

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Campus Politics and Intra-Party Vote Buying in Ghana: How Political Mentorship Could Destruct

Sebastian Angzoorokuu Paalo* & Ransford Edward Van Gyampo**

Abstract

Elections in fledgling democracies are punctuated by perceived and observed cases of vote buying otherwise also called electoral clientelism – regarded as a major threat to democratic consolidation. Notions of vote buying are variously captured in the burgeoning literature on democracy, but the ongoing scholarly discussions have failed to engage some growing contemporary trends that also contribute significantly to sustaining the culture of vote buying in intra-party, local and national elections. In our analysis of recent intra-party elections in Ghana, we argue that vote buying has become more complex and more pronounced – and the proliferation of the phenomenon is aided by student campus politics (particularly at the various tertiary institutions), which directly feed into national politics. Following this stance, the article concludes with a recommendation that further empirical research be conducted by scholars and policymakers to fully examine the reinforcing role of campus politics in electoral clientelism during intra-party elections and, by extension, national elections.

Keywords

campus politics; clientelism; political party; student politics; vote buying

Introduction

For decades, the drive towards democratic maturity in developing and transition countries has been characterised by notions of vote buying (Cheeseman, 2015). Post-Cold War Africa has witnessed enormous political transformation, particularly in terms of democratisation. Most polities in the continent have adopted the practice of secret balloting, electorates have continuously received some forms of civic education, electoral laws have criminalised vote buying, elections appear to be free and fair, and thus electoral institutions and processes are getting stronger with time (Cheeseman, 2015; Adejumobi, 2007). Consequently, authoritarian and patrimonial regimes have hitherto slowly paved the way for some democratic processes.

Like many other African states, vote buying is a common trait of Ghana's electoral democracy. Though being hailed as a consolidating democracy, largely by the international

* Mr Sebastian Angzoorokuu Paalo is a PhD researcher at the School of Political Science and International Studies, University of Queensland, Australia. Email: sebastianpaalo@gmail.com

** Prof. Ransford Edward Van Gyampo is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science and the Center for European Studies, University of Ghana. Email: revgyampo@ug.edu.gh

community and other domestic optimists, some pessimists are concerned about the deepening role and the complex dynamics of electoral clientelism in the country. Seven successive peaceful elections in Ghana since the beginning of the country's Fourth Republic in 1992, have largely erased the pain of a chequered and tumultuous political era which preceded Ghana's Fourth Republic. Democracy thus appears to be more rooted in Ghana relative to most parts of Africa. The political landscape in Ghana has been transformed through some innovative constitutional reviews; effective electoral management and reforms; elite consensus building; growing civil society activism; and expanding media participation – culminating in massive citizen participation in political activities across the country (Linberg, 2003; Frempong, 2008; Osei, 2015). Political parties now have codes of conduct that seek to, amongst others, instil fair and peaceful elections (Frempong, 2008). Parties have also contributed to a general improvement in voter turnout. From 29% in 1992, voter turnout in general elections in Ghana is on the average 70%, a phenomenon which implies Ghanaians are politically active, alive to their civic responsibilities, and committed to the course of democracy (Frempong, 2008). Despite the relative successes attained in Ghana's push towards democratic consolidation, successive elections in the country appear to have been marred by practices of vote buying (Cheeseman, 2015).

Discussions of vote buying and other electoral malpractices in Ghana and across Africa are amply captured in most of the literature on politics in Africa (Bayart, 1993; Lindberg, 2003; Adejumobi, 2007; Cammack, 2007; Frempong, 2008; Robinson, 2013; Cheeseman, 2015). However, these works concentrate on national or interparty elections, with little attention to relatively new but crucial issues such as intra-party elections and their reinforcing relationship with student campus politics, which has emboldened electoral clientelism in national elections.

Drawing on qualitative data from existing literature, personal observations, and print and electronic media discourses, we argue that partisan relations and transactions between campus student unions and national political parties promote vote buying mostly in intra-party elections, which further manifests in national elections. Mugume and Luescher (2015, 2017) indicate that resource transactions from parties to student leaders promote clientelistic politics on the campuses of some universities in Africa, while Ichino and Nathan (2013) opine that intra-party elections in Ghana are characterised by perverse vote buying. Our qualitative analysis of recent elections of political party representatives, parliamentary and presidential aspirants in Ghana, resonates with the findings of Mugume and Luescher (2015, 2017) and Ichino and Nathan (2013). The evidence further establishes that material distribution in student politics (campus politics) reinforces and contributes greatly to contemporary vote buying amongst party elites¹ in their internal party elections,

1 Party elites here refer to holders of various party positions, who are trained in democratic practices and are being charged by their respective parties to, amongst other things, educate the masses on matters including electoral rights of citizens. In Ghana, the largely ineffective nature of institutions such as the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) and the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), with regard to their mandates – to educate citizens on their civil rights – has given room for political parties to carry out such exercises. In this case, parties' civic education of the masses rather represents political campaigns.

which replays in national politics. This level of electoral clientelism is understudied, but is nonetheless an important subject for scholars and policymakers in the discourse and practice of democracy in Africa. This is because parties represent the masses at the national level and thus largely contribute to democratic attitudes and practices. They aggregate the policy aspirations of the masses, which means the political behaviour of parties and their supporters regarding the choice of leaders is of critical importance to democratic entrenchment (Nathan, 2016; Jensen & Justesen, 2014). Also, most political leaders in Ghana today were nurtured (a trend which continues to manifest) through campus politics and partisan relations with political parties (Gyampo, 2013). Yet, the resource distribution between politicians and students promotes vote-buying instincts in student leaders (Mugume & Luescher, 2015, 2017), who carry the same attitude into party and national politics.

Student leadership manifests in many areas and levels: halls of residence, departmental, faculty, college, national, regional, and even continental. However, we focus on the link between Students' Representative Council (SRC) and National Union of Ghana Students' (NUGS) representations on the one hand, and elite clientelism at political party elections on the other hand. Due to the large number of students under their leadership compared to other campus positions, SRC and NUGS are the arenas where most political parties, through their campus offshoots, propagate parties' agendas. The article focuses on the two largest political parties – the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the main opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) – because they have alternated political power at least twice in Ghana's Fourth Republic, and have each developed campus links for many years. In addition, a survey by Africa Elections Project, AEP (2016) discovers that NPP and NDC practice electoral clientelism the most, not only in national elections but also at their respective party delegates' elections, particularly when in power. Therefore, narrowing the focus on these parties enables a detailed discussion, while drawing implications on other smaller parties to present a national picture.

To be sure, we do not attempt to establish a direct link between material inducement and vote outcome in general, as direct correlations are hard to establish due largely to people's unwillingness to provide accurate information on whether or not they vote based on material influence (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). In recent times, some voters do consider other factors such as past records of politicians, even when attempts are made by the latter to 'buy' the former's choice at elections (Weghorst & Lindberg, 2011; Gadjanova, 2017). Also, we do not claim that campus distributive campaigns are the root causes of vote buying in intra-party and thus national elections, as the campus-party link is a latter development (especially from the 90s and 2000s competitive political period, up to today), and thus the campus-party link is younger than the long history of electoral politics in Ghana. Rather, we suggest that, evidently, student vote buying appears to replay within mainstream politics outside campus, as these same actors usually further perpetuate vote buying within the elite circles, starting at the level of party delegates elections, and invariably extending to national elections.

In the subsequent sections, we first discuss the existing theoretical debates on vote buying in the African context, which provides a background to the phenomenon of material inducement in elections in Ghana. The second section illustrates some manifestations of active in-party vote buying in Ghana, in particular, in 2018, during which Ghanaians witnessed perhaps one of the most materialistic intra-party delegates' elections. In the third section, we provide a brief evolutionary trajectory of student politics, while in the final part, we demonstrate that contemporary campus politics, which is being promoted by multipartism, has an informed role in intra-party voter behaviour, as it transfers the culture of vote buying to party levels and, by extension, to national elections.

A Theoretical Insight on Vote Buying in Africa

Scholarship on politics in Africa suggests that elections in the continent are mired by persistent clientelism and vote buying (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997; Lindberg, 2003; Robinson, 2013). Some scholars, however, contend that the characterisation of African elections as simply clientelistic, is predominantly a Western view, which is born out of uncritical comparison of African contexts with Western politics (Bratton & Mattes, 2001; Osei, 2012). Nonetheless, the bulk of the literature appears to converge on the notion of African elections as spaces of widespread vote buying (Robinson, 2013; Jensen & Justesen, 2014). We define vote buying as direct or indirect influencing or inducement of (potential) voters (individually or in groups), with material distribution, in favour of a particular candidate or a party, mostly in the lead-up to and during elections (Stokes, Dunning, Nazareno & Brusco, 2013; Nichter & Hidalgo, 2016). The buyers usually involve candidates themselves, or persons or groups close to them, who are willing to contribute to the victory of particular competitors or their respective political parties. The literature identifies many forms of vote buying; common amongst them direct payments to voters, donations of cash or items (e.g. food, building materials, etc.), promise of employment, social services, payment of cash or fees, award of contracts and provision of certain programmes upon a victory in an election (Lindberg, 2003; Nathan, 2016). Different polities or communities experience different vote-buying practices based on many variables, for example, the economic condition of the polity or community and the level of education or civic awareness of voters, but the influence of these conditions have equally provoked debates in scholarship (Robinson, 2013).

Generally, electoral clientelism in Africa is caused and reinforced by conditions of low productivity, high inequality and starkly hierarchical social relations (Wantchekon, 2003); low levels of economic development, cultural practices, small size of the public sector economy, low levels of educated voter population (Nathan, 2016; Jensen & Justesen, 2014); and the legacy of patrimonial colonial regimes – the tactics of resource distribution to cronies to divide and rule (Bayart, 1993; Mamdani, 1996).

The economic factor has however gained more prominence in most of the contemporary literature. For example, Adejumbi (2007) argues that in poor countries patronage networks and outright bribing of electorates constitute major instruments for electoral victory and the maintenance of power by the political elite. This impedes the establishment and maintenance of complex and robust democratic institutions, thus

affecting the quality of political institutions (Linberg, 2003; Cammack, 2007). The majority leader in Ghana's Parliament, Osei-Kyei Mensah Bonsu, laments that "... very soon many institutions of government, especially parliament, would be taken over by people with fat wallets ..." (Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu, 2018, para. 2). In addition, electoral clientelism inhibits the competition abilities and chances of smaller political parties that are mostly under-resourced (Gueye, 1996; Kumado, 1996).

Nonetheless, the real problem appears to arise from the spread and sustenance of elite electoral clientelism within political parties. As the poverty levels of most African countries continue to decline, more citizens become educated and the culture of voter inducement increasingly criticised (Lindberg, 2010; Lawson & Greene, 2014), the practice of vote buying is expected to decline, as occurred in some established democracies such as the U.S.A. and the U.K. (Stokes et al., 2013). Contrarily, this electoral fraud remains an active part of African politics. Lindberg and Morrison (2008), for instance, suggest that electoral clientelism is common in young African democracies, due in part to the growing intensity of political competition – as clientelistic rewards are used to change the opinions of particularly 'swing voters'. Where elections are competitive and voters expect gifts, candidates engage in a two-pronged strategy: affirm their own status through public displays of wealth, and undermine opponents' rewards by matching inducements or encouraging voters to break reciprocity norms. As a result, neither side's gifts are sufficient for a win (Lindberg & Morrison, 2008; Gadjanova, 2017). Therefore, parties are forced to pursue different linkage mechanisms to voters, including defining and targeting broader constituencies through policy proposals (Gadjanova, 2017). Some scholars also argue that vote buying persists amidst growing democratisation due in part to the perceived and evidential weaknesses and manipulations of the rule of law coupled with underdeveloped political party structures in Africa (Carothers, 2006, 2007; Adejumo, 2007; LeBas, 2011).

Political Parties and Vote Buying in Ghana

Cheeseman, Lynch and Willis (2016) argue that democracy seems to be consolidating in Ghana relative to other African states. This is largely because Ghana has witnessed at least three peaceful power alternations since 1992, and in particular, the 2016 elections which resulted in a historic loss of power by a sitting president (John Mahama of the NDC) who had not served his second term as had happened in all the previous cases in the country's Fourth Republic. However, Cheeseman and his colleagues also observe that an apparent increase in voter education, plus a burgeoning middle class in Ghana, does not have a significant effect on the reduction or eradication of vote buying, as the practice remains a main characteristic of Ghana's electoral democracy. This view is shared by other scholars (Linberg, 2003; Frempong, 2008; Cheeseman et al., 2016; Gadjanova, 2017). Yet, these studies mostly focus on national elections, with little attention to vote-buying dynamics in intra-party elections, and why party elites seem to develop a penchant for (re)distributive politics. Perhaps the most important and lucid work on vote buying in intra-party elections in Ghana, is by Nahomi Ichino and Noah Nathan. Ichino and Nathan (2013) stress that pervasive clientelism and patronage, rather than policy-centered competition, characterises in-party elections in Ghana.

Election of political party executives is amongst the topics that create enormous controversies across the country. In the early days of Ghana's Fourth Republic (from 1992), the choice of party executives and aspirants was characterised by hand-picking of some contestants ahead of others by political 'godfathers', ethnicity and tribalism, ballot snatching, physical violence and vote rigging amongst others (Carbone, 2003). While most of these issues remain relevant as they still influence interparty and intra-party leadership elections to various degrees (Osei, 2012), the phenomenon of intra-party vote buying has rather gained more attention from stakeholders and political commentators who protest through various media outlets. Like other multi-party contexts in Africa (Lindberg, 2003; Robinson, 2013), Gyampo (2018, para 11) notes that vote buying is not a new phenomenon in Ghana:

Since 1992, elections in Ghana, particularly internal party elections and national ones, have been saddled with vote-buying in a manner that confers legitimacy on corrupt practices after elections, undermines the sovereign will of the people, and hinders the selection of competent people to lead political parties.

One of the several measures to tackle in-party electoral frauds in Ghana was to expand the Electoral College to increase the scope of the electorate (from national executives to include constituency and zonal or community-level executives), who partake in the elections of national, regional and constituency party executives. This decision was made largely to minimise the influence of powerful party individuals who could, as it were, easily 'buy' delegates' votes or dictate the choice of a particular candidate to the few privileged party members who took part in party elections (Carbone, 2003). Thus, expanding the Electoral College was to tackle issues such as in-party electoral clientelism (Apreku-Danquah, 2017).

The expansion of the Electoral College, however, appears not to address concerns of voter inducement in party delegates' elections. As Asante (2018) notes, the expansion of the franchise comes with corresponding expansion and innovation in the dimension of vote buying. Asante indicates that during Rawlings' time (1993-2000), vote-buying materials were mainly T-shirts and, in some cases, flat-screen TVs. To Asante, even the expansion of the Electoral College, which can take up to 6 000 or more delegates at a single party leadership election, has not weakened the ability of contestants to distribute materials to all or target delegates to solicit their votes. As Stokes et al. (2013, p. 290) aptly contend, "democratization lies not in the expansion of the franchise but in its increasingly free exercise". Therefore, the expansion of party voters' register does not correlate with free and fair elections.

A survey conducted by Africa Elections Project (AEP) shows that all political parties in Ghana are guilty of vote buying – the majority of party supporters and, by extension, Ghanaians engage in the act either directly or indirectly, which depicts the perverse nature of the phenomenon in society (AEP, 2016). However, the study singles out the two largest political parties that have alternated power at least twice in Ghana's Fourth Republic – the ruling NPP and the largest opposition NDC – as being the guiltiest of perpetual electoral clientelism at their respective party delegates elections particularly when in power. This

resonates with scholars such as Linberg and Bayart who have argued that incumbent parties or parties that control state coffers tend to display opulence in distributive politics, especially in Africa where state laws and constitutions, as well as party guidelines and structures could be, and in many cases have been, hijacked by some ‘big men’. As the NPP and NDC have had access to state resources in turns, politicians’ quest to control power or get their close associates to handle party positions for the continued flow of trusted networks, incentivises active vote buying. The 2018 party executive elections in the NPP and the 2018–2019 executives and flagbearer elections in the NDC, revealed widespread vote buying as defined in the literature.

The NPP national delegates’ congress at Koforidua Technical University in the Eastern region of Ghana was not without copious cases of alleged vote buying. The exercise, which was to elect party national executives to steer the party’s agenda for ‘victory 2020’, witnessed various kinds of voter inducement, including direct distribution of cash to delegate voters. Perhaps the biggest instance surrounded the action of an aspirant for the position of the party’s national chairman, who purchased and promised to distribute buses to all 275 constituencies supposedly for party business. Around the elections, Freddie Blay had displayed a queue of buses, promising to hand over one bus to each constituency after the delegates’ voting. Though this decision could aid party business, as Blay and his close networks had argued, the gesture raised concerns about the timing of the buses – re-echoing the views of Stokes et al. (2013) and Nichter and Hidalgo (2016). The timing of the buses suggests a clear move to materially induce constituency executives to vote for the then acting national chairman, against a four-time loser, Stephen Ntim. According to Gyampo (2018, paras. 2–3) the timing of such a gesture was meant to sway voters:

... although Freddie Blay’s ongoing process to procure 275 buses for the party is ‘not a big deal’, the gesture could well be construed as vote-buying because the delivery of the buses has started too close to the party’s conference to elect national officers, scheduled for July 7 ... if someone means well for their party and decides to procure vehicles to help the party ... it shouldn’t be a big deal but the timing is what really would raise qualms and eyebrows.

Like many other political analysts and commentators, Gyampo stresses that if the buses had come in 2014, 2015, 2016 or any time before or after the elections, or even had not been withheld from beneficiaries until after the delegates elections, one would have conceived Blay’s gesture as a move in genuine support of the party’s growth.

The main opposition NDC also exhibited an open display of vote buying during its constituency, regional and national executives’ elections, as delegate voters were being given cash and other packages (e.g. parcels of food and handkerchiefs) branded with candidates’ images just before or while voting was taking place. For instance, a candidate for the Greater Accra regional chairmanship, Emmanuel Ashie Moore, started his campaign with the distribution of free computers, scanners and printers to constituencies. According to Ashie Moore, the move was to equip constituency offices for effective communications (Morre, 2018). However, in line with the previous views, the timing of such items could qualify Ashie Moore’s gesture as a vote-buying attempt.

While there exists vote buying in each of the party's delegates congresses, the practice becomes more pronounced when one is in power (AEP, 2016), largely for two reasons. First, incumbent parties in Africa mostly use normal government service delivery as conduits to seek voter support. Thus, government appointees, in their mandates to perform state-sanctioned duties, appear to citizens as though it is out of the former's benevolence, and hence should be rewarded with votes (Linberg, 2003). At the party level therefore, networks of party clienteles usually acquire wealth and cash, amongst others, through awards of contracts and committee allowances, with which they attempt to lure party delegates to vote for them or their favourites in party elections to ensure a continuum in their wealth acquisition. Second, once a party wins power, it is often believed that a certain crop of party executives did an efficient job in barring any inefficiencies in the opposition's camp. Thus, some party 'big men' favour some candidates for party leadership and would usually pump in resources in support of such candidates' campaign to retain them in office (AEP, 2016). This support usually tilts the field of competition in favour of the preferred candidate, which usually generates conflicts and apathy, and sometimes leads to defection of losers and their support base.

Asare (2018) blames the proliferation of intra-party and, by extension, national elections, on the non-regulation of party funding. Although Section 33 of the Representation of the People Law of the 1992 constitution of Ghana criminalises vote buying and other instances of electoral misconduct,² political parties do not follow the directive in most cases. Part III of the Political Parties Law (Act 574 of 2000) also sought to control party funding but appears rather vague, as it does not put a ceiling on party spending but rather focuses on who has the right to sponsor party activities, in which case only citizens of Ghana do (Political Parties Law, Act 574, 2000). Consequently, Asare's proposition does not apply and cannot be applied under the current dispensation. After all, if the law does not concretely hold one accountable in matters of vote buying in national elections, little change is expected concerning same or similar acts at party levels. Asare opines that unchecked party funding is the predominant channel for the pervasiveness of vote buying, as individuals and groups can spend any amount of resources without any restrictions. According to him, the constitution should put a ceiling on funds and the value of materials being donated for party activities, as is being done in some matured democracies. This, in his view, would cripple the upsurge of "political entrepreneurship" in the country. Citing the US as an example, Asare (2018, para. 7) reveals:

I spent years of my life in the United States and I am very active in the politics over there, but there is a ceiling on how much an individual can contribute to party. I supported Obama in 2008, but I was only able to contribute 2400 dollars to his campaign, that is the maximum. Even if I wanted to contribute more, I couldn't.

Though it is usually difficult to conclude and researchers have failed to provide concrete evidence indicating that material inducements have direct influence on vote outcome, the vastly uneven and opaque grounds created by party electoral frauds have negative

2 The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana.

implications for democratic consolidation. While legal reforms and correspondent strict adherence to electoral laws would sanitise intra-party democratic processes, as happens elsewhere (Stokes et al., 2013), we suggest that elite consensus against ‘electoral entrepreneurship’ is also crucially needed to address electoral clientelism (Osei, 2015). According to Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu (2018), the success, effectiveness and prestige of any institution rest on its orderly functioning and the extent to which it adheres to standards of discipline, dignity and decorum. He acknowledges that it takes time to build credible and durable political institutions and credible democratic attitude, but believes that after more than 25 years of Ghana’s Fourth Republic, the quality and credibility of institutions should manifest more positively than it presently appears.

‘Pre-Multi-Party’ Student Politics and Activism

Before the establishment of universities in Africa, there existed some sorts of pan-African student activism. However, the earliest known student political groups and movements did not start in the African continent but in the metropolitan cities in Europe. For instance, the following student unions were founded in London: the Union of African descent (UAD 1917), the Gold Coast Students’ Union (GCSU 1924), the Nigerian Progress Union (NPU 1924), and the West African Students’ Union (WASU 1925). Such activisms were mostly for student welfare (e.g. accommodation, scholarships, and against racial discrimination), but pan-African student activism was later tailored towards the political independence of continental Africa. The movements started amongst pioneer African students who were privileged to travel abroad for higher education. The most prominent of the groups was WASU, as it was able to canvass massive support from students of West African descent, which later led to their vociferous anti-colonial campaigns back in Africa and especially within the West African region. WASU was able to export the independence struggle back home in Africa and successfully linked diaspora activities with agitations in Africa. One of its first leaders was Kwame Nkrumah who later became the first president of post-colonial Ghana. The focus on independence struggle, particularly, became more pronounced after World War II when many more students from the colonies gained scholarships to study abroad while several university colleges were established in the colonies amidst the global wave of self-determination. Since then, student representation has been part of the governance structures of universities and higher institutions across Africa (Oanda, 2016a, p. 63).

Right from Ghana’s independence to the period before its Fourth Republic (1992 to date), student politics existed with a focus similar to the initial activisms by pioneer African students abroad. The pioneer student activist group in the country, the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS), clashed with, advised and agitated for and against several programmes by successive governments both civilian and military. NUGS’ politics started from the University College of Ghana (now University of Ghana) which was the first tertiary institution to be established in the country and spread to other latter campuses such as Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and University of Cape Coast. Like their predecessors, NUGS was more concerned with student welfare (e.g. security, academic freedom, fees etc.). Yet, through several protests and agitations, the union also

promoted some political tolerance under the then authoritarian governments, thus transforming the political landscape and contributing to multi-party democracy from the early 1990s (Gyampo, 2013). There was scarcely partisanship amongst NUGS' operations and within campus politics, as there were no opportunities under authoritarian regimes for any mobilising of students for political power by barely existing opposition parties (Finlay, 1968).

Student Politics and Multipartism

While Oanda, Finlay and Gyampo reveal the existence of formidable student politics dating back to the pre-independence era, Mugume (2015) and Luescher-Mamashela and Mugume (2014) suggest that student politics became more institutionalised later, especially in response to multi-party politics in Africa. With the surge of post-Cold War multi-party democracy across Africa, a period Samuel Huntington describes as “democracy’s third wave” (Huntington, 1991), student politics have increasingly been influenced by different political parties, thus the glaring manifestation of partisanship and the acceptance of same in campus politics in most parts of the African continent (Gyampo, Debrah & Aggrey-Darkoh, 2016). Although some countries such as Tanzania and South Africa have enacted legislations that prohibit political party influence in student politics (Oanda, 2016b), the practice appears to be gaining more roots largely because parties believe in the organisational capacities of young people who are mostly in higher educational institutions – and who would always, by varied means, utilise their exuberance to mobilise support for political parties (Paalo, 2017). This non-compliance with legislative prescriptions could be understood within the assertion that the judiciary in most African settings is usually not independent enough, and thus ineffective to prosecute perpetrators (Klopp & Zuern, 2007). Therefore, the hitherto ‘non-partisan’ task of student leaders to advance welfare agendas of students through negotiations with university and national authorities is eroding (Gyampo, 2013). This is because most student agitations are being tagged with the agenda of a certain political colouration depending on the identity of organisers and participants, media partners and the leanings of political leaders who support or criticise such agitations.

In Ghana, the most popular and top-ranked tertiary institutions, including University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, University of Cape Coast and University for Development Studies, have always been fertile grounds for partisan manifestations in student politics (Gyampo, 2013). Being the leading universities in the country, these institutions attract most of the influential, brilliant and vibrant groups of students who political parties believe can be used to campaign, vigorously broadcast parties’ visions, and to canvass grassroots support for political power (Bob-Milliar, 2012; Gyampo, 2013; Paalo 2017). As such, most political parties found and sustain student unions on campuses to promote the agendas of their respective parties. This is more so with the dominant incumbent NPP and the main opposition NDC who pride themselves on campus offshoots in the names of TESCON and TEIN respectively. The two main parties have been able to sustain their student mentees’ unions for many years largely because, as parties that have alternately controlled government coffers and, being composed of wealthy individuals, they provide more resources for student mobilisations.

Gyampo (2013) argues that Ghana's accolade as a relatively successful democracy in Africa cannot be mentioned without acknowledging the contribution of student activism throughout the country's Fourth Republic. Through campus politics, student groups have transformed the country's multi-party democracy – giving a positive new phase to political participation. Since the inception of multi-party democracy, which runs for close to three decades now, student leaders and activists have developed cordial relations with politicians at the national level and especially within party ranks, unlike their predecessors who had strained relations with the then authoritarian regimes that censored and repressed student activities (Finlay, 1968). With the surge in a multi-party system, however, politicians in Africa see universities as critical outposts for building vibrant political clients to wrestle political power (Oanda, 2016b). Mugume and Luescher (2017) contend that the recruitment of student cadres seems to be the most important function of party-political involvement in student politics as parties scramble for numerical strength of membership in fledgling democracies in Africa.

This change of political atmosphere, which involves unprecedented student participation, was assumed to promote leadership development, as young people through campus politics get mentored politically and can contribute to issues of national governance. Both student leaders and their political links, have argued that campus politics feed directly into national politics as the nurturing begins from the campuses. Thus, when, for instance, the University of Ghana decided to ban partisan politics on its campus in 2012, a conglomerate of student leaders vigorously kicked against the move, calling it an impediment to the development of the country's democratic practice and the grooming of future political leaders. Ludwig Hlodze, the president of a group calling itself the Inter-Party Youth Committee, protested in a statement, that:

The decision by the University of Ghana to disallow the operation of political parties on campus amounts to the stifling of the country's human resource and capital, because the University serves as a nursing ground for many political ambitions. (Hlodze, 2012, para. 2)

This stance re-echoes Mugume's view that the relationship between political parties and students could have some positive effects in terms of moulding future leaders with democratic instincts, as well as offering general leadership training to students. Yet, this leadership training appears rather to be clouded by patron-client relations, which replays at various levels in state politics.

Student Politics, Multipartism and Vote Buying

Despite the (potential) positive impacts, student-party relations in most African countries have revealed a common trend in contemporary times. Mugume and Luescher (2017) aptly point to a reciprocal relationship between political parties and student leaders, using the case of Uganda. The latter generally receives items from the former, which are meant to directly influence student voters during campus campaigns and elections, and this distributive link continues after campus campaigns and even after graduation. In this regard, Mugume and Luescher (2015) posit that student-party relations later enhance clientelistic

national politics. To corroborate this view from a nuanced angle, evidence from Ghana led us to contend that student–party relations promote vote-buying instincts and practices that are mostly exhibited in intra-party elections and, by extension, in national elections. Student leaders mostly rather project the political party agenda ahead of national politics or policies, ostensibly because party politics automatically leads to national politics. Thus, student leaders in such a relation are highly compromised as they usually have future political ambitions linked to their affiliated parties. They may sacrifice the students’ interests in order to maintain their good reputation in the party or to portray a good image of their respective parties to the student body on campus (Mugume, 2015). This suggests a shift in the mandates of student leaders from mainstream student affairs to a vertical responsibility to and an association with their political mentors.

In a broad relation to the reservations raised earlier by Mugume and Luescher, university leaderships, policy think tanks and academics in Ghana have also raised serious concerns that politicians and political parties tend to promote clientelistic politics amongst students. For instance, five student leaders assembled by Joy FM’s “Super Morning Show”, unanimously agreed that political parties influence the elections of student leaders across the country.³ There is a trend of direct funding of student campaigns and other aspects of campus politics by politicians, with no clear lines of accountability. It may sound ideal for student leader aspirants to receive resource support for their campus campaigns, but the act by politicians to provide leader candidates with cash and other materials for direct distribution to student voters in return for the latter’s votes, can be described as *sowing seeds of electoral clientelism from below*. This is because the leaderships and frontlines of most political parties in the country tend to be dominated by these student leaders, ‘mentored’ from campus. Most high-profile politicians in Ghana’s Fourth Republic, including leaders in parliament, ministers and major party executives, have come from the ranks of campus politics, and it is this same group of people who partake in party delegates’ elections that are characterised by evidential materialism.

Campaigners for various SCR and NUGS positions mostly start with, or are forced by prevailing circumstances to start with a vote-buying mentality. They believe that success in campus elections hinges on some forms of favours that should be handed out to student voters. These could include cash, study materials, food or foodstuffs, busing of students from hostels on the voting day, like what occurs in intra-party and national elections. Although candidates always communicate their policy initiatives to voters, manifestos are usually less important compared to material inducements, especially when elections draw closer and competitions heat up. A renowned anti-corruption lawyer, Ace Ankomah, who has on many occasions openly called public attention to the link between student resource misappropriation and national corruption, narrated his research on one of the university campuses. According to him, the events in these elections are just a replay of what happens in our National politics, meaning that both campus and national politics reinforce each other – money changing hands, would-be student-leaders distributing branded T-shirts to

3 Joyonline.com, ‘Student leaders confess to political influences but ...’, 21 April 2016.

student voters, sponsoring entertainment programmes, giving out cash to students in order to buy their votes, sponsoring birthday parties, sponsoring morning porridge breakfast, etc. These practices, according to Ace Ankomah, regularly occur during SRC elections on university campuses. "I witnessed an SRC presidential aspirant dishing out one thousand, two thousand, three thousand and up to five thousand Ghana cedis to people in halls of residences to share among themselves ..." (Ankomah, 2016, para. 9). In Ankomah's (2016, paras. 10, 13) interaction with some SRC aspirants, one of them narrates:

I have done all that I need to do. They tell me that I am a good material for the SRC presidential position. They tell me, I have a great vision, a good message and articulate them well but without money, I will make a very little impact in the elections ... With this, all that I need to do is to spread the cash and they will vote for me. It works perfectly.

This electoral clientelism has persisted over the years in changing dynamics, and is being fuelled by political parties who mostly want their presence felt on campuses through (potential) student leaders, and hence would provide clientelistic goods to their favourite candidates for onward distribution to student voters. In his research as student journalist on the University of Ghana campus, Amewor (2016, paras. 2-3) observes the following two issues:

Some political parties of the nation are unculturally participating in some SRC Elections by providing funds, student-based political supports and other necessary amenities to the SRC Executive portfolio aspirants. It is loudly whispered that each party constructively selects its aspirant based on criteria known to God-knows-who, and supports him/her to victory. If it becomes so, the party will then have an indirect 'rulership' of that institution for the said academic year. This is all done out of the light of view of the entire student populace. It is not supposed to be so.

SRC Elections are meant for the students, from the students and by the students. All sources of funds, advertisements, strategies et cetera for the campaigns are supposed to come from the minds, pockets and brains of the Hopefuls. This cannot but serve as an effective means of testing the competence and effectiveness of the Hopefuls for the portfolios being aspired for.

It is important to note, however, that not all student leaders or aspirants are politically affiliated, directly receive distributive resources from parties, or readily venture into clientelistic politics on campus, as indicated by the 2016 NUGS president, Michael Paa Kwesi-Adu. Kwesi-Adu (2016, para. 6) states:

Let's say you are contesting for a position, political parties may not come directly to you so you the leader may not have a direct relationship with that political party; maybe Davis, Romeo and Andrew are supporting you and belong to party K, so they may pass it through Davis, ... so if we are talking about political influence in the student leadership it may not be a direct influence, it would be a sort of indirect influence that the political parties have on the student leadership when it come to the election of student leaders.

Therefore, scarcely does any round of student elections pass without material transactions and inducements from political party mentors to their student mentees. As this practice goes on unchecked, largely due to the lack of political will to stop political parties' influence on campuses, and the fear of political victimisation on the part of university authorities to stop partisanship amongst students, campus vote buying and attendant frauds become the norms and are being transported through party to national elections. In this case, it is not the poor uneducated voter in the rural area as argued by most scholars, but elites and informed voters whose votes are very costly but must be bought because such is the game. Therefore, though intra-party elections may previously have had some forms of vote buying, contemporary partisan mentorship of campus politicians has strongly contributed to the pervasiveness of the situation.

Consequently, the partisan politicisation of student politics hinders probity and accountability amongst students on campuses. This is similar to how the politicisation of certain crucial issues amongst political parties in Ghana has not yielded positive results in the fight against corruption. It is a common practice on campuses to find that student leaders sometimes squander funds meant for student affairs and go unprosecuted, and any student or group of students that raises the alarm on such malfeasances is being tagged as politically witch-hunting the accused. In most of the universities across the country, each year passes with accusations of gargantuan misappropriation of student funds by student leaders, through various means (e.g. contract bloating, non-existent purchases, etc.). However, supposed investigations into such issues do not only always free the culprits, but in some cases the petitioners may be tagged with political colours and victimised based on whose party is in power. This situation kills the culture of crime reporting amongst citizens in general. Interestingly, some university authorities or individuals in charge of tackling student corruption through existing guidelines may also not fully follow up on such petitions for fear of political tagging and victimisation from political leaders towards whom student leaders have leanings. In 2007, the then NUGs president, William Yamoah, lamented that student leaders were partly to blame for politically supervised corruption in the country. Yamoah (2007, paras. 1-2) indicates:

The level of dishonesty demonstrated by aspirants for leadership in student politics had given the impression that politics was all about money ... competence, which used to be the criterion for electing student leaders, had now been relegated to the background. The future of this country is bleak unless student leaders change their attitude.

With such corruption with impunity, most young aspiring political leaders unleash such practices at their political party levels and subsequently when in government. This sustains elite vote buying in party elections because it is a (near) political crime to speak against electoral frauds by party members. This would be conceived as speaking against the broader party's agenda and would project the party to the world as being clientelistic, thus exposing it to public and, worst of all, to opposition parties' criticism. Hence well-meaning party officials would keep mute in order not to be painted as enemies to their own party. The few

who may bravely condemn their internal party vote buying usually lose favour from most of the party's top hierarchy and are always being vilified or sidelined.

Apart from what happens on campuses between student leaders and their political mentors, two other broad issues also ensure the continued relationship between campus partisan politics and mainstream political landscape 'out there'. First, the distributive politics by politicians during intra-party and national elections is usually through vibrant youth leaders from the various campuses, who mostly do not only (attempt to) buy votes by distributing cash and items to voters in local communities, but also use such engagements as means to project their future political agendas in their communities and constituencies. Second, these young aids to politicians are usually in charge of defending and/or propagating the activities of their 'big men', including in most cases justifying or denying instances of direct vote-buying attempts by their top political links. Amongst many examples, one instance could be drawn from the January 2019 Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency by-elections. While government projects were barely visible in the constituency prior to campaigns and elections, the NPP government appeared to suddenly and calculatedly sanction road projects, and active road construction was going on across the constituency, just around the elections. This was conceived by many, including constituents, as vote-buying tactics, as several petitions for projects had fallen on deaf ears until just prior to elections. Reacting to this, a student leader, Abdullah Matin, of the University of Ghana NPP student branch (TESCON-UG), vehemently denied all allegations, insisting that road constructions were genuine government projects, and that the timing was only coincidental with the by-elections (Abdullah, 2019, para. 4). This suggests a direct relationship between campuses and partisan politics, and before student leaders emerge from campus, they are already being 'baptised' into the political culture on how to win elections.

Discussions and Conclusion

We have demonstrated that campus politics contributes to, reinforces and is reinforced by intra-party vote buying in Ghana, and thus this subject should be given significant attention in scholarship and in policy circles. The current concentration on electoral clientelism in national elections leaves out some important, related issues such as the link between campus politics and internal party politics that further shapes the character and approach in general elections. Intra-party elite vote buying keeps soaring with each round of party delegates' elections in Ghana, in particular within the NPP and NDC, who have monopolised the political landscape in Ghana's Fourth Republic. What is more critical is the fact that delegate voters are usually graduates of the various tertiary institutions in the country, who become party executives and partake in the choices of party leadership through routine elections. As Mugume (2015) notes, significant numbers of students become members of political parties whereby student leaders are most likely not only to be ordinary party members after graduation, but front-line party leaders as well. Political parties use the student guild elections to recruit new members, and in most cases distribute vote-buying materials to aspiring student leaders during campus elections.

Thus, this group of students usually identifies with political parties even before leaving campus, which should not be an issue when analysed on its own merit. However, the promotion of material inducement in party elections by these graduate mentees and their political mentors reveals a reinforcing condition between campus and the mainstream political realm, which plays out in national elections, as it is parties that contest in national elections. As most campus leaders receive material and other support from politicians and political parties with the support of student partisan groupings on campuses, these leaders all over the country form networks of young political leaders from campuses straight into the national arena. But partisan support for student leaders breeds some forms of corrupt practices with impunity as entrenched partisan positions prevent corrupt students from being concretely sanctioned for resource misappropriation on campuses.

It is generally hard to state emphatically that campus vote buying has a direct link to in-party vote buying, thus to national elections. However, given the evidence presented in this article, coupled with the fact that most of these graduate mentees seem to exhibit attributes of 'bad' politics including 'conscience-free' distributive politics, it is tenable to argue that such attributes are cultivated from campus politics and reflect the generally compromised system in Ghana. Therefore, much as other factors may sustain vote-buying instincts and practices amongst parties, the party-campus alliance is also mentoring leaders whose major approach to winning elections is by inducing voters with clientele materials, a practice which can neither sustain nor consolidate Ghana's democracy.

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