



Local Government Administration and Sustenance of Democratic Institution in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges.

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ABSTRACT: Local Government Administration as the third tier government is supposed to be the essential system for grassroots democratic consolidation. The system is significantly proved as an engine towards the involvement of many people in the practice of democracy as the preferred system of government in the history of mankind. The system promotes human development, dignity of man, and more importantly, fundamental human right among others. However, Nigeria is still in a clinical democratic condition as the practice is assumed nascent if not alien to our country because of foundational weaknesses where local government administration has been rendered less important in the building of Democracy in Nigeria. This paper emphasise the institutional fragility in Nigeria democratic system as a result of malfunctioning of local government administration. These are attributed to the neglect of 1976 local government reform in Nigeria. It also examined the emergence of Local Government in Nigeria, its co-ordinate functions and revealed the factors that rendered it conditional tier and ineffective system. The paper explored majorly secondary method of data collection with qualitative analysis, which involves desktop research, textbooks, occasion papers and electronic research. Findings revealed that, the failure of local government administration is a bane of democratic sustenance and the overbearing of the two tiers are the challenges of local government. The paper concluded with recommendation on how the tier of government be run efficiently and effectively so as to strengthening and sustaining democracy in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Democracy, Local, State, Federal, Nigeria and Sustenance.

I. Introduction

The process of achieving local government administration that would have engendered sustainable democracy was not visibly seen in Nigeria, from the colonial period to the year 1975. Thus, the colonial masters concentrated on the welfare of a minor elite population which lived in the towns and cities (Akhakpe, Fatile & Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2012). Prior to the advent of the British colonial administrators, the various communities, kingdoms and empires had evolved their own unique forms and patterns of native administrations which were able to meet the needs of their various peoples at their different levels of development. If the colonial administration in Nigeria had not halted the natural evolution of the peoples' unique system of native administrations, perhaps greater socio-economic and political development would have been realized in different parts of the country. The once vibrant and dominant level of government is presently seen as an appendage of the state and federal governments. As a result of this, several attempts and approaches have been adopted since the 1976 local government reforms to bring about efficient local government administration in Nigeria. Thus, the subsequent local government decree of 1989, 1990 and 1992 have all intended to operationalize the third tier status of local government in Nigeria, therefore, granting it a high degree of autonomy as well as increase in their revenue allocation in order to enhance democratic institution in any county particularly Nigeria.

It is obvious and generally accepted that, the popular definition of democracy as a system of government, allows majority to participate in the administration of states, either directly or indirectly. According to Shively (2001) "A democracy is a regime in which all fully qualified citizens vote at regular intervals to choose, from among alternative



candidates, the people who will be in charge of setting the state's policies." It is called a government of the people, by the people and for the people. In a large and heterogeneous state, the main and significant reasons of local government administration is to build up democracy from the grassroots where efforts are also made to bring government closer to the people so as to enhance the goals of grass-roots participation. One of the ways to ensure that a government is a government of the people is the invention of a federal system of government, an arrangement in which powers are shared by levels of government. In his *Federal Government*, K.C. Wheare (1963) writes that an essential feature of federalism is division and sharing of powers among different governments in the state in a coordinated manner. According to him: "By the federal principle, I mean the method of dividing powers so that general and regional governments are each within a sphere, coordinate and independent of which according to K.C Wheare (1963), in his postulation of devolution of power, local government administration is also considered.

Ogoma(2018), posited that, one important mark that differentiates a federal state from a unitary state is the constitutional divisions of powers among the levels of government in a federal state. As a matter of fact, a unitary state can have levels of government but the source of power of the other levels of government is the general or central government. In line with his view, the federal or the state initiated their power from the grassroots which is the local government. Nigeria formally became a federal state by the virtue of the 1954 Constitution. Since then, apart from the short period between January and July, 1966, efforts have been made to improve on the federal system in the country. As at present, Nigeria has three tiers or layers of government; federal, state and local. Each of these levels of government has its own allotted powers and functions in accordance of Nigeria constitution. Like every other human organization, it also has its own peculiar problems that has rendered it inefficient. The target of this work is on how local government as the third tier government in Nigeria, almost lost its capability of sustaining democracy. The power of Local Government system in Nigeria has been grossly, usurped by both the federal and the state and as a result, rendered inefficient and ineffective to the extent that it has almost lost its relevance as a government that promote and sustain democracy at the local level.

The vintage position of local government as a way of enhancing and sustaining democracy that gives room for majority's participations, has

generated sensitive concerns among scholars which influence their thought in different ways of which they have hypothesised in dimensional ways on the salient issue, root causes of the problems of local government by losing its glory particularly in this fourth republic and proffering solutions to solving the problems. This paper lays premium on the Nigerian constitutions of 1979 and 1999, and the state governments as the main epiphyte on the growth of local government administration in Nigeria, analysing the difficulties in democratic sustainability in the absolute neglect of local government and redesign measures to the solutions of local government in Nigeria.

II. Methodology

The paper adopts qualitative research design and descriptive analysis to gain an insight into the Impact of Local Government Administration in the sustenance of Democratic Institution in Nigeria. The paper which is theoretical in nature draws its argument basically from secondary data which include journal publications, textbooks and internet sources. To improve on the reliability and validity of the paper, multiple secondary sources were used to minimize risk of error. To realize these objectives and for ease of analysis, this paper is divided into five segments. Section one deals with the meaning, concept and importance of local government. Section two deals with the development of local government in Nigeria. The third section discusses the various local government reforms in Nigeria, especially, the 1976 reform. The fourth section deals with the impact of local government in the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria, five argues about the challenges of local government and how it has been treated against the provision of Nigerian constitutions of 1979 and 1999 as well as the state government are the key factors that are responsible for the near moribund of local government in Nigeria. The last section makes recommendations on how local governments can be efficient and effective in its contributions towards democratic development in Nigeria.

III. Literature Review and Theoretical framework

Local government administration in Nigeria has come of age, not so much of because of its efficiency and effectiveness, but primarily because of its longevity and resilience of its relevance in the administration of the country (Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2003). The expediency for the creation of local government anywhere in the world stems from the need to facilitate development at the



grassroots. As important as local government administration has been, there seems to be some constraints that have been infringing on its operations over the years. These challenges range from political but undue interference of federal and state governments, coupled with high rate of bribery and corruption to embezzlement and gross inadequacy of well-trained and qualified human resources among others (Akhakpe, Fatile&Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2012).

Conceptualizing Local Government Local Government has been variously defined. Some of these definitions are given and reviewed below. The United Nations (1959) defines local government as: A political subdivision of a nation or (in a federal system) State, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs including the power to impose taxes or to exact or exact labour for prescribed purposes. The governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected Ugwu (2002) sees Local Government as: “the lowest unit of administration to whose laws and regulations, communities who live in a defined geographical area and with common social and political ties are subject.” For Appadorai (1975): “Local Government is a government by popularly elected bodies charged with administration and executive duties in matters concerning the inhabitants of a particular district or place.” The Guideline for local Government Reform of 1976 defines Local Government as the:

‘Government at local level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. These powers should give the council substantial control over affairs as well as the staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services and to determine and implement projects so as to complement the activities of the state and federal government in their areas and to ensure, through devolution of functions to these councils and through active participation of the people that initiative and response to local needs and conditions are maximized’.

Local government as a concept has attracted several definitions. But unlike other concepts, it has not generated much controversy as to its actual meaning. A sketch of some of these definitions could be helpful. Local government can be defined as the substructure upon which the superstructures of state and federal governments are erected. Yet, Bello Iman (in Akhakpe, 2011) defines local government as “that unit of administration with defined territory and powers as well as administrative authority with relative autonomy”.

According to 1976 Local Government reforms, local government could be defined as; government at local level exercise through representative council established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. These powers should give the council substantial control over local affairs as well as the staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services and to determine and implement projects so as to compliment the activities of the state and federal government in their areas and to ensure, through devolution of functions to their councils and through the active participation of the people and traditional institutions, but that local initiative and response to local needs and condition are maximized”, (FRN, 1976).

Enemuo (2008) asserts that, Local government is the lower level of government in a modern state that is legally distinct, and has powers to raise revenue and undertake assigned responsibilities under a leadership that is elected and answerable to the people at the local areas. (Enemuo; 2008). From these and other similar definitions, some salient points about Local Government are obvious, besides the constitutional provisions of local government as it was established by an act of parliament, Local Government has two major structures namely; political structures and administrative structures. One, Local Government is a government of the local people by the local people. Two, Local Government has certain power over a particular geographical territory. Three, people that govern Local Government are elected by the people. Four, the elected officials of Local Government are responsible and accountable to the people over which they govern. Five, the people of a Local Government have certain affinities with one another. It is therefore safe to define Local Government as a government created by the law with certain powers and functions, administered by local people for the advancement of the welfare and happiness of local people.

Theoretical analysis

This brings to the fore the question whether local government administration and democracy are related. Two theoretical perspectives have been put forward in this regard. The first perspective argues that in a democratic local government system, people's participation in governmental affairs brings about better politics which impact positively on the lives of the people. Thus, where democracy is practiced in local government system, it opens up the political space for different individuals and groups to contribute to community development and



human self-fulfilment. The second perspective argues that there cannot be "an inevitable tie of reciprocal dependence between democracy and local government". According to this perspective, while democracy attempts to create a social whole, a universal norm and pattern that applies to all, "local government is by definition a phenomenon of differentiation of individualization of aspiration" (Gboyega, 1987; Akhakpe, 2012).

From the point of analysis, it would appear from empirical facts that there is an interface between local government administration and democracy. However, local government administration in Nigeria is still evolving towards the stage where we can safely talk about a reciprocal dependence between local government and democracy. Thus, the struggle for a democratically elected third-tier of government has not been an easy one and the process is still on-going.

Emergence of Local Government Administration in Nigeria

The evolution of local administration in Nigeria is traceable to the early 1950s. This according to Chukwuemeka (2013) was the period during which the first form of local government reform that ushered in the anticipatory of local government in Nigeria was carried out. Before this time, the native authority and indirect rule system were in existence. The struggle to realize an effective and efficient local government administration in Nigeria has been a recurring decimal. To transform local administration to local government with autonomous powers, took several decades. This was due to the country's colonial antecedence which sub-planted the indigenous political arrangement for the British colonial administrative structure. As Guyer (1992) observed: *The British colonial endeavour in Africa, and Nigeria in particular, seems in retrospect to have tried to duplicate the English sequence over a period of a few decades, to establish central government and taxation systems on authoritarian bases, to promote the market using these mechanisms fairly ruthlessly in some places and finally in the last decades to allow limited systems of representation and expansion of the salaried local civil service.*

The centralization of power and resources in the federal government in a multi-ethnic deeply divided society like Nigeria has serious implications for development at the local level in all parts of the country. For instance, in the Eastern, Western and Mid-Western regions, several local government

ordinances were enacted to bring local administration to the status of local government.

1976 Local Government Reforms: Issues and challenges

Despite the undemocratic nature of the military, the institution seems to be the first to realise the importance of local government in Nigeria and the need to make it more efficient and more effective. It can be said without fear of contradiction that one of the legacies of military regimes in Nigeria is local government reform. This assertion is not premised on only what they did but on the declared intention of the institution in regard local government system. Brigadier Musa Yar'Adua correctly pictured the state of the local councils in Nigeria before the 1976 reform when he noted that;

“The defects of previous local government systems are too well known to deserve further elaboration here. Local Government has, over the years, suffered from the continuous playing down of their powers. The State Governments have continued to encroach upon what would normally have been the exclusive preserves of Local Government. Lack of adequate funds and appropriate institutions had continued to make Local Government ineffective and ineffectual. Moreover, the staffing arrangement to ensure a virile Local Government system had been inadequate. Excessive politicking had made even modest progress impossible. Consequently, there had been a divorce between the people and the government institutions at their most basic levels. (Guidelines Local Government Reform, 1976)”.

In 1976, a local government reform committee was set up by the then military government to look critically into the challenges that made the level of government ineffective, and to come out with recommendations that would propel local government into maximum efficiency. The reform was aimed to achieve four basic objectives. These are: (a) to make appropriate services and development activities responsive to local wishes and initiatives by developing or delegating them to local representative bodies, (b), to facilitate the exercise of democratic self-government close to the local levels of our society, and to encourage initiative and leadership potentials., (c) to mobilise human and material resources through the involvement of members of the public in their local government, and (d) to provide a two-way channel of communication between local communities and government that is, federal and state. After



consultations, the Committee came out with what is known as the 1976 Local Government Reform.

Among the important issues of the reform included:

- Local governments all over the country became single-tier. By this, they are to perform the same functions, unlike what obtained before the reform.
- Local governments also became, for the first time in the history of the country, the third tier of the government. The first and second being federal and state, respectively. The implication of this provision is that, local government became legally recognized, with certain powers and functions.
- Past debts of the local governments were written off so as to make them have a new beginning and a good start.
- States were mandated to set up Local Government Service Board that would be responsible for the training of the staff of the local government. This was aimed at improving the standards and quality of their personnel.
- Federal and state governments were mandated to release monthly allocations to the local governments in the federation. This was in line with the important functions the councils were to perform.
- Local governments were to be controlled by elected chairmen and councillors. Traditional rulers were therefore insulated from partisan politics. Under the reform, the traditional rulers are to perform purely advisory roles.

Impact of Local Government

Local Governments are created for certain purposes which include bringing government closer to the people, enhance grass-roots development, decentralization of power and provision of certain peculiar needs (Abe & Omotoso, 2015). As a result, they perform the following functions;

- It assists the central and state governments to carry out certain functions like rural development.
- It brings government closer or nearer to the people.
- It maintains and improve the culture and tradition of the people.
- It serves as a link between the central, state and the local people
- It assists to educate or enlighten the local people about the policies and programs of the people.
- It helps the federal and the state governments to collect taxes and revenues.
- It acts as a training ground for future leaders,
- It provides and maintains services like water supply, street light, markets, parks, public toilets and banks.

- It helps the law enforcement agents to maintain laws and order.
- It constructs and maintains feeder roads and bridges.
- It provides environmental sanitation and sewage disposal. (Nwankwo; 2002).

Objectives and roles of Local Government Administration in Nigeria.

Local government are expected to play some vital roles in any country. Prominent here are political and socio-economic roles. Local governments are to provide some basic social services to the people and communities around them. They are to ensure better quality of life for the citizens.

Enemuo (2008: 318) asserts that Local Government serves as 'an invaluable socio-political laboratory'. By this he means that a policy can be tested at the level of local Government. If it successful, it can be replicated at the federal level, but if it fails, such policy would not continue or be improved upon. The Nigerian constitution also ascribes certain functions to Local Government which included the following:

- Provision and maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education.
- Development of agriculture and natural resources other than the exploration of minerals.
- Provision and maintenance of health services.
- Such other functions as may be conferred on a local government by the House of Assembly of the state. (The 1999 Constitution)

The above and other functions of local government make it an important tier of government in a federal state like Nigeria. Its importance is however dependent on its ability to performs these functions. As it will be shown later in this work, local governments in Nigeria have not lived up to expectation in terms of their performance because of certain problems that this work identified.

Local Governments as Agents of Democracy and Development

Local governments are created to bring about development in the rural areas. As agents of rural development and local democracy. Local governments are to use the funds made available to them by both the federal and state governments and their internally generated revenue to improve on the lives of the people within their areas of operation through initiating and attracting development projects to the local government such as provision of access roads, water and rural electricity; sustaining livelihoods through the provision of credit facilities for agriculture, arts, crafts and small



scale business; and encouraging the formations of cooperative societies and other economic groupings (Akhakpe, Fatile&Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2012). It is equally important to reiterate that no kind of desirable development can be achieved if there is a political framework defined by; a tendency to divert public resources for private gain; failure to establish a predictable framework of law and government behaviour conducive to development, or arbitrariness in the application of rules and laws; excessive rules, regulations, licensing requirements, and so forth, which impede the functioning of markets and encourage rent-seeking; narrowly based or non-transparent decision making.

In all emergent states, local government administration has been adopted as the main fundamental instrument for the acceleration and sustenance of democracy and development. Various arms of government must aim at stimulating and motivating rural people to take an active part in the development of their communities by so doing, there is a presence of democracy. The development of democracy at the local level, is a background performance of democracy at the macro level of government. Yet, motivating people is the duty of local government and it is a complex process. It has to do with defining development so that there is no logical and operational break between past practices, past beliefs, the present and the future. The above statement buttresses the fact that local government has a meaningful and positive role in development process. AkhakpeFatile&Igbokwe-Ibeto (2012) noted that community development through the instrumentality of the local government is essential for a sustained developmental process.

Local government serves as training grounds for politicians while local government administration trains people for higher political duties and responsibilities. A number of people holding political positions at the higher levels of government started their political career at the grassroots' and they were recognized for future appointments. Yet, local government administration helps to promote development at the grassroots' as earlier discussed. In a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria, decentralization of power through local government gives the people of the community a better knowledge of their environment and opportunities therein and contributes to their community development. It also helps other levels of government to bring policies and programmes closer to the people at the grassroots' (Anazodo, Igbokwe-Ibeto, Osawe&Nkah, 2014). Local government administration facilitates political mobilization and sensitization of the people within

its areas. The institutional framework of local government administration is pivotal to the success of any government programme. It has been consistently argued in literature that local government administration is an effective and efficient instrument for political education and socialization of the people at the local level. Local government administration allows for clientele participation in decision making and implementation of government programmes that affect their lives (Akhakpe, 2013).

Local Government and Democracy in Nigeria: issues and Challenges

The issues and challenges facing local government and sustainable development are so enormous and complex that space cannot permit us to do justice to all. Therefore, we shall concentrate on topical and salient ones. A critical Analysis of Enemuo (2008) as summarized by Ogoma E.D, (2018) about the problems of local government in Nigeria as follows as analyses; lack of adequate funding, scarcity of experienced personnel, excessive instruction and control by the central and state governments, corruption among staff, inadequate public support and rivalry with traditional authorities. These are indeed the basic reasons the local government system has not lived up to its expectations in Nigeria. However, these problems are not natural, and they are made possible or created by the constitutions of Nigeria, and unless, this is recognized, all attempts to reform the system will prove abortive. Both constitutions provide for the existence of the local councils by elected officials. However, the state shall: ensure their existence under a Law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils. (Section 7 (1)).

Yet, local councils are regarded as a tier of government vested with certain powers and responsibilities. The implication of this constitutional provision is that, local councils are creation of the state governments, hence, the concept of 'tier' in the constitution is in contradiction with the purpose of the councils. In other words, local councils cannot in any way by this provision, be free from the absolute control of the state, thereby rendering the councils as tools in the hands of the state governments. Abdulhamid and Chima (2015) recognize the damaging impact of the 1979 constitution, especially, to the effectiveness of local councils when they submit that:

“However, the 1979 constitution which provided the legal framework for the 1976 reforms, plunged the local government system into a crisis of



identity, and ever since local government in Nigeria has remained an idea in search of relevance....the combined effects of constitutional gaps and reform contradiction have rendered Nigeria's system of local government an unfortunate 'orphan', and that, lacking a strong constitutional foundation, local government in Nigeria has been subject to the whims of both state and federal governments. (Abdulhamid and Chima :2015).

The 1999 constitution created more legal and constitutional problems for local governments than the 1979 constitution. Section 7(1) states that states shall: ensure their existence under a Law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils. (Section 7 (1)). This was interpreted by some people as giving the power to create local councils to the states. This was led some states like Lagos, Osun, Ekiti, Rivers and in the recent time, Ondo State among others to create local councils in the early part of the Fourth Republic. This later became a legal battle between Lagos state and the federal government, when the latter ceased funds for local councils of the former over the creation of additional 37 local councils. The crisis was avoidable but for the constitution. The 1999 constitution gave power to the National Assembly to allocate revenue allocation to the local governments, but these are the local governments recognized by the constitution. The implication of this power is that, even if the states have power to create local governments, only 774 local governments are recognized by the constitution and these are those the National Assembly have powers to allocate revenues to. Yet, local councils need funds to carry out their constitutionally stipulated functions.

The Supreme Court ruled that the federal government had no power to withhold local councils' funds of the Lagos state, and at the same time, states have no power to create more local councils. Agreeing with the Supreme Court ruling in the case between Lagos and Federal governments, Iwilade (2012) submitted that: "Unless the National Assembly enacts a consequential Amendment Act to list the additional 37 Lagos Local Development Councils Areas as Local Government Areas under the 1999 constitution, Lagosians cannot validate the new Local Government Areas they have lawfully created." For two years or thereabout, Lagos state local councils were deprived of their federal monthly allocations. This was as a result of the lacuna created by the constitution.

Another problem created by the 1999 constitution for the smooth operation of the local councils in Nigeria has to do with finance. Local

councils, like the other tiers of government, need enormous funds in order to be relevant. The constitution recognized this fact, and necessary provisions were made by the framers of the constitution. Of all the sources of revenue to the local councils, the largest come from the mandatory monthly allocations from both the state and federal governments. The Fourth Schedule of the constitution declares that: "The National Assembly shall make provisions for statutory allocation of public revenue to local government councils in the Federation; and (b) the House of Assembly of a state shall make provisions for statutory allocation of public revenue to local councils within the state. It is here the local councils become over dependent and over-reliant on the other tiers of the governments. In most cases, the state governments would not release funds to the councils. Where the party in power in the state is not the same with the one that controls the council, such a council usually suffer. Apart from the fact that in some cases, the due of the councils from the states are not released to them, the constitution also aided the suppression of the councils by the states. Under the Distributable Pool Account, there is this provision that:

Each State shall maintain a special account to be called State Joint Local Government Account into which shall be paid all allocations to the local government councils of the state from the Government of the state. (8) The amount standing to the credit of local government councils shall be distributed among the local government councils of that state on such terms and in such a manner as may be prescribed by the House of Assembly of the State. (1999 constitution).

The SJLGA, no matter the original intention of the framers of the constitution, has become a potent weapon in the hands of the state government to weakening the performance of the local councils. Commenting on the implications of the state in the starving of the local councils by the state, Abdulhamid&Chima write thus: The consequence of the financial strangulation of local government councils is predictable: a local government administration that is ineffectual, unable to connect with citizens, or to discharge its statutory responsibilities, and a local population without responsive local administration. Abdulhamid&Chima; 2015):

"The damage done to the local council system in Nigeria by the state Governors are enormous. They make sure that the tier of the government is not functional. They make local council a local administration instead of a local government. They usurp local councils' powers,



funds and responsibilities thereby making the government of the local people invisible. All attempts to reform and restructure local councils are blocked by the state governors. They do not allow free and fair elections to hold in the councils, apparently because the Governors themselves have failed their people and they would not want a situation where opposition parties will defeat them at the local level. Hence, they prefer to have their loyal party members as caretaker committee members to run the councils, since they can easily manipulate them. Throughout the four years of Kayode Fayemi as governor of Ekiti state, local council elections were not conducted. Olusegun Mimiko spent eight years as Ondo state governor without conducting elections into the local councils. These are just examples of very many states in Nigeria where the state governments prefer an appointed caretaker committee to a democratically-elected official to run the local councils as guaranteed by the constitution. Yet, the governors are all acclaimed democrats. The roles of the state government at impoverishing local council system in Nigeria was well captured by Onyedikachi (2016), when he writes that:

‘Most governors have exploited the constitutional provision for the establishment of joint state and local government account to control local Government funds; they hijack the nomination and subsequent election for their acolytes as council chairmen. Aspirants who emerge victorious after rigorous process paid allegiance and political dues to the governor by accepting whatever deductions they make from the joint state- local government account.

Nigeria lacks equity and fairness in sharing revenue as epitomized by the incessant manipulation of revenue allocation criteria and tax policies by the political class. There is the growing practice among the state governments to divert local government funds through state-local government joint account. This is possible because local government allocations from the federation account are disbursed through the state governments. Most State governments have taken this advantage to divert part of the allocation to otiose projects thereby robbing the local governments of the capacity to perform their functions and live up to the expectations of the people. (Onyedikachi 2016)’

The operational problem identified by the Dansuki Committee continues till date in the local councils’ administration. More than 80% of the 774 local councils in Nigeria are managed by caretaker committees. In states like Ekiti where elections were conducted, all the seats are won by the party that

controls the state. The same thing in the controversial Osun state and Ondo State. Needless to mention that in such places, elections are neither free nor fair. As a matter of fact, the state government select the candidates for the elections, and the elected officials are mere errand boys of the governors. This arrant the constitutional provision that empowers the state to set up the State Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC). In some cases, too, when a new state governor emerges, elected councils are dissolved, only to be replaced with appointed loyalists of the governor.

The implication of this is that, local government ceases to be a government for the local people. It is on this basis that Nwosu (1989) submits that: government is orchestrated by the relationship that existed between the state and local government resembles that of the partnership of the horse and the rider, in which the state government propels the local government to any direction they desire. The local governments are not encouraged to use their initiative to harness local human and material resources for the provision of high quality services for millions of Nigerians who live in rural communities. (Nwosu:1989).

The implications of all these impediments are many. For one, local councils are almost non-existence in Nigeria because their impacts are not felt in the grass-roots. Feeder roads are not repaired, parks are not constructed and the existing ones are not renovated. Markets are not built by the councils but by the states as in the case of Ondo state under Governor Olusegun Mimiko. In fact, infrastructures are in poor state in most councils all over the federation. Some constitutional functions of the councils like the administration of primary schools and health, market and drainages are being usurped by the states. Councils are no longer responsible and responsive to the local people but to the state Governors. The government of the locals ceases to be as citizens are not able to actively participate in the government that are supposed to be their own. The essence for which local councils were created, as a way of linking the locals with the central government has been defeated. An efficient local council system would provide an opportunity for training future leaders that would grow from councillors to chairmen, to the assembly members before becoming governors and finally progressing to the central government level. Economic development is hampered as a result of ineffective local councils. Local initiatives are lost in the process



IV. Conclusion/Recommendations

The crucial roles of effective local councils' system in any democratic and federal state cannot be over-emphasized. It is however noted that the impacts of the system are not felt in Nigeria because of certain challenges this paper has identified. A thorough examination of local government system in the country was carried out in the paper. As a way of concluding, the following measures are recommended for the effective local government system in the country, especially, at this crucial time that many people are clamouring for restructuring.

- First and foremost, positive leadership is crucial to the success of any human endeavour local government administration inclusive. Therefore, there is the urgent need to bring about political and administrative leadership anchored on rule of law, transparency and accountability, administrative probity and culture of good governance.
- The local government system needs missionary and visionary leaders with democratic credentials and readiness to transform the local government system in the country. Local government administration should adopt the principle of public management summarized by Osborne & Gaebler (1993) to include: catalytic government: steering rather than rowing; community: owned government empowering rather than serving; competitive government:
- In line with the provision of the constitution, all local councils must, without unnecessary delay, be governed by democratically elected officials. There must be a relevant law that will prevent the states from constituting appointed caretaker committee at the council levels. If federal and state governments are controlled by elected officials, the same should be extended to the local council, for it to be a true tier of government.
- State Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC) should be cancelled. In its place, it should be the responsibility of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct elections into the local councils and Local Councils' elections should precede state and federal elections.
- The proper functions of the local councils should be performed only by the councils. A situation whereby state embark on the construction and

maintenance of primary schools and health, markets and parks, should be discouraged.

- State Joint Local Government Account (SJLGA) should be cancelled and funds for the local governments should be paid to them directly. It does not make much sense again to say that the councils cannot be entrusted with huge funds. As a matter of fact, there is little to steal at the local level than in the other levels of government.
- The anti-graft agencies, the civil societies and the local people should be empowered and enlightened to monitor funds for the local councils. This is what obtains at the state and federal levels.
- In order to prevent the proliferation of local councils as witnessed in the Second Republic, local government creation and existence should be handled by an independent commission.

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