

Local Government Administration in Nigeria and Community Development: The Efficiency Services Interrogation

Jide Ibietan¹, Peter Ndukwe²

Abstract

The central thesis or argument of this paper is that the performance of local governments in Nigeria, especially in the fourth republic can be interrogated through the Efficiency Services theory. The kernel of this theory is that local government acts as an efficient agent for providing services that are local in character. Through a heavy reliance on secondary data backed by practical observation and analytical framework, the paper observed that the leading personnel, policy outcomes and political/administrative environments of local government administration in Nigeria (within the period of study) portrayed them as failed institutions. The paper canvassed the need for synergy and collaborative approach to community development and reform initiatives anchored on “theory to practice” policy inclination.

Keywords: Local Government; Administration; Community; Development; Efficiency; Services.

1. Introduction

The local government being the government nearest to the populace, is one of the best agencies for generating motivations and encouraging mobilisation for self-help, as well as including the much needed wider participation of the local population in the decision making process at the local level (Ukah, 2012). According to Edward Scouma, (in Eluwa, 2012:11),

The so-called third world is a rural world where any meaningful discussion of community development really means not only “talking of overall national development,” but because “it is in community that the problems of inequitable distribution of resources or a marked lack of purchasing power and of grinding poverty in which the wretched members of society stagnate and stare one in the face with brutal clarity.

The raison d’etre of the local government in Nigeria is to, at least stop the deteriorating living conditions in the various communities of the country. An effective local government will be better disposed than the state or federal government, not only to stem the grim reality of the rising tide of grassroots poverty but also be better positioned to evoke communal efforts and networking to manage and mobilise the support of local citizenry in participating in all the programmes that may affect them (Eluwa, 2012).

As an agent of development, the major priorities of any local government should include reduction of poverty in the community, increasing the standard of living of the local dwellers, provision of social amenities, enhancing the participation of the local citizens in political activities that concern them, enhancing their individual human capabilities, boosting nationalism, inspiring creativity and innovation as well as educating the local people (Bello-Imam, 2007).

Conceptual Discourse

The concepts of Local Government and Community Development are discussed in this section. It also presents the logical interconnection and challenges inherent in the nature and practice of these concepts in Nigeria.

¹Department of Political Science & International Relations, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria

²Department of Political Science & International Relations, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria

The Concept of Local Government

The performance of local governments has been receiving increasing attention in Nigeria over the past decades, from both academic and civil society sectors. All over the world and especially in Africa, local government is seen as a means of enhancing development and service delivery, improve governance and deepen democracy (Buccus, Hemson, Hicks and Piper, 2007).

The National Guidelines for Reforms of Local Government (1976:1) in Nigeria defines Local Government as:

Government at local levels exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. These powers should give the council substantial control over local affairs as well as staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services and so determine and implement projects so as to complement the activities of the state and federal Governments in their areas and to ensure through devolution of functions in these councils and through the active participation of the people and then traditional institutions that local initiative and response to local needs and conditions are maximized (cited in Bello, 1986:12).

This explains the legality of local governments which has the backing of the fourth schedule of the 1999 constitution to enforce authority and power within its territorial boundary. It is expected to discharge duties which ensure effectiveness at the local level and this should in some ways contribute to the overall growth and development of the nation.

Mabogunje (in Ibietan, 2010:32) cited some of the major expectations from local governments which include:

- a) Improving the living standards of the subsistence population through mobilisation and allocation of resources to achieve desirable balance over time between the welfare and productive services available to the rural subsistence populations.
- b) Ensuring mass participation aimed at achieving both allocative rationality plus equity with redistributive efficiency.
- c) Making the process self-sustaining: this requires appropriate skills acquisition and development; capacity building; and availability/presence of functional institutions at local, state and federal levels to facilitate optimal use of available resources and the development of the rural areas.

Nigeria operates a federal system with feeble attempts at democratic practice and has three tiers of government namely: the federal government, the state government and the local government being the third tier. It is pertinent to note that the practice of federalism in Nigeria has had several interferences by the military who imported their unitary command system into governance. A semblance of this unitary command still exists in the present democratic dispensation as power is concentrated in the hands of the federal government, impinging on the true practice of federalism as devolution appears shaky. The practice of federalism in Nigeria deviates from the letter and spirit of federalism as advocated by K.C. Wheare who is credited with developing a concise treatise of federalism (Ibietan, 2010:31). Onyeoziri (in Ibietan, 2010:205) further argues that the inconsistencies characterizing the logic of federal practice especially in Nigeria where each level/tier of government which is supposed to be coordinate and independent in its sphere becomes subordinated and this is contrary to the letter and spirit of federalism as advocated by K. C. Wheare (1784) who developed the original idea of federalism (Ibietan, 2010). Onyeoziri (in Ibietan, 2010:205) further corroborated that the imperfections in the state institutions also create some disabilities for the federal practice. He therefore cautioned on the lacuna in discussing federalism without backing it with "a suitable theory of state" (which is the infrastructure) onto which federalism is grafted. Thus, a mutual reinforcement of the two variables offers a reliable strategy in guaranteeing stable federal arrangements (Ibietan, 2010:206). When there is an effective federal practice, then there can be proper deconcentration and devolution of powers to subnational governments, to perform their duties.

The Nigerian federal structure allows the existence of the local government as the third tier of government. Section 7(1) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria specifically guarantees a democratically elected local government system. The fourth schedule of the same constitution similarly defines the roles of the local governments (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). The Nigerian federation currently has 774 local government units created for grassroots administration and for delivering services to the people at the various local levels as well as creating a relationship with the local people through which the government can be responsive to their needs and demands. In addition, local governments also exist to ensure effective political involvement of the local people in the policy making process as well as in the affairs of government (Afrobarometer, 2013:1). Some scholars are of a contrary opinion that the local governments have not performed their functions as agents of development; rather they have attained disrepute for corruption, fiscal disorderliness and overall irresponsibility. The lack of uprightness, transparency and accountability at the local level of government constitute a heavy toll on the welfare of average Nigerians (Agbo, 2010:20).

Local government as the name implies is the government established for the sole purpose of directly governing the local populace. This means that the government at the local level is expected to be transparent and accountable to the local people for whom it was created and the provisions of the constitution ought to be reflected through the running of this tier of government. As an aberration to good governance, corruption exists at the three tiers of government, and local governments in Nigeria are often seen as nurturing grounds for barefaced corruption and near absence of transparency and accountability in the conduct of its governance (Abubakar, 2010: 25). Gabriel (2011) argues further that corruption has become an everyday issue in the context of the Nigerian governments, as there are frequent cases of stealing, embezzlement and mismanagement of funds. "Thieving has become a major interest and diversion for Nigerians in high places. It has become a big time occupation. All arms of government are affected and the local government is not excluded" (Gabriel, 2011:19). The lack of autonomy and financial power to attract and retain qualified personnel are also major problems as local governments do not possess the necessary resources needed to formulate and fully implement programmes that are beneficial to the communities they govern. This lack of autonomy is partly attributed to constant interference and impediments on the affairs of the local governments by the state governments.

Lawal (2000) opined that local government is the tier of government closest to the people and it is vested with certain powers to exercise control over the affairs of people in its domain. A local government council is therefore expected to play the roles of promoting the democratic ideals of a society and co-ordinating development programmes at the local level. It is also expected to serve as the basis of socio-economic development in the locality.

Despite the numerous challenges it faces, local government is essentially a pathway to, and patron of national integration, organization and development (Lawal, 2000). Oviasuyi & Isiraojie (2010) averred that local governments exist in Nigeria, yet the resident populations in it are denied the benefits of its existence. Local governments have however been criticised by many local dwellers in various parts of Nigeria for not living up to its expectation and actualising the purpose for which it was created.

The Concept of Community Development

Community development is a term that has been subjected by several authors to various perspectives, each of them presenting definitions to connote their specialisation and practice. The assumption is that the definition of community development can easily be arrived at by understanding the concepts of community and development separately. However, community development is a broad concept, hence the various views and definitions on the concept. "Development" is a progression that increases varieties. It means new choices, variation, thinking about ostensible issues differently and forestalling change (Christenson and Robinson, 1989).

Community development marries the idea of "community" with "development". The notion of community refers to a group of people with common traits. Therefore, community development depends on

communication between people and cooperative action, rather than individual exploits which some sociologists termed as “collective agency” (Flora and Flora, in Ikechukwu, 2012:5).

Ugwu (in Ikechukwu, 2012:2) asserted that “community development is one of the main boards upon which national developmental policies and their implementation are hinged”. The concept of community development is not completely new. What probably may appear new is the mode of application in modern times and its ancestry as a union of community, organisation and economic development (Sanders in Hanachor, 2012).

The Cambridge summary conference of (1948) in Hanachor (2009:5) averred that:

Community development is a programme designed to encourage improved living for the entire community with the vigorous contribution and if possible, on the creativity and if not forth coming instinctively, by the use of methods for instigating and motivating it in order to ensure its active fervent reaction to the movement.

Hence, it purports trickle-down effects and efforts from the government to ensure the optimal wellbeing of the people that reside in such communities, and this is done through the collaborative efforts of both the government and the people.

Ogo (in Hanachor, n.d:2) opined that community development is a move by the community members to provide their basic needs through their own efforts and sometimes with external assistance where necessary and possible. He is of the opinion that whether this external assistance comes or not, it is believed by professionals in community development that adequate injection of external assistance by local governments in self-help efforts by the communities, reinforces local development actions. Hence, local governments should seize the opportunity to offer such external assistance or acts as facilitators for community development. Mexiro (in Hanachor, n.d:3) also argued that community development is “a planned and organized effort to assist individuals to acquire the attitudes, skills and concepts, required for their democratic participation in the effective solution of a wide range of community problems in order of priority”. Community development when viewed in the light of educational process manifests in behavioural change and acquisition of new skills and confidence as a result of repetition or practice and co-operation. It is the responsibility of the local governments to act as facilitators in educating the local citizens as well as spear-heading the planed efforts for empowering these individuals at the grassroots.

Murry (1966) in Bello and Bola (1987:1) using another approach (programme approach) explained it to be:

The application under a single programme of approaches and techniques which rely on local communities as units of achievement which endeavours to syndicate outside assistance with organised local self-determination and effort which harmoniously seek to arouse local initiative and leadership as the primary apparatus of change.

This means that when the external factors (government) constantly fulfill their duty by assisting communities who willingly put in efforts, local initiatives will be put in motion and this will bring about development in the communities.

Barikor (in Hanachor, n.d:3) gave a comprehensive and contemporary definition of community development. He opined that community development by contemporary standards is “an amalgam of many dynamic and complementary factors involving education, economic, socio-political, cultural effort to emancipate the community from retrogressive tradition, poverty, ignorance and disease”. The local governments in Nigeria are responsible for ensuring basic primary education among the community dwellers as well as providing basic health care facilities but they have not lived up to the expectation of discharging these duties. From an academic point of view, Anyanwu (1992:2) alleged that as an educational process, “community development is usually employed as a means of educating the people of a community to help themselves both as individuals and as groups”. Most local governments in Nigeria fail in this area as they have been unable to adequately mobilise and educate the rural people. For community development to be effective, people in a community must believe that collective efforts can create a difference and bind their

common needs together (Flora, Flora, Spears and Swanson, 1992). It is the responsibility of local government to spear head and organise these collective interests and ensure that they are fulfilled. However, local governments in Nigeria tend to overlook the interests of the people as they pursue the governing elite's selfish interests.

Community development occurs when a group of people in a community reach a conclusion to foster a social action procedure to improve on their economic, social, cultural and environmental situations (Christenson and Robinson, 1989). Going by this view, community development cannot be achieved without the collective efforts of the people. Also, Community development is a progression that increases choices. It produces an environment where people can exercise their full potentials to lead fruitful, ingenious lives (Shaffer, 1989). Community development is also a process through which peoples' efforts are combined with those of public authorities to galvanise the economic, social and cultural situations of communities, with concomitant effects on national integration and development (United Nations, in Biggs, 1999). This is a testament to the panoramic view and catalytic role of local government in community development.

The development of a community's economy is about recognizing and coupling local community resources and prospects and inspiring sustainable economic and employment action (Kenyon, 1994). Sanders (1958) posited that community development is a process that advances from stage to stage; a technique of working towards an objective; a programme of processes and as a drive sweeping people up in sentiment and conviction. It is a process through which increasingly more members of a given area or environment makes and implements socially responsible decisions, the probable consequence of which is an improvement in the quality of life of some people without a decrease in those of others (Oberle, Darby, & Stowers, 1975). Furthermore, it can be described as a situation in which some groups, usually locally based such as neighbourhood or local community attempt to improve its social and economic situation through its own efforts, using professional assistance and perhaps also, financial assistance from the outside and involving all sectors of the community or group to a maximum (Voth, 1975).

Community development can also be seen as the process of helping community people to analyse their problems, exercise a large measure of community autonomy as possible and feasible, and promote greater identification of the individual citizen and organization with the community as a whole (Warren, 1978). There is an undeniable need for the involvement of the local governments in the activities of the communities in order to develop the grassroots.

2. The Role of Local Government in Community Development

It is the duty of the local government to ensure service delivery at the grassroots, support infrastructure by building public, low-cost homes as well as building and maintaining public parks, increase training opportunities for the community dwellers and also attune government policies in favour of the community. An additional response is needed whereby government agencies develop a greater role in helping communities build their capacity for development (Cavaye, 2000).

Increasing number of people no longer view the safety of their neighborhoods as the sole responsibility of the police. In well-ordered countries, citizens in areas plagued by crime and violence are uniting to work with local governments. Together, they have the knowledge and resources to identify and remove the sources of crime, drug use, and juvenile delinquency in their communities. Developing and sustaining these partnerships require strong local leadership from Chairmen, city managers, city planners, and other elected local officials. It is the role of the local government to foster such initiatives and organise groups involved in crime control in their various localities so as to give room for the community to develop (Asheroft, 2001).

The role of local government in community development include: creating a "vehicle" for local people to express and act on existing concerns; judging appropriate interaction with communities from "consultation" to genuine partnership and facilitation; personal relationships between local public servants and community members is crucial to government's involvement in local affairs and capacity development; moulding formal "structures" that mediate community involvement with a grassroots culture of local

participation; community members “unlearning” the role of government solely as a “provider” and government “unlearning” the historical technical assistance approach to communities; fostering relationships between community members and government workers by increasing the “networking” role of public servants in communities and initiating contact with a greater diversity of clients (Cavaye, 2000:2).

Local government is supposed to provide services and internal support for communities and the technical assistance provided can aid community development. When local government provides support for communities, it contributes greatly to economic development, infrastructure, and quality of life of the common man. Although local government activity and services are sometimes perceived to be confined to infrastructure provision and enforcement of regulations, local authorities can embrace an enhanced multi-disciplinary role in local, community and enterprise development. This includes working with the local and community development sector to promote the interests of local communities and playing a leading role in co-ordinating the delivery and integration of services at local level.

The Efficiency Services Theory

The thrust of this paper is that the performance of local government in Nigeria can be interrogated through this theory. This is premised on the fact that local government is the closest tier of government to the grassroots, hence it is expected that they will impact on the populace better than others.

The main arguments of this theory are:

- Local government is an efficient agent for providing services that are local in character.
- Local government exist to provide services and it must be judged by its success in providing services up to a standard measured by a national inspectorate” (Mackenzie in Ezeani, 2012:16).
- In view of its proximity to the grassroots, local government can provide some services more efficiently than the federal or state governments.
- The efficient performance of these services makes the existence of local government very compelling (Sharpe, 1970:168).

Relevance of Efficiency Services Theory to the Nigerian Local Government System

The fourth schedule of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is very clear on the functions of and expectations from Local Government Councils (LGCs) as the closest tier of government to the grassroots. These functions by which LGCs must be interrogated include provision and maintenance of infrastructures such as roads, public conveniences and formulation of economic planning and development schemes to mention but a few. These have been termed as exclusive and mandatory functions of LGCs by Nwachukwu (2000:38, 40).

The LGCs also have concurrent functions such as provision and maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education; development of agriculture and natural resources; provision and maintenance of health services. There are also extractive functions through which they can boost internally generated revenues; Distributive functions which deals with allocation of values and benefits to the local populace; Regulative and protective functions aimed at maintaining law, order and public safety; Educative functions which are directed at changing negative traditional attitudes and dispositions which drive social and economic progress.

The view of this paper is that this theory represents an ideal but not the real situation in Nigeria as local government councils have not robustly proved that they are efficient agent for providing services that are local in character. To underscore this, especially with reference to the performance of LGCs in Nigeria’s fourth republic, Adamolekun (2009:19) posited that “since the return to civilian rule in 1999, the LGs are widely perceived as failed institutions”. He identified several acts of corruption, mismanagement of monumental proportions and consistent practice of undermining of local government autonomy as explanatory factors. The later part of this averment is attributed to the phenomenon of military hangover in governance and public administration system which super imposed the military unitaristic principles and

bifurcated federal practice, thus circumscribing the “coordinate and independent” position of sub-national units as advocated by theorists on federalism.

In addition, there is a disconnection between the governing elite and the populace manifesting in low-level of people-oriented services and functions that can impact on the livelihood of the masses. This is the paradox of governance in Nigeria, occasioned by the tragic irony of the electoral process and system that catapults mediocres into leadership.

By virtue of their proximity to the grassroots, it can be argued that this position should make LGCs impact on their citizenry, especially under civilian rule. However, the narrative shows that their leading personnel, policy outcomes and political/administrative environments present debit entry on the balance sheet. The extent to which they satisfy the yearnings of the populace is open to debate and the Nigerian situation has been laid bare as the foregoing analysis testifies. However, to judge LGCs by standard set by “national inspectorate” gives a connotation of local administration. This presents a view of local government as field administration, deconcentration or administrative decentralization. Local governments in this sense become agents of the central government, devoid of autonomy; financial and human resources independence; and they lack legal personality as core attributes of devolution which is the essence and ideal of a functional local government system. The trajectory of local government administration in Nigeria shows that these essentials of devolution have been absent and partly explains the failure of LGCs to live to their billings.

It is consistent with good reasoning that for Nigeria to achieve the development it aspires for, and this must be qualified as people-centred with trickling effects, the country must travel the route of recognising the compelling or indispensable functions of the third tier of governance, thus capacitating them for efficient service delivery reflecting in the much desired dividends of democracy. Only through these propositions can Sharpe (1970:168) make meaning to the lives of the average Nigerians.

3. Obstacles to Local Government Councils’ Efficiency in Nigeria

Corruption at the Local Government Level

Corruption, according to Harsh (1993), is a practical problem involving the outright theft, embezzlement of funds or other appropriation of state property, nepotism, and granting of favours to personal acquaintances. One of the fundamental problems of contemporary Nigeria is corruption which has thrived, progressed, and flourished unabated in the country. Corruption has been institutionalised to the point of accepting it as part of the system. Although, corruption is universal; it is found all over the world, but the degree of its manifestation varies from system to system (Adeyemi, 2012:190). Corruption is the greatest bane of local government administration in Nigeria. At the grassroots level, corruption has been canonically accommodated, entertained, and celebrated within the system. In the local government setting, corruption is normally labeled and euphemistically referred to as “Egunje” (a slogan implying “illegal offer” in Nigeria).

Regrettably, democracy, which is assumed to be the antidote to corruption, has not lived to expectations in practice in Nigeria. Consequently, the level of apathy, cynicism, and poverty is high among the community dwellers (Lawal and Abegunde, 2010). Kolawole (in Oladunjoye, 2010:232) lamented this situation when he opined that “in spite of the establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC), corruption still thrives in our society”. In his analysis, Kolawole is of the view that the lack of funds is no more a constraint on local government performance, but mismanagement and misappropriation of the funds accruable to it (Lawal, 2010:232). Nowadays, men and women who have been (s)electd to undertake leadership position at the grassroots level in Nigeria primarily seek means to enrich themselves as quickly as they can and ultimately run the budgets of their various localities aground without any visible developmental projects to show for it. Developmental projects, if any, are in place after being thoroughly inflated (Lawal, 2001).

Most local government chairmen see their position as opportunity to enrich themselves. The following examples are quite revealing. In 2001, the chairman of Kachia LGA in Kaduna state awarded a contract of N2.5 million for the rehabilitation and completion of women's centre and no work was done. Similarly, the

chairman of Sanga local government in Kaduna spent N6,495,605.70 as extra budgetary spending. He awarded a contract of N3, 171,375.00 for rehabilitation of his office which N906,044.00 would have been enough for (Aluko, 2006). In Kwara State, the Chairman of Ilorin SouthLGA claimed to have built two staff residential apartments at Fufu, the councils headquarter at an inflated price of N20 million. The chairman also claimed to have paid N19 million to a contractor for the Gaa-Akanbi and Niger roads which had been rehabilitated by the state government in the previous year. It was also reported that the chairman owned twelve personal cars, far above what his legitimate earnings can afford (Aluko, 2006).

Also sentenced for corrupt practices were AlhajiGana Abbas, the former chairman of Damban local government in Bauchi, and the treasurer of the council, Alhaji Ali Abacha. They were convicted and sentenced to 17 years imprisonment for misappropriation of public funds while in office as the chairman and treasurer respectively. They awarded contracts for the drilling of boreholes in Azir and Ngwalimi villages for the total sum of N12 million. The sum of N7 million was approved as mobilization fees for the contract to Galtis Nigeria Water Services. These two officers released only N1 million to the contractor and converted the remaining sum of N6 million to their personal use (Gold, in Adeyemi, 2012:194).

ICPC also interrogated, the former chairman of Bassa Local Government Area of Kogi State, Mr. Bako Shiga, who was alleged to have operated a single cash book and awarded contracts without due process which gave room for misappropriation of funds. The former chairman of Dekina local government area council in Kogi State, AdejoAkowewas alleged to have collected money for security vote twice in one month. He collected money for some sub-heads twice for the same project and conferred undue advantage on himself by virtue of his position (Sowe, in Adeyemi, 2012). The former caretaker committee chairman of Kala Balge local government council in Borno State, Mr. ZannaAbubakar was arraigned in court by ICPC for misappropriation of N23, 825,000.00 belonging to the council while serving in office (Ingobro, in Adeyemi, 2012:194).

ICPC also arraigned Saidu Musa, former chairman of Awe local government area council of Nasarawa State and two top principal officers: Mr. UmaruZanuwa, Director of Works and AlhajiAsoSafiyano, the Director of Finance over various corrupt practices involving N23,503,940.00 (Ameh, 2008:6). Mr. Umaru H. Zannuwo, who was the Director of Works in the council used his office to confer pecuniary advantage upon himself by collecting the sum of N2, 430,000.00 for the electrification of Kanje/Kekura, a project which was financed and executed by the Japanese Government. He was also accused of using his office as Director of Works in the council to criminally divert for personal use the sum of N4,522,000.00purportedly for hiring a bulldozer in the name of MICGA investment (Ameh,2008:7).

Local government chairmen in the country have continued to soil their hands through avarice and sundry acts of graft. For instance, in March 2010, 12 out of the 23 local government chairmen in Benue state were recommended for suspension for various financial misconducts. This followed reports submitted by three ad-hoc committees set up by the state House of Assembly. Nine of them were recommended for three months suspension and directed to refund millions of naira they allegedly misappropriated, the chairmen of Gwer East and Gwer West councils were to refund N56 million and N54 million respectively and stay out of office for six months. Their Ogbadibo counterpart, who was suspended from office in 2009, was also suspended for six months for fraudulently enriching himself (Oyelude, 2010:17).

Corruption is proving to be an acceptable norm among Local Government Chairmen in Nigeria and if the trend continues unabated, the desired development will not reach the people at the grassroots. Nwanma (2008) exposed a disheartening scenario in Yobe State, Nigeria, where a man walked to the headquarters of Jakusko Local Government Area and with a knife and hacked seven people to death, due to unpaid accumulated emoluments (to him) in the face of massive corruption by the local government chieftains. The frustration that compelled the man into this dastardly act represents the failure of the country's local councils to meet the basic needs of the citizens, even in the face of generous revenues from the central government. The 17 Local Government Areas in Yobe state received a total of 72.3 billion in eight years, from 1999 to 2007, according to figures from the office of the Accountant General of the Federation (Nwanma, 2008:148). An objective analysis of the physical infrastructural and social services in the state is at variance with this

enormous statutory allocation. Corruption has really denied the public the dividend of their "social contract" (Nwanma, 2008). In fact, grassroots administration in Nigeria is increasingly paling into insignificance and the fastest means of primitive accumulation. This is due to the fact that the more financial resources earned by the local governments, the less the provision of essential services to the people at the grassroots in Nigeria.

State Government Persistent Intervention in Local Government Affairs

The imperfections in the provisions of the 1999 constitution have made almost every State Government see Local Governments as their sub-entities and therefore subjected them to various manipulations by the Executive Governors. In 2009, the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), Mrs Farida Waziri, disclosed that:

The level of social infrastructural development in the rural areas does not match the huge amount of money available to local government administrators nationwide. The 774 local government councils in the country received a whopping amount of N3.3 trillion from the federation account between June 1999 and June 2007, without anything to show for it (Waziri in Akanni, n.d:9).

Diversions of local government funds by the state governors have been a major problem that stunted developmental growth in most local areas across the country. For instance, in Ondo State, under the late Governor Olusegun Agagu, there was an unholy alliance between the state government and the local councils in the state, where the former constituted Joint Action Committee, tagged "JAC". Federal allocations to local government councils were first deposited into a particular ad-hoc account before calling for the committee's meeting. This in a way created avenues for the state government to divert local government funds and release paltry sums instalmentally. As a matter of fact, LG allocations became slush funds for state governors' personal activities. Practices like these are replete in this fourth republic, and this circumscribed the ability of LGCs to deliver services efficiently at the grassroots (Olaniyonu, 2007). Akanni (n.d:10) corroborated that state governors see the allocation from the federation account to Local Government Areas as their personal fund and use it to finance their political activities. Some Governors found it easy stealing from LGAs. Between 1999 and 2003, only Chief Adebisi Akande of Osun State was reported not to have tampered with the local government funds (Lawal, 2010).

A particular Governor from a North Central state who was not re-elected actually took as much as N2 billion from the LGAs within four years. Also, a former LGA chairman in a South-West state narrated an instance in which his state governor had given them a few million nairas each as running cost and he challenged the Governor that the money being shared was the constitutional entitlement of the LGAs which the chairman should use for development purposes. The governor told him to- keep quiet as he (the chairman) "cannot tell me how to use my money" (Oyelude, 2010). Several local government administrators confirmed how their respective Governors just give them few million naira as running cost and diverted the remaining money originally meant for LGAs. Furthermore, several expenses incurred by the State Governments were charged to the account of the LGAs (Lawal, 2010). When the local government chairmen realised that they could barely pay salaries from the stipends given to them by the Governors, they found a smart but dubious way to share the money with their councilors for personal gain and jettison the social services which the constitution set out for Local Government Areas to provide (Olaniyonu, 2007).

Manpower Problems of Local Government

Observation by some scholars shows that one of the major problems confronting the operations of Nigerian local governments is shortage of qualified manpower. Akeredolu-Ale (in Bello-Imam, 2007) observed that in Kano and Jigawa states, the local governments lacked development planners, senior administrative officers, engineers and technicians, medical staff and health auxiliaries (nurses, mid-wives, trained dispensary attendants, secretarial and clerical staff and typists). He also observed that this trend rather than being peculiar to Kano state could be generalised. There is no comprehensive and accurate data on the manpower situation in local government councils throughout the country and this in itself is a source of concern (Bello-Imam, 2007).

Local Government Autonomy

Central-local relations in Nigeria have frequently been contentious, especially in relation to the contradiction between democratisation at the grassroots and the enduring practice of central control over local autonomy. The intricate nature of this complex inter-relationship between the national and subnational (federal and state) governments is revealed in lack of fiscal autonomy occasioned by inadequate financial buoyancy at the lower tiers of government, erosion of clearly stipulated roles and functions, occasional central imposition of functions without commensurate funds to match and sometimes untidy administrative structures of the local government councils.

The provisions of the 1976 Reform were entrenched in the 1979 Constitution which was operational in Nigeria's Second Republic. However, the 1976 Reforms invariably gave the Federal Government a more domineering role. AsGboyega (in Asaju, 2010) rightly observed; "the consequences of Federal intervention and imposition of a common system of local government have been mixed from a benign role that clearly retained State dominance of local government policy-making, the federal role has gradually widened to the point where the Federal Government can initiate local government Policy reform".

The Second Republic was a turbulent period in the history of local government administration. It witnessed attempts at experimenting with the provisions of the 1976 Local Government Reforms as contained in the 1979 Constitution. It was a fierce period in which the States and the Federal Government contested the control of Local Government. Attempts by the State to re-establish their primacy in local government policy-making not only created conflict with the Federal Government, but also weakened the power of the local government (Asaju, 2010:8).

The States, especially, abused some provisions of the 1979 Constitution to suit their selfish desires. State governments neglected or voided aspects of the 1976 LG Reforms that they were displeased with and distorted those that were merely inconvenient. For instance, throughout the Second Republic (1979-1983), no election was held into the Local Government Councils, only Sole Administrators were appointed (Asaju, 2010). This was at variance with the 1976 Reforms and 1979 Constitution, especially (Section 7) which provides for a democratically elected Local Government Council throughout the federation. Such behaviour painted the States as villains and provoked demands for greater federal role in local government policy-making (Gboyega, 2001).

The re-emergence of the military into the political scene brought about a shift of local government control from the State to the Federal government. The Babangida administration (1985-1993) initiated some reforms aimed at ensuring local government autonomy. Some of the reforms included the abolition of the Ministry of Local Government, establishment of executive and legislative arms in Local Councils, and direct allocation to local governments without passing through the State government. The statutory allocation of the local government was also increased from 15 percent to 20 percent in 1992 (Asaju, 2010:9). There is an agreement among scholars, (Gboyega, 2001, Igbuzor, 2003) that the reforms of this period were aimed at a radical transformation of the status of local government in a federal system. Thus, the Federal government's scheme of decentralisation was deliberately and consciously focused on transferring greater powers and resources to local governments rather than to state governments. Through the reforms of this period, it could be said that a greater measure of devolution was made at the expense of the state. This however, provoked negative reactions from the states and suspicion about federal government's motives in promoting the reforms. The Abacha Administration (1993-1998) however, revised some of the reforms (Asaju, 2010).

The exit of the military and the enthronement of the democratic government in 1999 brought to the fore, again, the problem of local government autonomy. The provisions regarding local government administration in the 1999 Constitution created a lot of confusion. The 1999 constitution by its provisions in sections 7 and 8 did not only recognize the local government as a third tier of government and also guaranteed it, but gives the state the autonomy to lord over the local government. Sections 7 and 8 provide that there shall be: "The system of local government by democratically elected councils which is by this Constitution guaranteed and accordingly, the government of every State shall, subject to section 8 of this Constitution ensure their existence under a law which provides for the establishment; structure, composition, finance and functions of

such councils” (Asaju, 2010:10). Another dimension to this confusion created by the 1999 Constitution which affects local government autonomy is the provision that empowers the State to determine and create new Local Government Areas. Section 8 (13) provides the modalities for the creation of new local government areas and indeed vests the power to do so on various State Houses of Assembly. Section 8(6) of the Constitution however empowers the members of the National Assembly to ratify them. This provision also brought about the tussle for the control of local government administration between the States and the Federal government.

Another sore point on local government autonomy has to do with finance. The Constitution empowers the State to scrutinise and approve local government budgets, and expenditure through the State House of Assembly. States do exercise arbitrary and undue control over local government finance through the establishment of the State Local Government Joint Account. The issue of State Local government Joint Account has been a thorny issue in Local Government-State relationship in the Fourth Republic. This situation underscores the need for local government autonomy. The experience with many local government areas is that their state governments starve them of their statutory grants, thus denying them the financial muscle to render essential services as required.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The central argument of this paper is that local government as the tier of government nearest to the people should play developmental roles, commencing from the communities. The paper interrogated local government administration in Nigeria, especially the fourth republic through the efficiency services theory which sees local government as an efficient agent for providing services that are local in character. Based essentially on secondary data, the analysis revealed that the performance of LGCs leaves more to be desired and that Nigerians are experiencing a raw deal with the governing elite at the third tier with possible generalisation to other tiers of governance as reflected in infrastructural deficits, sundry acts of mismanagement befuddled by avarice, corruption and kleptomania.

The position of this paper is that a “theory to practice” policy approach underscored by the tenets of the Efficiency Services theory in which LGCs as an institution sees itself as an efficient agent of providing services to the local populace is pivotal to Nigeria’s aspiration for development. Partly through this, can community development become precursor and pedestal for national growth and development. To corroborate, local government can become proactive engines of wealth creation; poverty reduction; improved standard of living; social services delivery; socio-economic and political mobilisation and human capital accumulation through effective education functions.

Premised on the foregoing, this paper recommends the following:

- There is a realistic need for synergy and collaborative approach to community development. A bottom-top strategy that harnesses local needs, wishes and aspirations will galvanise efforts for maximum impact.
- Appropriate political and constitutional reforms that can enhance the autonomy of local governments is seriously canvassed. All portions of the constitution suggesting superintending roles of state governments on local governments, and specifically parts of section 162 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that ties LGCs allocation to state governments should be expunged.
- LGCs should invigorate their extractive functions in order to boost internally generated revenues to enable them support community development initiatives and activities effectively.
- The educative functions of local governments can be strengthened through improved information dissemination, management and enlightenment for participation in community development by the LGCs.
- The appropriate agencies responsible for mobilisation, civic reorientation and election (National Orientation Agency and INEC) should continually improve citizen awareness; ensure credible and transparent process that can produce accountable and good leaders.

- The institutions and mechanisms saddled with ensuring rectitude and accountability in public governance should be re-invigorated. This has the tendency to reduce resource mismanagement, plunder and outright conversion of public funds to private advantage.

References

- Abubakar, H. (2010). Transparency and Accountability in Local Government Administration in Nigeria. National Workshop on the Local Government Structure and Potentials for Socio-Economic Development of Nigeria: Ibadan, 28th-30th July. p. 25. Retrieved from (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accountability>).
- Adamolekun, L. (2009). "Nigeria Notes: Governance and Development: An Overview". Vanguard (February 25), Page 19.
- Adeyemi, O. (2012). "Corruption and Local Government Administration in Nigeria: A Discourse of Core Issues." European Journal of Sustainable Development. Vol. 2, Pp.183-198.
- Afrobarometer, (2013). Public Opinion and Local Government in Nigeria. Briefing Paper No. 53, (December) Retrieved from :www.afrobarometer.org on September 25th, 2013.p.2.
- Agbo, A. (2010). Institutionalizing Integrity. Special Publication of Independent Corrupt Practices and Others Related offences commission. TELL (Nigeria's Independent Weekly). (December.) p. 20.
- Akanni, R., Fatile, J.O. (n.d). "Corruption and Democracy in Nigerian Local Government." Department of Industrial Relations and Public Administration, Lagos State University.
- Aluko, O. (2006). Corruption in the Local Government System in Nigeria. Ibadan: Oluben Printers.
- Ameh, M. (2008), "Ex Local Government Chairman and Two Others Arraigned in Court for Corruption". ICPC News. Volume 3, No. 4. May.
- Anyanwu, C. N. (1992) Community development: The Nigerian perspective. Ibadan: Gabesther ed. Pub.
- Asaju, K. (2010). "Local Government Autonomy in Nigeria: Politics and Challenges of the 1999 Constitution." International Journal of Advanced Legal Studies and Governance. Vol. 1, No.1.
- Barikor, C. N. (1984). Contemporary Issues in Community Development Education. Lagos: Nigerian National Council for Adult Education.
- Bello, O. & Bola-Oni, S. (1987). "Community development: Back-Bone for promoting socio-economic growth." Zaria: Oluseyi Boladeji Company & Gaskiya Corporation Ltd.
- Bello-Imam, I.B. (2007). The Local Government System in Nigeria. Ibadan: College Press and Publishers Limited.
- Bello-Imam, I.B. (1996). Local Government in Nigeria. Ibadan: Heinmann Educational books.
- Biggs, S. (1999). "Community Capacity Building in Queensland: The Queensland Government Service Delivery Project." Unpublished Paper. Office of Rural Communities, Brisbane, Queensland.
- Buccus, I.; David, H.; Janine, H. and Laurence, P. (2007). Public Participation and Local Governance. Kwazulu: The Centre for Public Participation (CPP). p.5.
- Christenson, J.A. and Robinson, J.W. (1989). Community Development in Perspective. Iowa: Iowa University Press.
- Cavaye, J. (2000) "Understanding Community Development." Retrieved from: www.communitydevelopment.com.au/DOC on 5th September, 2013.
- Ezeani, E.O. (2012). "Delivering the Goods: Repositioning Local Governments in Nigeria to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)". The 66th Inaugural Lecture of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. (April 26).

- Ezeani, E.O. (2004). *Local Government Administration*. Enugu: Zik-Chuks Nig.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria.(1976).*Guidelines for Local Government Reforms*. Kaduna: Government Printer.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria.(1999).*Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*.Abuja: Government Printer.
- Flora, C.B.; Flora, J.L.; Spears, J.D.; and L.E. Swanson. (1992). *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change*. Colorado: Westview Press.
- Gabriel, O. (2011). *Stealing Nigeria Blind and Failure of EFCC to Stop the Thieves*. Vanguard Newspaper. (June, 20.) p. 19.
- Gboyega, A. (2001). *Local Autonomy in Federal politics: The Nigerian Local Government System in Historical Perspective, Being a paper presented at an International Conference on New Directions: Federalism in African, Abuja Nigeria*.
- Hanachor, M.E. (2009). "Influence of Community Based Organizations in Community Development." unpublished Ph.D dissertation. University of Port Harcourt.
- Hanachor, M.E. (n.d). *Historical Analysis of the Concept of Community Development: Implications on Community Development Practice in Nigeria*.
- Harsh, H.C. (1993). "Accumulators and Democrats: Challenging State Corruption." In Heywood, A. (ed). *Politics*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Ibietan, J. (2010a). "The Role of Local Government in Rural Development Issues." *KnowledgeReview*. Vol.20.No.2. (April).pp 30 - 36.
- Ibietan, J.(2010b). "Local Government and the Localism Principle." *International Journal of Studies in the Humanities*.UNN.pp. 203-215.
- Ikechukwu, E.J.; Eluwa, I.J. and Ukah, F.O. (2012). "Rural-Community Development in Nigeria – A Group Dynamics Perspective." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*. Vol. 4, no 5.
- Kenyon, P. (1994). *Ready Set Go: Action Manual for Community Economic Development*. Melbourne: Victoria publishing house.
- Lawal, O. (2001). *LGs as Bastions of Corruption*. National Concord. February 12, Pp.13.
- Lawal, T. and Oladunjoye, A. (2010). "Local Government, Corruption and Democracy in Nigeria." *Journal of sustainable development in Africa*. Volume 12, No. 5.
- Lawal, S. (2000). "Local Government Administration in Nigeria: A Practical Approach." In Ajayi, K. (ed). *Theory and Practice of Local Government*. Ado-Ekiti: UNAD Press.
- Mexiro, J. D. (1967). *Dynamics of Community Development*. New York: Scarecrow Press.
- Nwachukwu, G.E. (2000). *Theory and Practice of Local Government in Nigeria*. Umuahia: Ark Publishers.
- Nwanma, V. (2008). "Corruption Chases Accountability from Nigeria Local Government Administration." Retrieved January 12, 2014.
- Olaniyonu, Y. (2007). "LGA: Their Excellencies as the Problem." *This Day Newspaper*, December 14.
- Oberle, W.; J. Darby, and K. Stowers. (1975). "Implications for Development: Social Participation of the Poor in the Ozarks." *Journal of the Community Development Society*. Vol. 6, No. 2: 64-78.
- Oviasuyi, P. O.; Idada, W. and Isiraojie, L. (2010). "Constraints of Local Government Administration in Nigeria." *Journal of Social Science*. Vol. 24, No. 2, pp 81-86.
- Oyelude, O. (2010). *Jonathan is Lily Livered*. The News Star Magazine. January 27. Lagos.
- Sanders, I.T. (1958). "Theories of Community Development." *Journal of Rural Sociology*. 23(1): 1- 12.

Sharpe, L.P. (1970). "Theories and Values of Local Government". *Political Studies*. Vol. 18.

Voth, D. (1975). "Problems in Evaluating Community Development." *Journal of the Community Development Society*. Vol. 6, No. 1: 147-162.

Warren, R. (1978). *The Community in America*. Illinois: Rand McNally Publishing House.