

Federalism and Local Government System in Nigeria: A Critical Assessment

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Abstract

Nigeria operates a federal system of government with three tiers of government - federal, state, and local. The local government system is an essential component of Nigeria's federalism and plays a critical role in the administration of grassroots governance. However, the local government system in Nigeria faces several challenges, including revenue allocation, lack of autonomy, corruption, and political interference. Despite the constitutional recognition of local government autonomy, the system's operations remain largely under the control of state governments. This research examines Nigeria's federalism and local government system, highlighting the dynamics of federalism, challenges of local government, the nature and structure of federalism, revenue allocation and resource control. It also discusses the challenges faced by the local government system and suggests possible solutions to enhance its effectiveness and efficiency. The research concludes that strengthening local government autonomy is essential to promote grassroots development and effective service delivery in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Federalism, Local Government, Revenue allocation and resource control*

Introduction

Federalism is a political structure that incorporates shared rule, facilitating multi-level governance and granting autonomous political units the capacity to fulfil their distinct functions within a larger framework. However, despite the implementation of formal decentralization policies, unsatisfactory intergovernmental relations can create tensions between central and local governments (Karingi, 2003). In a federal system, each unit possesses autonomy, enabling them to choose whether to remain

in the union or exit it. Nevertheless, existing mechanisms and institutions for intergovernmental policy coordination are insufficient and require improvement and strengthening (Lawson, 2011). The Nigerian Constitution of 1999 outlines the functions and powers of the various levels of government in a manner that precludes any level from singlehandedly delivering services to the populace, thus emphasizing the necessity of cooperation in governance (Shah, 2006).

Nigeria's federalism is typified by diverse ethnic groups, languages, cultures, political affiliations, and struggles for political power. The need to cater to these heterogeneous elements while ensuring service delivery at the grassroots level led to the creation of local government (Boadway and Shah, 2009). The federal government is characterized by several key features, including the distinct and autonomous nature of each level of government, the principle of mutual non-interference in the allocation of power, and the presence of a supreme court and a court of law to mediate conflicts between different levels of government. These principles are crucial for maintaining a healthy balance of power in a federal system of governance, as they ensure that each level of government is able to operate independently while also respecting the authority of others. The role of the courts in resolving disputes is also essential for promoting cooperation and preventing conflicts from escalating into larger-scale political crises (Abia, 2010). Intergovernmental relations refer to the interactions among levels of government, whether national or regional, or among federal, state, and local governments (Ajulor and Okewale, 2011). Such relationships among the tiers of government are not without tension and conflict. (Jinadu 1998) suggests that the dynamics of federal-state relations within the federalist constitutional framework are characterized by a see-saw between interdependence and cooperation on one hand, and conflict on the other, between the centre and the constituent units.

The concept of federalism necessitates a combination of shared rules that accommodates multi-level governance and authorizes autonomous political units to perform their distinct functions within a political structure. Despite the implementation of formal decentralization policies, unsuitable intergovernmental relations can hinder the relationships between central and local governments (Karingi, 2003). In a federal system, each unit is granted autonomy to decide whether to remain in the union or withdraw. However, the existing mechanisms and institutions for intergovernmental policy coordination are weak and need improvement and strengthening (Lawson, 2011). The 1999 Nigerian Constitution stipulates the functions and powers of the levels of government in such a way that no level of government can single-handedly provide service delivery to the people. Cooperation is therefore a prerequisite for governance (Shah, 2006).

Unfortunately, the fourth republic witnessed unhealthy relationships between the states and local governments, as about ten local government chairmen were removed or suspended from office by state executive fiat. This development infuriated the local government chairmen and made them sue the thirty-six governors and their state assemblies (Fadeyi, 2001). By the arrangement of the 1999 constitution on the distribution of powers, Nigeria remains a centralized federation with strong unitary elements, and there are complaints about overconcentration of power in the federal government, the product of long periods of military rule (Olopade, 1984).

The unhealthy rivalry between local government and other levels of government is a result of several inter-related factors, including undue interference by the state government, unconstitutional removal of local government chairmen by some state governments, shortening of local government chairmen's tenure of office, joint state-local government accounts that the former controls, and what the states perceive as an attempt by the federal government to relate directly with local governments. (Adedeji 1969) asserts that the success or failure and the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of local government depend on the financial resources available to individual local authorities and the way

resources are utilized. Indeed, the problem associated with the inadequacy of funding continues to remain high among factors associated with local government's ability to perform its statutory devolved functions as the closest to the people. As an appendage of the state government, the structure is under-developed, and not only are councils performing below expectations across the board, but their prospects as an autonomous unit of administration are slim.

Federalism

Contemporary federalism is traced back to Kenneth C. Wheare who conceptualized federalism as a constitutional arrangement that divides lawmaking powers and functions between two levels of government, ensuring independence and coordination within their respective spheres of jurisdiction and competence (Wheare, 1953). Kapur (1986) described federalism as a dual government in which the constitution distributes powers and functions between a central government and regional or state governments. The component units, i.e., regional or state governments, are coordinate independent authorities within their allotted sphere of jurisdiction, with both levels of government possessing original and derived powers. It is crucial that the component units have sufficient economic resources to satisfactorily perform their functions without dependence on national government handouts. In the words of Babalawe (1988), a federal state is one with an explicit and constitutional demarcation of powers and functions between national and sub-national units. The responsibilities are distributed in such a way that both levels of polity can protect their existence and authority within their own sphere. Federalism is a doctrine that advocates for decentralized power or dispersal by contract as a means of safeguarding local identities and individual liberties. Federalism describes a state's structure, political process, and political culture. However, in Nigeria, the principle of definition and description of federalism can no longer hold because the central government has taken over powers previously exercised by regional governments.

According to Rodee (1983), federalism is a constitutional arrangement that defines the distribution of governmental power between the national and constituent units. Friedrich (1963: 585) views federalism as a union of groups united by common objectives but retaining their distinctive group being for other purposes. It is a means of uniting groups without destroying their distinctive characteristics, and it strengthens their relations with one another. Similarly, Wheare (1953), Kapur (1986), and Babalawe (1988) argue that true federalism allows regions or states to control their resources without much interference from the central government. In an ideal federation such as the United States of America, Canada, and Switzerland, the states are semi-autonomous, virtually independent of the center. They have control over resources found in their areas but pay royalties to the central government. However, Nigeria's federalism has been characterized as cosmetic, lacking many of the essential elements of federalism. According to Ekpo (2004), proponents of resource control have argued that Nigeria cannot be considered a true federation because it lacks key elements such as state police and control of natural resources by the federating units. Nigeria's federal system is essentially a unitary state, with the government at the center wielding more power than the states, which rely on the central government for survival. The proponents of true federalism argue that if the regions of the first republic had control of the agricultural products produced in their areas and received up to 50 percent derivation from whatever accrued to the federation account as revenue, then the Niger Delta region should be entitled to the same benefits. The people of the Niger Delta find it unacceptable that the practice of resource control was abandoned, and derivation was significantly reduced. Additionally, federalism is a constitutional arrangement that divides governmental power between national and constituent units. True federalism allows regions or states to have autonomy and control over their resources without much interference from the central government. Nigeria's federalism is considered cosmetic, lacking many of the essential elements of

federalism, with the government at the center holding more power than the states. The people of the Niger Delta region are pushing for resource control and greater derivation to address this imbalance. The attainment of true federalism in Nigeria holds significant potential for the introduction of the principle of resource control, thereby encouraging the early development of other natural resources of both local and international relevance. Such a move would empower states to provide inputs into how natural resources found within their respective areas are to be exploited and how any revenue accruing therefrom should be shared. As all states within Nigeria are blessed with natural resources, the potential benefits of true federalism are universal. Ndu (2003) identified two fundamental reasons for the erosion of true federalism, which characterized the Nigerian nation during the first republic before the military's intervention in 1966. Firstly, the collapse of the first republic, brought about by the military's intervention in January 1966, abruptly ended the visionary development of federalism, which had been in progress from 1954 to 1965. The unfortunate events of that early harmattan morning on January 15, 1966, not only eliminated some of the founding fathers of federalism in Nigeria but also killed the essence of federalism itself. Secondly, proponents of true federalism argued that the feebleness of states was not due to a lack of resources and manpower that would make them economically and administratively strong. Instead, the fiscal and legislative relationships between the states and federal government rendered them weak (Ndu, 2003).

In conclusion, the attainment of true federalism has the potential to enhance the resource control principle and the development of natural resources in Nigeria. The feebleness of states in the country is due to fiscal and legislative relationships with the federal government, which true federalism seeks to address. The collapse of the first republic and the subsequent military intervention in 1966 tragically eliminated some of the founding fathers of federalism and effectively killed the essence of federalism in Nigeria.

Local Government

The idea of local government is a fundamental aspect of the nature and identity of a state. It reflects a deep-seated belief in the importance of democratic participation in governance at the community level. Local government involves the delegation of authority and personnel by a higher level of government to a community that has its own distinct interests and desires. This system of decentralized governance allows for the provision of specific services and functions that are tailored to the unique needs of people at the grassroots level. Through local government, citizens can play an active role in shaping the policies and decisions that affect their daily lives, fostering a sense of ownership and investment in the democratic process. (Agagu, 1997). Abubakar (2010) defines local government as a political subdivision of a national or state, constituted by law and having substantial control of local affairs, including the powers to impose taxes or exact labour for prescribed purposes. The governing body for such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected (Ikeanyibe, 2009). In a unitary state, Adeyeye (2000) defines local government as a non-sovereign community possessing the legal right, which serves as administrative agents of the central government. Oloyede (2006) describes local government as a political and administrative structure that facilitates decentralization, national integration, efficiency in governance, and a sense of belonging at the grassroots. Arowolo (2006) interprets local government as a unit of administration with defined powers and authority imbued with relative autonomy in decision-making, elected or appointed. Obi (2009) asserts that local government is the third tier of government nearest to the local people, set up to meet the needs and aspirations of the rural dwellers. Overall, local government councils are institutions whose operations address the needs and aspirations of the citizenry and extend administrative and political control to rural areas (Wanjohi, 2003). The concept of local government is viewed as a means to

encourage democratic participation in governance at the grassroots level and to promote the decentralization of authority and personnel from higher levels of government to local communities. Fajobi (2000) considers local government as a political authority established by the state to decentralize political power and delegate authority. By providing local services, local governments alleviate the burden on central and state governments, which are often not equipped to address local needs. According to Chukwuemeka and Uche (2005), local government is a political sub-division of a state with a legal existence under the law, run by elected representatives of the local people, and possessing substantial autonomy in administrative and financial affairs. Bello-Iman (1996) also sees local government as a unit of administration with defined territory, powers, and administrative authority.

In Nigeria, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 1999) defines local government as government at the local level exercised through a representative council established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. This provision in the constitution confers significant authority to local councils in the management of local affairs, including the ability to hire staff, establish institutions, and allocate funds for social services and developmental projects. Through the devolution of functions from higher levels of government to local councils and active participation of citizens in addressing local needs, local councils are empowered to take a leading role in implementing programs that complement the activities of state and federal governments. This system of devolution enables greater responsiveness to the unique needs of local communities and promotes democratic participation at the grassroots level, helping to ensure that policies and decisions are informed by the perspectives and experiences of those who are most directly impacted (Ina, 2002). Overall, the establishment of local government is viewed as a way to promote community participation in governance, generate local resources for development, and alleviate the burden on higher levels of government.

Dynamics of Nigeria's Federalism

It is unfortunate that Nigeria's post-military era has been marred by electoral violence and political instability. The diversity of Nigeria's population and its regional, religious, and ethnic divisions, coupled with the political elites' use of poverty-stricken and unemployed Nigerians as mercenaries for violence, have contributed to the country's political crisis. The importance of free and fair elections in the entrenchment of federalism, as noted by K.C Wheare and contemporary scholars, has not been realized in Nigeria due to the history of violence and electoral malpractice. It is important for Nigeria to address these issues and promote democratic values in order to achieve stability and progress. Currently the Nigerian state is divided into six geopolitical zones namely: the North-West comprising *Kaduna, Katsina, Jigawa, Sokoto, Kebbi, Kano, and Zamfara*; the North-East comprising *Bauchi, Gombe, Borno, Taraba, Adamawa and Yobe*; the North Central comprising *Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (FCT), Plateau, Nassarawa, Niger, Kwara, Kogi and Benue*; the South-West comprising *Lagos, Osun, Ogun, Oyo, Ekiti and Ondo*; the South-East comprising *Enugu, Anambra, Imo, Abia and Ebonyi* and the South South comprising *Rivers, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Delta Edo and Bayelsa*. Nigeria is a pluralistic society with different and overlapping regional, religious, and ethnic divisions. Culture in Nigeria is as diverse as its population, which is estimated to be over 200 million. With the regaining of political process in 1999 and after over three decades of military rule, Nigeria looked set for a return to stability and the regaining of its position in the comity of nations particularly in Africa. Unfortunately, this was not to be (Aniekwe & Kushie 2011). Since the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections, the Nigeria electoral and political landscape has fallen from par to below par and has moved from violence to greater violence. The level and magnitude of electoral,

political, regional and religious violence has risen and the political elites have often converted poverty-ridden unemployed Nigerians into mercenaries for the perpetration of electoral, regional and religious violence. For K.C Wheare and contemporary scholars who observed that free and fair election is a precursor or prerequisite to the entrenchment of federalism, the history of elections in Nigeria appeared to have proved otherwise (Aniekwe & Kuschic 2011).

Nature and Structure of Nigeria Federalism

Nigeria's federalism is rooted in the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914, which recognized them as near autonomous entities with differences in their administration. However, it was the Lyttleton Constitution that established true federalism in Nigeria when it came into effect on 1st October 1954. This constitution divided powers between the central and regional governments, specifying issues exclusive to each level and those on which both could legislate. The constitution also provided for regional premiers. The federal structure introduced by the Lyttleton Constitution was followed by the Independence Constitution of 1960, which made minor modifications to it. Under this constitution, the Prime Minister was the head of government, while the ceremonial president was the head of state. The Republican Constitution of 1963 created the mid-Western region, increasing the regions from three to four. However, the problem of the unequal size of regions persisted, with the Northern region larger than the three Southern regions combined.

The year 1967 marked a turning point in the political history of Nigeria as the then General Yakubu Gowon-led administration took steps to subdivide the existing four regions into twelve states, with the aim of reducing the influence of Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu, the governor of Eastern Nigeria, and averting secession. However, Ojukwu defied the move and declared independence of the Eastern region, which led to a destructive civil war lasting three years (6th July 1967 – 15th January 1970). The twelve states that emerged from the restructuring exercise were fashioned out of the former four regions, with the Northern region providing six states, the Eastern region three, the mid-West region one, the Western region one, and the old Lagos colony, along with some parts of the Western region, forming a state. Each state was administered by a military government, except for the East Central State, which had a civilian administrator. The exercise, while seemingly a strategic move by the federal government to achieve a balance of power and reduce the influence of the Eastern region, was fraught with challenges. The unequal size of the regions created discrepancies in the distribution of resources and revenue allocation, which further fueled tensions among the regions. The military government's heavy-handed approach to governance, coupled with the ethnic and regional tension, ultimately culminated in the Nigerian Civil War.

Summarily, the subdivision of the four regions into twelve states was a significant milestone in Nigeria's political history, albeit one that was shrouded in conflict and controversy. It represented a deliberate attempt by the federal government to reduce regional power and create a more balanced federation. However, the exercise did not completely solve the issues of unequal resource allocation and regional tensions, which eventually led to the destructive Nigerian Civil War. The creation of seven new states on 3rd February 1976 by the General Murtala Muhammad regime brought the total number of states to nineteen. The Babangida administration created two more states, Akwa Ibom and Katsina, in 1987. Under the same administration in 1991, nine additional states were created, making a total of thirty states, excluding Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. Finally, the Abacha regime created six additional states on 1st October 1996, bringing the total number of states in Nigeria to thirty-six.

Revenue Allocation/Resource Control

The equitable allocation of federal revenue has been a contentious issue in Nigerian federalism. The lack of fiscal autonomy among the federating units has left them solely reliant on the central government for revenue. With Nigeria's dependence on crude oil for over 90% of its income, the Niger-Delta region has become critical to the country's economic future. However, the local population feels marginalized and deprived of a just share of the benefits, while the environment and agriculture, which serve as means of livelihood, are adversely affected by oil exploration. Over time, the Federal Government has gained control of oil revenues through successive legislation, including the Petroleum and Land Use Acts. This has denied the Niger-Delta adequate control of revenue generated from their land. Consequently, the importance of derivation as a revenue allocation principle has declined, leading to an unjust and inequitable revenue-sharing formula that benefits a particular region to the detriment of others. The derivation principle is one of the constitutionally prescribed criteria for distributing federally-collected revenue between the federal and state governments. It states that a predetermined percentage of federally-collected revenue, derived from a state of the federation, shall be returned to that state as a form of compensation for its contribution to federal finance. The aim of this principle is to achieve a fair balance between the contributions made by the respective states to federally-collected revenue and their share of the revenue from the total federal receipts. A critical analysis of previous and current revenue allocation formulae shows that revenue allocation has become a veneer for legitimizing Northern hegemony. For instance, in the 1995/1996 fiscal year, Kano State alone received over 15 billion Naira as statutory allocation, while the much more populated and productive Lagos State received a little over a billion Naira from the same Federation Account. This discrepancy in revenue sharing underscores the injustice in the current revenue allocation formula and highlights the fact that Nigerian federalism is far from a truly federal fiscal system.

The current revenue allocation formula came into effect on July 10, 1992, with the promulgation of the Allocation of Revenue Amendment Decree of 1992. It is essential to revisit this formula to promote equity and fairness in the allocation of revenue among the federating units. The Niger-Delta region, in particular, should have adequate control of the revenue generated from their land to ensure sustainable development and address the challenges they face due to oil exploration. Nigeria is widely considered to be a mono-economy, particularly with respect to federally collected revenue. This is largely attributable to the fact that, in 2008, oil revenue accounted for 83% of such revenue. The various levels of government, with the notable exception of Lagos State and Rivers State, primarily rely on their respective shares of federally collected revenue to execute their functions. The revenue allocation formulae currently in use were established on 10 July 1992 through the promulgation of the "Allocation of Revenue (Federation Account etc) (Amendment) Decree of 1992," which stipulates that 48.5% of the revenue is allocated to the Federal Government, 24% to the state governments, 20% to local government, and 7.5% to a special fund. It is important to note that, with the exception of the two aforementioned states, the remaining states heavily rely on their shares of federal allocations to carry out their functions. Adamolekun (2018) argues that the sharing and allocation of responsibilities in Nigeria would be more dependable with a decentralized federal system, which would closely follow the provisions in the 1954 and 1960 Federal Republic of Nigeria constitutions. Under such a system, there would be a short exclusive federal list, covering areas such as national defense, the macro economy, and foreign affairs. Additionally, joint responsibility would be allocated for some crucial functions, such as internal security and policing, which are presently exclusively the federal government's responsibility. The sub-national government would assume the primary obligation in line with some roles in the Second Scheduled of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution.

However, Adamolekun (2018) observes that the failure of the National Assembly to consider the delegation of power in the planned Constitutional amendment implies that the continuous attachment to over-concentration of power is not only the level of military politicians. He proposes that citizens in all geopolitical zones should make a pledge to the Constitutional amendment on decentralization a litmus test for the aspirant in the coming 2019 general election: Legislators at the state and national levels, Governors, and the President. Adamolekun further argues that the current allocation percentages applied to the Federation Account should reflect the projected allocation of responsibilities to ensure equal power and resource allocation among all the federating units. Therefore, he proposes a 35:65 sharing ratio, that is, 35% for the central government and 65% for the government of the federating units.

In conclusion, Adamolekun recommends a decentralized federal system in Nigeria, where there is a balanced sharing and allocation of responsibilities among the federating units, to ensure equal power and resource allocation. Shehu's (2017) study highlights that Nigeria's fiscal arrangements were initially structured as a unitary arrangement with a central government that held significant constitutional power in fiscal matters. However, the constitutional creation of three regions in 1946 led to the regions assuming the fiscal responsibilities of the federal government. Shehu notes that "by 1947 there were constitutionally two main sources of revenue for the regional governments as Declared and Non-Declared Revenue generated from within the regions and grants from the central revenue". Despite the intended plan of the elites, this organized dysfunction resulted in a sequence of vehement, exaggerated, and upsetting inter-ethnic regional hostility, as expressed in the spirit of the discussion (Majekodunmi, 2015).

Local Government Administrative Reform in Nigeria

Local government administration in Nigeria has undergone several reforms aimed at enhancing its effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery. These reforms have been introduced from the pre-colonial period to the post-colonial era. The Eastern region experienced the local government reforms of 1955, 1958, and 1960, while the Western region had the 1952 and 1957 local government laws and the sole administrators' regime during the military system of local government in 1960. However, the major breakthrough in local administration is linked to the reform of 1976. The 1976 local government reform aimed to establish a national democratic system and decentralize power to ensure efficiency in the provision of services locally. The reform brought uniformity in local government administration in all the states of Nigeria. It introduced the practice of giving statutory allocations to local governments and eradicating regional administration by using local government representatives. Another notable feature of the 1976 reforms was the introduction of full-time chairman and supervising councilors at the local level, which aimed to stimulate democratic participation through the institution of popularly elected representatives in the local government councils (Aibieyi, 2008).

In 1991, the military government of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida introduced the separation of powers in legislative councils and the presidential system practiced in the federal and state governments to local governments. This led to the eradication of the Local Government Service Commission in Nigeria. However, the body was set up again in 1992. Many other reforms have taken place between 1999 and the present day. These include the politicization of the office of the local government secretary, the introduction of DG service and Administration as the head of administration in the local government, and the establishment of the office of the Auditor General to audit the accounts of local government councils and local government pensions, among several others. Despite the various reforms introduced over the years, the performance of local governments in Nigeria remains unsatisfactory. The implementation of these reforms has been marred by political interference,

corruption, and inadequate funding. Therefore, there is a need for more comprehensive reforms that address the root causes of these challenges and strengthen the autonomy of local governments to promote grassroots development and effective service delivery in Nigeria.

In conclusion, the history of local administration in Nigeria has seen several reforms aimed at improving the performance of local governments. The 1976 local government reform stands out as a significant breakthrough in this regard. However, the implementation of these reforms has been marred by various challenges, and the performance of local governments in Nigeria remains unsatisfactory. Therefore, there is a need for more comprehensive reforms that address the root causes of these challenges and strengthen the autonomy of local governments to promote grassroots development and effective service delivery in Nigeria.

Challenges of Local Government System in Nigeria

1. Lack of Autonomy: The founding fathers of the 1976 Local Government (LG) reform envisioned an administration that is autonomous at the local level. This was intended to serve as a training ground for political participation and to encourage local participation in the management of their affairs. In recognition of this, the LG was recognized as the third tier of government in the reform. As stated in section 7(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the LG was to function as an agent of socio-economic development and as a relatively autonomous body, as observed by Ajayi (2000). However, it is regrettable that the autonomy that was envisioned at the inception of the reform has become a mirage. As noted by Adeyemi (2013) and Gboyega (2001), state governments have treated local government as an outpost of state administration since 2003. This lack of autonomy has been evident in the state government's manipulation of the election or appointment of key personnel in the system, which does not reflect the choices of the local communities. Furthermore, state governments have refused to release 10 per cent of the internally generated revenue to local governments, while taking over lucrative sources of internally generated revenue. Additionally, the financial autonomy of local government has been eroded with the introduction of the Joint Allocation Account of the State and Local Government, which is hidden under section 7 (6) of the 1999 Constitution. In 2003, the state government compelled local government Chairmen and Directors of Administration to write on behalf of their councils to establish the JAC and evade litigation. Such a scenario is counterproductive to local government performing its statutory duties, as noted by Onah (1995.40).

2. Financial Challenges: The preceding discourse reveals that the institutional challenges that characterized the period between 1979 and 2003 have resurfaced, with grave consequences for local government administration. At present, local councils are unable to undertake any meaningful development projects because their source of funds has been taken over by the state government. More troubling is the fact that the operatives of the local government are unable to speak out, even when faced with extreme condemnation by their communities. It has also become commonplace for the federal and state governments to transfer some of their responsibilities to local governments without providing adequate funding. The emerging scenario has imposed a severe financial burden on local government administration, resulting in a widely reported situation in the news media where some local governments are owing their staffers for upwards of six months. The implication of unpaid salaries is far-reaching, as salaried workers are often the drivers of the rural economy. In instances where salaries are not paid, the effect is usually evident in a slowing down of business activities and general discontentment against the government. The situation is particularly dire in Osun state, where food items were donated to civil servants, and a High Court Judge called for the impeachment of the state governor (Kumolu, 2015). This compelled the Buhari administration to arrange for financial bailout funds to offset the bills, as was done in 1984.

3. Manpower Challenges: An in-depth examination of the manpower situation within the local government system in Nigeria reveals that despite the exposure of both state and local government employees to similar training facilities, the system is not necessarily populated by academically sound personnel, as may be assumed. The observations of Kenje (2013) and Gboyega (2001) rightly point to the significant challenge of personnel quality, rather than quantity, in the local government system. This challenge is attributed to flawed recruitment and deployment procedures, which are largely based on political loyalty, rather than merit or necessity. Consequently, the administration is populated by individuals who are idle and may constitute a burden to the system. Notably, since 1999, there has been a massive influx of teachers from primary and secondary schools into the local government system, as well as politically appointed heads of administration who may lack the requisite qualifications or have not passed prerequisite examinations, contrary to Civil Service Rules. As a result, such officers may find it difficult to articulate any position beyond forwarding the comments of subordinate officers to the chairman, with their own contributions "above for your approval." Additionally, staff experience and seniority may no longer be regarded in some states, such as Kwara and Kogi, where officers of Grade Level 16 are made to serve under Grade Level 14, without having committed any offence. This practice undermines the standard of administration and creates a sense of insecurity among hardworking staff, leaving them to cringe rather than face their duties. Furthermore, the appointments of heads of departments, treasurers, and directors of administration, which are supposed to be the prerogative of the Local Government Service Commissions, have been hijacked by politicians, thus sacrificing competence. Inadequacies in the quality of the political class in the local government system are also a concern. The appointment of handpicked political loyalists by governors, without academic or professional competence, is a liability to the system. A case in point is the appointment of an illiterate carpenter as the Chairman of Moba Local Government in Ekiti state by Governor Fayose in August 2015. As a result, many local governments are currently staffed by officials who may not possess the necessary leadership and managerial skills to effectively implement democratic policies and initiatives. This lack of expertise can create challenges in the delivery of services and programs that are responsive to the needs of local communities. While the devolution of functions to local councils is an important step towards promoting democratic governance and citizen participation, it is also essential to ensure that officials at the local level are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively carry out their duties. Investing in training and capacity building for local officials can help to address these challenges, improving the quality of governance and the delivery of services to citizens at the grassroots level (Makinde, et al 2016).

In summary, the shortage of trained and skilled political, administrative, technical, and professional personnel renders local governments in Nigeria ineffective and inefficient in the performance of their constitutional rights. Agba, Akwara, and Idu (2013) have also made similar observations regarding this challenge. It is, therefore, essential to address the issue of personnel quality and recruitment procedures in the local government system, to enhance the quality of governance and promote development in Nigeria.

4. Indiscipline: A critical examination of the manpower situation in local government systems may reveal a misconception that the system is populated with highly educated personnel, similar to other sectors. While it can be argued that local governments now have medical doctors and engineers, among others, as observed by Kenje (2013) and Gboyega (2001), personnel issues pose serious challenges in local governments, not in terms of quantity but in quality, due to faulty recruitment and deployment procedures. Unfortunately, recruitment into local government systems is largely based on political loyalty rather than on needs, which results in idle hands that burden the system. Since 1999, there has been a massive transfer of teachers in primary and secondary schools into local

government systems and politically appointed heads of administration without passing prerequisite examinations or complying with Civil Service Rules. Consequently, such officers are unable to articulate positions effectively and merely forward the comments of subordinate officers to the chairman with their own contributions, "above for your approval." Moreover, staff experience and seniority no longer count in many states such as Kwara and Kogi, where Grade Level 16 officers are made to serve under Grade Level 14 without having committed an offense. This results in lowering the standard of administration, creating a sense of insecurity among hardworking staff, and leaving them to cringe rather than face their duties. In addition, the appointments of heads of departments, treasurers, and directors of administration, which are supposed to be the prerogative of Local Government Service Commissions, have been politically hijacked by politicians, thereby disregarding competence. Furthermore, the issue of corruption in local government systems is closely related to general indiscipline in the service. Recent experiences reveal that staff turn up in sizable numbers when salaries are to be paid, while the office is deserted even by political officeholders and top echelon of the service shortly after payment. An unstructured interview with staff from two local governments in Kwara State confirmed this, indicating that directors of administration and other heads of departments were seldom seen in offices. Local government secretariats exist as physical structures without required services performed. It is, therefore, common to see women selling wares in offices, while men show up before disappearing to their various business ventures. This, as observed by Alao, Nwogwugwu, and Alao (2012), is partly attributed to low morale in the service, particularly due to irregular salaries. However, when salaries are regular, indiscipline is still a common feature in public service and by implication, local government service.

Akpobakah and Obioma (2002) also view indiscipline in terms of budget implementation, as projects not budgeted for are often embarked upon or imposed on local governments by higher levels of government without corresponding funding. This often leads to implementing multiple projects simultaneously, while, as observed by Lawal (2000), a lack of maintenance culture of existing facilities results in avoidable waste.

Conclusion

In summary, the essence of true federalism is to promote unity among all the states and regions in the country, while allowing each state or region to have significant independence in managing its affairs. The Nigerian federalism system is based on power-sharing and resource control, in line with federalism principles. However, conflicts have arisen in the allocation of resources and sharing of power, leading to ongoing debates and questions about the effectiveness of the system. While diversity among individuals is a natural and beneficial aspect of most federal states across the world, it has unfortunately resulted in slow planning, decision-making, and implementation, societal divisions, and particularistic feelings in Nigeria. It is essential to find ways to improve the current federalism system in Nigeria to ensure that it promotes progress and unity, rather than division and conflict. The Nigerian federalism and local government system face a plethora of challenges, which have hindered their effective functioning. The federal system in Nigeria is characterized by excessive centralization, which has limited the autonomy of the federating units. Similarly, the local government system is plagued by corruption, indiscipline, and inadequate capacity, which have impeded its ability to deliver essential services to the people. The current situation calls for urgent reforms to address these challenges and improve the functioning of the federal and local government systems.

Recommendations

To address the challenges facing the Nigerian federalism and local government system, the following recommendations are proposed:

Devolution of powers: There is a need to devolve more powers to the states and local governments to enable them to address the needs of their citizens effectively. This will require constitutional amendments to limit the powers of the central government and grant more autonomy to the states and local governments.

Capacity building: The capacity of the local government system needs to be strengthened through the training and development of human resources, provision of necessary infrastructure and equipment, and institutional reforms to improve governance and management practices.

Fiscal decentralization: Fiscal decentralization should be encouraged to enable local governments to generate and manage their revenue effectively. This will involve reforming the current revenue allocation formula to grant more revenue to the states and local governments.

Anti-corruption measures: The Nigerian government should take decisive action to combat corruption in the local government system. This will require strengthening the institutions responsible for preventing and investigating corruption and implementing strict sanctions for corrupt officials.

Public participation: The Nigerian government should involve citizens in the decision-making process of the local government system. This will involve the creation of platforms for citizens to engage with local governments on issues that affect them and the establishment of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the performance of local governments.

By implementing these recommendations, the Nigerian federalism and local government system can be restructured to ensure greater autonomy, accountability, and effectiveness in service delivery, thereby promoting the development of the country as a whole.

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