



TECHNIUM
SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL

Vol. 19, 2021

**A new decade
for social changes**

www.techniumscience.com

ISSN 2668-7798



9 772668 779000

Democratic crises; the bane of developmental local government in Nigeria

Toyin Cotties Adetiba¹, Olusegun Jonathan Adedokun²

¹Department of Political and International Studies, University of Zululand, South Africa, ²Department of Public Administration, Federal University of Oye Ekiti, Nigeria

AdetibaT@unizulu.ac.za¹, olusegunadedokun2@gmail.com²

Abstract. In the cycle of scholars on Nigeria's local government system, the belief is that Nigeria has only succeeded in transiting to a system that represents a synthesis of various influences, in which formal democratic institutions of democracy are a smokescreen for informal institutions which preserve anti-democratic practices and power relationships in local government administration. Thus making them incapable of performing their developmental roles as the third tier government, yet overstrained with many socio-political and economic responsibilities they have never been able to implement. The Nigerian 1976 Local Government Reform was geared towards making local government a bedrock for socio-economic and political development. But the 1999 constitution seems to have overridden the gains and aspirations of this tier of government while undermining peoples' aspirations as well as the efficacy of grassroots governance. Using qualitative method, this study examines the state of local government in Nigeria and the factors militating against its developmental status and concludes that the nature and democratic characters of the Nigerian state explains the ineffectiveness of local government in Nigeria.

Keywords. Local Government, Constitution, Developmental, Administration, Grassroots

1. Introduction

Through the history of the various [civilian and military] regimes that have come to power in Nigeria, local government administration has always been part of the process of governance (Mukoro, 2003). Democracy is considered to be a positive force; derived from trust, where responsibilities are shared while working towards achieving the desired goals. In a federal [political] system like Nigeria, local government is very important to development at the grassroots. The existentiality of local government has been defended on the basis that it is crucial for the process of democratisation and strengthening of peoples' participation in the decision-making process which invariably translate to development. Thus no political system like that of Nigeria is deemed complete, democratic and sustainable without local government system. By interpretation, the need to accelerate inclusive and balanced development at the local level, maximize the participation of citizens at that level necessitates the creation of the local government.

Fatile & Okewale (2013) had argued that local government in a democratic system serves as a form of political and administrative structure that facilitate decentralisation, national

integration, efficiency in governance, and a sense of belonging at the grassroots. Hence the argument that local government, administratively, ensures supply of goods and services as well as represent and involve citizens in determining specific local public needs and how such needs can be met.

Where it exists, local governments, according to Agagu (2004) is considered as a unit of administration for developmental purposes. Arowolo, (2005), Fatile & Okewale (2013) concurred when they argued that notwithstanding the form of its existence which may be in different forms and in different political system, local government is a universal [political] institution and most importantly regarded as the path to administrative efficiency where effective service delivery and inclusive development is guaranteed. In essence, because of its easy accessibility to people at the grassroots, local government [in Nigeria] is very essential to development. Hence, the reason for the argument put forward by Adejo (2003) that local government is significantly important to the people at the grassroots and the government as well owing to its role as an institution that feeds the state and the central government with the opinions as well as the [socio-economic] demands of the people. Further to this, local government is also considered to be in a better position to anchor a sustainable development at the grassroots level while promoting healthy democratisation, good service delivery and mobilisation of human resources for sustainable development.

Over the years, the system [of local government] has been a major feature of the Nigerian government. In terms of its composition and structure, local government in Nigeria have experienced several changes; of which the major change was the reform of 1976. The reforms essentially laid the foundation for the constitutional basis of local government as a third tier of government in Nigeria. These main aspects of the 1976 Local Government Reforms were accorded constitutional guarantee in the 1999 Constitution (as amended) as follows;

1. *Democratic character for the local government councils in Section 7 (1).*
2. *Statutory allocation of funds to local governments in Section 162 (3) (5) (6) (7) (8).*
3. *Functions of Local Government Councils in the Fourth Schedule.*

As the third tier government of Nigeria, these enhanced status of local government as provided by the constitution confirm the assertion that the introduction of participatory democracy and political responsibility at the local government level by the 1976 reforms with constitutional backing in the 1999 Constitution reinforce the developmental as well as multi-purpose status of local government in Nigeria.

However, with a view to enhance its capacity for the purpose for which it was created successive governments after these reforms, have tinkered with its structure and composition. Fatile & Okewale (2013) had argued that the local government is created to serve the people at the grassroots and expected to mobilise and harness local resources and ensure their effective utilisation for development, with the support of both the federal and the state governments.

Contrariwise, the much desired development has continued to elude the communities at the grassroots. To Fatile & Okewale (2013:128), it has been rural poverty, rather than rural development. Connected to the high level of the absence of democratic character in the Nigeria's local government system is the prevalence and inescapability of poverty and lack of the desired development at the grassroots level.

Guided by the supposition that democratic crisis is an instrument that undermines developmental local government in Nigeria, this study examines the essence of the local government system as a developmental force at the grassroots but for some democratic vices, local government in Nigeria has remain a shadow of itself as a political institution.

2. Methodology

This study used a qualitative research approach and draw on secondary data through a systemic analysis of works related to the theme of the study. Kohlbacher (2006) asserts that thematic content analysis allows researchers to validate theoretic text and the authors' close observations of events in the study area. This study takes a holistic approach to understanding how local government in Nigeria have been deprived of its developmental roles at the grassroots as a result of its unwholesome abuse by other [seemingly] institutions in the polity.

3. Research questions

The study was underpinned by two research questions, what are the [constitutional] factors militating against local government's developmental roles in Nigeria and how can this be resolved for local government to be able to function as a developmental government at the grassroots level? These questions enabled the researchers to reflect on the constitutional errors regarding the roles of local government in Nigeria.

4. Clarification of Concepts

Adeyemi (2012) cited in Fatile & Okewale (2013:128) writes that within the disciplinary parameters of social science, the issue of definition of concepts has never been without its own attendant problem as a result of its diverse nature and paradigmatic dispositions of respective disciplines within the field. Therefore, it is very significant to shed light on some [major] concepts in this study while trying to situate them within the context of local government vis-à-vis development at the grassroots.

4.1 Democratic crisis

Ercan & Gagnon (2014:1) comments that in the contemporary, the opinion of scholars on the crisis of democracy has received more critical attention from political pundits and scholars alike. Owing to number of socio-political and economic factors which includes high levels of [Nigerian] citizens' apathy for politics (Campus & Andre 2014); a very low and disgraceful absence of significant political education among Nigerians; loss of trust in Nigerian government, lack of accountability to the people by the political office holders, inadequacy of peoples' representation, duplication of political arrangements that often allows political office holders to shirk accountability and transparency (Runciman, 2014) and the unresolved contradictions, and ambiguity in Nigeria's constitution (see section 7(1), section 8, section 7 (6a) section 7 (6b) section 162 (6) Section 162(7) section 162(8) section 8 (subsections 5 and 6) of Nigeria's 1999 constitution), democracy particularly in Nigeria has been adjudged to be in crisis.

Merkel (2014:12) writes that democracy is a contested concept owing to the fact that it has been classified into different fields such as conservative, liberal, social, pluralist, elitist, decisionist, communitarian, cosmopolitan, republican, deliberative, participatory, feminist, critical, post-modern, or multicultural. What this suggests is that scholars of democracy needs to be aware of what kind of democracy they have in mind when writing about the concept.

Dryzek (2009) had argued that scholars arguing for different philosophies of democracy are diverse, if not contradictory in their arguments about democracies vis-a-vis the conditions that must be met for democratisation. This however depends on whether their focus is on conventional positions and contrivances for democracy. Therefore, the advocates of a particular type of democracy might call for crisis on the basis that a different form of democracy from what they perceive is correct is being exercised because they see such as a rescindment of their idea of legitimate democratic practice.

Ercan & Gagnon (2014, p. 6) however added that the delineation of what point to democratic success, crisis depends on both the normative democratic approach one takes and on socio-political and historical factors that give both democracy and crisis, and their connection a particular meaning. Merkel (2014) concurred that the answer to the question of whether or not there is a crisis of democracy hinges on the chosen definition of the concept of democracy. Hence the concept of embedded democracy by Merkel.

Merkel (2013) believes that at the core of embedded [constitutional] democracy stand five democratic regimes which are democratic election, rights to political participation, civil rights, horizontal accountability, and effective power to govern. Of necessity to democratic electoral election, though may not be sufficient condition for democratic governance is the role it plays in democracy. Participation through election is the most visible expression of popular sovereignty and therefore requires universal [active or passive] voting rights as well as free and fair elections. However, if a democratic electoral system is tainted by crisis it definitely would change the voting behaviour of the electorates negatively.

Rights to political participation is a prerequisite to completing the vertical dimension of democracy, though it goes beyond elections. This is embodied in the freedom of speech and the right to associate, demonstrate, and formulate petitions These help in the transformation of the society with particular reference to the grassroots. In a democratic society, one of the means of guaranteeing adequate participation of people in political system of such state is respect for the civil liberties of citizens. This invariably serves as a complement to democratic [free and fair] elections as well as political participation. However, [in society] where such rights are restricted the quality of its democracy is jeopardised.

Very important to democracy is the accountability of the political leaders to the people. Where effective governance is handled by political bodies and individual authorised through free and fair elections. Although the three arms of government are interdependence but in a situation where the executive has pocketed the legislature it becomes difficult for the entire democratic system to work effectively and hence the attendant effect on development particularly at the grassroots. To Ercan & Gagnon (2014: 3-6) there is nothing new about the democratic crisis and it has never been the exception to the rule; rather, it is an inherent feature of a democratic system and may even be seen as a sign that it is functioning, and fundamentally a normative and unfinished project because one person's idea of a democratic act might be viewed by another as undemocratic.

4.2 Local government

To Fatile & Okewale (2013: 30), there are two sides of the coin while viewing local government; as a process and as a unit of administration. As a process, local government refers to that organisation saddled with the promotion of the welfare and well-being of the people at the grassroots. As a unit of administration, local government is established with defined territory and powers, administrative authority with relative autonomy from the central government (Bello-Iman, 1996). Thus emphasising its structural autonomy in the areas of power and authority. Further to this assertion, Emezi (1984) sees local government as a system of local administration organised to maintain law and order, ensure service delivery, as well as encourage political participation at the grassroots level. Thus providing local communities with formal organisational structure which enables local people to conduct their affairs effectively for an inclusive local development.

To this end Adetiba (2017: 25) argued that local government as the third tier of government in Nigeria, is purposefully established to promote grassroots development owing to its closeness to the people, hence, improving its ability to easily articulate and aggregate

socio-political and economic demands of the people. Therefore, as the third tier of government, it accentuates the fact that local government in the context of Nigeria's federal system is somewhat not a subordinate political unit of the federal and the governments.

Clarifying this assertion, The United Nations Office of Public Administration (UNOPA) cited in Ozor (2003:19) believes that *local government is a political sub-division of a nation or (in a 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 purposes. The governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected.*

Given the above submission what differentiates local government from [a federal and state] governments is what they enjoy in service delivery reflecting the degree of [political and financial] powers, functions and resources at its disposal which is subject to the test of and level of practicality (Fatile & Okewale, 2013). Emphasising this, Section 7(1) of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria states categorically that *The system of local government by democratically elected local government councils 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, finance and functions of such councils* (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2010).

What this translates to mean is that, local government is a structured political unit entrusted with the powers to initiate policies and execute laws at the grassroots as well as manage their affairs. Reinforcing this assertion Agagu (2004) in Adetiba (2017: 25-26) advances that the presence of local government in a given local area is conceived from the fact that latent human and natural resources abundant at the grassroots are available for a productive and progressive transformation of such area with a view to achieving effective grassroots development and the need to stimulate government responsive service delivery. From the 1999 constitution that displayed the uniqueness of local government, one would expect good performance from the local government councils in Nigeria. Contrary to this expectation, its performance has been less than satisfactory, meaning that, there is a failure of governance at the third tier level of government in Nigeria, thus explaining why there have been continuous local government reforms in the polity.

4.3 Developmental Local Government

The term "developmental local government" was coined in South Africa where the practice and vision is linked to national policies on decentralisation (Fourie et al; 2013). To conceptualise developmental local government, it is imperative to define development and local development.

Development can be interpreted in many ways; this is because it means different thing to different people depending on their fields of specialisation. In essence the meaning an economist will give to development is different from the meaning a political scientist or an engineer will give to the concept of development. Kuye (2011:171-172) advances that there are two school of thought that exist in approach to development. One school views development as a means to fighting poverty, improvement of livelihoods as well as drive [socio-political and economic] progress. The other school sees development as only promoting economic growth while focusing on building the drivers of inclusive production of goods and services. It thus means that development, from the perspective of this study can be located within the context of the first school of thought. Based on this perspective, AUC (2013) cited in Fourie et al (2013: 5), define local development as the mobilisation of local, national and global human, economic, socio-cultural, political, and natural resources for the improvement and transformation of livelihoods, communities and territories at the grassroots.

Although not in common usage in every country, the term developmental local government, reflects the vision for local government where local authorities will have to think both about how they engage communities in the design and service delivery as well as the roles and responsibility of citizens at the grassroots.

Fourie et al (2013) advances that in developmental local government, an enabling environment that enhances the mobilisation of both local, national and global human, economic, socio-cultural, political, and natural resources for the improvement and transformation of livelihoods, at the local grassroots must be created. Further to this they mentioned that developmental local government has two primary elements; which are provision of local government with the environment and [financial] capacity to drive socio-economic development within a given community or local area and state-led empowerment of ordinary citizens [at the grassroots] to be actively involved in the problem-solving areas in which public policies are made.

By implication it is the constitutional role of local government to promote the socio-economic and material needs of its citizens as well as improve their quality of life and efficient service delivery. The 1998 [South Africa] White Paper on Local Government according to Visser (2009), translated the constitutional objects and duties of local government into the concept of developmental local government, and defined its mandate as local government committed to working with citizens and groups at the grassroots to find sustainable ways of meeting their socio-economic, political and material needs while improving the quality of their lives.

Visser (2009: 9-10) further stated that characteristically, developmental local government features prominently in maximising the economic growth and social development of communities at the grassroots, integrating and coordinating developmental activities of other state and non-state agents in the local government area, as the political vehicle through which citizens work to achieve their vision of the kind of place in which they wish to live and building social capital, stimulating the finding of local solutions for increased sustainability, and stimulate local political leadership.

However, the developmental roles of local government as a means to the sustainable well-being of the people at the grassroots it represents can only be made possible where there are no crises of functions between the national assembly, state government, state house of assemblies as it is in Nigeria.

5. Theoretical interpretation

The need to provide answers to some germane questions relating to the roles of local government has led to developing a theory of local government. Hence the question why did local government come on board and what should be the role of local government? (Makinde, Hassan, & Olaiya, 2016). In response to these questions, a number of schools of thoughts have emerged with differing theories of local government while trying to proffer solution to these questions. Among these school of thoughts are efficiency services school, development school and democratic participatory school. Very significant to this study is the first two schools with compliment from the third school.

To Ola (2007) the efficiency services school believe that the essential function of local government is to provide services and that local government must therefore be accessed on the basis of their achievement in service delivery measurable by national standards. The basis of the argument of this school is that the main purpose of local government is to provide essential services to the local people on the grounds that local government is the most efficient agent for providing those services that are principally local but accessible. Makinde, Hassan, & Olaiya,

(2016) further confirms this when they argued that the efficient delivery of some local services is so compelling that if local government does not exist, something else will have to be created in its place, thus making local government an indispensable political entity.

On the other hand, (Ola, 2007) opines that the developmental school, believes that local government is a political arrangement that can efficiently accelerate the political integration of ethnically pluralise society like Nigeria. He further argued that where people are religiously attached to local sentiments, local governments can use these [as instrument] to positively advance national growth. What this intends to mean is that at the expense of overstressing its local eccentricities, the institution is seen as an instrument for national awareness as well as national consciousness where they are able to encourage developmental initiatives as well as encourage purpose driven enterprise and socio-economic experimentation, identify available local skills, interests and abilities and get them developed for the benefits of the general populace.

Ola (2007) mentions that for democratic participatory school it holds that the existentiality of local government is to encourage political participation, educating and socialising people at the grassroots. This school of thought is rooted in John Stuart Mills' utilitarianism where he claimed that a representative government is the best form of government on the basis that it promotes civil liberty, equality, and communalism; which has made citizens look beyond their immediate socio-economic and political interest; recognised the unprejudiced demands of others while promoting political education, participation and communication (Makinde, Hassan & Olaiya, (2016). This school further avows that principally, local government is democratically, the level where the intrinsic values of democracy irrespective of the services it provides is demonstrated. This school further believe that government can only be [truly] representative when everyone irrespective of their status is allowed to be a partaker. It is on this ground that socio-economic and political functions as well as responsibilities are given to the local government for efficient and effective performance in terms of service delivery which by extension translates to development at the grassroots argued Adetiba (2017: 27).

Further to this, Adetiba (2017) argued that generally, local government in Nigeria is recognised as a political tool for rural development and by extension a perfect tool for political integration since it is the closest government to the people at the grassroots, thus justifying the need for local government on the basis of its importance to practical administrative purposes. This is corroborated by decentralisation theorists (Heywood, 1997; Roindinelli, 1981) that decentralisation connotes the constitutional transfer of political authority and responsibility to the subordinate government, by the central government where the local government is allowed to function at the local levels where the central government might not be able to reach on time.

As identified by Olowu (1995) there are two major forms of decentralisation, which are de-concentration and devolution. He argues that de-concentration is a form of internal delegation of political authorities and responsibilities to the subordinate government, which invariably are within the same administrative system. On the other hand, devolution involves the transfer of detailed and complete political responsibilities to the local communities which are usually represented by their elected officials. Adeyeye (2000) however, argued that in the real sense of it, both de-concentration and devolution are not commonly limited when implementing programmes on the basis of decentralised form of government; rather what is required is a balance of these elements. It therefore means that decentralisation is a political strategy for mobilising local [human and material] resources for the sustainability of national socio-economic development.

6. Factors militating against local government's developmental status

There have been various local government transformational reforms conceived out of passion for development to take place at the grassroots in Nigeria. Although, local government is established to form the bedrock of socio-economic and political development at the grassroots but for some socio-political contradictions [both constitutional and human errors] local government in Nigeria has not been able to perform optimally.

Although the 1999 constitution maintained the position of local government in Nigeria as the third tier government, the same constitution however, constitute a clog on the wheel of its success. A close look at the constitution shows that there are some inconsistencies in the [1999] constitution of Nigeria with regards to local government administration. Section 7(1) of the 1999 constitution clearly states that *The system of local government by democratically elected local government councils 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, finance and functions of such councils.* However, in section 7 (6a) the constitution states that *the National Assembly shall make provisions for statutory allocation of public revenue to Local Government councils in the federation.* Thus contradicting the submission in section 7 (1). This conflict was further compounded in section 7 (6b) where the constitution states that *the House of Assembly of a state shall make provisions for statutory allocation of public revenue to local government councils within the state.*

In section 162 (6) the contradiction further resurfaced where the constitution throws its weight by creating the State Joint Local Government Account (SJLGA) for the purpose of payment of *all allocations to the Local Government councils of the State from the Federal account and from the Government of the State.* The constitution in section 162(7) states that *each State shall pay to local government councils in its area of jurisdiction such proportion of its total revenue on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the National Assembly.* As if that is not enough, in section 6 (8) the constitution states that *the amount standing to the credit of local government councils of a State shall be distributed among the local government councils of that State on such terms and in such manner as may be prescribed by the House of Assembly of the State.*

By implication all the contradictions would make it extremely difficult for local government in Nigeria to constitutionally locate its power as the third tier government apart from making it cumbersome to ensure timely and quality service delivery at the grassroots. Apart from this, in as much as these contradictions remains unresolved, the politicians will always find it easy to manoeuvre their ways around this constitutional loophole to slow down the progress of local governance in Nigeria.

One question that needed to be answered in this study is how stable is Nigeria political system vis-à-vis the developmental status of local government in the polity? The reason for this question is because, till date Nigeria has been moving from one crisis to the other and this apart from affecting the polity generally, the local government has been the worst hit. Thus making the developmental role of local government invisible, that is if there is any. Adetiba (2017) had argued that the inability of local government to advance service delivery as well as development can be blamed on policy and structural changes that has become part of Nigeria's local government a situation that is in contrast to what is obtainable in many developing countries like Nigeria. In his contribution Agagu (2004) maintain that local government in Nigeria has been turned to an institution where learning of new rules has become the order of the day with little or no opportunity to fully exploit or improve existing rules.

Further to the above submission, Adetiba (2017) argued that between 1979 and 1983, the civilian governors of various states in Nigeria rather than allowed local government chairpersons to be democratically elected, they appointed their political allies to manage the affairs of these local governments. He further stated that local government in Nigeria was placed under civilian administrators by the military government having abolished the system in 1984. Ten years later [under the military rule led by late Gen. Sanni Abacha] the elected local government council were sacked and replaced with *caretaker committee* whose members were military apologists. Thus corroborating Lawal (2014) assertion that local government elections under Abacha were somewhat subjective and candidates who do not support his political ambitions were not allowed to contest elections.

Contrary to section 7 (1) of 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which states that *the system of local government by democratically elected local government councils is under this Constitution guaranteed; and accordingly, the Government of every State shall, ensure their existence under a Law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils* the Ekiti state governor in 2010 through governors' fiat dissolved all the 16 local government councils and placed them under care taker committee.

In all these unwholesome abuse of local government system in Nigeria, sections 7 and 162 of the 1999 Constitution have always been the political shield and a way of escape for many state governments in Nigeria to arm-twist the local government and reduce it to a mere department in the state governors' office. This anti-development instrument has been used to frustrate every effort to make the Local Government work since the return of Nigeria to democracy in 1999. It is pertinent to say that these sections of the Nigeria's constitution have outlived their usefulness and must be expunged.

One thing that is peculiar to local government governance in Nigeria is what we would call "new leader new programme syndrome", what this means is that once a new local government chairperson is elected, the new chairperson summarily dismisses the programme of his/her predecessor not minding how good such a programme might be. This is done to impress and satisfy their political supporters by starting new projects rather than given room for continuity. By implication there may never be continuity in the system thus becoming difficult to point to one developmental programme in any of the local governments. In agreement Khaleel (2012) states that across Nigeria politicians have turned local councils to a caricature of local government administration where all manner of experiments, political and administrative are carried out.

The challenges of poor financing and limited revenue, limited autonomy, poor political leadership, lack of basic social amenities such as electricity, transport and telecommunication facilities according to Alo (2018) have continued to make local government things difficult for local governance at the grassroots. This is in addition to the appointment of inexperienced and unqualified personnel, corruption and misappropriation of funds, lack of accountability and transparency, lack of local plans and weak programming capacity have all compounded the effective running of local governments in Nigeria. These challenges need to be resolved in order to give local government in Nigeria a new lease of life for effective service delivery.

One factor that often impedes transformation and development at the grassroots in Nigeria is insecurity. The insecurity of lives and property has reached an alarming rate where it has become difficult for the federal government to protect the lives and property of its citizens. The dreaded Boko Haram operating in the north east of the country has killed thousands and rendered many homeless, with the internally displaced people (IDP) growing in numbers daily. Across the length and breadth of Nigeria, people are being kidnapped daily, coupled with the

dangerous activities of the Fulani herds men where farm produce are grossly destroyed, thus making farming and trading difficult at the grassroots. This is occasioned by acts of banditry, kidnapping for ransom and other related crimes, high rate of unemployment among the youths, rape and all forms of terrorism have become the new trend in local communities particularly in the northern part of the country. The Sultan of Sokoto and President General of the Jama'atu Nasril Islam, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar once said "Nigerians have become so much terrified, as nowhere is safe; the home, the farms and the roads. Bandits now rule in many [local] communities; they set rules that must be obeyed" (Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar, 2020). One factor that has made it possible for these bandits to operate freely is the lack of the political will to initiate socio-economic policy or structural transformation, at local level to reposition the local governments for its developmental purposes.

7. Conclusion and suggestions

This study assesses democratic crises in Nigeria vis-à-vis the performance of local government in Nigeria against the parameters of three school of thoughts; efficiency services school, development school and democratic participatory school and finds out that local government administrations in Nigeria have fallen far short of its developmental status, partly owing to some constitutional inadequacies and usurpation of local government powers by the governments of the States. As expected local government in Nigeria have not being enjoying the independent status and power decentralisation that is expected in a true federal system.

Nigeria has six geopolitical zones created in 1996 by the military government, with a total of 774 local government areas and listed in the 1999 Nigeria's constitution which is in contradiction of what is obtainable in most federal system. By implication, the state governments are rendered powerless to create new local government or abolish any without permission from the National Assembly (see section 8 subsections 5 and 6) of 1999 Nigeria's constitution).

Local government constitutionally, exists as the lowest tier of governments in Nigeria and act within powers delegated to it. At the grassroots, local government set the agenda and direction for socio-economic development in the rural areas through the effective use of resources to benefit citizens. In essence local government is responsible for the delivery of services such as primary health care, waste disposal, creation and maintenance of markets, park lands and other recreational sites, etc. Alo (2018) however argued that the local government in Nigeria has been dominated by the state government hide under the inconsistency of the 1999 constitution notwithstanding the clear cut roles for the three tiers of government in the constitution, thus rendering it ineffective in the discharge of its constitutional duties.

It thus means that the affairs of local government in Nigeria is determined by the central government contrary to its constitutional status. Hence Adetiba (2017) concludes that the Nigeria's local government autonomy is more of theory than in the real practices of it, hence its inability to fit into its developmental status at the grassroots, coupled with the continued influence of both federal and state government over the functions allocated to local government in the stipulated in the fourth schedule of 1999 constitution of Nigeria. This also impede the political connectivity between the various local communities and the local government, which flies in the face of the policy intent of developmental local government.

Under a true federal system, the ambiguities in the 1999 constitution of Nigeria would have been amended but this has not been the case in Nigeria. Therefore, if local government in Nigeria must survive this study suggests that section 7 of the 1999 Constitution be replaced and a chapter on Local Government should be provided in the Constitution to restore the autonomy of local government and guarantee its status as the third tier of government in Nigeria. The reason for this is because of the inconsistencies and contradictions in this section which has

provided a constitutional shield for state governments to manipulate the Local government system by circumventing democratic governance, and commandeering the statutory functions of local government while its resources are being plundered. What this translates to mean is that state governments should be deprived of their constitutional powers to unilaterally dissolve democratically elected council officials and illegal diversion and deduction of funds meant for local governments.

Furthermore, this study suggests an adoption of three tier model of governance supported by unambiguous constitution and laws to ensure non-interference but cooperation and collaboration between the various levels. This will unequivocally strengthen the practice of inclusive, transparent and participatory local governance where development and public participation will serve as the political vehicle for citizens at the grassroots to realise their visions for their communities. While fostering the exercise of powers and functions in a [democratic] manner that maximises the innovative ideas of the people as well as sustain sensitivity of people towards socio-economic development and growth.

References

- [1] O. ADEJO: Local Government and the 1999 Constitution. In M KWAMANASHIE (Eds.) Politics and Political Power Relation in Nigeria. Zaria: Dat and Partners 2003
- [2] T. C. ADETIBA (2017). Existentiality of Local Government in Nigeria an Answer to Grassroots Development, but for Unsolicited Socio-Political Factors *Acta Universitatis Danubius*, ISSN: 2068 – 5459, **9** (2), 25-46 (2017).
- [3] M. ADEYEYE: Decentralization versus local level governance: The congruence problem. In A. ADEDEJI, A. BAMIDELE. (Eds.) People centred democracy in Nigeria: The search for alternative systems of governance at the grassroots. ISBN 9781293136, 9789781293139. Ibadan. Heineman Educational Books Plc (2000).
- [4] A. AGAGU: Continuity and change in local government administration and the politics of underdevelopment. In Agagu, A. & Ola, R. (Eds.) Development agenda of Nigeria state. Ibadan: Flag Publishers (2004).
- [5] ALHAJI SA'AD ABUBAKAR. Nowhere is safe under Buhari, Sultan-led JNl laments. *Punch Newspapers* <https://punchng.com/nowhere-is-safe-under-buhari-sultan-led-jni-laments/> Accessed on 3rd December, 2020.
- [6] F. ALO: Revitalising the Local Government System for Development in Nigeria. Good Governance Africa Nigeria Centre. **3** (4) 2018. <https://gga.org/revitalising-the-local-government-system-for-development-in-nigeria/> Accessed on 17th November, 2020.
- [7] I. BELLO-IMAM: Local Government in Nigeria: Evolving a Third Tier of Government. ISBN-13: 978-9781293399. Ibadan. Heinemann Educational Books Plc (1996).
- [8] C. ANDRE SANTOS, J. G. ANDRE: Challenges to Democratic Participation. Anti-politics, Deliberative Democracy and Pluralism. (ISBN)9780739191514 (ISBN)0739191519 (OCOLC)867604655. Lanham. Lexington Books (2014).
- [9] J. DRYZEK: Democratization as Deliberative Capacity Building. *Comparative Political Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009332129> **42** (11), 1379–1402 (2009).
- [10] C. EMEZI: Local Government in Historical Perspective. *Nigerian Journal of Public Administration*. **2** (2), (1984).
- [11] S. A. ERCAN, G. JEAN-PAUL: (2014). The Crisis of Democracy Which Crisis? Which Democracy? *Democratic Theory* ISSN 2332-8894 (Print), ISSN 2332-8908 (Online) **1** (2) 1–10 (2014).

- [12] J. O. FATILE, R. A. OKEWALE: Corruption and democracy in Nigerian local government. *Review of Public Administration and Management*. ISSN: 2315-7844 **2** (3), 127-142 (2013).
- [13] FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA: The 199 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (As altered by the Firsts, Second and Third Alteration Acts, 2010). https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---ilo_aids/documents/legaldocument/wcms_127563.pdf (2010). Accessed on 3rd November, 2020.
- [14] R. FOURIEourie, R. SINGH, J. CARR-WEST, K. K. PANDEY, H. VERMA, F. TIPU: (2013) Developmental local government: Putting local government at the heart of development. In: Background Paper for Commonwealth Local Government Conference, Kampala, May 2013, 14-17
- [15] A. HEYWOOD: Politics. ISBN 139780230363380 London, Macmillian Press Ltd (1997).
- [16] I. KHALEEL: Entrenching local governance and decentralisation issues in the Nigeria constitution review process. In: Workshop paper organised by the Center for Democracy and Development, Abuja, Nigeria, October 2012, 4 –5
- [17] F. KOHLBACHER: The use of qualitative content analysis in case study research. In Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: *Qualitative Social Research*. **7** (1), 1-30 (2006).
- [18] J. O. KUYE: Leadership and governance imperatives in a developmental state: the debate for a public policy dialogue. *African Journal of Public Affairs*. **4** (1), 170-185 (2011).
- [19] T. LAWAL: Local government and rural infrastructural delivery in Nigeria. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*. RePEc:hur:ijarbs:v:4:y:2014:i:4:p:139-147 **4** (4), 139-147 (2014).
- [20] J. T. MAKINDE, O. A. HASSAN, T. A. OLAIYA: Theory, principle and practice of local governance in Nigeria. *The Journal of Developing Areas*. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24737350> **50** (1), 305-318 (2016).
- [21] W. MERKEL: Is There a Crisis of Democracy? In: Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, USA, August 29-September 1, 2013
- [22] A. MUKORO: (2003). The Evolution of a Democratic Local Government System in Nigeria *Journal of Social Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2003.11892377> **7** (3), 171-179 (2014).
- [23] R. F. OLA: Local Government Theory & Practice: An Examination of Modernisation Efforts in Three Decades of Nigerian Local Government (1975 -2003). In: A. A. AGAGU, R. F. OLA (Eds.) *Development Agenda of the Nigerian State*. Akure: Lord Keynes publishing (2007).
- [24] D. OLOWU: The failure of current decentralization programmes in Africa. In: S. WUNSCH, D. OLOWU (Eds.) *The failure of centralized state institutions and self-governance in Africa*. Sanfrancisco Institute for Contemporary Studies (1995).
- [25] E. OZOR: Third-Tier Government in Nigeria. Ibadan: University Press Plc Publishers (2003).
- [26] D. RONDINELLI: Government decentralization in comparative perspective: Theory and practice in developing countries. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, **47** (2), 133-14 (1981).
- [27] D. RUNCIMAN: The Confidence Trap: A History of Democracy in Crisis from World War I to the Present. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1d2dnv4> Princeton: Princeton University Press (2014).

- [28] J. VISSER: Developmental Local Government in South Africa: Institutional Fault Lines
Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance <http://hdl.handle.net/10566/1251> **2**, 7-25(2009).