee clerks can serve as useful channels for disseminating information to MPs. This can complement on-going initiatives aimed at promoting the visibility of the staff and services of Information Units within Parliament.
- To complement current efforts at establishing an integrated information request system aimed at avoiding duplication of efforts of information units in parliament in the midst of Parliament's limited resources, the Parliament

of Ghana needs to develop an efficient tracking system for documents. An efficient tracking system will serve as a reference point for easy coordination and improve dissemination of such information products.

- Parliament ought to have a formal policy for mandatory deposits of copies of key documents in the Parliament Library, particularly documents that come through the Table Office. This will help build a more comprehensive collection for use of members and staff and bridge the current gap in the library's collection as reported by interviewees. Future policies on collection development should explore the concept of making the Ghana Parliament Library a national depository for all publications in Ghana, similar to the model of the Library of Congress.
- The Parliament of Ghana needs a system for coordinating and properly documenting the various initiatives both by parliament itself and those funded by development partners aimed at improving its capacity and its information support systems. This can help better manage the evolution of these systems and initiatives, support process of building a strong institutional memory while limiting the occurrences of undue delay, abandonment of useful initiatives whenever parliament is reconstituted. The study identified a number of useful projects running concurrently in parliament aimed at improving information system in the entire institution.
- The findings showed that high public interest in bills (*Public Salience*) was associated with longer layover time for MPs to scrutinize the Bill. It is recommended that citizens, through organised associations, labour unions, civil society groups, think tanks, could have designated parliamentary liaison officers, tasked to track issues of interest that come before the House.

These liaison officers should then focus on helping to maintain interest, promote publicity as well as facilitate citizens' input into the work of the legislature. The longer layover time associated with citizens' interest in Parliamentary work will give MPs more time to find information and to scrutinize bills and other important matters that come before them.

Contribution to Knowledge

The study has contributed to knowledge by unearthing new details about Ghanaian MPs' information needs, and the effect of institutional arrangements under the hybrid governance system on their access to and use of information in the performance of their mandate. The study has contributed to knowledge by establishing through empirical analyses the fact that parliamentary leadership of the Ghana Parliament restrict members' access to information by shortening the layover time in order to push through executive/leadership priority bills. Furthermore, the study established that leadership was strategic, and did not restrict members' access to information, allowing longer layover for scrutiny of bills, when there was high interest in the issue at hand from the public.

The study also contributes to knowledge by building on ideas from a number of subject disciplines and combining an examination of the institutional arrangements of the legislature with an information behaviour model, to interrogate questions relating to the role of information and parliament. This made it possible to adapt Wilson's 1996 General Model for Information Behaviour making it suitable for the study of the information behaviour of members of Parliament. The conceptual framework developed for this study (Model of Information Behaviour of Members of Parliament) provides a holistic

way to study information behaviour of the individual Members of Parliament while taking into consideration institutional factors that shape actions and decisions in a collective decision making environment. The conceptual framework for the study introduced key variables into Wilson's 1996 General Model for Information Behaviour and was structured such that it can be applied to the study of other legislatures, especially under-resourced legislatures.

Methodologically, the research adopted a multiphase mixed-methods research design to examine MPs' information behaviour in a collective action environment. This made it possible to complement a qualitative method that allowed in-depth interviews, with questionnaires that were answered by individual MPs, and a multivariate regression analysis of layover time of bills to measure leadership control tactic of limiting access to committee reports on bills. The research design and methodological approach therefore provides a more holistic method compared to previous studies on the role of information in the Parliament of Ghana which often provided descriptive data on members' information need, sources and on status of information units in the Parliament of Ghana.

Area of Further Research

For future studies, the multivariate analysis of data on bills carried out in this study can be extended to cover data on all bills presented to all previous Parliaments in the Fourth Republic to generate a more comprehensive empirical analysis of layover time of bills presented to the Fourth Republican Parliament. A similar multivariate analysis could also be carried out focusing, this time, on layover time of loan agreements presented to Parliaments in the Fourth Republic.

The research findings showed that there are statistically significant differences in some aspects of the information behaviour of the different groupings within the parliamentary system, namely, political party affiliations, male/female and leadership versus those who are not part of leadership. These groups differ in their responses on a number of issues related to their information behaviour. Future studies on information in parliament could examine these groups in more detail in the context of examining the complex dynamics of information and legislatures' performance of their mandate.

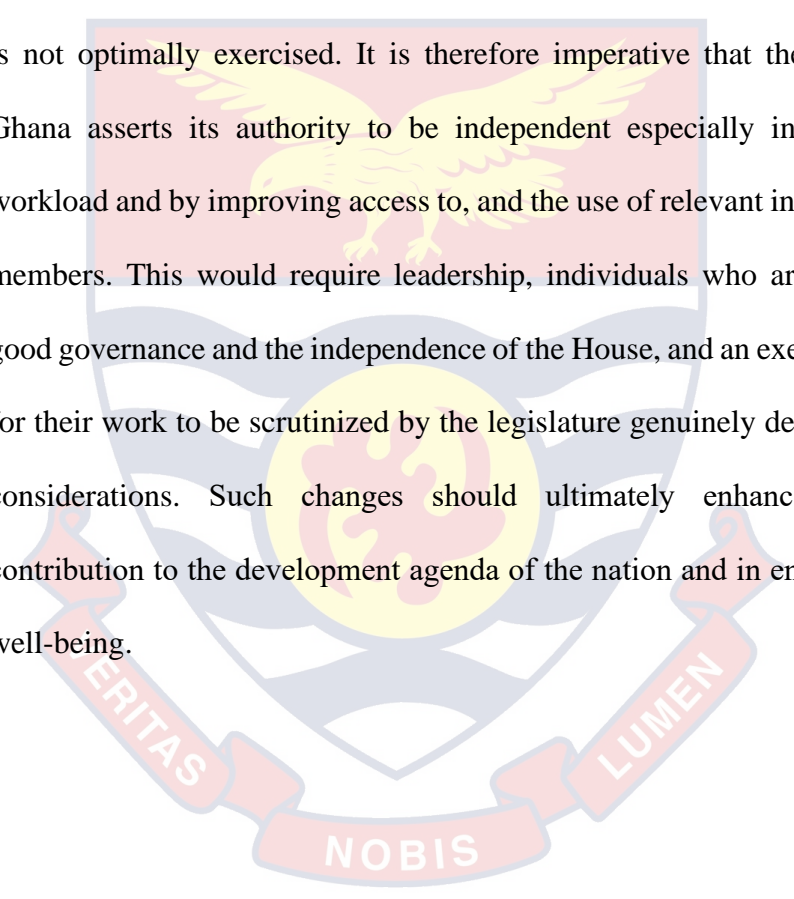
Concluding Remarks

Overall, the study highlighted the complex dynamics of power relations, asymmetry of information, information control, over-reliance on executive experts, the limited access to alternative information and obstacles to the use of information in the work of the Parliament of Ghana. The Parliament of Ghana can be credited for continuing to play its role, especially for making enormous progress with its law-making mandate regardless of the shortfall of relying heavily on the executive for information and expert advice. However, the Parliament of Ghana is not living up to expectation with its scrutiny of loan agreements and its check of executive actions. Parliament possesses a number of tools, it is therefore within parliament's power even within the constraints of the current prevailing institutional arrangements to get the needed information.

However, MPs rarely request for the required information to carry out their oversight function. It is also well within the power of the Parliament of Ghana and its leadership to set up an independent unit for analysis of information for its members so as not to overly depend on the executive; yet there is inertia on the part of leadership. Parliament has the power to regulate

its own activities; therefore, it is within its power to minimise the use of back loading of its schedule and to improve layover time to allow adequate time for scrutiny of matters that come before it. Nonetheless, back loading of the parliamentary calendar and the use of urgent business have become the norm.

The study has demonstrated that in spite of progress made by the Parliament of Ghana in the Fourth Republic, the delegated power of citizens to government, especially to Members of Parliament through the social contract, is not optimally exercised. It is therefore imperative that the Parliament of Ghana asserts its authority to be independent especially in scheduling its workload and by improving access to, and the use of relevant information by its members. This would require leadership, individuals who are committed to good governance and the independence of the House, and an executive prepared for their work to be scrutinized by the legislature genuinely devoid of partisan considerations. Such changes should ultimately enhance Parliament's contribution to the development agenda of the nation and in ensuring citizens' well-being.



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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

INFORMATION NEEDS, SEEKING AND USE BY MEMBERS OF GHANA'S PARLIAMENT

This questionnaire is to gather information from you as a Member of Ghana's Parliament as part of a doctoral research aimed at investigating your information needs, how you go about meeting these needs and how you use information when carrying out your mandate.

This study will be of great benefit to Ghana Parliament and its members, to the academic community and to all interested in enhancing MPs' access to information and the overall effectiveness of Parliament in Ghana's democracy.

I would be extremely grateful if you could take a few minutes of your very busy schedule to answer the questions. Please be assured that responses you provide will be used for academic purposes only and will be treated in the strictest confidence. Thank you.

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION *(Please tick):*

1.1 Your Term in Office as an MP: 1st Term 2nd Term

Other *(Please specify)*.....

1.2 Sex: Male Female

1.3 Political Party *(Please tick):* NPP NDC

1.4 Highest Level of Education Attained: *(Please tick)* Junior High School (BECE)

Secondary (WASSCE/SSSCE)

Secondary (O level)

Secondary (A level)

First Degree (BA, BSc, etc.)

Masters (MSc, MBA, MA, etc.)

Doctorate (PhD)

Other *(please specify)*

1.5 Expertise/professional background *(Please indicate)*:.....

1.6 Position(s) you hold in the current Parliament *(Please tick those applicable):*

Leadership (Majority - includes whips)

Leadership (Minority - includes whips)

Chairperson /Vice - Chairperson of a Committee(s)

Ranking Member /Deputy Ranking Member of a Committee(s)

Member of Committee(s) *(Please list)*:

1.7 Constituency *(Optional)*:.....

1.8 Previous occupation/job before entering parliament *(Please indicate)*:
.....

INFORMATION NEED (Please Circle)

2. What constitutes information in the performance of your mandate? Please circle the appropriate number that corresponds to your level of agreement to the following on a scale of 1 to 6 where 1 indicates strongly disagree and 6 indicates strongly agree.

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Somewhat Disagree 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Agree 5	Strongly Agree 6
2.1 All published & unpublished knowledge on any given topic	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.2 Discussions at meetings, conferences, workshops	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.3 News items from TV/ radio/newspapers/internet	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.4 Analysed information from experts	1	2	3	4	5	6

Information Need - Role Related

3. How often do you need information to perform these roles/tasks? Please circle the appropriate number on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 indicates Never and 5 indicates Always.

	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
Legislative Function					
3.1 Scrutinizing Bills	1	2	3	4	5
3.2 Scrutinizing Loan agreements, statutory instruments	1	2	3	4	5
Financial Function					
3.3 Reviewing Budget and Economic policy documents	1	2	3	4	5
3.4 Monitoring the expenditure of public funds	1	2	3	4	5
Oversight Function					
3.5 Scrutinizing Ministries/Departments/Agencies	1	2	3	4	5
3.6 Vetting and approving presidential nominees	1	2	3	4	5
3.7 Monitoring and field visits at the committee level	1	2	3	4	5
Deliberative Function					
3.8 Debating matters before the House	1	2	3	4	5
3.9 Making statements on the floor of the House	1	2	3	4	5
Representational Function					
3.10 Asking Government Ministers questions on the floor of the House	1	2	3	4	5
3.11 Articulating and advancing constituents' interest in parliament	1	2	3	4	5
Constituency Service					
3.12 Identifying, monitoring needs of constituents	1	2	3	4	5
3.13 Providing for the needs of constituents	1	2	3	4	5
Personal effectiveness, Party Duties					
3.14 Keeping abreast with issues (at national/ international level)	1	2	3	4	5
3.15 Preparing for TV and radio appearances	1	2	3	4	5

INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

Strategies for Looking for Information

4. How do you go about meeting your information need? Please circle the appropriate number to indicate how often you use the listed strategies on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 indicates *Never* and 5 indicates *Always*.

	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
Personal Effort					
4.1 Use own knowledge/experience	1	2	3	4	5
4.2 Use own information collection (e.g. books; articles)	1	2	3	4	5
4.3 Search for information personally	1	2	3	4	5
4.4 Contact personal networks of experts and trusted sources	1	2	3	4	5
Use Intermediaries					
4.5 Use Parliament library Staff	1	2	3	4	5
4.6 Use Parliament Research Staff	1	2	3	4	5
4.7 Use Committee Clerks	1	2	3	4	5
4.8 Use Official Personal Assistant	1	2	3	4	5
4.9 Use Parliament Hansard office staff	1	2	3	4	5
4.10 Use Parliament ICT dept. staff	1	2	3	4	5

Sources of Information

5. How often do you rely on these sources to meet your information needs? Please circle the appropriate number on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 indicates *Never* and 5 indicates *Always*.

	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
Sources inside parliament (Internal Sources)					
5.1 Parliamentary leadership - (including whips)	1	2	3	4	5
5.2 Committee Chairpersons/Ranking Members	1	2	3	4	5
5.3 MPs who are Ministers/Deputy Ministers	1	2	3	4	5
5.4 More experienced MPs	1	2	3	4	5
5.5 MPs with demonstrated expertise in the subject area	1	2	3	4	5
5.6 Parliament Library Staff	1	2	3	4	5
5.7 Parliament Research Department staff	1	2	3	4	5
5.8 Parliament Committee Clerks	1	2	3	4	5
5.9 Parliament IT Dept. staff	1	2	3	4	5
5.10 Parliament Hansard Department staff	1	2	3	4	5
5.11 National Service Personnel assigned by parliament	1	2	3	4	5
5.12 Experts from Executive Branch assigned to parliament	1	2	3	4	5
5.13 Witnesses appearing before parliamentary committee	1	2	3	4	5

	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
Sources outside parliament (external sources)					
5.14 Experts from Universities/Think Tanks/ NGOs/CSOs	1	2	3	4	5
5.15 Experts from Professional Bodies /Private sector	1	2	3	4	5
5.16 Members of my Constituency	1	2	3	4	5
5.17 Family and friends	1	2	3	4	5

6. How important is information from leadership (including committee chairpersons) when you are performing the following roles? Please circle the appropriate number on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 indicates *Not Important* and 5 indicates *Extremely Important*.

	Not Important 1	Slightly Important 2	Moderately Important 3	Very Important 4	Extremely Important 5
6.1 Reviewing National budgets and economic policies	1	2	3	4	5
6.2 Reviewing bills/loan agreements	1	2	3	4	5
6.3 Considering Gov't appointees for approval	1	2	3	4	5
6.4 Scrutinising Gov't Ministries' work	1	2	3	4	5
6.5 Scrutinising financial/audit reports	1	2	3	4	5
6.6 Questioning ministers on the floor of the House	1	2	3	4	5
6.7 Debating on the floor of the House	1	2	3	4	5

Information source characteristics

7. How important are these characteristics when using an information source? Please circle the appropriate number on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 indicates *Not Important* and 5 indicates *Extremely Important*.

	Not Important 1	Slightly Important 2	Moderately Important 3	Very Important 4	Extremely Important 5
7.1 Access (easily available)	1	2	3	4	5
7.2 Credibility (quality and accuracy)	1	2	3	4	5
7.3 Trust (reliability and truthfulness)	1	2	3	4	5

8. How would you rate your level of satisfaction when it comes to your access to the following? Please circle the appropriate number on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 indicates *Not at all Satisfied* and 5 indicates *Extremely Satisfied*.

	Not at all Satisfied 1	Slightly Satisfied 2	Moderately Satisfied 3	Very Satisfied 4	Extremely Satisfied 5
8.1 Content of bills	1	2	3	4	5
8.2 Memorandum on bills	1	2	3	4	5
8.3 Content of Loan agreements	1	2	3	4	5
8.4 Analysed documents on bills (by in-house experts)	1	2	3	4	5
8.5 Analysed documents on Loan agreements (by in-house experts)	1	2	3	4	5
8.6 Briefings/reports by Ministries/Departments	1	2	3	4	5
8.7 Evidence Based Documents on Social services (eg Education)	1	2	3	4	5
8.8 Documents from parliament's library	1	2	3	4	5
8.9 Petition from public/groups	1	2	3	4	5

9. How much trust (reliability and truthfulness) do you have in information from the following sources in performing your role as an MP? Please circle the appropriate number on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 indicates *No Trust* and 5 indicates *Very High Trust*.

	No Trust 1	Low Trust 2	Moderate Trust 3	High Trust 4	Very High Trust 5
<i>Sources outside parliament (external sources)</i>					
9.1 Citizens of your constituency	1	2	3	4	5
9.2 Experts from Universities /Think Tanks	1	2	3	4	5
9.3 Experts from CSOs/NGOs	1	2	3	4	5
9.4 Experts from Private sector /Professional bodies	1	2	3	4	5
9.5 Development Partners	1	2	3	4	5

10. How do you establish the credibility (i.e. accuracy and quality) of information you receive or obtain? Please circle the appropriate number on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 indicates *Never* and 5 indicates *Always*.

	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
10.1 Ask other Members of Parliament about it	1	2	3	4	5
10.2 Consult external experts (Think Tanks / Universities etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
10.3 Consult relevant state institutions	1	2	3	4	5
10.4 Check source authority/credentials	1	2	3	4	5
10.5 Consult in-house Parliamentary Staff/ experts	1	2	3	4	5

FORMAT

11. In what format(s) do you prefer to receive information? (Tick those applicable)

PRINT

ELECTRONIC

VISUAL/GRAPHICAL FORMAT

ORAL PRESENTATION

BARRIERS TO OBTAINING INFORMATION (INTERVENING VARIABLES)

12. How significant are the following as barriers when accessing information? For each statement below please circle the number that corresponds with its level of significance as a barrier on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 indicates *very significant barrier* and 5 is *not a barrier at all*.

	Very Significant Barrier 1	Significant Barrier 2	Somewhat of a Barrier 3	Rarely a Barrier 4	Not a Barrier at all 5
<i>Institutional and Resource Barriers</i>					
12.1 Limited or no access to loan agreement documents	1	2	3	4	5
12.2 Limited or no access to analysed technical documents	1	2	3	4	5
12.3 Limited number of in-house experts in the research department	1	2	3	4	5
12.4 Lack of appropriate facilities for optimal use of the parliamentary library	1	2	3	4	5
12.5 Limited or no access to content of bills	1	2	3	4	5

13. How significant are the following as barriers to your use of policy information? (Policy information includes content of bills /Analysis /Evidence-based research documents) For each statement below please circle the number that corresponds with the level of significance as a barrier on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very significant barrier and 5 is not a barrier at all.

	Very Significant Barrier 1	Significant Barrier 2	Somewhat of a Barrier 3	Rarely a Barrier 4	Not a Barrier at all 5
Procedural and Time Constraints					
13.1 Limited time for scrutinizing bills	1	2	3	4	5
13.2 Limited time for scrutinizing loan agreements	1	2	3	4	5
13.3 Current rules and procedures for Urgent Bills	1	2	3	4	5
13.4 Current rules and procedures for reviewing and passing loan agreements	1	2	3	4	5
13.5 Rules and procedures for contributing on the floor of the house	1	2	3	4	5

14. Do you get the needed research support to do your work? (please tick).

16.1 No (If **No** what do you want improved?) (please state)

16.2 Yes (If **Yes** what support do you get?) (please state)

INFORMATION PROCESSING AND USE

Non Use

15. Are there instances when you have relevant policy information but you are unable to use it for parliamentary work? Please circle the appropriate number on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 indicates Never and 5 indicates Always.

	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
15.1 Unable to use Policy Information	1	2	3	4	5

16. Under what circumstances are you unable to use relevant policy information you have in performing your role in parliament? (please tick as many as are applicable).

16.1 When the timeline for reviewing and passing the bill or loan agreement is very short	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.2 When I am not able to catch the eye of the speaker to contribute on the floor of the house	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.3 When the decision making is driven by political considerations	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.4 When I am not a member of the committee working on the bill/issue	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.5 When the information is too technical	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.6 When the information does not reflect my interest and my view of the world	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. Under what circumstances do you ignore relevant policy information available to you?	
17.1 When it is not in line with my party position	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.2 When the bill or matter before the house is presented at short notice	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.3 When not in the national interest	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.4 When the information is biased	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.5 When the information is from an unreliable source	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.6 When the information is too technical	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPLICATION

Informed contribution to Collective decisions/actions

18. Based on your experience in parliament to date how intensely have you been able to use information received or obtained to contribute to the following? Please circle the appropriate number that corresponds to how intensely you have used such information on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 indicates Never and 5 indicates Always .

	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
18.1 Bills/ Laws that are passed (including appropriation bill)	1	2	3	4	5
18.2 Legislative instrument (LI)/ other instruments passed	1	2	3	4	5
18.3 Motion or resolution on loan agreements that are passed	1	2	3	4	5
18.4 Motion or resolutions on recommendations for improving public financial management (Auditor General's Report) passed	1	2	3	4	5
18.5 Motions or Resolutions on Government appointees passed	1	2	3	4	5
18.6 Motions/ resolution on international agreements etc. passed	1	2	3	4	5
18.7 Oversight of Government-Parliament recommendations passed and forwarded to Ministries /Depts. /Agencies	1	2	3	4	5
18.8 Oversight - Ministers summoned to the house to respond to issues	1	2	3	4	5

Individual MP (Outcome/Actions)

19. Based on your experience in parliament to date how intensely have you been able to use information received or obtained for specific actions as an individual MP? Please circle the appropriate number that corresponds to how intensely you have used such information on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 indicates Never and 5 indicates Always

	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
<i>In the chamber/ At Parliament</i>	1	2	3	4	5
19.1 Statements made on the floor of the house	1	2	3	4	5
19.2 Input made to debates at committee level	1	2	3	4	5
19.3 Input made to debates on the floor of the house	1	2	3	4	5
19.4 Questions to Ministers (asked/answered)	1	2	3	4	5

	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5
<i>Parliament, constituency and beyond</i>	1	2	3	4	5
19.5 Constituency problems indentified and addressed	1	2	3	4	5
19.6 Personal effectiveness achieved	1	2	3	4	5
19.7 TV/ radio/public appearances made etc.	1	2	3	4	5

20. What suggestions would you like to make to improve MPs’ access to and use of information?

.....

.....

.....

.....

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you immensely for taking time to complete this questionnaire.

THANK YOU.

Kindly return the completed questionnaire to the person who administered it.
Or send your assistant to deposit it at the front desk of the library on the first floor at job 600.

Appendix 2: What constitutes Information?

In order to get a better understanding of what was respondents see as information as they performed their parliamentary roles, Respondents were asked the basic question as to what constituted information in the performance of their mandate.

What constitutes information?

What constitutes information in performance of mandate	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Non-Response	Total
	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)		
Analysed information from experts	0 0.0	0 0.0	3 3.7	8 9.9	40 49.4	26 32.1	4 4.9	81 100
Discussions at meetings, conferences, workshops	0 0.0	0 0.0	3 3.7	16 19.8	36 44.4	24 29.6	2 2.5	81 100
News items from TV/ radio/ newspaper/ internet	0 0.0	3 3.7	2 2.5	20 24.7	31 38.3	23 28.4	2 2.5	81 100
All published and unpublished knowledge on any given topic	3 3.7	4 4.9	22 27.2	36 44.4	15 18.5	15 18.5	1 1.2	81 100

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Appendix 3: Right to Information Bill Ghana – Timelines

SOURCE / REF	KEY ISSUES	DATES
Graphic online crediting Starrfmonline	Right to Information First draft by IEA Draft Document review (2003,2005,2007) BUT not presented to Parliament	July 25, 1999
RTI Coalition story	Coalition on Right to Information formed About 80 organizations to date	2007
RTI Coalition story	Original draft - RTI Tabled by Government	2009
RTI Coalition story	RTI BILL 2010 presented to the House 5 th Parliament	5th February 2010
6th Parliament		
RTI Coalition story	Following series of engagements with the Leadership of Parliament and the Attorney General, the AG took a bold step by incorporating all the proposed amendments into a new RTI Bill, and on 18th October, the AG withdrew the old Bill and tabled the revised Bill (RTI BILL 2016) for consideration by Parliament. She specifically wrote to Parliament requesting that the Bill be considered under a Certificate of Urgency, ”	18th October 2016, the AG withdrew the old Bill 18th October – AG tabled the revised Bill (RTI BILL 2016)
	It said the Bill was immediately referred to the select committee on constitutional, legal and parliamentary affairs for review and report, affirming that the review process by the committee was within a day, October 23, and submitted to parliament on October 25.	October 23, 2016 – referred within a day committee report , submitted to parliament on October 25 2016
	In Parliament, the consideration of the new Bill progressed speedily as the Bill saw 48 clauses considered in one day, October 31.	October 31, 2016 Consideration stage
	However, the momentum could not be sustained as the minority MPs raised issues, including the lack of quorum, but the Coalition’s monitoring of the consideration process indicated that some other Bills including loan agreements were passed despite the lack of quorum	

7th Parliament		
	RTI Bill laid on the 23 rd of March 2018	23 rd March 2018 later withdrawn
	4 th April 2018 the RTI Bill referred to the Committee on Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs during the first meeting of the second session of Parliament	4 th April 2018
	Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs invited memoranda and contributions to the Right to Information (RTI) Bill set a Deadline of Friday 13th April 2018	4 th April 2018
	RTI New Bill presented and read first time 26 th April 2018 - Referred to Joint committee on Constitutional Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and Communication	Read first time 26 th April 2018
	Committee report and second reading	7 June 2018 7 June 2018
	Consideration stage begun	July 2018
	Promise made by Leadership Parliament would finish work on the bill by the second meeting of the next session of the House which translates to about July 2018	July 2018
	Leader apologise for non-passage of bill during emergency meeting	September 2018
	Third reading- marking the final passage of bill by Parliament	26 th March 2019
	Presidential Assent	21 st May, 2019

Source: Compiled by Author, 2019

Appendix 4: Budget office/ Scrutiny office – Timelines

KEY FACTS

1993 to 2006 [1st, 2nd and 3rd Parliaments of the Fourth Republic]

CSOs especially the Parliamentary Centre (PC) and the IEA and other development partners including CIDA and World Bank Institute supported and facilitated access to technical experts for parliament, its committee on poverty reduction and on budget related issues. Members at a meeting on NEPAD also emphasised the need for the enactment of a Budget Act.

2006 to 2009 [4th Parliament] – The Enhanced Strategic Plan of the Parliament of Ghana 2006 to 2009 captured parliament’s plans to facilitate and enact a Budget Act. CSOs especially PC and Development Partners such as USAID supported capacity enhancement initiatives for analysing budgets.

2009 – 2011 [5th Parliament] – CSOs especially PC and Development partners including DFID, CIDA USAID continued support through several projects partnering the Parliament of Ghana to undertake study visits and knowledge sharing trips including trips to the United States, Canada, Finland, Kenya and Uganda to learn about Budgets Offices and information support systems for Parliaments in general. Through these initiatives other related partnership a draft Budget Act was developed for the Parliament of Ghana but this was never formally presented to the House for consideration.

Parliamentary Self-assessment Index conducted by seven African countries in 2010, an initiative pioneered by PC with funding from CIDA was launched in 2011. This triggered renewed interest of the Parliament of Ghana in pursuing its goal of enacting a Budget Act.

The Budget Statement for the 2012 financial year presented in November 2011 captured the intention of the Parliament of Ghana to promote the establishment of a Budget office through the enactment of a Budget Act (Budget Statement p. 193 Item no. 863).

2012 [5th Parliament] – This intention to enact a Budget Act was reiterated by the Speaker of Parliament, Rt Hon. Joyce Bamford-Addo, in a speech read on her behalf at the 2011 Post Budget Workshop for Leadership and MPs (May, 2012). The second round of the API assessment in 2012 showed that

consultation and recommendations had been made (2010- 2012) yet the Budget Office had not been established (API assessment 2012).

2013 [6th Parliament] –The 2013 Budget Statement presented in March 2013 included the establishment of a Fiscal Analysis office for Parliament. [Budget Statement page 184 Item number 759]

November 2013, the Budget Statement for 2014 Fiscal Year signalled that Parliament will establish an Office of Scrutiny and Fiscal Analysis to provide fiscal, financial and budget analysis [Budget Statement page 58 , item no 224]The Speaker of Parliament, Rt Hon. Edward Doe Adjaho, at the November Post Budget workshop in 2013 reiterated the intention of Parliament to set up a Scrutiny Office.

2014 [6th Parliament] – Budget for 2015 contained information that the Office of Scrutiny had been set up – specifically that the concept and the scheme of service were completed while office location and recruitment of staff were ongoing (see Budget Statement for 2015 presented in November 2014 p 53 item no 217).

2015 [6th Parliament] –The Budget Statement for the 2016 Financial year presented in November 2015 stated that in 2016 the Office of Scrutiny will be established (see Budget Statement for 2016 presented in November 2015 p60 item no 244).As part of the new concept of setting up a Scrutiny Office, a policy was approved by the Parliamentary Service Board and an appointment of an Acting Director for the office was completed prior to the end of the term of the Sixth Parliament (Interviewee 9).

2017 – [7th Parliament] –The Budget statement for the 2017 Financial year presented in MARCH 2017 states that the Parliament of Ghana facilitated the establishment of the Scrutiny Office. (See Budget Statement for 2017 presented in March 2017 p 54 item no 247). The 2017 MTEF for 2017 – 2019 for the Parliament of Ghana shows the scrutiny office as one of the priority projects funded by the African Development Bank. Projection dates for completion as follows (Page 28) show:

Projection for enacting Budget Act	December 31 st 2018
Projection for establishment of Office of Scrutiny	December 31 st 2017

2018- [7th Parliament] –The Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2018 financial year presented by the Finance

Minister in November 2017 does not capture any information on the Status of the Scrutiny office (See Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana). The 2018 MTEF for 2018 – 2021 of the Parliament of Ghana p33 presents information on and projections on enactment of the Budget Act and setting up the Office of Fiscal Analysis. It is also captured under financial oversight (p 32) and as an objective under the Library and Research Services (p45)

Projection for enacting Budget Act December 31st 2019

Projection - setting up the Office of Fiscal Analysis December 31st 2018

2019- In the Budget Statement of the Government of Ghana for the 2019 Financial Year Presented to Parliament on Thursday, 15th November 2018 the only reference to the Budget Office is in section 406. “It [Parliament] will also pursue reforms including the strengthening of the Budget and Fiscal Office and the Legal Services and Drafting Department to assist MPs in introducing Private Members’ Bills as well as the commencement of the Parliamentary Assurance Project” (see p92 Budget Statement of the Government of Ghana for the 2019 Financial Year).

As at January 2019, the Parliament of the Republic of Ghana has not passed a Budget Act neither does it have a functioning Budget office/ Scrutiny office / Office of Scrutiny and Fiscal Analysis.

Source: Compiled by Author, 2019

Appendix 5: Back Loading of Parliamentary Schedule: Comparing Order

Papers for First Day with Last Day of Meeting

SECOND SESSION OF 7 TH PARLIAMENT (2018)	FIRST WEEK	ORDER PAPER – SCHEDULED ITEMS	FINAL WEEK	ORDER PAPER – SCHEDULED ITEMS	REMARKS
FIRST MEETING	23 rd January 2018 First sitting of the first meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business statement for the week • Statements • Presentation of papers (2) • Committee meetings (3) 	23 rd March 2018 Thirty-six sitting of the first meeting of Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions (7) • Statements • Presentation of papers (5) • Presentation and first reading of bills (1) • Motions / Resolutions (19) • Consideration of bills (1) • Committee meetings (2) 	7 items for the first sitting Compared to 35 items For Thirty-sixth sitting
SECOND MEETING	15 th May 2018 First sitting of the second meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business statement for the week • Statements • Presentation of papers (6) • Committee meetings (2) 	27 th July 2018 Forty-fifth sitting of the second meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions (7) • Statements • Presentation (6) papers • Motions – (16 motions) • Consideration of bills (5 bills) • Committee meetings (2) 	10 items for the First sitting compared to 36 items Forty-fifth sitting
THIRD MEETING	30 th October 2018 First sitting of the Third Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business statement for the week • Statements • Presentation of papers (9) • Presentation and first reading of bills (2) • Motions • Consideration on stage of bill (1) 	22 nd December 2018 Thirty-ninth sitting of the third meeting of Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statements • Presentation of papers (3) • Presentation and first reading of bills (1) • Motions (8) • Second reading of bills (2) • Consideration of bills (1 bills) • Committee meetings (1) 	14 items For the First sitting Compared to 17 items for the Thirty-ninth sitting

Source: (Compiled by Author, 2018 - from parliamentary documents)

Appendix 6: Order Paper

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE SEVENTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE FOURTH REPUBLIC OF GHANA

ORDER PAPER

FOR THE FORTY-FIFTH SITTING OF THE SECOND
MEETING OF PARLIAMENT

FRIDAY, 27TH JULY 2018

C O N T E N T

	Page
1) PRAYERS	2
2) CORRECTION OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS AND OFFICIAL REPORT	2
3) QUESTIONS	2
4) STATEMENTS	3
5) PRESENTATION OF PAPERS	3
6) MOTIONS:	
(i) Adoption of the Mid-Year Review of the Budget Statement and Economic Policy	4
(ii) Tax Waiver—Electrification of 556 Communities - Phase I	5
(iii) Convention on the Simplification & Harmonisation of Customs Procedures	7
(iv) Construction of Priority Infrastructure Projects	8
(v) Contract Agreement in respect of Tetteh Quarshie, Kibi, Aburi, Atibie Hospitals	9
(vi) Contract Agreement in respect of Bekwai Hospital	11
(vii) Consultancy Service Agreement for New Coastal Landing Sites	13
(viii) Credit Agreement—Construction of Bridges in Northern Ghana	14
(ix) Tax Waiver— Construction of Bridges in Northern Ghana	16
(x) Tax Waiver—Access to Satellite TV for 300 Villages in Ghana	18
(xi) Contract Agreement— Construction of Bridges in Northern Ghana	20
(xii) Novation and Amendment Agreement—AMERI ENERGY	22
(xiii) Tax Waiver—Upper East Region Water Supply Project	24
(xiv) Adoption of the Report of Privileges Committee - Ken Ohene Agyapong	26
(xv) Third Reading of the Ghana Education Trust Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2018	27
(xvi) Second Reading of the Luxury Vehicle Levy Bill, 2018	31
7) CONSIDERATION STAGE OF BILLS:	
(i) Ghana Education Trust Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2018	27
(ii) National Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2018	28
(iii) Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2018	30
(iv) Value Added Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2018	30
(v) Minerals Income Investment Fund Bill, 2018	32
8) COMMITTEE SITTINGS	36
9) ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS	38

Appendix 7: Research Assistants for Parliament

A development partner is committed to supporting the training of MPs Research Assistants in basic research methodology to enable them become effective in supporting their members with information needs (Interviewee 4, 7). Processes for engaging research assistants for the Members of the Seventh Parliament has however been characterised by indecisiveness and hence many delays (Interviewee 8). Each research assistant is to be identified by the MP in question, but has to be vetted and recruited by the Parliamentary Service and then assigned to that MP. This arrangement is seen as the best way to satisfy individual MPs while maintaining Parliamentary Service control of the engaged staff.

The dual arrangement and flexibility have also contributed to the delay in implementing the research assistant initiative. The minimum requirement for the position continues to be in contention and it is further complicated by the exact structure to be followed and how the research assistant will interface with the Parliamentary Service HR system, their pay and accounting structure, and the partisan dimension inherent in the process. On the 14th of June 2018 on the floor of the House the Speaker affirmed the fact that Members are to identify and present to the Clerk an assistant of their choice based on set standards developed by the Speaker and Parliamentary Service Board. He gave 18th and 19th June 2018 as timelines for letters to be issued for engagement of qualified research assistants (Parliamentary Debates, 2018, June 14th).

Source: Author (2018)

Appendix 8: Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients^a

-2 Log Likelihood	Overall (score)			Change From Previous Step			Change From Previous Block		
	Chi-square	df	Sig.	Chi-square	df	Sig.	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1674.905	84.550	5	.000	74.609	5	.000	74.609	5	.000

a. Beginning Block Number 1. Method = Enter

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

