Local government as an agent of Grass Root development in Nigeria: A study of Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area, Rivers State.

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Abstract

The creation of local government cannot be possible without the existence of the community, because it is the communities that are constituted by law to form a local government. This paper, seek to examine local government as an agent of grass root development in Nigeria. The political system and functions of government cannot be run on the basis of the centralized administration alone. It consequently represents both the need for political participation and development convenience. It is very important to conventionally see "development from below" and "development from above" as a complementary element of a single development strategy. Federalism in Nigeria is one complex and unclear constitutional elements by which power is allocated fragmented and shared – within the political system. It is vital for us to recognize from the very beginning that the future of Nigeria democratic experiment hinges on a conscious and calculated effort to establish a carefully balanced frictionless equilateral between the three tiers of government. The objectives of this paper is to see how local government as an agent of grass root development in Nigeria. This paper, is descriptive in nature and employed secondary data which contained baseline and qualitative information from authoritative authors and adopted the basic needs models as it theoretical framework, and some recommendations to fulfill

this objective of the study, among which is that local government service commission should monitor the activities of local government to enhance development in Nigeria

Keywords: Local Government, Grass Root, Development.

Introduction:

All over the World, various approaches and strategies have been adopted or used by governments for the management of its rural areas. Local government today is a household name common to both the urban and rural dwellers. The reason is that it is the nearest government to the people. Local government administration is that aspect of public administration that takes place in a particular and unique sector the communities or rural areas. Just like administration at all levels it achieves its goals through planning, organizing, coordinating, controlling, directing and supervising the human, material and financial resources available to this form of government to attend to the felt and unfelt needs of the masses at the grass root. "Felt or unfelt needs because at this local level, the masses are naïve primitive (not so civilized or informed) that they, may not properly disposed to know what they want, if given the option to state their needs they may not place their priorities right.

Definition of Local Government

Attempts to define local government have elicited various viewpoints. This could be due to the varied perspectives on the actual roles of local government, which differ from one environment to the other. Experts on local government administration do not agree on common definition of the concept. There is therefore, need for proper articulation of the concepts in order to promote greater understanding among the populace, especially those who embark on the administration at the grassroots level. The foregoing argument accounts for the philosophical substratum for either the definition of all topics or their explanations lucidly given in order to avoid insipid reading by the learner.

The 1976 local government reform hand book defined local government as:

"Government at the 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 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, and through devolution of functions to these council and through the active participation of the people and their traditional institutions that local initiatives and response to local needs and conditions are maximized"*

This definition is rooted in the meaning of local government by the United Nations, office for public administration which explains local government as:

> *"a political division of a nation or (in federal system), state, which is constituted by law, and has substantial control of local affairs, including the powers to impose taxes or to exact labour for prescribed purpose. The governing body of such an entry is elected or otherwise locally selected (quoted in Ola, (1984, p.7)*

According to Ola, (1984) this definition is the most widely accepted and has been considered as the United Nations definition because the definition is embracing. The above definitions indicate some elements, which precipitate the establishment of the third tie of government called local government. They include:

Citizen participation in the management of local affairs;
Efficient and equitable provision of essential services; and
Resource mobilization for development purposes.

Ugwu, (2000, p.87) defined local government as "the third tier level of government created for the purpose of efficient and effective administration of the localities".

The salient features which emerge from the definitions of local government are as follows:

It is government at the local level, that is at the grassroots;
It has its autonomous existence;
It is a body corporate hence possesses a legal status;
Specific powers are reserved for it. For example, it can levy taxes and incur expenses;
It exists within a defined areas or territory;
It is a distinct tier or level of government;
It exercises its authority over a given population;
It must provide avenues for the promotion of the well-being and welfare of the members of the community; and
It is composed of elected (or locally selected) members.

Definition of local government administration:
Obviously, government at all levels (whether national, states or local) entails politics plus administration. Whereas politics is chiefly concerned with policy-making, planning and organization, administration deals primary with the implementation of policies and programmes of government through some agencies. Although this is usually the case, local government administration is perceived solely in the national perspective; hence it is simply referred to as local administration.

Also local government administration deals with the role of government in managing the affairs of the local people of a particular locality. It is that aspect of public administration that takes place in a particular sector of the government the local community. It has to do with the planning, organizing, staffing, controlling, coordinating, reporting, budgeting in local government affairs. This is not done in a vacuum, it entails making use of the available human material, and financial resources available to the local government to attend to and achieve the stated needs, aspirations, goals and objectives of the individuals in the local community and the local government as an institution. The 1976 local government reform marked the inception of modern local government administration in Nigeria. The

reform was timely because Nigeria needed a local government system that will serve:
As machinery for even and accelerated development;
As a vehicle for increased democratic processes at the grassroots and finally;
Provide the foundation for stability of the national political system. (Remember the military was operating a transitory government).
The reform formally and legally recognized local governments as the third tier of government in Nigeria..

Area of the Study:
Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area is among the last 181 new Local Government Councils created in 1996 by the Military regime of late General Sani Abacha. The Headquarters of the Local Government Area is the Ancient town of Opobo. The Local Government is the only "Industry" in the area, it depend only on Federal allocation without any internal generated revenue. Although, the Local Government is a historical paradise. Most of the population at home in the ancient kingdoms are those engaged in fishing for commercial quantity. The territorial boundary of the LGA., included the present Andoni LGA., in Rivers State, some parts of Khana LGA., also in Rivers State, Ikot Abasi and Mkpat Enin LGA., of Akwa Ibom State. Opobo/Nkoro LGA., is a coastal communities in Rivers State, and they are close to the Atlantic Ocean.

Local Administration:
Local administration is used to connote a body set up by law in a local government area or even at a state level to exercise limited control and authority over the area. In most cases, the power vested in a local administration may include that of assessment, collection of community tax and rate tenement and property rate or capitation. Local administration refers to the institution at the local government headquarters, body corporate which can sue and be sued but usually appointed and are closely tied to if not taking dictation from the center.

Obiukwu, (1982, p.102), noted that a local administration, authority is granted to a local unit by a higher political authority to execute measures within a definite area according to some established policy and decision guides. Here, local bodies is

seen as agents of the higher political authority. Thus, the local body serves as an instrument of coordination, supervision and control. The local administration is not expected to exceed certain limits in the application of its jurisdictional authority. A typical example of local administration is the native authority system in Nigeria during the colonial days. This body was mainly charged with the maintenance of law and order and the collection of tax revenue. In local administration, power is delegated out in a bid to deconcentrate activities of the central government.

Characteristics of local administration:

The unit of operation is national in scope;
The population is marginalized;
The guiding principle is based on efficiency and effectiveness;
There is no independent source of revenue;
Development, the emphasis is within the broader framework national development plan;
The functionaries are national government employees (civil servants) mere agents or representatives of the national government;
Little discretions is allowed to the functionaries; and
The issues are not purely local in nature, but even when local in nature are given national recognition and solution.

Features of local administration

Local executive of a local administration derives his power and authority from the central authority and is in law accountable to the central authority rather than the people;
Legal autonomy as agents executing central initiation to take binding decision outside their policy mandate;
Local administration is service oriented and facilitating in its role;
The role of local authority as agents executing centrally dictated policy and directed responsible to the central authority;
The local administration involves a measure of political interaction which is mainly service oriented and are fed into the political process by the inter-hierarchical role of agents on the central administration;

Element of local administration is the existence of hierarchical chain of command from the central government the smallest unit of local administration;
The interests of local administration need not and in fact usually do not coincide with the interest of the people of the locality. Here, an election may not be the presiding factor;
The local administration is an institution or a body set up by law to administer or govern a group of people inn the locality from afar e.g. the local authorities or native authorities in Nigeria during the colonial period;
Local administration is always set up or imposed by coercion from outside after a military conquest e.g. the Asika administration after the Nigerian civil war or by subjugation through treaty e.g. the treaty signed between Lord Lugard and the Emit of Nikki or by Annexation;
The main aim of local administration is to serve as agent of propagating the ideas, ideologies and policies of the mother government. thus during the British colonial rule in West Africa, the regional governments established local authorities possessed wide power to administer their localities for and on behalf of Britain for the sole reason for maintaining and extending British rule and ideology among others. These authorities could not be called local governments because they had no sufficient powers to run the affairs of the local people for and on behalf of the locality;

The decisions and actions of the local administration or even formal resolutions by elected or nominated representatives of the people received their legal or binding force from the approval of the central authority or their appointed representatives. This implies that even if the local administration is elected, once his decisions and policies are subject to the approval of the central authority before they are legal, the system is a local administration.

Finally, the people have no legal control over the local administrative agents. Their role in the administrative process is limited to advise, suggestion, influence and at best a level of input in the form of resolution and proposal all of which can only be given legal force by the consent and approval of agents of the central authority.

Differences between local government and local administration:

Table 1.1: The table showing the differences between local government and local government administration

S/N.	Local Government	Local Government Administration
01	Local government deprecates national government	Local administration is national government interference in local affairs par excellence.
02	Local government enjoys a degree of autonomy in purely local issues.	Local administration integrates local issues into national concerns
03	Local government elects, select, recruits and fires its functionaries	Local administration is manned by national government employees and agents.
04	Local government enjoys wide and independent sources of revenue	Local administration expends from the national budget.
05	The jurisdiction of a local government is limited to specific geographic space	The jurisdiction of local administration is issue determined
06	Local government encourages the local population to participate directly	Local administration simply administers the issues.
07	Local government wields some discretionary powers especially in purely local issues.	Local administration operates within a nationally determined power and authority range.
08	Local government bows to local politics and pressures	Local administration ignores local politics and pressures.

Source: theory and practice of local government a Nigerian perspective by Okoli, F. C., (2000, p. 23)

Characteristics of local government:

Although, local government is an abstract concept, it has certain basic characteristics. Many scholars conceptualize local government as a geographical area/ territorial location, non-sovereign community that possesses the legal right and the necessary orientation to regulate its own affairs. The following characteristic are therefore discussed.

Geographical location: There should be a definite geographical location with boundaries for every local government area within the state. This is because local government does not exist in a vacuum. That is why it is seen as a subset of a state or a political subdivision of a state. Its exercise of power and functions are restricted within a specified geographical area of jurisdiction, which must be well defined by the law establishing it. These territorial areas in Nigerian context are – towns, villages, wards, kindred and families. Characteristically therefore, local government has to do with a restricted area usually smaller than a state..

Population or clientele: Local government administration is people oriented (rural people) and as such has to do with those services specifically armed at improving the conditions of the rural dwellers. It is therefore obvious that population is a necessary factor in the determination of local government area to be created.

Viability: A geographical area to be designated local government area must be financially resourceful. Its financial strength must be high. There must be an existing natural resources, commercial institution with viable commercial activities enough to maintain its citizens and move the local government forwards by sustaining its developmental projects.

The ability to raise fund: It is an established fact that local government by powers conferred on it can raise fund by improving taxes and rate. It should also be appreciated that it raises fund not just because it needs money to manage its own affairs but also for the fact it cannot depend solely on the central government for grants and subvention at all times. In line with this, Ogunna, (1996, p.33) pointed out that local government in Nigeria cannot operate as a third tier of government without adequate funds, a crop of well qualified professional and competent

personnel. It then becomes necessary that local governments in Nigeria require adequate power to mobilize the revenue needed for its existence.

Local authority: usually the affairs of the local government are managed by the local people who are the elected representatives of different wards or areas of council. Members of this council are usually elected either by direct or indirect election from the local communities under regulations made by the state government up to 25% of the members of each council may however be reserved for members nominated by the government.

Local autonomy: Autonomy has to do with the ability to manage one's own affairs without undue interference. But this does not mean a lack of accountability or total freedom to determine and implement its laws. Rather, it refers to its limited discretionary powers to make and execute bye-law within its geographical jurisdiction. Local autonomy therefore means supremacy of bye-laws made by the local body within a framework determined by the central/state government. It therefore follows that autonomy at the local level has to do with the degree of discretionary powers, assigned to it by a superior tier of government in terms of functions, finance, administration and political matters.

Elected representative: There must be in existence elected representatives in the local council. They see to the administration of the council and are accountable to the people. This is an important attribute and makes for fair performance of the officials in governance, since they are selected among the local people and by the people themselves. More so, since these elected representatives are part of the local people, they are likely going to run the administration bearing in mind the wishes and aspiration of the their people as to enable them stand the chances of being re-elected.

Statutory status: For local government to be granted or established, necessary formalities must be fulfilled. It is usually authorized by law of the state. Local government being a legal person or entity it can own or posses property. It can also enter into contracts on its own capacity. In sum, local government usually comes into existence by a specific state of the government, which lays down its purpose,

power and functions. Ogunna, (1996, p. 34) has this to say on the status of local government. He says:

Local Government as an Agent of Grassroots Development

Local governments bring government nearer to the ordinary people at the local areas since the states and the federal governments are remote to the physical and psychological distance existing between the local people and the officials of the federal and the state's governments. If the distance is not removed by the coming into the position by local governments, the effort by the other tier in making the "grassroots" identify with their programs become futile. The grassroots understand, recognized, and identify with local governments in so far as they experience their presence and impact as they carry out their daily activities within the local areas.

Basically, it is clear that the major reason for the establishment of local governments among other things is grassroots developments. The number (C & D) of the guideline on local government reforms are 'outlined below:

To mobilize human and material resources through the involvement of members of the public in their local development; and

To provide a two-way channel of communication between local communities and government.

With reference to the above it is then important that the indigenes (people) or members of a particular local government should participate fully in their governance. The essence of this is to enable them initiates actions and take decision based on their areas of needs. When local people participate in local government administrative activities can be made effective and efficient through constructive criticism from the governed and responsiveness on the part of the authorities. It creates an avenue for responsible government. Also by decentralization of powers, the grassroots can make bye-laws that suit them based on their cultural setting.

At grassroots levels communities raise developmental issues, which are communicated to the state or federal government depending on whose area of

jurisdiction it fails, this is channeled through their elected representative (i.e. the councilor and chairman)

In addition, members of local government areas engage in self-developmental project like building of hospitals, industries, rural electrification, cottage industries, constructions and maintenance of rural roads. Some of this projects when finished are commissioned. At this stage, of the projects, state or federal government is invited as a sign of courtesy, which in a reciprocal manner results in fund raising mainly done by government to encourage the community.

There is the human development aspect of local government responsibility at grassroots levels. This entails citizenship education. Awareness of the fact that local government areas are made up of families, kindred's clans' villages and towns' therefore collectively of local governments in a geographical area of the country make up a state. It them implies that education of a people of a country be it political, social, religious or economic is initiated at the grassroots.

In realization of the need for grassroots development Nigeria in the recent political dispensation has not only emphasized but has gone all out for grassroots mobilization and political enlightenment of the rural masses. According to Ogunna, (1996, p. 55) says, local government is designed to serve of local communities. As a community- based authority it creates a great sense of "we-feeling" among the people of the area. This sense of "we-feeling" fosters commitment to common cause that makes the mobilization of people possible. It therefore seeks to exploit tap, mobilize and harness the available human and material resources of local communities, and local leadership potentials and patriotism for rapid development, local communities are fully involved in the identification for their priority, needs and in the evolution of effective strategies for their efficient execution.

The concept of grassroots participation:

The concept is not easy to define just as the saying that beauty is in the eyes of the beholder; based on the different people give it different interpretation and area coverage.

Some see it as an opportunity to get involved in the developmental activities of their areas.

Other sees it as a process of improving the standard of living of the downtrodden while it is also seen as a means of creating political awareness at the rural level.

According to Egomwan and Ibodje, (2001, p.43), "to the elected officer, it connotes controlling the affairs of their fellow human beings, but to the public administrators it means access to decision making, process, while to the ordinary people it is right to select their representatives.

From the above discussion, it is glaring that it is a concept that cannot easily be pinned down to a thing because "grassroots" participation" is all embracing concept.

Quoting Egonmwan and Ibodje (2001) where both writers put forward the ideas of Cohen and Uphoff (1977) on "developmental participation. They says, as a tool of analysis, the concept of developmental participation has three basic dimensions of what? Whose and how?". This is augmented by an analysis of the context of participation based on the development task in hand and the special features of the environment in which the task in undertaken.

What participation are that we are dealing with?. There are four possible types of participation, namely:
Participation in decision making;
Implementation of policies and programs;

Benefits; and Evaluation.
After determining the "what?" of participation i.e.. which one or which combination of these four types is of concern to us, then we can ask: whose participation are we looking for?. Again there are four possible categories: participation of:

The local people;
The leaders;
Government personnel; and
Foreign personnel.

After determining what and who participation, we may then ask: how is participation taking place?. There are seven possible factors of analysis posited, namely:
Source of initiative from above or below;
Nature of inducements for participation voluntary or coerced?;
Structure of participation: individual or collective?;
Channels of participation; formal or informal organizations? Direct or indirect?;
Duration of participation, once and for all?;
Scope of participation: intermittent or continuous and to what range of activities is it directed; and Empowerment of participation: how effective is the people involvement in the what of participation vis-à-vis the goals or result being persuade?.

Once we know what, whose and how to participation we can relate them to the context of participation involving the task being undertaken and the task environment. The context of participation,. That is the task and environment significantly affects the what, whose and how of participation. To this Egonmwan and Ibodje (2001) says. It is pertinent to point out that the Cohen and Uphoff development participation model is exploratory and can at best serve as a rough guide to the analysis of the problematic and exclusive concept of participation. E.g., the model fails to state who determines the what, whose and how of participation in any situation. It also fails to determine the combinations of the three dimensions of participation or of elements within each dimension sufficient to ensure participation for all these and other weaknesses of the model, we shall therefore not apply it work line and sinker but we shall apply the model selectively in the analysis of the subject under discussion. After all, a model is an abstraction of reality to a large extent therefore, every model necessarily distorts reality. No one model can fully or completely capture all the ramifications of a subject matter. Therefore, our own framework adaptive of Cohen and Uphoff, is a normative one

designed primarily to aid our understanding and simplify the discussion of the subject of grassroots participation in development of our immediate purpose, grassroots participation embrace both the initiator and the beneficiaries of a given development programs. It is a total commitment of both the initiators and beneficiaries in carrying out a mutually planned project to its completion through the involvement of participating agencies and recipients using a multi-sectoral approach in which the rural people take part in decision making.

The concept has three requirements, namely:

First, consultation with the masses who are supposed to be beneficiaries of development with a view to a ascertaining their needs and priorities;

Secondly, that the beneficiaries should have access to and can take part in the decision making process in all these programs which affect their live; and Thirdly, it involves the sharing of cost and benefits of development equitably. It requires financial, moral and physical commitment of the beneficiaries to development programs. Grassroots participation means consulting and involving the local people in identification of local needs, and in conception, formulation and implementation of project in order to development. In other words, local government should promote the involvement or grassroots participation of the beneficiaries of a project throughout the project cycle.

Theoretical framework

Accounting to Ake, "an economy is dependant to the extent that its position and relations to other economies in the international system and the articulation of its internal structure makes it incapable of autocentric development". Offiong, (1980 p.36) argued that dependency is the situation that the history of colonial imperialism has left and modern imperialism creates in underdevelopment countries. Dependency is not an "external factor" as often erroneously believed dependency is a condition situation in which the specific histories of development and underdevelopment transpire in various societies. In the same view, Nnoli, (1981 p. 38) see dependency as development alternatives open to the dependent nations are defined and limited by their integration into and functions within the world market. These limitations in so far as the functioning of the basic decisions in the world market are determined by the dominant nations. Thus, the dependent

nations must make choices in a situation in which they do not set the terms or parameters of choice. Finally, Robert, (1987 p. 44) this theory asserts that the laws of motion of capitalism and the contradictions existing in a capitalist economy force capitalism to expand into the less developed periphery of the world economy. Because of under-consumption and the falling rate of profit at home, the capital economies must dominate and exploit the less developed countries. This leads to a hierarchical structure of domination between the industrial core and the dependent periphery of the world capitalist economy.

Some of the defining meaning of dependency theory:
Over dependence on raw materials exports with fluctuating princes which causes domestic instability.

A mal-distribution of national income, which creates in the elite in appropriate testes for foreign luxury goods and neglects the needs of the masses, thus continuing social inequalities and reinforcing domination.

Foreign firm that gain control of key industrial sectors and crowd out local firms in capital market.

Introduction of inappropriate technology i.e. capital intensive rather than labour-intensive.

An international division of labour created between the high technology of the core and the low technology of the periphery. Obikeze, (2013 p. 45),

The dependency theory argues that imperialism brought the colonized and subordinated societies into the global capitalist economy in a structurally unequal manner. That is because of superior information and communication network, technological knowhow, wealth and market advantages at their disposal, the industrialized economies hold a decided advantages in their exchange encounters with the periphery societies. Dependency theories also posit that imperialism introduced two major distortions into the economies of colonized territories.

The subordination of the economy to the structure of advanced capitalists countries. This involved the re-organization of the economy towards the production of primary goods, which served to prevent local industrialization.
The external orientation of periphery economies which meant an extreme dependence on overseas markets, both for capital and technology.

The key mechanism of exploitation between the industrialized state and the periphery societies is through the process of "unequal exchange". The two main features of the distortion of periphery economies are:

The emergence of a class alliance between foreign capital and the comprador bourgeoisie of local elites who dominate the states and politics of less developed countries.
The evolution of extreme patterns of social inequality which causes distortions in the domestic market of periphery societies. Obikeze, (2013 p.98),

It is evident that the dependency theory had provided important insights into the nature of the constraints and challenges of the federal idea federal framework in Nigeria. The three levels of government, the federal, the state and the local government council. It clear and an established fact that the federal government of Nigeria controls the resources of the country and gives allocation to the other two levels of government. The Dependency theory is clearly stated that the state and local government in Nigeria are dependent on the federal government. More especially Opobo/Nkoro depending only on federal allocation for Grass-root development.

Local government as an authority or body corporate:
The system of local government by democratically elected local government council is fully established under section 7 of the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria. The constitution empowers the government of every state subject to section 8 to ensure the existence of the local government councils, under a law which according to section 7, provides for establishing structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils. Being a creation of state law, the local government becomes an artificial legal person. To this extend, to this

extend, local government council can validly enter into contract, sue and be sued; and also have a perpetual succession, staff, management and members of council can come and go but the council being a creation of law, remains until the law creating it is repealed or the relevant section amended.

Local government though a corporate personality with perpetual succession, still it is a creation of the state which has the powers to abolish it. For instance in 1971 the then East central state government abolished the local government system and replaced it with Divisional Administrative system which also was an extension of the state government administration, thereby reducing the status of local government to that of local administration.

In section 7 (1) of Law No 15 of 2000 of Imo State local government, administration, every local government shall be created through a law passed by the house of assembly authorizing the Governor to establishing same by means of an instrument, signed by the Governor. Notwithstanding the provision of the foregoing section, where the governor fails or refuses to sign the instrument as authorized by the house of Assembly, the House of Assembly shall by 2/3 majority provide the instrument establishing local government.

It went further to state in section 9 that "every local government area established under this law shall be a body corporate and shall have perpetual succession and a common seal and can sue or be sued in its corporate name Law No 15 of Imo State.

Problems and prospects of local government in Nigeria:

The major problem of local government in Nigeria has been poor finances. But following the 1976 local government reforms by the Obasanjo regime, more money was allocated to the local government level of administration thereby enhancing their funding capacity. Revenue allocations to the local governments as provided by law-makers have been progressive.

There was a period in the history of local government whereby the traditional rulers influenced political outcomes and things did not augur well because the subjects revolted against their leadership. Today, such influence by traditional

rulers are no longer exerted overtly. The electorate at the local areas vote in their representatives by way of democratic elections. It means that good people have the opportunity of serving their people. although there may exist the tendency among the political incumbents to maneuver elections and by so doing place their favourites in political offices, with the boldness among the teeming politicians, who contest alongside the incumbents, the irregularities at elections could be contested in the courts.

Corruption, nepotism and favouritism which characterized governments in the past have no formal placed today in local government. as all segments of the society are represented by their elected representatives, there is hope for adequate representation of all constituencies. Any representative (councilor) could be recalled by their electors where the fail to deliver to their electors; and even a Chairman of any local government stands the chance of being impeached for non-performance or a breach of the constitutional provisions. Therefore, there is hope for equity and fairness in the running of the local government.

Embezzlement of funds, squandermania, misappropriation and profligacy which used to be rife at the local government level are no more the order of the day as there are in-built methods of check and balances among the arms of government. The anti-corruption agency is not taking is easy with corrupt officials as many people are known have been dragged about for financial crimes. With time, the nature of the punishment meted out to the culprits will serve as deterrent to others. Corrupt Chairmen are debarred from borrowing from banks and are compelled to give accounts of their spending.

Ethnic differences and the heterogeneous nature of constituencies used to pose the problem of unity as dissentions emanate from political domination of one group of people over another. The manner of delineation of constituencies as wards and local government areas has allayed such fears of domination because areas are smaller and people of the same origin or common descent are grouped as wards. There is hope of no fear of domination of one by another group in the local government.

There was a situation whereby local government allocations were disbursed through the state governments. Today, local governments receive their allocations directly from the national government. even when the national government and the state tamper with local government financial resources, the public outcry against the diversion of local government fund is gaining potency as people have continued to agitate for financial autonomy of local governments which enables them perform their functions effectively and efficiently.

Ignorance and inexperience coupled with illiteracy accounts for the non-comprehension of the constitutional provisions regarding the rights and privileges as well as responsibilities of most local government citizens leading to non-performance of most local government citizens leading to non-performance and redundancy among many staff. This culminates in wastage of human and material resources. With increased investment and emphasis on education at all levels by the three tiers of government in Nigeria as well as the novel move by individual and group philanthropists to fights illiteracy proves a good omen and an indication that the problems associated with ignorance, inexperience, illiteracy could be solved all things being equal.

The caretaker-Committee System has meant that some persons are not elected democratically within the local governments at one time or another. It means that they are not accountable to the people constitutionally. This accounts for why the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) has been exploring the option of paying the council allocations directly to the local governments fearing the allocations for capital projects can be embezzled by non-democratically elected council officials. The RMAFC, therefore, insists that allocations for capital projects can only be disbursed to democratically elected council officials.

Conclusion:

The abuse of the powers conferred on the state governments in section 7 (1) of the 1999 constitution as amended, which provides for the joint-account arrangement whereby all federal allocations to the councils in some states are pooled into a common account for subsequent re-allocation to the local governments by the

states, the federal government through the RMAFC. Can expose the state governor who meddle with their council allocations and give them appropriate punishment by deducting such misappropriated council funds from the Federation Accounts due to the erring states. This will serve as a determent to the others state governors.

The elected local government officers and the core civil servants in the local government council should be monitored by the local government service commission to ensure the grass-root development.

Recommendations:

There should be increase in national revenue allocations to local governments to better the lot of the grassroots by providing them with social goods or infrastructure such as roads hospital, markets, etc.

The local government service commission should monitor the activities of local government properly.

Federal government should sanction any state Governor that take fund from local government allocations.

The Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) should investigate the activities of local government councils regularly.

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