

PSYCHOLOGY IN THE SERVICE OF PUBLIC POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT PLANNING: THE CASE OF GHANA

Seth Oppong

African University College of Communications
Accra, Ghana
email: oppon.seth@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Generally, psychologists are not well known in public policy and development circles as experts whose contributions are invited. This has been attributed, at the very least, to the inability of psychologists to communicate what they can contribute to public policy. To address this issue of lack of involvement, it has become necessary for psychologists, therefore, to claim part of the intellectual space in development circles in order to showcase the contributions psychologists can make to public policy and development planning. Thus, this article seeks to examine the potential contributions that psychology as a discipline can make to public policy making and development, particularly in Ghana. It concludes that public policy and development will benefit from the application of psychological research and principles. However, it is suggested that further studies should be conducted to assess the perceived acceptance of the involvement of psychologists in public policy from the various stakeholders on the one hand and the readiness of psychologists to participate on the other.

Keywords: politics, public policy, public administration, political psychology, applied psychology, humanitarian work psychology



Africanus
Journal of Development Studies
Volume 45 | Number 1 | 2015
pp. 42–61

Print ISSN 0304-615X
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INTRODUCTION

The contributions of the social sciences to public policy making cannot be underestimated. However, it is apparent that some social science disciplines contribute more to public policy than others. For instance, there is little doubt that economics, political science, sociology, and law have made and continue to make great contributions to politics and public policy making. On the other hand, the same cannot be said about psychology. According to Machungwa (1989, 55), ‘Unlike many other physical and social science disciplines, psychology is not well known by the average administrator/policymaker, let alone the average person in [African] countries’. Besides, McKnight, Sechrest, and McKnight (2005, 563) also have suggested that ‘because policy makers do not have the luxury of doing a literature search when charged with finding political solutions, they often will contact experts who they think might have some ideas about solutions’.

Indeed, Carr (2007, 45) has decried that:

At meetings and meeting places of the OECD, or the UN, or the conferences of policymakers, government officials, and academic researchers, we [psychologists] are simply not there. Other, related disciplines are clearly represented and indeed actively sought for advice. Chief among these is not surprisingly perhaps economics, followed by sociology, social policy, anthropology, and, increasingly, management... It signals at the very least a communication issue, for example, possibly that our competencies are still perceived as predominantly in terms of clinical and counselling. Reinforcing that image perhaps, psychologists are found doing valuable work in clinical and counselling roles, for example, in the aftermath of natural and man-made disasters.

This therefore calls for action on the part of psychologists with a developmental orientation to claim part of the intellectual space in development circles in order to showcase the contributions psychologists can make to public policy and development planning.

This implies that psychology is not one of the disciplines that policymakers readily call to mind, as the profession of psychology is little known to them (Machungwa 1989). The low profile of psychology among policymakers accounts for the negligible impact of psychology in policy circles in the US (McKnight et al. 2005) and worldwide (Carr 2007). Indeed, psychology is equally less known among policymakers in many African countries, including Ghana (Oppong 2015; Oppong, Oppong Asante and Kumaku 2014; Oppong 2013; Oppong Asante and Oppong 2012). Thus, the potential benefits that politics, public policy making and public administration can derive from psychology have not yet been realised.

However, given that psychologists develop theories of human nature, there is no denying that psychologists can contribute a great deal to improving politics and the work of the policymakers. It is against this background that this article explores the role that psychology and psychologists can play in improving public policymaking

and public administration. It is worth noting that ultimately the role of the psychologist will be to perform functions that will facilitate socio-economic transformation that serves the interest of the citizen, which happens to be the principal objective of public policymaking and public administration.

This article explores the potential contributions that applied psychology can make to politics, public policymaking, and public administration in order to showcase generally how politics and nation-building can benefit from the discipline and profession of psychology. As a result, a review of politics and public administration as well as of what politicians do follows an exposition on what psychology is and what psychologists do. Again, the potential contributions of psychology in public policymaking are also examined. In addition, a review of the potential areas in which psychologists can strategically impact politics and nation-building is also presented with a view to showcasing the ‘impact areas’ of psychology in public administration.

PSYCHOLOGY AND THE PSYCHOLOGIST IN GHANA

Psychology is the scientific study of both animal and human behaviour. Though the scope of psychology spans both animal and human behaviour, the study of animal behaviour is instrumental to the understanding of human behaviour. Psychologists, therefore, build theories of human nature and behaviour in order to describe, explain, predict and control human behaviour. Thus, psychology develops many ‘control technologies’ which could be useful in the modification of behaviour. Indeed, this has given rise to several techniques for behavioural modification. Psychology is a profession with varying specialisations (see Table 1). The table lists some of the major subfields in psychology (American Psychological Association [APA] 2011).

Table 1: Selected subfields of psychology

Subfield	Focus	Applied/Basic Research
Biological or physiological psychology or neuropsychology	Relationship between brain systems and human behaviour.	Basic
Developmental psychology	Physical, emotional, and cognitive changes humans undergo throughout life.	Basic
Cognitive psychology	Experimentations about how humans perceive, think and solve problems.	Basic
Personality psychology	Traits and/or individual differences.	Basic

Social psychology	Interrelationship between individuals and groups.	Basic
Quantitative and measurement psychology	Focuses on methods and techniques for designing experiments and analysing psychological data.	Basic
Clinical psychology	Assessment and treatment of mental, emotional, and behavioural disorders.	Applied
Industrial/ organisational psychology	Application of psychology to business management.	Applied
Human factors or engineering psychology	Conducts research on how people work best with machines.	Applied
Counselling psychology	Helps people recognize their strengths and resources to cope with everyday problems and serious adversity.	Applied
Educational psychology	Concentrates on how effective teaching and learning take place.	Applied
Health psychology	Studies how biological, psychological, and social factors affect health and illness.	Applied
Rehabilitation psychology	Studies and manages stroke and accident victims, people with mental retardation, and those with developmental disabilities caused by such conditions as cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and autism.	
Sports psychology	Helps athletes refine their focus on competition goals, become more motivated, and learn to deal with the anxiety and fear of failure that often accompany competition.	Applied
Community psychology	Studies and improves the abilities of communities, settings, organizations, and broader social systems to meet people's needs.	Applied
Environmental psychology	Studies the dynamics of person-environment interactions.	Applied
Forensic psychology	Application of psychological principles to legal issues.	Applied
School psychology	Studies how to deliver comprehensive psychological services to children, adolescents, and families in schools and other applied settings.	Applied

Though psychology is said to have been ‘born’ in 1879 at the University of Leipzig in Germany, it may be said to be a relatively new development elsewhere, such as in Ghana along the West Coast of Africa (Oppong, Oppong Asante and Kumaku, 2014; Oppong 2013; Oppong Asante and Oppong 2012). In Ghana, scientific psychology is often reported to have emerged during colonisation within the context of providing education to serve colonial interests, as was the case in other West African colonies (Nsamenang 2007; Oppong, Oppong Asante and Kumaku 2014; Oppong 2013; Oppong Asante and Oppong 2012; Peltzer and Bless 1989). However, it is possible to trace the intellectual origin of psychology in Ghana to Antonius Guilielmus Amo (Guinea-Afer) (Oppong, Oppong Asante and Kumaku 2014). In April 1734, Antonius Guilielmus Amo (Guinea-Afer) became the first black African or Ghanaian to obtain a PhD in Philosophy and Psychology at the University of Wittenberg after successfully defending his dissertation titled *On the Apathy of the Human Mind Or the Absence of Sense and of the Faculty of Sensing in the Human Mind And the Presence of these in our Organic and Living Body* (see Amo [1734] 2012).

Historical records indicate that training of teacher-missionaries in Ghana began with the establishment of the Basel Seminary (now Presbyterian College of Education) in 1898 and the Accra Teacher Training College (now Accra College of Education) in 1909 by the Basel Mission and the government of the Gold Coast respectively (Oppong, Oppong Asante and Kumaku 2014; Oppong 2013; Oppong Asante and Oppong 2012; Graham 1971). The teaching and practice of psychology can therefore be traced to the training and nonprofessional practice of psychology (teachers and African missionaries) in the late 1890s. However, psychology as an academic discipline started at the University of Ghana, Legon, and it was first taught in 1963 as a combined psychology-sociology course in the Department of Sociology (Agbodeka 1998). It became an independent academic discipline when the Department of Psychology was established at the University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, in May 1967. Psychology has gradually been established as a professional discipline, a fledgling science at best in Ghana (Oppong, Oppong Asante and Kumaku 2014). Despite this, not all the subfields of psychology as indicated in Table 1 can be found in Ghana in terms of having trained psychologists in said specialisations. Mostly, one can find in Ghana all the subfields of psychology except personality psychology, rehabilitation psychology, forensic psychology and quantitative psychology. Thus, the focus of psychology in Ghana has largely been an applied one, implying that there has been very little contribution from Ghana in terms of the basic science of psychology which serves as the basis for applied work.

When psychology was established as an independent academic programme in Ghana in 1967, it was thought that ‘the pressures that accompany rapid political, economic, and social changes in a developing country like Ghana would cause many human problems for whose solutions psychological teaching and research can be directly relevant’ (Agbodeka 1998, 177). However, psychology in Ghana has failed

to make the expected contributions to public policy and development of the Ghanaian society as anticipated in 1967 (Oppong 2015). Thus, it has become necessary to consider the potential contributions that psychology can make to public policy and development so as to redirect attention and resources in the training and application of psychological science in Ghana and Africa. It is also part of the efforts to claim an intellectual space for psychology in the development circles.

POLITICS AND POLITICIANS

Heywood (2007, 4) argues that generally ‘politics is the activity through which people make, preserve, and amend the general rules under which they live’. He further identifies four different perspectives as to what politics is, namely: (1) politics as the art of government, (2) politics as public affairs, (3) politics as compromise and consensus, and (4) politics as power and the distribution of resources.

When politics is viewed as an art of government, it implies the exercise of control within society through the making and enforcement of collective decisions, whereas, when viewed as public affairs, it signifies ‘an ethical activity concerned with creating a “just society”’ (Heywood 2007 8). In addition, when politics is viewed as compromise and consensus, it comprises a particular means of resolving conflicts, while, when viewed as power and distribution of resources, it implies acquisition of power for the allocation of resources (Heywood, 2007). The working definition in this paper is that politics reflects an activity that involves the acquisition and exercise of authority in the allocation of resources for the betterment of society.

This suggests that politics is an essential activity for nation-building, and the key players involved in this activity are politicians. Presidents or states, legislators or members of parliament (MPs), assembly members, and other elected officials are different categories of politicians who practise the art of politics. It is in this sense that the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana recognises the above-mentioned categories of persons as politicians. Their role in nation-building is not in doubt. This is because these politicians provide the needed leadership that steers the affairs in nation-building, and failure and success can be attributed to them (Kwakye 2011; Adei 2004; Achebe 1983).

Regardless of how one views politics, it intertwines with public policymaking and public administration as well as development planning. This is because public policymaking requires the involvement of politicians as key participants in various stages of the policymaking process such as agenda setting, policy formulation, policy legitimation, and policy implementation (Dye 2008). Similarly, public administration is generally considered to be related to government and primarily with the executive branch, where the work of the government is carried out; thus, the activities of the executive branches of the national, state, and local governments are the primary

focus of public administration (see Peters 2002; Bhattacharya 2007). For instance, according to Corson and Harris (1963, 44), public administration involves:

decision-making, planning the work to be done, formulating objectives and goals, working with the legislature and citizen organizations to gain public support and funds for government programmes, establishing and revising organisations, directing and supervising employees, providing leadership, communicating and receiving communications, determining work methods and procedures, appraising performance, exercising controls, and other functions performed by government executives and supervisors. It is the action part of government, the means by which the purposes and goals of government are realized.

Furthermore, Peters (2002, 153) adds that public administration can be considered 'as means of providing effective and accountable management in government'. The scope of public administration presented here constitutes the field of politics with policymakers and politicians as key players. In other words, the politician is one of the key actors in public administration and public policymaking, as politicians provide the strategic direction for governance and public management.

PUBLIC POLICY MAKING, DEVELOPMENT PLANNING, AND PSYCHOLOGY

Simply put, 'public policy is whatever governments choose to do or not to do' (Dye 2008, 1). This suggests that public policy reflects the decisions and actions of governments and these represent the government's effort in development planning. Indeed, public policies represent the development plans of governments. Given that the principal objective of politics and public administration is to bring about socioeconomic transformations, it is possible to conclude that public policies are the conduit through which politicians and public administrators achieve their principal objective. Thus, public policymaking is an important exercise that ought to benefit from the contributions of all relevant experts. Typically, the public policymaking process comprises problem identification, agenda setting, policy formulation, policy legitimation, policy implementation, and policy evaluation (Dye 2008). This sequence represents a step-by-step approach to public policymaking 'but in reality these processes overlap and intertwine' (Dye 2008, 32). These processes are summarised in Table 2.

A key step in the policy making process is the identification of a public problem. According to Anderson (2006, 80), a policy problem is a 'condition or situation that produces needs or dissatisfaction on the part of people for which relief or redress is sought'. This suggests that the role of psychologists at this stage of the policymaking process will be to identify conditions that constitute policy problems through research and advocacy. This implies that psychologists should no longer be content with researching about issues that cannot constitute policy problems if they wish to be considered experts by policymakers.

Table 2: Public policy making and potential role of psychology

Process	Activity	Participants	Potential Role of Psychology
Problem identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicising societal problems • Expressing demands for government action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass media • Interest groups • Citizen initiatives • Public opinion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research on relevant public problems • Advocacy
Agenda setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deciding what issues will be decided; what problems will be addressed by government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elites, including elected public officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research on relevant public problems to highlight the urgency for resolving them • Advocacy
Policy formulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing policy proposals to resolve issues and ameliorate problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think tanks • President and ministers • Legislative committees • Interest groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Application of psychological theories
Policy legitimization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting a proposal • Developing political support for it • Enacting it into law • Deciding on its constitutionality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest groups • President • Legislative assembly • Courts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Advocacy
Policy implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing departments and agencies • Providing payments or services • Levying taxes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office of president • Ministries Departments and agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of industrial/ organizational psychology
Policy evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting outputs of government programmes • Evaluating impacts of policies on target and non-target groups • Proposing policy revision and reforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministries Departments and agencies • Legislative committees • Mass media • Think tanks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of psychological research designs

Source: Adapted from Dye (2008, 32)

This is not to imply that other problems cannot be studied by psychologists but when they investigate these problems, it is incumbent upon them to advocate for

support until the problems grow in prominence. Thus, as much as psychologists can study policy problems, they are at liberty to study other problems with the principal objective of transforming them into policy problems. This also implies that psychologists must always consider the policy implications of the problems they study, particularly the impact on the socioeconomic development of the society. Thus, the first 'law' is that *a psychological study is meaningless unless it contributes to addressing a policy problem* while the second law ought to be that *a psychological study is useful only when it highlights its impact on socioeconomic development*.

Related to the process of problem identification is agenda setting. Getting a given policy problem to be considered worthy of consideration for redress as part of national decision making (Dye 2008) is very important. But what role can psychologists play at this stage? Through research and advocacy, psychologists can transform problems that will not otherwise be considered for national decision making to be on the agenda for policy considerations. This implies that psychologists will have to use the mass media, think tanks and interest groups to consistently push for policy considerations related to the problems that they study. On the other hand, psychologists can also contribute to public policy by way of investigating policy problems to help policy makers to set priorities.

Public formulation is the development of policy alternatives or solutions for dealing with problems on the public agenda (Dye 2008). This involves determining which options are available to government in resolving a particular policy problem that has received sufficient attention to be worthy of redress. Psychological research and application of psychological theory will be useful in the formulation of policy alternatives. For instance, Oppong's (2014a) evaluative review of Bandura's social cognitive theory and Giddens's structuration theory and the resultant integrated model of human conditions and actions is illustrative of the contributions that psychology can make to public policy making. The model compels policy makers to consider all the relevant factors that will ensure that policy solutions have sustainable impact. Oppong's (2014b) examination of economic policy failures in Africa also makes another useful contribution concerning the role that psychology can play in policy design and formulation. It is important to note that psychologists have a responsibility to engage with and educate policymakers about how the application of psychology can dramatically transform policy implementations and policy successes. This is to say that a 'psycho-policy' (i.e. a policy that is built on psychological principles on how behavioural change can be achieved) will be more effective than traditional policies that ignore psychology. In other words, the application of psychology can take two forms: (1) application of psychological knowledge as 'technology' for behavioural control and change to issues for which psychological knowledge is not needed to address the substance and (2) application of psychological knowledge as both the technology of control and core knowledge for addressing the substantive issues the policy seeks to address.

Policy legitimation involves selecting a particular policy alternative and garnering political support for the policy solution (Dye 2008). An important implementation option is the public private partnership (PPP). PPP enables governments to access private capital and skills in the design, finance, construction, maintenance, and operation of public infrastructure for service delivery. The role of psychologists at this stage will be the application of the psychology of persuasion theory and practice to the communication of the policy option in order that politicians and policymakers can win the confidence of target beneficiaries. Thus, the application of psychology's persuasion theory will be key in the advocacy process. On the other hand, psychological research could be utilised to demonstrate to the target beneficiaries the need to support the implementation of a given policy alternative.

Policy implementation involves all the activities designed to carry out the policies enacted by the legislative assemblies (Dye 2008). According to Dye (2008), policy implementation activities comprise creating new organisations and/or the assignment of new responsibilities to existing organisations. These organisations are expected to translate laws into operating rules and regulations as well as to hire staff, engage in public procurement, expend money and perform tasks towards the achievement of the policy objectives. This implies that policy implementation overlaps with public administration. This is because public administration deals essentially with 'the machinery and procedures of government as these are used in the effective performance of government activities' (Bhattacharya 2007, 6). Details about the potential contributions of psychology to public administration and therefore policy implementation are presented in the next section on the role of psychology in public administration. Though much of the exploration deals with the political directorate or elected officials, the principles examined are equally applicable to the non-elected public servants.

Policy evaluation involves learning about the consequences of public policy (Dye 2008). Wholey Scanlon, Duffy, Fukumoto, and Vogt (1970, 25) define it as 'the assessment of the overall effectiveness of a national programme in meeting objectives, or assessment of the relative effectiveness of two or more programmes in meeting common objectives', while Nachmias (1979, 4) defines policy evaluation as 'the objective, systematic, empirical examination of the effects of ongoing policies and public programmes have on their targets in terms of the goals they are meant to achieve'. Thus, policy evaluation is applied research that seeks to determine the degree to which a policy alternative is likely to achieve its desired impact when implemented and/or actually achieved its intended impact upon implementation. This signifies that policy evaluation is simply an application of experimental and quasi-experimental designs in the assessment of the impact of a public programme or project. In this regard, psychologists are well-positioned to serve as experts as a result of their training in research methodology and statistics. This is because psychologists are not only users of research methods and statistical techniques but

also active creators of new methods and techniques (APA 2011). It is worth noting that Shadish, Cook, and Campbell's (2002) *Experimental and Quasi-experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference* represents an important source book for any psychologist thinking of making a career in policy evaluation. Currently, the University of Cape Town in South Africa offers postgraduate studies (masters and Phd) in programme evaluation through its Organisational Psychology Section of the School of Management at the Faculty of Commerce.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND PSYCHOLOGY

When governance is likened to running an organisation, it is possible to conclude that politicians are the leaders who direct the various parts of the said organisation. In fact, that view underlies the principles of public administration. For instance, Peters (2002, 153) argues that public administration can be considered 'as means of providing effective and accountable management in government'. Similarly, Corrigan, Hayes, and Joyce (1999) mention, among other things, change management, people management, understanding consumer behaviour (customer service), and entrepreneurship as constituting management in the new local government in the UK.

Public administrators comprise two levels, namely: (1) the political directorate (cabinets, councils, advisory bodies) who may be elected, co-opted, nominated by interest groups or selected through some other means; they may also include members from the military or civil services and (2) the permanent career officials and bureaucratic organisations which largely constitute public services (Goel and Rajneesh 2006).

Owing to the scope of public administration as a discipline, which constitutes a subfield of political science, it is not far-fetched to suggest that public administrations can benefit from the application of psychological principles for effective and efficient management of the government machinery and public service. The deliberate application of psychological principles to public administrations may be considered as an activity that dovetails with the scope of humanitarian work psychology (HWP). Carr et al. (2013, 5) define HWP as:

the application of Industrial and Organizational (I-O) psychology to humanitarian work (including humanitarian workers well-being and humanitarian task performance) as well as making work-in-general more humanitarian (promoting what the International Labour Organization calls Decent Work, and meeting responsibilities to multiple stakeholders in wider society).

That public administration is largely non-profit and therefore seeks to accomplish a humanitarian goal can justify the consideration that any deliberate application of psychological principles to public administration is humanitarian work psychology. At this point, it is plausible to argue that psychologists, particularly industrial and

organisational (I-O) psychologists, can contribute to conducting job analysis on the job of the politician, politician selection, performance review, job evaluation, and leadership development. The selection of these I-O activities is meant to be illustrative rather than exhaustive of what psychologists can contribute to public administration. In the following paragraphs, each of the above-mentioned areas is presented in detail. Given that the focus of this paper is on the political directorate rather than career officials, the rest of the discussion will concentrate on the application of psychological principles to the former.

Job analysis

Job analysis is the basic tool employed by the psychologist. According to Ilgen, (2004, 472), job analysis is ‘the study of the job requirements’, while Levy (2006, 65) considers it to be ‘the process of defining a job in terms of its components tasks or duties and the knowledge or skills required to perform them’. Ilgen (2004, 742) adds that ‘job analysis goes beyond the simple description of what must be done to suggest the human characteristics necessary to accomplish the job successfully’. This implies that job analysis comprises both task-oriented and worker-oriented analyses such that the former concentrates on the tasks or duties or what must be carried out and the latter focuses on the knowledge, abilities, skills, and other characteristics (KASOCs) required to perform the tasks identified as part of the task-oriented analysis. KASOCs are identified as the job or personnel specifications (Levy 2006). This makes job analysis key to any successful psychological intervention. This is because it forms the basis for employee selection, training and development, job design and redesign, performance management, job evaluation and compensation, and preparation of job descriptions.

Psychologists can conduct job analyses on the jobs carried out by the political directorate to prepare both job descriptions and job specifications. This initial process will be key to accountability in government. This is because once we can clearly identify the tasks that these politicians need to perform, the general public will be in a position to demand performance of those tasks, thereby enhancing accountability. The appointing authorities in government can similarly demand accountability from officials they have selected. Accountability will be improved if there is transparency about what the members of the political directorate are required to do, as it creates a sense of what both government and the general public can expect from the political directorate. Again, it enables the general public to also assess whether or not the members of the political directorate are placed where they will be most effective.

Politician Selection

Public administration, like any other process, is carried out by human resources. However, getting the right human resources is what will distinguish an effective

administration from an ineffective one. Generally, selection is the process of deciding the suitability of candidates for a given job (Oppong 2011; Levy 2006; Ilgen 2004; Guest 1997). Thus, employee selection is a decision-making process in which the employer determines whether or not a particular candidate under consideration fits the job and/or the organisation with the objective of ensuring effective performance. This implies that selection focuses on both person-job fit and person-organisation fit; while the former relates to the degree of match between the KASOCs possessed by the candidate and the KASOCs required for the job, the latter deals with the degree of match between the candidate's values and those of the employer (Oppong 2011). There are many tools that I-O psychologists employ for effective selection decisions, and these include cognitive ability tests, psychomotor tests, personality inventories, work samples, assessment centres, biographical information, and employment interviews (Levy 2006).

When applied to public administration, the psychologist will be expected to employ the various tools at his or her disposal to assist the central government in the selection of its political directorate. Based on the results of a thorough job analysis, the psychologist will assist the political leadership to determine the profile of the ideal candidate for a given job. This will assist any vetting committee in their assessment of each candidate for the jobs under consideration. The challenge arises when attempts are made to apply these principles to the selection and election of officials to political offices at the party political level. This is because doing so may be considered discriminatory and may be viewed as elitist in character. This will ultimately lead to the creation of political parties on the basis of elites and non-elites, and this can undermine the purpose of political organisation for socioeconomic transformation.

Performance Management

Performance management (PM) is a 'system of individual performance improvement that typically includes (1) objective goal setting, (2) continuous coaching and feedback, (3) performance appraisal and (4) development planning' (Levy 2006, 116). Levy adds that performance appraisal is the 'systematic review and evaluation of employee's job performance, as well as the provision of feedback to the employees' (2006, 113). This suggests that an effective performance management system will begin with a thorough job analysis with a view to producing job descriptions and job specifications. This is because it is on the basis of job descriptions that objective goal setting can take place, as well as the development of performance appraisal forms for assessment of employee performance. Again, all the other processes involved in performance management will make reference to the results of job analysis as the data for decision-making.

Application of psychological principles in public administration in the area of performance management will involve working with the political leadership to set

specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals for the various members of the political directorate and designing a system for monitoring the performance over the given timeframe. This will improve the overall performance of the government and services that the general public receives from the civil and public services.

Job Evaluation

Job evaluation is the process of determining the value or worth of jobs to organisations in order to set salaries (Levy 2006). Armstrong and Murlis (2005, 112) also describe it as a 'systematic process for defining the relative worth or size of jobs within an organisation in order to establish internal relativities and provide the basis for designing an equitable grade and pay structure'. Thus, job evaluation is required for the determination of compensation or salaries that need to be paid to workers. In Ghana, for instance, the Fair Wages and Salaries Commission Act, 2007 (Act 737) provides the framework for conducting job analyses on public services jobs. Given that Act 737 does not apply to the officials mentioned in Article 71 of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, it is expected that psychologists may serve as consultants to both the parliamentary and presidential committees that are charged to determine the emoluments for the officers covered by the Article 71. Specifically, this article covers the following officers:

- President and the Vice-President
- Chairman and members of the Council of State
- Ministers of State and their Deputies
- Speaker and Deputy Speakers of Parliament
- Members of Parliament
- Chief Justice and other Justices of the Superior Court
- Auditor-General
- Chairman and Deputy Chairmen of the Electoral Commission
- Commissioner for Human Rights and Administrative Justices and the Deputies
- District Assemblies Common Fund Administrator
- Chairman, Vice-chairman and other members of:
 - National Council for Higher Education
 - Public Services Commission
 - National Media Commission
 - Lands Commission
 - National Commission for Civic Education

Leadership Development

Politicians are required to exercise leadership in the governance process and psychologists can contribute a great deal to the development the politicians as leaders. Given that many of the leadership theories were developed by psychologists (Strümpfer 2007) and that psychologists are also skilled in conducting job analysis, it is reasonable to expect that they are in a better position to facilitate the development of leadership skills required by the politicians or the political directorate. In particular, I-O psychologists and clinical psychologists trained in executive coaching (see Berman and Bradt 2006) can serve as coaches to the political directorate. The Executive Coaching Forum (TECF 2008, 19) defines executive coaching as:

an experiential and individualized leader development process that builds a leader's capability to achieve short- and long-term organizational goals. It is conducted through one-on-one and/or group interactions, driven by data from multiple perspectives, and based on mutual trust and respect. The Organization, an executive, and the executive coach work in partnership to achieve maximum impact.

Thus, the psychologist may be assigned to individuals or groups of political leaders within the public administration to help them develop and hone their leadership skills so as to effectively and responsibly exercise the authority vested in them as public officials.

CHALLENGES

In the ongoing discussion, attempts have been made to showcase contributions that psychologists in general and I-O psychologists in particular can make to politics and public administrations. However, it has not been possible for psychologists to make the expected impact on politics and public administration. This can be traced to a number of challenges, including the fact that psychology is not known among policymakers, psychologists have not been directly involved in politics as politicians, and psychologists have not branded themselves enough to be perceived as relevant by the politicians and public officials. In the paragraphs below, each of these challenges is discussed in detail.

As stated earlier, 'Unlike many other physical and social science disciplines, psychology is not well known by the average administrator/policy maker, let alone the average person in [African] countries' (Machungwa 1989, 55). Similarly, psychology is not as well-known as other social disciplines in Ghana (Oppong, Oppong Asante and Kumaku 2014; Oppong 2013; Oppong Asante and Oppong 2012). Viewed against the backdrop that policymakers usually consult those experts they believe have ideas about the solutions being sought (McKnight et al. 2005), it is unlikely that psychologists will be sought by policymakers in Ghana to offer their expertise to facilitate the nation-building process. This is also because the public

conceptions and perceptions about psychology have largely been focused on only one subfield, clinical psychology, due partly to the fact that the majority of practicing psychologists are clinicians. Thus, psychologists should avail themselves wherever and whenever possible to public officials in order to create awareness and recognition for the expertise that they possess. This way, psychologists may be consulted when certain policy issues arise which require their expertise.

Related to the above challenge is the fact that psychologists are not directly involved in politics. When one is directly involved as a politician, it increases the chances that one's expertise will be tapped into by other policymakers. Though there are teachers or educators in legislative assemblies, including that of Ghana, there are no known psychologists. Thus, successful election of just one psychologist member of parliament may bring psychology under the media spotlight, which may enhance recognition of psychology's role in politics.

Finally, there is also the issue of psychologists not branding themselves enough to be recognised as experts in the areas discussed in Ghana. For instance, § 5(1) of Act 737 stipulates that the Governing Body of the Fair Wages and Salaries Commission (FWSC) in Ghana, among other members, must include four other members who must have expertise in *human resource management, wage and salary administration or law*. This membership criterion is provided for by Act 737, despite the fact that FWSC is charged, among other objectives, to accomplish the following:

- To ensure fair, transparent and systematic implementation of the Government public service pay policy
- To develop and advise Government on and ensure that decisions are implemented on matters related to
- Salaries, wages, grading, classification
- Job analysis and job evaluation,
- Performance management and indicators, and
- Allowances and benefits in the public service with the ultimate objective of consolidation of the allowances and benefits

Thus, § 5(1)(d) of Act 737 gives recognition to human resource management but fails to recognize I-O psychology as a legitimate expertise required in job evaluation and compensation management. This may have resulted from the fact that Ghanaian I-O psychologists have not demonstrated themselves as experts who can provide essential inputs for policy formulation in pay administration.

CONCLUSION

This article presented a review of the literature on what I-O psychologists in particular and psychologists in general can contribute to nation-building in the

areas of politics, public policymaking and public administration. It was observed that there are many potential benefits that public administration can derive from the application of psychological principles. In particular, job analysis, politician selection, performance management, job evaluation, and leadership development through executive coaching are presented as areas illustrative of the potential contributions from psychology to public administration with particular reference to the political directorate. However, it has not been possible for psychologists to make the expected impact on politics and public administration.

This low profile of psychology in policy circles may be traced to a number of challenges, including the fact that psychology is not well known among policymakers, psychologists not having been directly involved in politics as politicians, and psychologists not having branded themselves enough to be perceived as relevant by politicians and public officials. It is therefore recommended that further studies should be conducted to assess the perceived acceptance and benefits of the involvement of psychologists in public administration and public policy making from the various stakeholders as well as the readiness of psychologists to participate in public policy making and public administration.

It is vital to note that the desired impact of psychology on public policy will be much better achieved in Ghana and other parts of Africa through re-orientation of qualified psychologists and training of psychology students that includes a study of the potential relationship that can exist between psychology and public policy. In this regard, the PhD programme in Public Policy offered at the Sanford School of Public Policy of Duke University in the United States deserves special mention. This programme allows students to have disciplinary concentration in economics, political science, sociology, and psychology. However, the disciplinary concentration in psychology focuses on research methods, statistics, developmental psychology, social psychology, and clinical psychology, leaving other equally useful subfields of psychology unaddressed. This may be understandable, given that the policy area focus comprises social policy, globalisation and development, health policy, and environmental policy. On the other hand, cognitive psychology has already found a home in public policy through its marriage with economics in behavioural economics. Other subfields such as industrial psychology, social psychology, educational psychology, and community psychology are yet to become major players in public policy studies and practice.

The existence of outlets for the dissemination of research findings regarding the applications of psychological knowledge to public policy and development making is equally essential. In this regard, the *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* (JSPP) provides an important platform for engagement within the communities of practice involving psychologists, public policy analysts, and technocrats within the public service. JSPP seeks to publish 'articles at the intersection of social and political psychology that substantially advance the understanding of social problems,

their reduction, and the promotion of social justice ... and encourages submissions with interdisciplinary perspectives' (Cohrs and Vollhardt 2013, 1). Significant distinguishing features of JSPP include its (1) objective of truly internationalising scholarly exchange beyond the so-called Western world to include non-Western scholars, (2) comprehensive and integrative approach in terms of accommodating different epistemological, methodological, and theoretical traditions and therefore overcoming the quantitative-qualitative divide, (3) emphasis on the responsibilities of scholars to reflect on the implications and applications of their scholarly work in education, policymaking, professional practice, and advocacy and social action. This implies that JSPP acknowledges that knowledge is not only produced in Western educational institutions but that their non-Western counterparts equally engage in knowledge production. This will help in producing truly "universal" knowledge. Thus, JSPP is an important journal that creates a forum for both Western and non-Western scholars to contribute to the process of alleviating human suffering and improving wellbeing.

Another significant development across the Atlantic Ocean is the establishment by APA of the journal *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law* in the mid-1990s. This journal aims at providing a platform for research psychologists and applied psychologists as well as public policy analysts to explore the contributions that psychology can make to public policy and legal issues (Lamb 2013). In pursuit of this grand objective, the journal publishes articles which (1) examine the contributions of psychology to public policy and legal issues, (2) evaluate the relevance of different policy and legal options against the backdrop of the existing scientific literature, (3) identify and articulate empirical gaps in the literature regarding public policy and legal issues, (4) present empirical evidence on the application of psychology to public policy and law, and (5) explore public policy and legal implications of the conduct of psychology. The scope and target audience of this journal provides interested psychologists the needed forum to engage with and educate policymakers about the contributions that psychologists can make in the nation-building process at the policy level. It is against this background that this paper argues that it will be worthwhile if many other similar journals are established.

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