

IEA Survey Report

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MPs NEED TERTIARY EDUCATION

Majority of respondents in a public perception survey conducted by the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) have recommended a minimum of tertiary education as requirement for one to contest as a Member of Parliament (MP). Although the 1992 Constitution is silent on educational qualification as one of the eligibility criteria for aspiring MPs, an overwhelming majority of respondents (79.7 per cent), regardless of sex, age, region, locality of residence and educational level, are calling for a minimum entry qualification for MPs. Majority of those respondents (83.7 per cent) recommended tertiary education as the minimum qualification for MPs.

“One possible explanation for this may be that the wider Ghanaian population recognizes that the role of Parliamentarians (whatever that may be perceived to be) is a challenging one and, therefore, an education threshold needs to be set for a person to be eligible to stand. “A national debate on what informs this view is required to further interrogate the educational background concern as a first step in charting reform on this issue,” the report on the “Public Perception of Members of Parliament” survey recommended.

Background of Survey

The survey was conducted by the IEA in November/December 2015 across the 10 regions of Ghana as a follow-up to a similar survey conducted in May/June 2011. The objective was to seek the views of Ghanaians on how they perceived the roles and responsibilities of MPs. It focused on five thematic areas, namely, interaction between constituents and MPs; respondents’ voting considerations; educational qualifications of MPs; performance of MPs, and ex-gratia payments to MPs. The survey methodology involved the use of a probability sample design to select 1500 respondents aged 18 and above from all the 10 regions of Ghana. The criteria for the selection of respondents were also based on gender, ethnic, educational and rural-urban balance.

Electorate Voting Considerations

There are many factors that the electorate consider before voting for an MP, and for majority of respondents (60 per cent), they consider the calibre of the candidate more than the political party he or she represents. But nevertheless, the survey found that “voting along party lines is still significant, as 30.3 percent of respondents indicated that they consider political party over the personality of a parliamentary candidate”.

The findings on the electorate voting considerations on regional basis are also quite interesting, as they deviate markedly from the notion that some regions are “World Bank” for some political parties and the inference therefrom that even a “goat” put forward as candidate in those “World Bank” of its political party would win the election. Apart from the Western Region, respondents in all the regions said they considered the personality of the candidate over the political party he or she represents.

Leading the pack of regions whose electorate make such voting considerations are the Brong Ahafo Region (75.8 per cent), Greater Accra Region (72.3 per cent) and Central Region (67.5 per cent). “It is important to note that these three regions happen to be swing regions in Ghana’s electoral history and have changed hands between the two major political parties, NDC and NPP, between 1992 and 2009,” the report emphasised. It is only in the Western Region where majority of respondents (52.2 per cent) considered the political party a candidate represents over the personality of the candidate.

Another interesting finding is that the youth are more apolitical in their voting considerations, as 63.1 per cent of respondents from age 18 to 24 considered the personality of the candidate over the political party he or she represents before voting. In terms of sex, majority of respondents, whether male or female, said they considered the personality of the candidate more than the political party he or she represents.

