

**CHALLENGES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA:
LESSONS FROM COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS.**

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ABSTRACT: *Local government administration in Nigeria is classified as the third tier of government while several problems have been its recurring decimal and various reforms since 1976 haven't been able to make the system effective and responsible to developmental challenges. Most responses to the challenges have concentrated on looking inward for respite without much success informed this the paper to examine the lessons that could be learnt from comparative local government studies from nations like United States of America, France, India and Britain. It is a descriptive study that relied on secondary data sources. The paper revealed that the challenges inhibiting efficient service delivery range from undue intervention by the state governments, the structure, corruption, over politicization of administration and staffing which were not found to be so in other systems. The study concluded that the challenges are institutional and attitudinal in nature which could be addressed given that there is the political will by the Federal and State governments. It recommended a democratized multilayer local government system, legal framework to checkmate excessive intervention by State government, enhancement of human resources capacity and accountable leadership.*

KEYWORDS: Local government, governance, democratic participation, accountability, service delivery

INTRODUCTION

Local government administrations (LG) globally vary in size and structure and operate under different arrangements based on the system of government in different nations. However as observed by Mello, (2012) local governments globally strive to meet peoples' demands for goods and services in a cost effective manner particularly at the lowest level of government or government at the grass root. Among the characteristics generally manifested by local government include that it is a subordinate system of government or subunit of a federal/central or state government and charged with powers to perform legislative, administrative and quasi judicial functions as the case may be. It also has the power to formulate policies, prepare budgets and a measure of control over its own staff, with a view that it is rightly position to ensure unhindered and efficient service delivery (Chukwuemeka et al, 2014, Otinche, 2014, Ezeani, 2012 and Tumini 2011).

Among the notable feature of local government in Nigeria is that it operates a unified administrative system and expected to have an elected. The 1976 Local Government Reform fixes the population of a local government not less than 150,000 and not more than 800, 000. In all, there are 774 local governments in Nigeria including the four area councils in Abuja. The Local Government Service Commission has been empowered to handle staff matters particularly those in senior category while the State Assembly has oversight functions on its

operation. In addition, Governor's office, the Ministry of Local Government and Finance Ministry exercise authority in respect of establishment matters. The Office of the Auditor General of the state among other performs some regulatory functions over the operations of local government.

Ajayi (2000), Kolawole (1997) and Adewale (1990) argued that among other reasons for the existence of local government are the needs to toy in line with modern administrative practices. This position finds expression in the need for decentralization, democratic participation, speedy socio-economic development at the grassroot, bridging of communication gap and serving as a platform for training of future leaders.

Furthermore, to achieve these goals, for instance, Section 7(6) of the 1999 Constitution provides that:

(a) the National Assembly shall make provisions of statutory allocations of public revenue to local government councils in the federation, and (b) the Houses of Assembly of states shall make provisions for statutory allocation of public revenue to local government councils within the state.

As noted by Ovaga () and Onah (1995:40), in spite of the fact that the 1976 local government reforms granted greater autonomy, powers and functions to local governments, they still have a long way to go towards the satisfactory performance of their functions in many areas. The above statement is in consonant with the state of affairs in the local government system in Nigeria.

The basic question central to this paper is why the local governments in other systems where there are no direct constitutional provisions and huge resource base as in Britain and United States of America are democratically run and efficient in service delivery while same is not true of Nigeria. What are the lessons that could be learnt from comparative analysis of local government administration in nations like France, USA, Britain and India?

Among previous related studies is Kyenge (2013) that focused on reasons for poor performance. He listed indiscipline, misplaced priority, unskilled staff, financial challenges and autonomy. On the other hand, Ejike, (2014), Adeyemi, (2012), Aina (2006) and Aluko (2006) partly focused on corruption while Gboyega (2001) among others concentrated on undue interference by the state Government and the personnel challenges. Ibok (2014) argued among other reasons that inadequate funding constituted a huge challenge. The focus of this paper is to examine lessons that could be learnt from comparative study of local government as to be able to overcome the challenges faced by local government administration in Nigeria.

In effect, the paper set as its objectives to examine the challenges of LG administration, previous efforts by the governments in Nigeria to address the challenges and lessons that could be learnt from other workable systems. The paper is descriptive while secondary data sources were used such as relevant books, journals, documentary evidences and Internet materials. The paper layout has introduction as section one, while conceptual review featured in section two. Section three discussed theoretical review while section four has historical perspective of local government with reference to previous government efforts to enhance the capacity of LG to be efficient and effective in service delivery. Section seven discussed comparative analysis of local government and the lessons for Nigeria. The last section was devoted to conclusions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a consensus of opinion that the LG is an important and inevitable unit seen as the grass root level of government whether in a federal or unitary arrangement. The form or structure or the tiers within the systems varies. In Nigeria, it operates a single tier, while in Britain, USA, France and India are multi tiers. The United Nations Division of Public Administration cited in Ola and Tonwe (2009) views local government as a political division of a nation which is constituted by law and that has substantial control of local affairs, including the powers to impose taxes or exact labour for prescribed purposes.

Chukwuemeka et al.(2014), Otinche (2014), Ezeani (2012) Tumini (2011) as well as Whalen (1970) note that LG has the following characteristics including a given territory and population, an institutional structure. it is separate legal identity, has a range of powers and functions authorized by delegation from the appropriate central or intermediate legislature. lastly within the ambit of such delegation, autonomy is accorded within its sphere of jurisdiction and competence.

In another sense, the Guideline for Local Government Reform (1976:1) in Nigeria goes beyond definition to present local government as:

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

In addition, Section 7(1) of the 1999 constitution that observed that:

The system of local government by democratically elected local government council is under 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, finances and functions of such councils.

It is however sad that while these provisions were made in the 1976 Reform and in the 1999 Constitution in Nigeria to enhance the capacity of the system to be a democratic participation institution, effective and efficient in service delivery; such is not the experience as observed by Kyenge (2013) and Aina (2006).

The concept of LG particularly in a federal arrangement like in USA and Nigeria is routed in decentralized authority and power from the central/regional government to the lower or grass root level (Youm and Feiock 2015). This in effect is to facilitate efficiency and administrative conveniences. According to Osaghae (1990: 84), it means *a system of dispersal of power from a central government to other units or agencies of government.*

Decentralization could either take the form of deconcentration or devolution of authority. Deconcentration is the delegation of authority adequate for the discharge of specified functions

to staff of central departments who are situated outside the headquarters as was found in French arrangement Alderman (1967) opines that it involves the transfer of powers to subordinate authorities, whether offices, individuals or field units.

Devolution in line with Amarasekera (2012) is more of the constitutional or legal instrument of conferring or transferring powers to discharge specified or residual power upon formally constituted local authorities. This explains why L.G. administration can rightly be viewed as a deconcentration or a devolution arrangement as the case may be. For instance, in Nigeria and Kenya, LGs are more of devolution of powers because of constitutional provision for their existence.

By implication, decentralization lessens the burden of responsibilities and functions performed by the higher levels of government in such a way that the needs of each locality within the federating units are given special attention. In addition, the need for social change, taking care of diversity and to pay adequate attention to functions and services that are local in nature constitute the basic reasons for decentralization either by deconcentration or devolution of powers. This explains why Adamalekun (2005) views the decentralization in Mali, Uganda, Tanzania, and Ethiopia as a mechanism for coping with societal demands, though problematic, but directed at modernizing the traditional local institutions without destroying the very basis of their success. Amarasekera (2012) and Adamalekun (2005) therefore observe that decentralization amounts to the transfer of power from the central government to a local authority, be it a region, a province or a district.

Opalo (2015) in effect demonstrated how the 2010 Kenya Constitution provided for devolution of power leading to the creation of forty-seven sub-national units (counties) with elected assemblies and executives. As a further step to put an end to over centralized governmental system, the Constitution provided that the counties enjoy fiscal allocations of 15 per cent of audited ordinary revenue distributed on the basis of population and poverty level.

However, the French example as embraced by Franco-Phone nations in Africa is that of integrated prefectural system before 1981 and unintegrated prefectural system thereafter that fits into deconcentration arrangement (Adamalekun, 2005). The distinctive feature of deconcentration arrangement is that the officials to whom responsibilities and resources are transferred operate under the superior authority of the central government.

Regardless of the form of power allocation to lower levels of government, LG performs variety of functions. For instance in Nigeria, the constitution is very specific on functional relationship between the central/Federal and State governments. The functions of the LG are contained in the fourth Schedule of the 1999 Constitution including the consideration and the making of recommendations to a state commission on economic planning on economic development of the state as well as social, educational, environmental and political function.

On the other hand, Local Authorities (LA) performs three broad functions in Britain, classified as environmental, protective and personal. As for the U.S, the functions include management of schools, policing and fire protection, public works, libraries and recreation, public utilities, city planning, public health, airports, harbor and housing. In addition, unlike in other systems, special districts are created to carry out specific functions or projects.

Other Acts apart from Local Government Act 2002 in New-Zealand clearly stated the statutory responsibilities of the councils. These Acts include the Resource Management Act 1991, the Building Act 2004, and the Biosecurity Act 1993. Such functions range from sustainable regional wellbeing, managing freshwater, land, air and coastal waters, transportation and environmental safety among others. It should be acknowledged that city and district councils perform the same functions while the classification is based only on population size.

In India, the functions of the Panchayati Raj (i.e. local government) are similar functions like in America except for police, harbours and airports but could be classified as be classified as obligatory and discretionary which is a function of the size of the council based on three tier arrangement. However, urban councils could perform obligatory functions like conservation, street lighting, drainage and construction and maintenance of roads. Very large councils engage in water supply, street cleaning refuse and disposal, fire service and primary schools but not gigantic functions like in America.

The primary concern of this paper is why the LG systems in other nations are able to cope with development challenges and are accountable to the electorate even without well-defined cheap revenue sources and still bedrock of their democracies and such is not the experience in Nigeria.

Theoretical Orientation

The paper adopt Democratic-Participatory and efficiency models/theories to underpin the challenges of local government administration in Nigeria and the relevance of comparative study in overcoming the challenges though other theories such as integrate, accountability and Functional models are often applicable.

Democratic-Participatory Theory.

Participatory democracy has been one of the earliest models in social sciences, particularly in political discuss since about 2000BC. Mills (1964) work on Utilitarianism, liberty and representative government that serves as an impetus for renewed commitment to this school of thought, re-emphasizing that local government is the starting point of democratic participation regardless of other intrinsic and extrinsic functions it performs.

The tenets of the school is that local governments are created in order to encourage participatory democracy and serve as training ground for recruitment of leaders, provide channel of self-government and political education at grass root levels. This was demonstrated in the works of Chukwuemeka et al., (2014) Ani et al (2013), Adeyemo, (2011) that the idea of local government is intricately connected to a philosophical commitment to democratic participation in the politics and self-governing at the grassroots level.

For instance, David Butler in his study of British politics in 1964 revealed that 53% of Labour members of parliament and 45% of defeated Labour Party parliamentarian's candidates were once local government politicians and political office holders. Mackenzie (1954) also illustrated this with data showing that more than half of the Deputies and about the same proportion of Senators in Italy had had political education in the local government. In Nigeria, president Shehu Sagari, Umar Dikko, Ali Mongumu among others started their political carriers at the local government level as demonstrated by (Tony, 2011, Ajayi (2000:6) and Adamolekun, Olowu and Laleye, 1988).. The empirical relevance of this model was

demonstrated in the study by Aragone and Sanchez-Pages (2008) in the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil in his examination of how the system of Participatory Budgeting was implemented.

However, Fischer (1993) argues that representative democracy is not generally considered participatory since citizens may lack the time, knowledge or will to contribute to policy making. In addition, in spite of the constitutional provision for LG in Nigeria and the 1996 LG Reform, it is however sad that the manner in which the LG is run clearly and unambiguously deviates from the stated objectives. The overbearing posture of the State Governors in Nigeria especially since 2003 has strangled LG from serving truly as the third tiers of government. In most States, caretaker systems were adopted to ensure that the Governors have total control over the operation of LGs. In situation where elections were claimed to have been conducted, the process deviated from any civilized democratic norms as candidates were imposed by the governors and the elections conducted by the State Electoral Commission only returned candidates contesting the elections on the same political platforms as the governors. In effect, though Local Government expected to serve as an avenue for political socialization, recruitment and participation has not been fully realized.

Even if the above stated goals are not achieved as expected in some system like Nigeria due to institutional and attitudinal factors, it does not diminish the relevance of the theory as noted by Aragone and Sanchez-Pages (2008) that a participatory system at the local level is indeed possible and can successfully, but not without problems as it helps to govern large communities.

Efficiency Theory

This theory/model premises the existence of local government as an efficient agent of government for providing services that are local in character. Mackenzie (1954:14) cited in Adeyemo (2010) and Chukwuemeka et al., (2014) noted that one of the notable proponents of the existence of LG is *that local government exists to provide services and it must be judged....by its success in providing services up to a standard measured by national inspectorate*. This same line of thought was found in the works of Sharpe (1970:168), that given that there is no local government, a functionally similar body must be in existence to provide services that are local in nature. This explains why Eboh & Diejomaoh (2010) adds that local governments worldwide are considered as strategic institutions for the provision, among others, basic socio-economic needs

This could be understood from the perspective that the size and spread of a nation particularly those that are large and heterogeneous in composition may not be able to rely on the central and regional government to effectively meet up with needs that are local in nature. In effect, local government may effectively and efficiently respond to local need. This theory therefore notes that LG may not justify its existence if it fails to provide needed service within its scope of competence effectively.

The model has been criticized by Sharpe (1970:168) in the sense that the value of local government as a bulwark of liberty, or at least as a handmaiden of democracy, has been recognized, its role as an agency for providing services has evoked no comparable enthusiasm. This is particularly relevant to Nigeria situation in which the local government has failed to justify its existence.

The nexus between the two theories in respect of challenges of LG in Nigeria and lessons that could be learned from comparative study is anchored on assessing the extent to which it has been able to serve as a agent democratic participation and how efficient it has been able to cope with developmental challenges with specific reference to socio-economic needs that are local in nature. Empirical reference for an inclusive governance is found in Parent Commission (2008) proposing changes in the current governance system to provide the necessary accountability and checks & balances and stronger parental input into school management by Mayors in New York State.

Historical perspective and Efforts of Governments in enhancing the Capacity of Local government to Respond to Developmental Challenges in Nigeria

Local administration in Nigeria predated colonial rule as each of the separate entity that make up the nation had a unique but relatively effective system. The Hausa/Fulani North were ruled by their Emirs and adopted emirate system but the territory were divided into districts and villages for ease of administration under the control of district or village head. The Oyo empire was ruled by the Oba/Alafin assisted by council of chief (Oyomesi) that had as its head Bashorun. The *Are Ona Kakanfo* was the military head stationed outside the capital Old Oyo to avoid distraction. Towns and villages were under the control of local Obas and village heads that were subservient to Alafin (Nigeria at 50 Compendium). Kyenge (2013) and Denga (2003:19) alluded to a decentralized administrative system in Ibo societies where there was lack of centralized head but largely based on compound, village and clan administrative system.

British rule came with Lugard introducing indirect rule system with the amalgamation of North and Southern protectorate in 1914. The system revolved around recognizing the importance of local participation as a base for grassroot democracy because Europe was just emerging from World War II, the cost of administration would be too much for the home economy, the lack of sufficient man power and the success of indirect rule in India and elsewhere. In this arrangement, there was disproportionate sharing of power between the traditional rulers and the British administrator. This eventually gave birth to Native Authority system of local government Administration that was introduced as contained in the Native ordinance of 1916. The system was very successful in the North, relatively successful in the West but a near total failure in the East (Lugard, 1922).

Reforms were brought to the system through the Local Government Ordinance of 1950 leading to elected councils with a three – tier structure like the British pattern. The structures were the countries, districts and local councils. Apart from national reforms to the system that cut across the country, the respective regional governments also introduced some reforms thereby leading to different paces of development of LG system. For instance, reforms in the Western region did not start until 1952 when it promulgated the Local Government Law of 1952 while in the East, with the enactment of the local Government Law of 1955 it replaced the 1950 ordinance. Both the Eastern and Western authorities had three years tenure while 75% of members of the councils were elected (Aina, 2006 and Ezeani, 2004).

At independence in 1960 through 1966, the East and the West enacted the Local Government Law of 1960 which spelt out distinct structures for the system. In the North, the Native Authority Law No 4 of 1954 continued to be in operation till 1966 when the military took over power.

In 1967, the administrative structure of Nigeria changed with the creation of twelve states from the existing four regions. Military Governors dissolved all the existing local government structures, each of the federating States enacted an edict to govern LG administration while some large divisions and districts were created from the old arrangement. In 1971, the conditions of service of local government staff were harmonized with those of civil servants at the state level to attract high caliber of staff Aina (2006).

In 1972, the council-manager model of the United States and Canada was adopted by abolishing advisory committee system, replacing them with standing management committee with an administrative executive. In spite of the challenges associated with the civil war in the East, French model which emphasis was on development administration for their local government system well as the then Bendel state (Edo and Delta States).

The most fundamental reforms in local government administration came with the 1976 Local Government Reform as LG government was accorded the third tier status. In addition, the Guidelines for local Government Reform was released while there was also the establishment of the Local Government Service Commission, Local Government Peace and Security Committee and recognition was accorded the position of the traditional rulers as advisers to councils. This arrangement continued to stabilize LG administration but with huge challenges of over head cost and inability to meet up with salaries up to nine months in some states before the Coup d'état of December 1983 due to state government diversion of LG fund.

The Buari regime in 1984 dismantled all democratic structures including the new mushroom local government councils created under Shagari administration by the governors and appointed sole administrators for each local government council. To streamline the administration of the LG to enhance efficiency, a 21 member committee headed by Ibrahim Dasuki was set up. The outcome of the committee led to upholding 1976 Reform that was eventually implemented by Babangida administration. The administration increased the number of LG from 304 to 453 and finally to 774. Concerted efforts were made to make LG serve as a training ground for democratic politicking and governance and a spring board for participation of other levels of government (Babangida in Aina (2006:251). On the other hand, the Political Bureau was set up with the view of making local government a mobilizing force for national development and to fully integrate their voluntary and self-help efforts within the actions of government in national transformation.

The Babangida administration in 1985 introduced the executive presidential system of government into the local government and by the Decree 23 of 1991, each local government was to have and operate an executive cabinet composed of the Chairman, with five Supervisory Councilors and Secretary appointed by the Chairman. In terms of function, the responsibilities associated with primary education and primary health infrastructure were transferred to the LG and the statutory allocations to local government was increased from 10 percent to 15 percent and finally to 20 percent from the federation account payable directly to LGs. Elections were first conducted to LG councils on non-party basis followed later on a multi-party basis.

General Abdulsalam Abubakar Military Regime (1998 – 1999) within its short span successfully conducted local government elections on multi-party basis in December, 1998 as

its first step to democratization programme and nothing was done negatively to interfere with the structure, functions and funding of LGs.

Between 1999 to date, the local government had witness worst the bastardization of the system from the higher level of governments. The States government hid under Section 7(1) & (6) of the 1999 constitution to forcefully impose Joint Allocation Account on LGs to siphon the resources of LGs and rendered it too weak for performance of its statutory duties. In addition, its internally generated revenue sources that were considered juicy like advertisement, tenement rates, street naming among others were taken over by the state government while the 10 per cent internally generated revenue were not paid to the LGs. This partly explains the precarious positions of the LGs while the available resources were misappropriated by the council official as demonstrated by Aluko (2006). Such oppressive action on LG manifested in Obasanjo's regime unconstitutionally seizing the Lagos State LG fund for more than three years till when Yar Adua took over in 2007 on account of creation of additional council. Hence, the local government administrations since 1999 have more or less been paralyzed. The first ray of hope was the announcement by the current Governor of Kaduna State in July, 2015 cancelling Joint Allocation Account thereby allowing statutory allocation to go directly to the LGs.

Challenges of Local Government Administration in Nigeria

There is no confusion in respect of the functions/roles of local government administrations globally and with specific reference to Nigeria. These functions among others include that of serving as an agent of decentralization, grass root accelerated development, bridging communication gap and training ground for future leaders (Ajayi, 2000 and Gboyega, 1987). In Nigeria, the Fourth Schedule of 1999 constitution clearly states the function of LGs but regrettably they have been found to be performing far below expectation.

There is no LG administration globally without its inherent challenges. For example, The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) has identified the ability to attract and retain skilled staff; the existence of appropriate IT, financial and other systems; inculcating a culture of service delivery; and good working relationships between political and administrative leaderships with clear delineation of their respective roles as its operational challenges.

Schlachter, Coleman, and Anway, (2013) demonstrated the inherent challenges associated with running Local administration in Britain and by implication with developed economies. These include managing budgetary demands in the face of revenue decreases and increased service demands, costs of unfunded state and federal mandates as well as meeting the demands of infrastructure and its associated costs. However, the responses to these challenges in each system to a large extent determine the effectiveness of the systems in service delivery.

The challenges of LG system in Nigeria include the management of its structure to enhance efficiency. Structure in this sense refers to its single-tier unified system that is official recognized in the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria. Also, the population of the LG according to LG Reform of 1976 is between 150,000 -800,000. The implication is that when a single layer arrangement might work for LG with low population like Oke_Ero and Isin LGs in Kwara state with population below 40,000 such might be difficult in Somolu or Ajegunle LGs in Lagos state with population about 700,000. The ability of the operators of the system to respond to development challenges cannot but be weak and slow even if there was the genuine intention to perform. In addition, a unified administrative system might not be able

to accommodate effectively the peculiarity each of the localities this may lead to relocation of offices to meet up with the approved structure without due consideration for their needs. Also, unlike in developed system with multi-layer system of LG like in France, USA and Britain specifically designed to cater for specific local needs, a single layer in Nigeria has been found to be inadequate to cope with developmental challenges.

Furthermore, the LG in Nigeria has not been able to perform optimally because of the overbearing nature of the state government rendering the autonomy of the system relatively paralyzed. This manifested largely under democratic dispensations (1979- 1983) and (1999-2015). The resources accruing to the LG from the federated account were considered too juicy to be ignored by the state government. Hence, hiding under Section 7 (1) & (6) of the 1999 Constitution, various systems were cynically developed to rub the LG of the benefit of appropriating its funds.

These include that all state governments stage managed the election into the council to ensure that their party and their own handpicked candidates won the election so that leadership at the LGs are not responsive to the electorates but to the state governors. In addition, the introduction of Joint Allocation Account by the state government and having the LG operatives to forcefully authored and signed letters in support of this arrangement remove the fear of litigation (Odo, 2003; ALGON, 1999). To reflect that LG operatives were participating in the process, they were requested to submit the list of projects intended for execution while the state government award the contracts. Added to this is the unrestrained demand for fund and over ambitious expectations the populace particularly the local political juggernauts by expecting the council official to meet their personal needs at the expense of developmental needs. Such situations constituted distractions for the LG administration in balancing the governor's demands and community's expectation.

In effect, disproportionate fund were often released by the state government to meet the needs of LGs which often fell short to pay staff salaries and for efficient administrative management. Hence, the scenario of 1983/84 is repeating itself in 2014/2015 whereby salaries remained unpaid for upward of 5 to 10 months to LG staff in most states of the federation necessitating a bail out from Buari administration Ovaga, (2009). Therefore, as observed by Chukwumeka et al, (2014), Ani et al (2013), Ezeani (2012), and Ugwu (2010), the financial resources directly available to LGs in Nigeria are grossly inadequate placed side by side the societal expectations and constitutionally assigned responsibilities.

Over reliance on federated fund or statutory allocation constitute a challenge to LG administration in Nigeria. Hardly could any LG in Nigeria function effective without receiving monthly allocation. The Fourth schedule of the 1999 constitution clearly stated the functions of LG and sources of revenue which are not effectively tapped to the advantage of the system. These include that the state government have taken over most of the juicy sources of internally generated revenue including large markets, naming of street, and tenement rate among others. In addition, the 10 per cent of the internally generated revenue of the state government were not often remitted to LG. All these factors to a large extent strangled the LG from effective service delivery (Ibok, 2014 and Abada, 2007).

Corruption is a household word in Nigeria and it has become a hydra headed monster difficult to tame and endangered service delivery and democratic participation in Nigeria as votes were bought and sold. This explains why Ejike (2014), Kyenge, (2013: 70-76), Aluko (2006) and

Aina (2007) located corruption as one of the greatest impediments of effective service delivery at the local government level.

Ottenberg in (Aina 2007) noted that:

Almost every council position, whether of elected council or appointed staff, has its salary and also its additional income through corruptive activities. Corruption and bribery fit into internal and external political conflicts in the council. Infact, they form a major political aspect of local government.

Corruption in LGs manifests as outright falsification of financial transaction, inflated contracts, existence of ghost workers, and connivance with states' apparatus that are supposed to perform oversight functions. Gone are the era of 10 per centers in contract award, the dangerous trend is outright payment for jobs not done. The greatest challenge in addressing corrupt practices in the LG by the state government is that the search light was not often beamed on identifying culprits but directed largely after political opponents immediately after a change of government to settle political scores. This does not remove the fact that such operatives might be actually corrupt but the effort was not to clean the whole system. Hence, the palliative selective justice could not wipe away institutional corruption in the LG system like in the higher levels of government in general. Corruption in effect breeds inefficiency, raises transaction cost and it has become infectious in Nigeria as the institutions like Independent and Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) have not recorded sufficient result in checkmating corrupt practices. Hence Akanbi (2004) in Aina (2007:427) argues that systemic corruption leads to poor governance, undermines institutions and hinders development which is central to the existence of LG. In addition, it erodes social values and lead to ethical decay as observed by Animashaun (2007) in Aina, (2007).

Over politicization of developmental programmes is another challenge in LG administration in Nigeria. The maxim that politics ends with election has not found a place in Nigeria's political system. In effect, allocation of projects often may not reflect the needs of the society but for political patronage. All over Nigeria, there had been over concentration of developmental projects in particular communities at the expense of others. Hence, communities with teaching hospitals will still have state hospitals, health centers particularly at the state capital and clinics constructed by the LG and none may be functioning effectively while rural communities without leaders with political clout will continue to suffer institutional neglect.

Over bloated personnel structure has to a large extent expanded the financial burden of the LG though it may be argued that creation of employment opportunities is an essential attributes of a good government. However, when such employees were not properly engaged, they turned out to be cogs in the wheel of progress. Though all states in Nigeria have Local Government Service Commission among other functions to streamline employment issues, most employments were politically motivated through donation of staff rather undergoing real engagement procedure. A study by the researcher in 2012 in Kwara State LG system revealed that there were twelve thousand employees in the system, while Ifelodun LG had a staff strength of 1,009 as at June, 2015 (LGSC, 2015).

As at 2010, the staff strength of Okiti Pupa L.G was 1201 with the population of 234,138, Ondo West had 1123 staff, a population of 288,868 and Akoko South East with staff strength of 1215 and a population of 82,443 (Ondo State Digest of Local Government Statistics, 2010). Such huge staff strength cannot but be inimical to effective and efficient service delivery as higher percentage of resources often go for overhead expenditure. This could partly account for inability of staff to get the salaries and allowances paid regularly and for upward of 5 to 10 months in most states in Nigeria that necessitated Federal Government bailout in July, 2015. In such a situation, developmental projects would naturally be of secondary importance.

Recruitment, engagement and deployment of staff have largely become a political consideration rather than actual need for efficient service delivery in the LG system in Nigeria. The quality of staff could not but be negatively affected if the right mix of staff could not be engaged and deployed (Kyenge 2013). For instance in Kwara state since 2000, there had been increasing conversion of primary and secondary school teachers into top levels of personnel administration and appointed within one year of conversion as Director of personnel without undergoing examination meant for the cadre. The arrangement was favourable to the Chairmen because they were dealing with heads of administration without cognate experience and they could easily be pushed around.

For such converted staff to secure their positions, Civil Service Rules, Scheme of Service and Financial Instruction were of no importance in order to please the political heads that at the same time played on their ignorance. Unable to articulate a definite position on issues, the best contribution in communication is to minute on their subordinate recommendations, "above for your approval". It needs be understood that there is nothing wrong in such conversion programme if the officer were allowed to acquire rudimentary knowledge in administration, sit and pass prerequisites examination before being appointed to head administrative system. However, political exigencies were considered too important than sustenance of the system. In effect, for civil servants to be relevant, it was more or less mandatory, no matter how efficient they were to identify with the winning party more than administratively required.

The Relevance of Comparative Analysis to Overcoming Challenges Associated with Local Government Administration in Nigeria

In his contribution to comparative study, Tocqueville (1985) noted that without comparisons to make, the mind does not know how to proceed. In effect, it helps us to develop explanations and test theories of the way in which system processes work and in which change occurs. This explains why Aristotle (1831) and Dahl (1995) adopted comparative approach in studying political systems and democracy. In effect, comparative studies enhances ability to describe and understand a system, helps in the development of general theory and so relevant for academic purposes and its practical utility. The paper therefore examine the administration of local government with a view of developing strategies to overcome the challenges inherent in Nigeria's LG system considering the structure, the layers, funding and the degree of autonomy in US., Britain, India and France.

The structure of LG in US is based on four types of leadership, namely the strong mayor, the weak mayor, the commission system and the council or city manager system. The American LG system like Britain, France and India operates a multi-tier system created to meet specific needs Youm, and Feiock, (2015). In Britain since 1974 the structure of the local authority (LG) consists of Non-Metropolitan County Council, Metropolitan County Council County Councils

(Wales only), Non-Metropolitan County Districts, County Districts Councils (Wales only), and Parish Governments making the three tiers.

Department serves as the main unit of local government in France, multi-tier structure arranged in a descending order consisting of Cantons and Arrondissements and Communes. In 1990, the Nation Encyclopedia (2015) reported that only 235 communes out of 36,551 had more than 30,000 inhabitants; 84% of all communes had fewer than 1,500 inhabitants, and 43% had fewer than 300. However, as of 2002, France had 36,763 communes.

India operates a three-tier system referred to as Panchayati Raj. Locally they are called the Zila Parishad, the Panchayati Samitri (or Kshetra Samitri) and Panchayati respectively. The common element in all the three systems is that the political leadership are democratically elected, relatively autonomous and responsible to the electorate. In India, the Panchayati Samitri (or Kshetra Samitri) has a population of 60,000 to 3 million and the lowest tier, the Panchayat is from 2,000 people and above.

Tocqueville (2000) lauds the American local government system for its democratic values, arguing that towns embodied “local-self-government.” and regarded it as the foundation of all free republican government and the protection of the rights of minorities from all great political combinations. This explains why USA was referred to by Alderman (2012) in his comparative study of LGs referred to governmental system in “80,000 governments”. It is essential to note that some counties or schools districts are with a population of 227 people. In some instances, “Home Rule” which simply means that local units are granted powers of self-government without interference from State Law is allowed. Therefore, Youm and Feiock, (2015) and Tocqueville (2000) lauds the American local government system as applicable to France and Britain for their democratic values as Councils are democratically constituted. The composition and size of each of the layers within the LG tiers is largely a function of their complexity.

The implication of this comparison on Nigeria LG system is that each of the layers in others system discussed was designed to be able to effectively provide services that are comparatively local in nature and based on their financial and human resources capabilities. Such is not the case in Nigeria as it operates a unified system irrespective of the size, scope and capability. The manageable population in a multilayer system also allows for grass root democratic development in that reputable and known individual that are with high integrity are elected to run the various tier of LG.

Furthermore, when a democratic governmental system contends with low population, inherent advantage such as neighborhood watch enhances human and national security, ensure smooth provision of service peculiar to the environment and enhances the capacity to collate records and statistics required for effective planning while at the same time facilitates the growth of democratic norms through participation in governance.

In Britain, LG is a creation of the parliament, while in the USA, the Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution makes local government a matter of State rather than federal law, with special cases for territories and the District of Columbia. The relevance of LG in US leads to government and citizenry to believe that without LGs, government would have no vitality. Like in America, in India, the 73rd and the 74th Constitution Amendment Acts, 1992 made all the LG tiers to be State affairs and given such powers to enable them function on their own. There are 645,000 local governments in India, self-sufficient and self-enabled units

(Encyclopedia of Nations 2012). Other provisions include a democratically constituted council, fixed five-year term and regular elections. A noticeable feature of L. G. in France like US and Britain is that it serves as the bedrock of democracy while those of Nigeria were only in theory. In effect, the mindset of the governors and political gladiators in Nigeria should be changed from seeing LGs as their personal property and make them to be truly democratic rather than through imposition of leaders. LG can only be democratic, efficient and accountable if votes count and the choice of citizenry to leadership position is allowed by over ambitious political leaders.

The sources of revenue in British LGs include council tax receipts, income from sales, fees and charges and capital receipts. In addition, National Audit Office (2014) reported that in 2013-14, the government gave local authorities £36.1 billion in funding as this exclude funding passed directly to schools and individuals. Furthermore, the central government fund local authorities through several grant types, which have varying conditions attached including Ringfenced grants, unringed fenced grants,. The National Audit Office (2014) also noted that the central government introduced reforms in 2010 by implementing policy that gave local authorities more autonomy over their funding, thereby allowing them allocate resources to meet local priorities while at the same time trying to reduce the reporting burden.

In America, residents pay taxes to support the governments at all levels consisting of property tax, sales tax and income tax from residents to support corresponding state and local government activities.

Nallathiga (2008) noted that the resource base of the urban local bodies in India consists of their own tax and non-tax revenues, grants as defined by the Central Finance Commission and the State Finance

Commissions. The higher level governments also give grants and loans while market borrowing is allowed. The State Finance Commissions that must mandatorily set up exercises its influence on the tax field of the LG but state governments provide for the sources of their tax revenue, the methods of their mobilization in the statutes of their urban local bodies. However, there exist wide differences among the local bodies in their tax jurisdiction, the degree of control exercised by the state government in terms of the fixation of tax base, and tax rates and tax exemptions. General and specific grants are made to local government by the states multilateral agencies such as World Bank, Japan Exim Bank, Overseas Development Administration of the Government of UK (Article 280 of Indian Constitution).

Unlike in other system, Nigeria's funding of LGs provides a unique example of a direct statutory allocation from the federated account apart from other sources listed in the Fourth Schedule of the 1999 Constitution. In addition, State Government is by law expected to disburse 10 per cent of its internally generated revenue to the LGs within its jurisdiction. Also, the LGS are allowed to engage in business activities and to obtain loans among others. Sadly, with all these cheap sources of raising fund, little do they have to show in respect of meeting the yearnings and aspirations of the citizenry as demonstrated under the challenges of LG administration in Nigeria. The Nigerian government need to appreciate that without responsible, accountable and efficient LG administration, it might a herculean task to achieve meaningful development.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The paper concludes that the challenges of local government being an enviable institution for democratic participation, an effective and efficient system for socio-economic development of the grass root and accountable among others are attitudinal and institutional. These challenges are not insurmountable given the sincerity of purpose on the part of the Federal and State government to genuinely allow the spirit of the 1999 Constitution to work by curbing overbearing attitude of the State government, minimize corruption and make the system accountable.

The paper therefore recommends that:

1. Successful decentralization entails Federal and State governments allowing the local government clear mandate as contained in the 1976 Local Government Reform and the spirit of 1999 constitution to be implemented to the letter without unnecessary intervention like is found USA India, US and Britain.
2. The immunity granted the governor in the Constitution has significantly been abused and the paper recommend a constitutional amendment to withdraw it. Governor should be made accountable while still in office and this may checkmate their excesses. The current arrangement while governors are prosecuted after leaving the office amounts to medicine after death as the damage had already been done and the judicial system is equally challenged.
3. The amendment of Section 7 is recommended by expunging Sub Section (6b), that is: The House of Assembly of a State shall make provisions for statutory allocation of public revenue to local Government with`in the state.
4. Other sub sections under which the state governor hide to divert the resources of the Local Government should be expunged while a provision with penalty be included in the constitution for diversion of LG fund and non release of the 10 per cent of State's internally generate revenue.
5. The paper further recommend that the Third Schedule, Part II, the establishment of State Independent Electoral Commission be expunged from the constitution and the functions be transferred to Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to make LG election to the council credible as found in the developed systems. This does not imply that INEC has evolved as a credible institution but it shall minimize governors' imposition of LG political operatives.
6. Other state governments should emulate Kaduna State governor that scrapped Joint Allocation Account by allowing LG to have direct access to their statutory allocation. In addition, the state governments should hand off from constitutional internally revenue sources of LGs as practiced in US, Britain and France
7. The oversight function of the State Assemblies, Office of the Auditor General of LG among others should be strengthened to checkmate corrupt practice rather colluding with the operatives of LG to perpetuate corruption. Such arrangement might be view as a form of intervention but it is required to ensure compliance with Financial Instructions.

8. Institutional mechanisms to punish corrupt public officials should be strengthened rather than the current arrangement of plea bargaining leaving corrupt to thrive.
9. Finally, through constitutional amendment process, multi-tier LG system should be adopted by accommodating district and CDA to make the idea of decentralization truly workable.

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