

Contribution of Seaports to National Development

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Abstract

Recently, about 90 percent of the world's trade is carried by sea (European Sea Ports Organisation, 1996). Luguje, (2007) opines that ports play essential role in the development of developing countries particularly in times where the focus of economic growth and development is on trade. In landlocked countries, the efficiency or otherwise of transit ports has direct effects on international trade and competitiveness. According to the European Commission (1997), ports serve as medium through which countries receive and send goods and services that are imported and exported. This is as a result of the affordability of sea transport in transporting bulky goods and services as compared to other modes of transport. The ports of Ghana handle greater proportion of the country's exports and imports. The efficiency of ports operations in Ghana have increased over the years and have contributed immensely towards the country's development especially during the advent of privatization of the container terminals.

Keywords: Seaport Contribution, Port Development, National Port

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Goss, (1990) seaports open up countries to the international world by enhancing their comparative advantage in their areas of production. It is through sea ports that countries ensure optimum utilization of resources usually via trade. In Ghana, the contribution of the GPHA to the economic development is enormous. GPHA has been committed to government policy on private sector-led growth. Before 2001, only two private stevedoring companies operated in the ports. In 2008, the number of private stevedoring companies increased to eleven. Significant improvements have been made such as higher level of professionalism and greater degree of choice and attention to customer service due to increasing private sector involvement in the operations of the ports (GPHA, 2002).

The ports are integral parts of the international transport chain; it is the prime mover of industrial and agricultural development (GPHA, 2008). There is easy movement of capital goods from one country to another for production purposes. Most machines used by countries particularly in Africa imported from the outside world through the seaports. Also, the ports of Ghana contribute to the construction of roads. For instance, the port of Tema constructed a 6km road from the port to the Tema Motorway to enhance transportation within the Tema Township and access to the port (Tema Metropolitan Assembly, 2006).

Goss, (1990) intimates that the intrusion of private sector in to ports operations couple with the openings of new ports over the world, example the Dakar Port in Senegal, are increasing the employment levels of people. The GPHA, (2008) corroborates this by quoting GPHA, (2002) as intimating that Ghana the GPHA employs about 20,000 people annually in addition to the indirect services due to the existence of the ports.

Several governments generate enough revenue from the operations of the seaports. Government augments its revenue through seaports in the form of custom duties from both exporters and importers. The Rotterdam Port, which one of the biggest in the world, contributes about 10 percent to the country's GDP (Hoyle and Pinder, 1996). In Ghana, revenue from custom duties has doubled over the past decade (GPHA, 2002).

In the area of environmental protection, GPHA has been part and supported several projects relating to pollution control and safety week celebrations. For instance, GPHA supported the Marine Pollution Convention and ensures the protection of the ports environs. Also, a week in every year has been set apart for the celebration of safety week during which seminars, symposia and lectures are organised for staff to create safety awareness (GPHA, 1991). The GPHA contributes to the health sector both in cash and in cash. The ports have supported several health related exercises and campaigns such as the National HIV/AIDS awareness week to enhance public consciousness on health problems. GPHA also operates hospitals which serve both the workers of the Authority and the wider community (GPHA, 1991).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Role of Port Authorities

Port authorities have traditionally assumed three typical functions, that of landlord, regulator and operator (Baird 1995; Baltazar and Brooks 2001). These broadly correspond with the legal status of port authorities (Van Hooydonk, 2003). Varieties on this classification exist (e.g. Stevens 1997) but these can be easily linked to the three main categories. There seems to be a consensus in the literature, for instance Baird (2000); Baltazar and Brooks (2001); Van Hooydonk (2003) that is irrespective of whether the port authority actually owns the port land or manages the land on behalf of national or local government, the landlord function consists of a number of common elements, i.e. the management, maintenance and development of the port estate, the provision of infrastructure and facilities as well as the conception and implementation of policies and development strategies linked to the exploitation of the estate. According to Dooms and Verbeke (2007) the landlord function can be considered as the principal function of contemporary port authorities, also when seen from the value chain perspective

Verhoeven (2009) postulated that the landlord function has undergone substantial changes and postulated that three influencing factors stand out: First is the competitive pressure to invest in infrastructure. Meanwhile Slack (1993) noted that containerization, which became the hallmark of respectability for any port of commercial significance, turned investment policy into somewhat of a lottery. Port authorities, influenced by market forces in a deregulated environment, are pushed to take investment decisions in infrastructure which, due to the footloose nature of port users, are often of a speculative nature (Comtois and Slack 2003). Too often the belief prevails that the best workable strategy to defeat competitors is building highly new efficient terminals (Notteboom 2007a).

The second factor is the financial pressure: port authorities increasingly have to find own sources of funding or engage in partnerships with the private sector to finance investment projects since governments curb their financial support. The third is the competition for land: use which is essentially driven by ecological and societal motives and influenced by the fact that the negative externalities of port development projects mainly reflect on the local level whereas the benefits often extend far beyond the port-city perimeter (Notteboom and Winkelmanns 2001a). Verhoeven (2009) revealed that the literature recommend a variety of strategic options to deal with the challenge of competitive pressure on investments. He mentioned Bichou and Gray (2005); Jongman (1994); Meersman *et al.* (2009); Notteboom (2007); Notteboom and Winkelmanns (2001a); and Slack (1993) as some of the authors who recommended the strategic options on investments.

B. Regulator Function

Verhoeven (2009) intimated that the regulator function is somehow contained in the term “port authority” itself and combines a mixture of duties and responsibilities which can generally be referred to as controlling, surveillance and policing functions. These essentially relate to ensuring safety and security of ship and cargo operations within the port as well as enforcing applicable laws and regulations in these and other fields such as environmental protection and labour regulations (Baird 2000; Baltazar and Brooks 2001; De Monie 2004; Van Hooydonk 2003). Knatz (2008) revealed that in some cases port authorities will develop their own regulations in these fields and employ their own police force to exert control.

The increased focus on negative externalities of port operations has reinforced the regulator function of port authorities, in particular where it concerns environmental pollution surveillance, dangerous cargo control and security, a dimension which gained considerable importance since 9/11. Some authors extend the regulator role to controlling the correct implementation of concession agreements with private service providers (e.g. De Monie and Peeters 2006). Although it cannot be denied that this involves regulatory aspects, it is felt that it fits more appropriately with the operator function.

From the three traditional port authority functions, the regulator function seems to be the one which is least under pressure since it is less likely to be assumed by the private sector (Baird 2000). However, Verhoeven (2009) argued that it should be noted that in many cases the regulatory role is not only performed by the port authority, but often in co-operation with government agencies.

C. Operator Function

Verhoeven (2009) revealed that the operator function traditionally covers the provision of port services which can be broadly grouped in three categories: the physical transfer of goods and passengers between sea and land, the provision

of technical- nautical services (pilotage, towage and mooring) and a range of other, ancillary, services. Verhoeven (2009) also reported that the biggest change in most of the larger European ports is no doubt that privatization processes have almost completely brought cargo handling services in the hands of private operators with the port authority acting only as service provider “of the last resort” or offering specialised services (e.g. crane service for heavy lifts). Some authors believe that this process is irreversible (De Monie 2004) and research so far confirms that the larger ports in Europe and indeed worldwide confer to the so-called “landlord port” model or are evolving in that direction (Baird 2002; Peters 2001; Verhoeven 2006). At the same time it must be recognised that the landlord port model hides in many cases a wider diversity and that it is not always possible to classify ports precisely (Brooks and Cullinane 2007b).

Further empirical research is therefore necessary to validate this thesis. For the time being it can however be concluded that the operator function of a port authority with regard to cargo handling is refocusing on landlord and regulatory aspects. Several authors have in this context highlighted the increased power of global terminal operators – that are of various background and nature – which makes it difficult for port authorities to determine their own destinies, jeopardises their independence in making strategic choices and decreases the coherence of local port communities (De Monie and Peeters 2006; Everett 2008; Hayuth 2007; Martin and Thomas 2001; Notteboom 2007; Olivier and Parola 2007; Slack and Frémont 2005). Literature confirms that the intelligent use, including active control and supervision, of concessions is the best strategic option for port authorities to deal with this challenge, allowing them to stimulate intra-port competition and market contestability as well as sustainable behaviour of terminal operators (De Monie 2004; Notteboom 2007b; Notteboom and Verhoeven 2009; Pallis *et al.* 2008).

Verhoeven (2009) intimated that some voices however do not exclude a more entrepreneurial role for the port authority as operator, e.g. by taking strategic shareholder positions in global terminal operators, and question the irreversibility of the landlord concept (Delwaide 2007). Others warn for the negative implications of such an approach, especially where it concerns jeopardising the impartiality of the port authority (De Monie 2004). Elements of market contestability and transparency however also apply here (European Commission 2007) and port authorities would need to take care in considering the operation of these services as separate business units. Ancillary services can be defined rather diversely. These could be in the public area, such as waste handling, provision of shore power for vessels etc., or in the more commercial sphere, such as warehousing and logistics services. According to Verhoeven (2009) when using the term “port governance” two levels can be distinguished: the governance of the port and the governance of the port authority. The former corresponds with the external cluster level identified above whereas the latter relates to the internal firm level or “corporate governance” of the port authority (Brooks and Cullinane 2007a; De Langen 2007).

The European Commission (2001) defined a port authority as the entity which, whether or not in conjunction with other activities, has as its objective under national law or regulation the administration and management of the port infrastructures, and the co-ordination and control of the activities of the different operators present in the port. Most definitions underline the landlord and regulatory function, although other functions exist as well. The term ‘port authority’ implies a specific, i.e. public, form of port management, but it is used generally as the generic term for the body with statutory responsibilities that manages a port’s water and land-side domain (De Monie 2004). Regardless of the ownership and the managerial tradition to which they belong, port authorities are entities of a hybrid nature which contain elements of both public and private law. On the one hand they are bestowed with prerogatives of administrative action and in some cases even criminal law competence, at the same time they are undertakings which compete with each other (Van Hooydonk 1996). This corresponds with the fact that seaports as such possess characteristics of public utilities on the one hand and of private enterprise on the other (Meersman and Van de Voorde 2002).

D. Privatization of Ports

Zvi Ra'Anan, (1991) intimated that a number of studies and surveys provide evidence that privatization generally leads to improved performance over public-sector operations. According to Haarmeyer and Yorke (1993) a 1992 report by the World Bank examining 12 divestitures of state-owned enterprises in four countries provides persuasive empirical evidence of the benefits of privatization. According to Galal (1992) in eleven of the twelve cases, the net welfare change in terms of gains and losses to government, buyers, consumers, workers, and others, proved to be positive. Moreover, the magnitude of the gains was substantial.

Haarmeyer and Yorke (1993) argued that whether it is full or partial (less than 100 percent of the shares transferred to a private firm), privatization generates efficiency improvements. They opined that privatization enables an enterprise to take advantage of the stronger incentives associated with private ownership, reduces the potential for political interference, and exposes the enterprise to the full range of capital market disciplines and financing alternatives. According to The World Bank, (1992) full privatization has the potential to yield substantially greater benefits than partial privatization.

While commentators (Hirst 2000, Meyrick 2000) argue that political interference is the cause of port inefficiency this is a somewhat erroneous and myopic view. Political interference is not the cause of port inefficiency but an effect of something more endemic - of a model and legislative framework which is not appropriate for any commercially focused operation – government owned or otherwise. Hirst (2000) however opined that undoubtedly reform has improved port performance but dissatisfaction persists that the various corporatisation models have failed to ‘deliver the goods’. Clearly the objective has not been met and political input continues to impede commercial objectives.

Hirst has argued, for example, that while the corporatised ports are far more responsive to customer needs and are prepared to work more closely with their customers to obtain better transport solutions, many continuing disadvantages with the corporatised structure persists which portrays considerable and on-going bureaucratic and political interference in port issues that can affect port operations; delay, unnecessary capital and other expenditure cause problems to projects required to meet market development needs, basically to suit short term government agendas (Ibid). Notteboom and Winkelmans (2001) also argued that the problem associated with political interference is widespread globally and certainly not restricted to Australian port models. It has been suggested that in Europe, for example, the problem is one of a ‘political management structure’ which has impeded many public port organisations from developing enough flexibility and versatility to cope with a lack of productivity and innovation and to respond to structural changes in the world economy’.

Brooks (2001) suggests further that the issue of suboptimal port performance may be a product of port governance and whether commercially-oriented governance structures work to deliver the expectations of both government and the community?’ She has argued that ‘in the traditional private sector model, corporate governance is the structure, roles and responsibilities that provide the means by which the organisation is managed as an economic entity, based on the objectives of the corporation’. Good governance, she argues further, requires ‘the imposition of a system of rules and responsibilities compatible with the strategic intent of the organisation and its vision of the future’. Indeed, performance of the firm, she argues, is a product of industry structure and strategy and effectiveness of the strategy is a function of “fit” or how consistent or congruent all of the organization dimensions are with the strategy’.

III. CONCLUSION

This study sought to assess the bottlenecks in freight forwarding in Ghana and what could be done to mitigate their impact on the industry. To achieve this main objective, descriptive statistics was used to describe the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents and the results shows that the demographic age profile of the study participants shows that the industry is dominated by youthful population. The data also shows that both males and females were nearly equally represented in the sample size of this study and the distribution of the level of education and occupation were widely varied. This might have been as a result of the time and venues of data collection.

There is a chance for private container terminals to operate because all the respondents agreed that, there are adequate resources available for private container terminals to operate. However, majority of the respondents disagreed with the fact that the effectiveness of the resources is reducing inefficiency at the port. This is because, despite the adequacy of the resources at the port, it has no effect on the efficiency since the resources alone could not reduce the inefficiency at the port unless more private container terminals are allowed to operate. There is a high rate of loading and unloading of container cargoes by private terminals at the port. This therefore means that, the encouragement of private container terminals in operation could reduce inefficiency at the port. It was also agreed that, the present turnaround time by private container terminals is far better than before; which means that, the introduction of private container terminals have helped to improve upon the turnaround time. In addition, the current rate of documentation by private container terminals compared to the previous is better.

A container terminal was defined by the respondents as a place where containers are discharged off a vessel and stored on behalf of the shipping lines. Or, it is a facility where cargo containers are temporally stored for onward transportation to the end users. In addition, it is a facility where cargo containers are transhipped between different

transport vehicles. These definitions therefore conform to the one defined by Steenken (2004) in the literature review in chapter 2 which states that “a container terminal is a facility where cargo containers are transhipped between different transport vehicles, for onward transportation”. While a private container terminal is a container terminal that is owned by private individuals entirely with no recourse to state funds and government not playing any role in its management. Also, it is a container terminal owned by a private entity that is with private capital investment. Besides, it is a container terminal fund by a private or an independent company.

Furthermore, benefits that the community gets from private container terminals are: employment, human resource development, reduces yard congestion, facilitate easy and quick evacuation of container, income to the government through payment of tariffs, foreign exchange and promotes specialization. Moreover, problems that this sector faces are: yard congestion, less data quality, lack of departmental cohesion, lack of government support and wrong documentation of cargo ownership leading to delay in the discharge of cargo to end users. Therefore, they suggested that, there should be optimization of yard, container deliveries should be evacuated in an even manner and at same line and there should be education for both documentation officials and cargo owners in order to reduce wrong documentation.

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