

SECTION

4

STATE-SOCIETY  
RELATIONS



# CONSTITUTION, INSTITUTIONS AND ADMINISTRATION

## State and Non-state Actors in Ghana

### Introduction

This section looks at the importance of public opinion, mass media, political parties, and pressure groups. It shows how these concepts are interconnected and why they are important for the smooth running of today's societies. Specifically, this section aims at explaining the meanings, features, types, and importance of the concepts. It looks at these concepts within Ghana's democratic practices. Different instructional approaches are also used to help learners have a better understanding of the learning indicators.

By the end of the section, learners will have acquired the values of patriotism, teamwork and responsibility in addition to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills of creativity and innovation, leadership and communication skills.

### By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain how public opinion influences public policy decisions
- Discuss the mass media
- Explain political party and its structure

### Key Ideas

- Public opinion is the totality of thoughts and views of the population on important national issues.
- Mass media are ways of communicating with large groups of people e.g. radio, TV.
- Political parties refer to a group of people with similar ideas who want to win political power.
- Pressure groups are interest groups with the main aim of influencing government policies in favour of their members or particular causes.

## MEANING, FEATURES, AND SOURCES OF PUBLIC OPINION

Public opinion refers to the total thoughts and views of groups of people on important national issues at any given time. It represents the measure of the directionality and strength of issue-specific views and sentiments held by sections of the population. Public opinion is an important aspect of the functioning of a democratic society as it influences (or should influence) political decision-making in line with the wishes of the majority of the population. It is important to recognise that public opinion is shaped by the information and ideas accessed by the population and is, therefore, open to manipulation. The advent of social media has tended to make public opinion more fragmented, as different sections of the population access different sources of information.



Fig. 4.1: Symbol for public opinion

### Features of Public Opinion

1. **Focuses on issues of public concern/importance.** This means that citizens and individual opinions mostly focus on issues that affect a greater number of people in the country and are seen as important to individual welfare and community development. Public opinion, therefore, reflects what people think is important or needs attention in society. Examples of issues of pressing importance may include healthcare, basic human rights, education and water.
2. **Public opinion can be varied and diverse.** This implies that public opinion may not be homogeneous. Opinions differ from one person to another. This shows that people may think differently about the same issue, about a mix of ideas rather than one shared view.
3. **It is dynamic.** Public opinion may change over time in response to new events or interventions by leaders and influencers. New events, information, discoveries, ideas, and experiences do shape and influence public opinion thus causing it to evolve.

4. **Public opinion is based on rationality but dependent on accurate information.** The quality and accuracy of the information available to the public play a major role in forming these opinions. If the information is accurate, public opinion can be more reasonable and well-informed. But if the information is false, public opinion may not be based on good judgment.

## Sources of Public Opinion

1. **Social networks (e.g., family and friends):** This refers to social network relationships which are very influential in personality formation and character building. Family members, friends, co-workers, classmates or peer groups provide us with orientation on attitudes and values and may make us aware of important public problems. Thus, these close associations influence our opinions and stances on issues of national importance.
2. **Mass media.** The media, both print (newspapers) and electronic (television and radio, and social media) greatly influence citizens and individual views on issues of national concern. Most important events are covered in news stories by the mass media. The media educates people and influences their thoughts about issues, but may also be a source of misinformation.
3. **Indigenous values, norms, customs and systems.** This refers to unique cultural practices and traditional beliefs that are held in high esteem. They usually dictate what is good and what is possibly unacceptable in society. These traditional systems therefore influence our positions on issues. In other words, because they are accepted ways of life, we are sometimes moulded by their prescriptions.
4. **Interest groups and political parties:** These organisations are called the mobilisers of opinion. They make citizens, individuals and groups aware of public issues in an attempt to achieve their objectives. Their programmes such as research and dissemination of information, rallies, and press conferences usually shape people's views and positions on national and international issues.
5. **Religious and cultural organisations:** These are institutions that promote and practice a specific faith. They are an effective platform for moulding public opinion. Their teachings and activities do not only focus on spiritual matters but also cultivate new ideas and norms about political, economic and social issues in the society. In other words, they address public issues and can gather a large crowd of people.
6. **Educational institutions:** These include high schools, colleges, universities, study circles and libraries. These institutions help in creating public opinion through seminars, debates and conferences. In addition, co-curricular activities such as drama, open day, sports and games also help in sensitising students on important issues.

## MEASUREMENT OF PUBLIC OPINION

It is important, particularly in democratic societies, to have reliable means of measuring public opinion. Evidence of public opinion is important for the government in making decisions that align with the views of the population. Also, however, if governments wish to introduce novel and innovative policies, they need to know the baseline views of the population and what they need to do to convince them about such new policies. It is also of interest to citizens to know the extent to which their views and those of the population at large coincide. The measurement of public opinion must be valid and reliable as people can be influenced by what other people seem to think. There are various ways in which public opinion can be measured or judged.

### Methods for Measuring Public Opinion

1. **Mass media:** Traditional media such as newspapers often attempted to reflect popular opinion (either because they believed it was the right thing to do or because it helped their sales). Newspapers also give space for letters from their readers. However, it should also be noted that newspapers often have their agenda and give their support to particular political causes. Social media provides the opportunity for people to share their opinions directly, although often mainly with like-minded people. Nevertheless, this media gives some guidance to what people believe.
2. **Elections:** Elections in a democratic society are in many ways the ultimate guide to public opinion. However, there are two caveats. First, elections must be free and fair; in many countries, elections are 'rigged' or are perceived to be so by a section of the population. The second point is that voting for a particular party does not necessarily mean that people support all aspects of the government's programme, although governing parties typically claim that they have a mandate for anything that was in their manifesto.
3. **Survey research and focus groups:** The most scientific way of measuring public opinion is through surveys (opinion polls) and focus groups. Surveys are quantitative and, if validly designed, should provide valid evidence of the views of the population on specific issues. Focus groups are small groups of people brought together to take part in a structured discussion. They are more qualitative and allow exploration not only of what people think but why.
4. **Public consultations:** Governments will sometimes consult the public before introducing legislation or a policy. The aim is both to determine the extent of support for a proposal and also to help refine the details of the legislation or policy. In particular, it may help the government to identify particular aspects of a proposal that would be strongly opposed by the electorate
5. **Public protests/demonstrations:** Sometimes, opinions are expressed through protests and demonstrations, especially where it is felt that the government isn't paying heed or taking the desired action. The right to take part in peaceful protest is a fundamental democratic right

### Activity 4.1: Public Opinion

1. Do some googling to look up the meaning of public opinion and share your findings with the entire class for comments and feedback. You may visit <https://www.merriam-webster.com/OR> <https://www.oxfordreference.com/>
2. In small groups of not more than four and based on responses from the class discussion, write a two-page essay on how public opinion is formed. You may focus on how friends, family and the media have influenced your views on national issues. Make a presentation for further class discussion.
3. Together with two friends, conduct an opinion poll on a topic of your choice. You may consider this issue, “Do you support the efforts to completely ban illegal mining in our communities?” Submit your findings to the whole class for further discussion using a simple graph such as a bar chart.
4. Drawing on activity 4.1.3 above, summarise in three sentences the methods of measuring public opinion. Prepare a presentation on the extent to which the methods identified collectively lead to a proper understanding of public opinion. You may be asked by your teacher to present your work in class for discussion.

## HOW PUBLIC OPINION SHAPES PUBLIC POLICY

The expression of public opinion deepens democratic practice and encourages political participation. It also serves as a mechanism to hold political leaders accountable and provides a basis for government decisions/policy formation. Ultimately, it determines electoral outcomes/results and influences law-making.

1. Governments consider and analyse evidence of public opinion, e.g. via opinion polls to try to ensure that policies are broadly in line with the wishes of the population and that the ruling party will not be ‘punished’ at the next election.
2. Governments may set up focus groups to understand main public concerns and be able to predict which policies will be popular and what risks to avoid. In other words, political leaders and decision-makers use public opinion polls to craft policies and programmes that would be more acceptable to the larger section of society.
3. Public opinion shapes the activities of lobby groups or organised interests in public policies and programmes.

### Activity 4.2: Public Opinion and Public Policy

Watch the video of the Presidential update on the COVID-19 pandemic in Ghana.  
[https://youtu.be/vV5JbzhgUfs?si=\\_oiKp7MJYntcBa6u.](https://youtu.be/vV5JbzhgUfs?si=_oiKp7MJYntcBa6u)

**Now do the following activities.**

1. Based on the video and together with a friend, write a paragraph or two that summarises, in your own words the content of the President's policy measures. Present your main findings to the entire class.
2. Together with friends, forming a group of not more than 5, conduct research in your community, on the reaction of people to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown measure. Prepare and present a poster illustrating the positions of Ghanaians. Use the following guided questions:
  - How do you feel about the government's decision to implement the lockdown?
  - Do you believe the timing of the lockdown was appropriate? Explain your answer.
  - What different measures do you think could have been taken instead of a lockdown?
  - How did the lockdown affect the education of children in your community?
  - What do you think should have been done to make children continue education during the lockdown?

## MEANING, TYPES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE MASS MEDIA

The mass media refers to the various means or channels of communication that are used to disseminate information to a large audience at the same time. The media are the conduits through which issues are brought to the attention of the public. The characteristics of the mass media include communicating to a large audience at the same time, usually a one-way communication channel and feedback is generally slow.



**Fig. 4.2:** The Mass Media

## Types of Media

1. **Print media:** This refers to the traditional forms of mass communication that use physical materials, such as paper and ink to give information to the public. Examples of print media include newspapers, journals, posters, magazines, brochures, flyers, billboards and books. Among the print media, newspapers are the most common type. Newspapers supply daily news stories relating to education, health, agriculture, industry, business, science and technology. The newspapers also give commentaries, editorials, feature/articles on current important issues, personalities, sports and games, entertainment and fashion, general information about the weather as well as advertisements. Some of the newspapers in Ghana are the Daily Graphic, Ghanaian Times, the Mirror and the Junior Graphic.
2. **Electronic media:** This refers to the various forms of mass communication that use audio-visual and digital platforms to give information to the public. It requires one to use an electronic connection to access the content. Electronic media has become common with the arrival of information and communication technology (ICT). With the Internet, you can access almost all information online. You can talk to someone using social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram. Many of the news stories are currently available online giving competition to the traditional print media. Examples of electronic media include telecasting over television, broadcasting over radio, podcasts, social media, emails, and blogs.

## Principles of the Media

The mass media play an important part in our lives. Some enjoy listening to the radio, some watching television and some surfing the Internet. Let us now turn to the guiding principles of the media. These are also referred to as the codes of conduct and values that media professionals should adhere to in performing their assigned duties.

1. **Truthfulness:** Refers to the provision of objective facts and accurate information by the mass media. It implies that the media professionals report issues as they happened, without changing facts or presenting only part of the information.
2. **Honesty and Accuracy:** Accuracy of the media means that the information provided is correct and precise. This refers not only to the printed word; photos, videos and soundbites used by journalists and other media professionals should not be misleading or misrepresenting. Many people get information about the economy, healthcare delivery, and education among other things from the media and need to have accurate information. This requires checking of facts and careful evaluation of evidence. An important indicator in measuring the accuracy of stories by the print and electronic media is the quality of the source of the information.
3. **Balance or Impartiality:** This means that information put in the public domain by the media is unbiased. The principle of impartiality implies that journalists in what they publish, or broadcast should cover all sides of the story. Thus, the media information for the audience should be devoid of personal opinions, biases, or emotions. This applies to material presented as **fact**. Both print and electronic



media may legitimately provide opportunities for the expression of opinion whether by the editorial team or selected contributors. The important thing is that fact and opinion should be distinct. Impartiality of newspapers, television and radio stations allows individuals, groups and institutions to form their various opinions based on the available facts rather than just looking at one side of the issue. It further encourages trust-building and credibility in the media.

4. **Independence:** This means that the media operate freely without any external control or influence, such as governments, political parties, or representatives of any interest group. Acting independently implies that journalists should avoid any form of conflict of interest. Journalists should avoid receiving gifts and favours from individuals and organisations as it has the potential to compromise their work. The job of the mass media is to protect the public interest and therefore transparent in what they do. They should not serve as the spoke person of anyone and not depend solely on government public relations activities and political parties for getting and framing information. The media information should come from a variety of sources which should be credible. When the media is independent, it can investigate and share stories honestly, without fear of retaliation or being forced to promote a specific agenda. However, media regulations particularly ownership by politicians and other private individuals have an impact on journalists and media outlets acting autonomously and independently and the information consumers receive.
5. **Accountability:** It involves media professionals taking responsibility for what is covered and reported and explaining their actions to the public (i.e. listeners, viewers and readers). There is an obligation not only to fact-check and verify the information before using it in a story, but also to be transparent and make public corrections and, if necessary, apologise, following a mistake.

### Activity 4.3: The Media

1. What do you think the word 'media' means? (do not look up the answers in the dictionary). Post your answer on the whiteboard and discuss it with your classmates. Next, look up the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition (<https://www.merriam-webster.com>) for the term and compare it to your responses.



**Reflection of Fig. 4.3:** *What do these images remind you of? What message does these images communicate to you? What are the types of media?*

2. Examine **Figure 4.3** closely and record your observations concerning the images, text, contents, sender, audience and the effect. Record how these images contribute to the types and characteristics of media. Compare your findings with a friend for a class discussion.
3. In a group of three, research on the works, the guiding principles and ethics of the mass media. Prepare a presentation for the rest of the class. When writing this assignment, you may use a minimum of 1 print source and 2 Internet sources.
4. Watch and read the same news story (e.g., the government budget statement) presented on television and in a newspaper. Make a list of specific pieces of information reported in each of the stories as well as the images. In discussing, consider the questions: which of the medium presents a more detailed account of the story? Which of the mediums is more engaging and attractive to consumers? Present your work for feedback from your peers.
5. Watch online education-related news (e.g. Teacher Unions Labour Strike) reports from three different media outlets and evaluate the coverage reports. Are the reports from the media outlets fair, accurate, balanced and accountable? Which of the outlets seemed more credible? Copy and write a one-page paper in the evaluation box explaining your findings. In your evaluation, recreate a new headline and look for similarities and differences in terms of biased text or specific words, the image relating to the content of publications and the tone of the news report. Exchange your paper with a Colleague and provide feedback on their work. Are there any similarities and differences in your essay?

**Evaluation sheet**

## MEDIA CENSORSHIP

The 1992 Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, association and assembly. However, there are instances where the provisions of the constitution are in tension with other important rights, implying that free media does not mean a media system without any control.

Media censorship refers to restricting the activities of the media, i.e. what can be collected, recorded and disseminated for the consumption of the public. It is about media freedom in terms of what can be produced and accessed. Simple means when someone outside the newsroom uses his/her power to prevent what can produced and accessed. The issue of media censorship is often about the defence of democracy, e.g., authoritarian governments curtailing freedom of speech to prevent challenges to their power and privilege. At its most extreme, media censorship is exercised through the arrest and imprisonment of journalists, physical assaults and intimidation, raids of TV/radio stations, shutdown of social media networks, revocation of operating licences, manipulation and surveillance.

However, there are also democratically legitimate grounds for censorship. These include protecting people against defamation, obscenity, pornography, hate speech, intrusion into personal privacy and threats to national security. There are different views on the extent to which restrictions on free speech are legitimate.



Fig. 4.4: Examples of media censorship

### Activity 4.4: Media Censorship

1. Your school blocks access to certain websites including social media platforms such as YouTube videos in the school computer lab. The use of mobile phones has also been banned. What authority do headteachers have to control the content of learners' social media platforms?
2. In a small group of not more than five, write a written debate about whether it is imperative/important to restrict the activities of the media or whether

freedom of speech should be absolute. Please, ensure all group members participate. Prepare a five-minute presentation for further class discussion.

- Watch an audio descriptive video of the UN Secretary-General 2023 World Media Freedom Day message <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IcZmsV3aRwE>.
- VoA page featuring Inside story: free press matters, countering censorship, Episode 137 <https://www.voanews.com/a/7547386.html> (play to 5:30).
- Watch an audio descriptive video of free speech <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zemBh2uoCdQ>

**Now let us do the following activities.**

1. Summarise the arguments from the videos and prepare a presentation on the meaning of media censorship and the sorts of things censored. How similar or different is your definition from peers?
2. With your knowledge of the meaning of media censorship, copy and complete the table below arguing for and against media censorship. Your teacher may ask you to present your findings to the rest of the class in the form of a debate.

Mechanism	Aim	Reasons for censorship	Reasons against censorship
Stop a journalist from covering a news event.	Privacy		

## IMPORTANCE AND PROBLEMS OF THE MEDIA

### Importance of the Media

The media plays an important role in society. Public opinion is influenced significantly by the activities of the mass media. The many roles played by the mass media include information dissemination, watchdog functions, entertainment, job creation and as a medium of advertisement and marketing.

1. **Information dissemination and education:** The mass media serve as the vessel through which information and news get to the population. The media educates the

public about national and international issues impacting our daily lives. Whatever happens worldwide, be it political, economic, cultural or social, is reported in the newspapers, television, radio, and social media platforms. Journalists gather, process and present public service information concerning health care systems, politics and government, development and poverty, sports and arts, climate change and environmental degradation.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the media raised the alarm and awareness about the negative impact of the disease on all sectors of the Ghanaian economy. The wide coverage and education made Ghanaians comply with all the health safety protocols issued by the government and the World Health Organisation (WHO). The mass media also educates citizens and individuals about their rights and responsibilities in the state. It educates people on their fundamental rights and how to seek redress when they are infringed upon. Again, the media informs us about changes in societal norms and values. It teaches us about people, shows us how they act, and shows us what is expected of them.

2. **Watchdog Role:** In the watchdog function, the media monitor the decisions and policies of government officials and other institutions, checking that their actions serve the interest of the public rather than sectional or individual interest. It investigates and exposes bad and hidden government activities such as corruption, and human rights abuses including the rights of children. The monitoring and exposure of bad activities encourage government officials to make decisions that are more transparent and serve the interest of the public. The media is often considered the **Fourth Estate** in society. The idea behind this concept is that the media serve as a guardian of public interest and therefore an important institution for ensuring checks and balances in democratic societies. As a watchdog, the media may speak for and represent the interests of the marginalised in society.
3. **Entertainment:** In modern societies, media plays an important role as a source of entertainment for every social and cultural activity. It provides entertainment for the public through movies, music, television shows and others which help the individual and the public to have some form of relaxation after a day's work. The entertainment role of the media provides the opportunity for artists, filmmakers and musicians to showcase their talents and creativity.
4. **Creation of job opportunities:** The mass media serves as a source of job opportunities for different people with the required qualifications and experiences such as journalists, editors, producers, camera persons, news anchors, sound engineers, graphic designers, photographers, Illuminations/light experts and many more. Further, advertising as part of mass communication creates job avenues for copywriters, designers, social media managers, and sales representatives. Today, electronics are the easiest way to send information. The introduction of social media platforms provides the opportunity for social media influencers, bloggers, vloggers, podcasters, and other online content developers to generate revenue by producing media content for their followers. This has become one of the most common employment avenues for several unemployed youths in Ghana. The employment

of people in the media industry has the effect of increasing government revenue as these specialised people involved in mass media would pay taxes to the state.

## Problems of the Media

1. **Misinformation:** This involves the spread of information that is not true by the print media, radio and television stations, and social media platforms. The spread of 'fake news' is a threat to the progress of a country as it can lead to misguided beliefs and decisions. Some journalists and other media professionals do not verify the authenticity of information before disseminating it. Others also give out information to deceive the public. However, the rapid growth of social platforms has made the spread of fake news and rumours more prevalent. This is because such information travels very fast and becomes very difficult to withdraw. For example, there is a lot of false information surrounding the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Misinformation by the media may negatively affect the trust the individual and the public have in the media institutions.
2. **Quality of media personnel:** The most important asset of any organisation is its human personnel. Newspapers and other media are highly dependent on the quality and availability of media professionals such as reporters, editors, and photographers. However, some media houses do not have the qualified and experienced personnel to undertake their activities. This is because of poor and inadequate training of media professionals. The absence of qualified personnel affects the quality of information provided by many media outlets as they do not comply with the guiding and ethical principles governing the mass media.
3. **Weak financial position:** The nature and the kind of activities performed by the mass media are influenced by the strength of their resources. The activities of the media involve significant expenditure on logistics and staff salaries and benefits. However, most media houses in Ghana are facing a reduction in revenue. A possible reason for this reduction is the intense competition for the limited advertising opportunities, which are the main source of revenue. Another reason for the weak financial position of national media organisations is the advent of social media platforms such as Facebook, and X and messaging services such as WhatsApp which makes information and adverts easily accessible to the audience. Most people now receive information about products and services through social media rather than the traditional print and broadcast media.
4. **Poor working conditions:** The conditions under which employees work influence work output and productivity. In other words, a conducive working environment serves as a motivator for workers to increase their output levels. However, the working environment of most organisations in Ghana is not favourable and media houses are no exception. Equipment to work with is not readily available coupled with the absence of official office spaces as well as poor salaries and other benefits. The poor condition of service affects the quality of journalistic practices.
5. **Media ownership and regulations:** Media ownership and regulation also affect the quality of information disseminated. Media outlets are owned by the state

(government) and private individuals which makes their control and regulations quite difficult.

### Activity 4.5: Importance and Problems of the Media

Visit any media house, particularly a community radio station and have a conversation with officials to explain the importance and problems of the media. Share your findings with a friend and make presentations to the whole class discussion. Use the questions below as a guide:

- What roles do the media play in your community today?
- Why is that role important for the promotion of democracy?
- How does the media contribute to educating the public?
- Give examples of how the media has shaped public opinion or informed decisions.
- What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the media today?
- How do these challenges affect the accuracy and quality of reporting?
- Can the media ever be truly objective?
- How has the spread of misinformation affected trust in the media?
- Do you think the media is being influenced by the government?

## MEANING AND TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

A political party is a group of people, frequently with a common ideology, who seek to capture political power through elections to implement their policies and programmes in a state. Examples: The New Patriotic Party (NPP), the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the Convention People's Party (CPP), the People's National Convention (PNC) etc.

However, parties are not always ideological. Some may be based in whole or part around ethnic or other interest groups or be vehicles for patronage. A distinction may be made between mass parties and elite parties.

**Mass Party** refers to a political party whose membership is drawn from all sections of society, although in many cases, a party will appeal to certain sections of the population, e.g., right-wing pro-business parties and social democratic or socialist parties targeting the working class or the marginalised in society.

**An Elite Party** refers to a political party whose membership is restricted to a selected few, particularly the elites and the wealthy. They are formed in such a way that any person who wants to join them must be screened.

## Activity 4.6: Political Parties



Fig. 4.5: Symbols of some political parties in Ghana

1. Observe the figure 4.5 above carefully and other related materials. What is your understanding of political parties? Write down the names of the main political parties in Ghana. Discuss with your peers.
2. Together with a friend, conduct research on the type of political parties and prepare presentations using infographics/posters for further class discussion. More information can be found at <https://www.britannica.com/>
3. Do individual research on the manifestoes of registered political parties in Ghana, drawing out the differences and similarities in terms of their policies and programmes. Based on the tables, prepare a presentation for a whole class discussion.

### Differences

Political parties	Education	Health	Agriculture	Infrastructure
1				
2				
3				

### Similarities

Political parties	Education	Health	Agriculture	Infrastructure
1				
2				
3				



## STRUCTURE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

The organisational structure of political parties in Ghana is hierarchical, with the national secretariat at the apex and the ward at the lowest. It determines the administrative machinery of political parties as contained in their respective constitutions. The structure outlines how leadership and other positions are occupied in each party. Below is a discussion of the organisational structure of political parties in Ghana.

- **National Secretariat/Executive:** This is the highest decision-making body usually located in the national capital, Accra. It is made up of the national leadership, including the party Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons, General Secretary, National Organiser, Women's Organiser, Treasurer, and other executives. It is responsible for setting party policies, strategies, and direction. It also oversees national campaigns, elections, and party operations. The national executives oversee the activities of the party at the national level and delegate authority to the regional executives.
- **Regional Secretariat/Office:** This level of the party structure represents the party at the regional capitals, that is the 16 regions in Ghana. It is headed by a Regional Chairperson, supported by Vice-Chairpersons, Regional Secretary, Regional Organiser, and others such as the paid staff and volunteers. It is responsible for coordinating party activities, campaigns, and elections within the region. It reports to the National Secretariat and oversees the activities of all constituencies within the region.
- **Constituency Secretariat/Office:** It represents the party at the constituency level. Currently, there are 275 constituencies in Ghana with each constituency represented by a member of Parliament in the national legislature (Parliament of Ghana). It is headed by a constituency Chairperson. Other members are the Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Youth Organiser, Women's Organiser and the volunteers. Its main work is on grassroots mobilisation, campaigns, and elections within the constituency and reports to the Regional Secretariat.
- **Branch/Ward:** The basic unit of the party at the local level is the ward or branch. It typically consists of a few communities or a village. This branch is headed by a Branch Chairperson and supported by a Vice-Chairperson and Secretary. Youth Organiser, Ward Organiser, Women's Organiser and the Disciplinary Committee. It has the primary responsibility of mobilising supporters, organising local events, and reporting to the Constituency Secretariat.
- **Polling Station Executives:** This is the smallest unit of the party, typically representing a single polling station. It is headed by a polling station Chairman and agents. It is responsible for mobilising voters, monitoring elections, and reporting to the Branch/Ward level.

### Activity 4.7: Structure of Political Parties

1. Visit the office of any registered political party in Ghana and ask a knowledgeable person (e.g. Chairman, Secretary) to share with you the structure and administrative system of their party. Present your findings to the larger group for feedback using infographics or a poster.
2. From your findings, compare with a friend drawing out the differences and similarities in terms of the structure and the administrative systems of political parties in Ghana as seen in the table below.

#### Differences and similarities between political party structures in Ghana

Differences		Similarities	

## COMPARISON OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND PRESSURE GROUPS

**Pressure groups** are organised groups of people to achieve certain goals, often by influencing government decisions. They aim to influence policies or change public opinion but do not seek to gain public office. They may be promoting a general cause such as the environment or women's rights, (promotional pressure groups) or seeking to promote the specific interests of their members (sectional pressure groups). Examples of the latter are organisations representing businesses, particular industries or specific types of workers. Promotional pressure groups usually try to build up a large membership base to increase their political influence. Pressure groups can work inside the political system (insider groups) or try to influence the system from outside (outsider groups). Insider groups are frequently consulted by the government and use these connections to bring about change. They are likely to try to influence decisions by gathering and presenting evidence. Outsider groups are more likely to use media campaigns and public demonstrations to influence the government and public opinion. There are also anomic pressure groups who don't believe their aims can be achieved by conventional means and use violent methods including rioting and assassination.

## Techniques Used by Pressure Groups:

Pressure groups use a broad range of techniques, some direct, others more indirect. The use of these techniques is largely dependent on the nature of the political system and the type of society in the country.

1. **Lobbying:** Refers to direct communication with decision-makers, like ministers of state, legislators, business leaders and other public officials on matters concerning their members. Pressure groups lobby within the organs of government to achieve their objectives. Powerful pressure groups such as trade unions have close ties with political parties and the government where they attempt to influence policy decisions on behalf of their members. Lobbying is done in different ways such as personal meetings (face-to-face interaction), phone calls, and emails among others. It is mostly done behind the scenes leading to building relationships and trust with major stakeholders.
2. **Seminars and conferences:** To enhance their capacity to develop well-informed policy articulation and demand, these groups sometimes produce academic studies and disseminate their findings through conferences, workshops and seminars to create public awareness on specific issues and discuss other related areas that are of important concern for the group. By reaching out to television, radio, print media and others, pressure groups can bring pressure to bear on the government to address their concerns. The seminars and conferences also provide an opportunity for stakeholders and members of the society to share ideas, information and expertise. The mass media is commonly used by pressure groups to raise issues to the forefront and lobby for particular policies for their members.
3. **Petitions and memoranda:** Pressure groups also send formal letters and petitions for the fulfilment of their demands. These request letters are signed by many individuals, expressing support or opposition on an issue to decision-makers. The memoranda and petitions may ask the government to address certain conditions such as payment of salary arrears.
4. **Protests and demonstrations:** Pressure groups may also publicly display their opposition to, or concerns about an issue either peacefully or disruptively. They include strikes, boycotts, and sit-ins which are forms of peaceful protests or demonstrations (marches and rallies) where the group and individuals typically occupy a public space and refuse to leave until their demands are met or their message is heard. These actions draw public attention to their issue and put pressure on decision-makers to address their concern.



**Figure 4. 6:** A protester during a demonstration **Figure 4. 7:** Teachers protest over unpaid allowances.

## Functions of Pressure Groups

1. Promote the interest and welfare of their members
2. Promote the interest of marginalised and privileged groups
3. Provide expert advice on government policy decisions.
4. Watchdog role or monitor the activities of government etc.

### Activity 4.8: Political Parties and Pressure Groups

Leaners, please, follow the link and watch/listen to an audio description video of a pressure group. <https://youtu.be/e-gy7xXtneI>

Now do the following activities;

1. Record your observations and use them to explain the meaning and the contribution of pressure groups to Ghana's democratic governance. Present your ideas to the bigger group.
2. Together with a friend, and based on the video, research the mechanisms used by pressure groups to achieve their aims. Present your findings for a whole class discussion. Visit <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zfj8xyc/revision/2> for more information.
3. Based on your previous knowledge of political parties, identify and discuss how pressure groups are different from political parties as seen in the table below. In discussion, focus on their aims, structures and methods. Present your responses in class for further discussion.

Pressure groups	Political parties

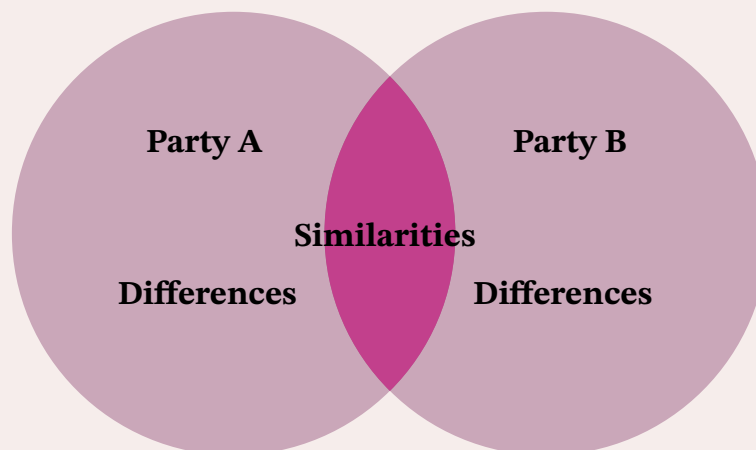
## Project

This lesson is devoted to a single project in which, individually or in pairs or small groups, you research and report on the role and activities of one political party or pressure group in Ghana.

- Using the following sample questions, conduct research on a political party of your choice as to how they nominate /select their presidential candidate(s). Present your findings in class for comparison.

Guiding questions:

- The origin/history of the party conference
  - Who are the delegates?
  - How many delegates vote?
  - Who are the super delegates?
  - What is the function of the delegate conference?
  - How do candidates win the delegate conference?
- Using a Venn diagram and in pairs, write out the differences and similarities of the nomination process between two political parties.



# Review Questions

1. How does public opinion influence the decision-making process of government officials? To what extent does it dictate public policy? Provide your answers with appropriate examples.
2. In what ways can public opinion be manipulated by external factors such as the media/ interest groups? How can societies guard against such manipulation?
3. How can mass media in Ghana serve as a promoter of democracy?
4. 'The media undermines democratic practices.' Discuss
5. To what extent should mass media be regulated in Ghana?
6. How does the hierarchical political party structure contribute to the decision-making process?
7. In what ways do pressure groups contribute to the democratic process in Ghana?
8. How do pressure groups differ from political parties in influencing policy?

# Answers to Review Questions

## 1.

- Public opinion can influence officials to modify or create policies to align with the majority view. For example, civil rights movements often shape legislation around equality.
- Elected officials seek re-election and are therefore inclined to align their decisions with public opinion to maintain their popularity and secure votes.
- **Consultative Role:** Governments often conduct public consultations or referendums to gauge opinions on controversial issues.
- Public opinion acts as a check on government decisions, ensuring that policies are perceived as legitimate and promoting accountability for actions taken.
- Strong opposition or support from the public can lead to the delay, amendment, or scrapping of proposed legislation, such as the widespread protests against fuel price hikes in France.

## 2.

- The media can frame issues in a biased way, leading the public to adopt a specific viewpoint. For example, selective reporting on certain political candidates can sway voter preferences.
- Interest groups can use targeted propaganda to shape opinions in their favour, sometimes with misleading or false information.
- Social media platforms often push content that reinforces existing beliefs, creating echo chambers and amplifying extremist views.
- Corporations and interest groups can use advertising to subtly influence public opinion, shaping perceptions without viewers realizing they are being influenced.
- False information spread through social media or fake news sites can distort public opinion, as seen in recent elections globally.

## 3.

- The media can serve as a platform for diverse political views and provide a forum for public debate, enhancing democratic participation.
- The media exposes corruption, inefficiency, and abuse of power, holding government officials accountable for their actions.
- The media can educate citizens about their rights, responsibilities, and the functioning of democratic institutions, increasing political awareness.
- Journalists investigate and report on governance issues, contributing to a transparent and informed electorate, critical for democracy.

- Media can mobilize citizens to participate in democratic processes like voting and engaging in civic activities through campaigns and reporting on political events.

#### 4.

- The media's tendency to focus on sensational stories rather than substantive issues can distract the public from critical democratic discussions.
- Some media outlets display political biases, which can distort the democratic process by promoting certain parties or candidates.
- The spread of unverified information can mislead the public, resulting in uninformed decision-making and undermining democracy.
- Media owned by powerful individuals or corporations may push agendas that align with the owners' interests, rather than promoting public interest.
- Fear of government loss of sponsorship can lead to media outlets censoring themselves, weakening the role of the media as a pillar of democracy.

#### 5.

- Regulation should focus on preventing the spread of harmful content, such as hate speech or misinformation, which could destabilize society.
- Regulation should be balanced to ensure that it does not infringe on the freedom of the press and speech, vital for democracy.
- Regulations should encourage responsible journalism, including fact-checking and transparency in reporting.
- Regulations should guard against discriminatory content or content that incites violence against marginalized communities.
- Media regulation should ensure diverse ownership and prevent monopolies that can reduce the range of perspectives available to the public.

#### 6.

- Hierarchical structures place key decision-making in the hands of party leaders, ensuring unified strategies and coherent policy direction.
- The structure ensures discipline among party members, leading to smoother legislative processes as members are expected to adhere to party lines.
- Hierarchies allow for long-term strategic planning, as decisions are made by experienced leaders who set the agenda for the party.
- Different levels within the hierarchy often represent various segments of the party, allowing for the consideration of diverse interests in decision-making.
- Party structures help in organizing and executing national campaigns, enabling better resource allocation and message consistency across different regions.



## 7.

- Pressure groups raise awareness of specific issues and advocate for change, representing interests that might be overlooked by political parties.
- Through lobbying and petitions, pressure groups can influence the drafting and implementation of policies that reflect the interests of their members.
- Pressure groups often monitor government actions, holding officials accountable and ensuring that policies are implemented as promised.
- Pressure groups engage the public, encouraging them to participate in political discourse and action on specific issues, which strengthens democracy.
- Pressure groups often represent marginalized or minority voices, ensuring that diverse perspectives are included in democratic decision-making.

## 8.

- Unlike political parties, which deal with a broad range of issues, pressure groups focus on specific causes such as environmental protection or labour rights.
- Pressure groups do not seek to gain political office but aim to influence those in power through advocacy, lobbying, and public campaigns.
- Pressure groups typically represent specific segments of society (e.g., trade unions or environmental activists), while political parties aim for broader electoral support.
- Pressure groups use methods such as petitions, protests, and media campaigns, whereas political parties rely on the legislative process and policy formulation.
- Some pressure groups are formed around a single issue and may disband after their objectives are achieved, whereas political parties are ongoing entities aimed at governing.

## References

- Fobih, N. (2010). Dynamics of political parties' administration in Ghana. *Africa Today*, 57(1), 24-41.
- Burstein, P. (2003). The impact of public opinion on public policy: A review and an agenda. *Political research quarterly*, 56(1), 29-40.
- The State of the Ghanaian Media report (2023). Department of Communication Studies, UG/ Media Foundation for West Africa (2023)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Ghana Education  
Service (GES)



## LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Name	Institution
Dennis Kwadzo Aमेvor	Jema SHS, Bono East
Sophia Gumah Songnabong	Bishop Herman College, Kpando
Arko Blay Augustine	UEW, Winneba