

Local Governance and Rural Development in IFELOJU LCDA of Oyo State

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Abstract: Local government serves as an instrument for rapid actualization of even development at the grassroots. It guarantees commitment to common cause which makes possible the mobilization of natives for the realization of desirable rural progress. It is in recognition of this that the paper examines the justification for the creation of LCDAs in Oyo state taking cognizance of administrative efficiency and economic viability. A sample of 120 people was chosen at random from three main areas in Ogboro. Relying on empirical method of analysis, self-designed questionnaire was administered to collect data just as Chi-square test was employed to analyse and interpret data. The findings indicate that the effectiveness of local councils to mobilize resources for local development was minimal. This situation makes the respondents wonder how the state government can financially sustain the newly created ones when the existing LGs are being starved of funds. Based on this, the paper recommends that only viable states with abundant resources should be allowed to create LCDAs, good measure of autonomy and substantial powers to LCDAs, effective mobilization of local resources, and adequate supervision of LCDA for effective performance.

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I. INTRODUCTION

As a political arrangement, federalism is considered a framework best suitable to multi-ethnic nations characterized by challenges of diversities. Thus, as an ethnic-balancing mechanism, successive leadership in Nigeria has devised strategies to address perceived lopsidedness in the political design, and formulate policies that will accommodate the peculiar needs of different communities. Local government creation exercise is one of the policy actions of government to devolve power to the local level with a view to enhancing development at the grassroots. Rural development involves both the transformation of lives and landscape to ensure significant improvement in the quality of life of the rural folk. When governance is actually transferred to the local governments, it provides significant opportunities for popular participation and increased involvement by the people and communities in decisions that directly affect their lives. Besides, political decentralization enhances empowerment which provides an appropriate framework for responding efficiently to the needs of the local populace (Manyi, 2007). Considered as the closest tier of government to the grassroots, Local Council Development Area (LCDA) is an initiative to challenge local area to utilize resources in delivering projects based on local interest and realities.

Notably, local administration predates political colonialism in Nigeria. As pointed out by Aina (2006), governance and politics at the local level in Nigeria did not come with the attainment of independence in 1960; neither was it the handiwork of colonial masters. Local governments (administration) have always been an integral part of the various societies and human communities that became known as Nigeria by the proclamation of Lugard in 1914. To Gboyega (1987), the 1976 local government reform was a watershed as it accorded formal and unequivocal recognition to LG as constituting a distinct level of government with definite boundaries, clearly stated functions, and provisions for ensuring adequate human and financial resources. For the first time in the political history of the country, the 1979 constitution recognized the local government as the third tier of government. Be that as it may, this work is being undertaken to empirically investigate the creation of LCDAs by the Oyo state government within the framework of empowerment aimed at improving/ enhancing rural livelihoods in their social and economic domains.

Statement of the problem

The need for rural development and the desire to reduce the rate at which rural people become passive recipients of policies (which affect their lives) leads federal government to devolve power to the local government. The notion that political decentralization enhances empowerment which provides an appropriate framework for responding efficiently to the needs of the local populace is the rationale for the creation of local

government. Thus, it seems decentralization constitutes the basic driving force for the promotion of development, democracy, and good governance at local level. But in reality, such devolution has in many cases been quite inefficient to achieve this goal as the local people lack control over resources and opportunity to participate in decision making process. Though, the Oyo state government claim the new local council development areas it created was in response to the yearning of people for more LGs in order to fast track grassroots development as well as the need to enhance socio-economic development in different localities. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of local councils to mobilize resources for local development was minimal. With the existing LGs being starved of funds, can the state government financially sustain the newly created ones? It is against this background that the paper attempts to examine administrative efficiency vis-a-vis economic viability of local council with particular focus on the Ifelaju Local Council Development Area of Oyo state.

Conceptual Clarifications

Local governance: It has to do with the exercise of political power to manage local affairs. This entails such issues as rule of law, accountability and transparency, development-oriented leadership, freedom of expression and association, responsiveness, responsibility, representativeness, efficiency and effectiveness (Alkali, 2005).

Rural development: It is the process of improving the living condition of the people of the grassroots by means of providing their basic exigencies and the acceleration of their access to the opportunities of self-fulfillment.

Local government and rural development

Local Government is established to serve as an instrument for rapid actualization of even development of community-based authority. It guarantees commitment to common cause which makes possible the mobilization of such people for the realization of desirable rural development for their collective benefit. The 1976 LG reforms have come to be identified as the reference point for any meaningful discussion of local government system as an avenue for participatory democracy. The return to civil rule in 1979 saw communities agitating for additional local governments. This is not unconnected to the position of the Ibrahim Dasuki committee on local government which, not only reaffirmed the soundness of the 1976 reforms but also proposed that, for better decentralization, local governments could, within their areas of jurisdictions, create between 5 and 7 development areas with responsibilities for providing basic services. Agitation for local government areas, Mabogunje (2016) observes, is always about which community would host the headquarters of the government not about how the communities are to be effectively governed. This is because whichever communities is selected as headquarters tends to enjoy a “free rider” advantage of attracting to itself all of the developmental projects meant for the LGA, often to the utter neglect of the other settlements.

Although the 1999 Constitution assigns a number of responsibilities to local councils, Section 7 of the same constitution ties the councils to the apron strings of the state governments by empowering the latter to legislate for their creation, structure, composition, finance and function. In terms of financing for instance, the constitution places the local councils under the control of states (FRN, 1999; Mabogunje, 2016). The issue of creation of new local government councils has been one major area of political disagreement between state governors and the presidency. This is borne out of the need to fulfill electoral promises regarding creation of new local government areas. This did not go down with the federal government which nursed the view that it might have future political implications. This line of argument was hardly convincing to states especially Lagos, where a feeling of marginalization suffered during the previous attempts at creating new LGs by the military was seen as being sustained by the Obasanjo administration. The situation between Lagos state and Kano state best illustrate the nature of this inequity. For instance, Lagos state has an estimated population of 21 million, while Kano’s estimated population was 14 million (Orebe, 2017). Until Abacha’s reform, both states had 20 local governments. Abacha then carved out Jigawa state out of Kano state and arbitrarily granted it 26 LGAs. Even the reduced state, he granted 44 LGs, making a total of 70 LGs whilst Lagos still remained with 20 LGs (Mabogunje, 2016). The motive behind this lopsided arrangement is the belief that ‘the more LGs a state has, the more it received from the federation account’ (Mabogunje, 2016), despite 5% of VAT (Value Added Tax) generated by Kano while Lagos state generates 55% (*The Nation*, October 1, 2017).

Contrary to periods 1965/66 and 1969/70 when LGCs in the Western Region generated from their internal resources more than eighty per cent (80%) of their total annual revenues (Gboyega, 2003), the present system has left most local communities in Nigeria virtually without governance. Since, the local councils are not economically viable, attaining administrative efficiency becomes difficult. At present, ‘nearly all local governments have become complacent to sources of revenue in their territories and the generation of independent incomes for themselves’ (Sagay, 2016).

Although the usual cliché is usually to assert that local government is the government nearest to the grassroots, there is little evidence that the grassroots feel any closeness to the present local governments. On the

strength of this argument, Gboyega (2003) affirms that local governments are not sufficiently local despite frequent fragmentation of their areas of authority and multiplication of their numbers. No local government, for instance, submits its annual budget to its local community or reports its achievements to them, except at great expense on the pages of newspapers.

Though the rationale behind the creation of LCDAs include, but not limited to, robust resource of social capital which had in the past been responsible for developments in many communities. It is against this backdrop that the Ajimobi-led administration increased the number of local councils in Oyo state. The creation of additional local councils was in consonance with the gazette No 23, Vol. 27 in 2002 which recommended the creation of supplementary 35 LCDAs to the existing 33 LGAs in the state (*Nigerian Tribune*, August 30, 2016). However, the boundaries of the existing LGAs were therefore redefined to reflect the new local councils and their wards. The state government justified the creation of local councils based on the need to fast track grassroots development; promote efficient and effective administration; and enhance socio-economic development in different localities.

Nevertheless, there are insinuations that many LCDAs would exist only in name because they could not afford to provide services to their citizens. Akin to the 1976 reforms that were characterized by ‘over-politicization of local government affairs by state governments’ (Aina, 2006), the Oyo state government did not conduct local council election for 11 years! Instead of guaranteeing a system of democratically elected people, the Akala and Ajimobi administrations opted for the management committee system based largely on appointment rather than election. What is more, with the existing LGs being staffed of funds, the state government went ahead to create new ones.

Objectives

- i. To examine the extent of peoples’ participation in local governance.
- ii. To discuss the rate at which local administrators achieve efficient service delivery.
- iii. To assess the viability and vitality of local council development authority regarding resource mobilization.
- iv. To recommend better ways of improving local administration in Nigeria

Research Hypotheses

1. There is significant relationship between local governance and rural development
2. Local governance has significant effect on efficient service delivery.
3. There is significant relationship between local governance and resource mobilization.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted descriptive survey design as it involves getting in touch with a target population. The researcher will have direct contact with the people. As an empirical study, the purpose is to survey what is happening on the field and describe in a logical manner the facts as collected from the field.

Study Area

The researcher intends to undertake a study on the newly created Local Council Development Areas which co-exist with the existing LGs across the three senatorial districts in Oyo state. For the purpose of in-depth investigation, the research is limited to Ifelaju LCDA that shares boundary with the existing Saki East LGA.

Population

The target population of the study was made up of residents (indigenes and non-indigenes) at Ogbooro, headquarter of Ifelaju Local Council Development Authority. These are individuals who will be affected (directly or indirectly) by policy actions of local administrators.

Sample and Sampling Technique

One hundred and twenty (120) respondents formed the sample of the study. In line with the geographical nature of the town, eight (8) wards were randomly selected in the proportion of 4:2:2 from Kajola, Ayetoro and Agbonle with a view to investigating the level at which people get involved in rural development in Ifelaju Local Development Area.

Research instrument

A self-designed questionnaire known as “Local governance and rural development” was adopted. The instrument contained two parts. The first part of the instrument was designed to elicit relevant information on

the bio-data of the respondents while the second part is made up of items relating to the perceptions of the respondents on the impacts of governance at the grassroots.

Validity and Reliability of the instrument

The questionnaire was given to lecturers in the department of Political Science for scrutiny. Their various suggestions were taken into consideration in the final compilation of this study. This ensures the face validity of the instrument. Meanwhile, chi-square test was applied to establish the reliability test instrument.

Table 1
People participate actively in local administration to promote rural development

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D
	People contribute immensely in the decision making process at local level	39	36	19	26
	Appointment of caretaker committee engenders political apathy	54	25	18	23
	People's participation in local governance accelerate development	27	25	33	35
	Getting involved in local administration fosters transparency and accountability	24	33	14	49
	Local council can pass bye-law which promotes local self-governance	39	19	44	18

Source: Author's field work, 2018

Table 2

S/N	Fo	fe	fo-fe	(fo-fe) ²	$\frac{(fo-fe)^2}{fe}$
1	75	64.2	10.8	116.64	1.82
2	79	64.2	14.8	219.04	3.41
3	52	64.2	-12.2	148.84	2.32
4	57	64.2	-7.2	51.84	0.81
5	58	64.2	-6.2	38.44	0.60
6	45	55.8	-10.8	116.64	2.10
7	41	55.8	-14.8	219.04	3.93
8	68	55.8	12.2	148.84	2.67
9	63	55.8	7.2	51.84	0.93
10	62	55.8	6.2	38.44	0.69
Sum	600				19.28

$X^2_{cal} = 19.28,$

$X^2_{tab} = 9.45$ at 5% sig level

Degree of freedom = (r-1) (c-1)

(5-1)(2-1)

(4)(1)=4

Since the value of X^2_{cal} which is 19.28 is greater than X^2_{tab} i.e. 9.45 at 5 % level of significance, the hypothesis which states that people participate actively in local administration to promote rural development is accepted.

Table 3
Local government autonomy stimulates efficient service delivery

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D
	Operation of State Joint Account hinders service delivery at the grassroots	85	24	5	6
	New LCDA is not viable, hence could not afford to provide services to the citizens.	65	34	13	8
	State government provides oversight to ensure programmes are implemented	17	31	24	48

	Peoples' representative discharge their responsibility willingly	30	15	25	50
	Dearth of professional and experienced personnel frustrates service delivery	33	49	12	26

Source: Author's field work, 2018

Table 4

S/N	Fo	Fe	fo-fe	(fo-fe) ²	$\frac{(fo-fe)^2}{Fe}$
1	109	78.8	30.2	912.04	11.57
2	99	78.8	20.2	408.04	5.18
3	48	78.8	-30.8	948.64	12.04
4	56	78.8	-22.8	519.84	6.60
5	82	78.8	3.2	10.24	0.13
6	11	41.2	-30.2	912.04	22.14
7	21	41.2	-20.2	408.04	9.90
8	72	41.2	30.8	948.64	23.03
9	64	41.2	22.8	519.84	12.62
10	38	41.2	-3.2	10.24	0.25
Sum	600				103.46

$X^2_{cal} = 103.46$, $X^2_{tab} = 9.45$ at 5% sig level

Degree X^2 of freedom = (r-1) (c-1)

(5-1)(2-1)

(4)(1)=4

Since the value of X^2_{cal} which is 103.46 is greater than X^2_{tab} i.e. 9.45 at 5 % level of significance, the hypothesis which states that local government autonomy stimulates efficient service delivery is accepted.

Table 5

Local administrators can mobilize resources effectively

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D
	Credible leadership can generate and manage resources efficiently	78	37	3	2
	LCDA should raise revenue to perform assigned functions	17	39	31	33
	Through self-help scheme, local administrators can mobilize people to construct community projects	21	28	30	41
	Philanthropists can sponsor basic infrastructure to hasten rural development	13	23	31	53
	LCDA can organize launching to mobilize resources from prominent individuals	21	24	43	32

Source: Author's field work, 2018

Table 6

S/N	Fo	Fe	fo-fe	(fo-fe) ²	$\frac{(fo-fe)^2}{Fe}$
1	115	66	49	2401	36.38
2	56	66	-10	100	1.52
3	62	66	-4	16	0.24
4	44	66	-22	484	7.33
5	53	66	-13	169	2.56
6	5	54	-49	2401	44.46
7	64	54	10	100	1.85
8	58	54	4	16	0.30
9	76	54	22	484	8.96
10	67	54	13	169	3.13
Sum	600				106.73

$X^2_{cal} = 106.73$, $X^2_{tab} = 9.45$ at 5% sig level

Degree X^2 of freedom = (r-1) (c-1)

(5-1)(2-1)

(4)(1)=4

Since the value of X^2 cal which is 106.73 is greater than X^2 tab i.e. 9.45 at 5 % level of significance, the hypothesis which states that local administrators can mobilize resources effectively is accepted.

III. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Ordinarily, decentralization entails devolution by the central government of powers and appropriate resources to local authorities. Besides, it constitutes the basic driving force for the promotion of development, democracy, and good governance at local level. Perhaps, this explains the theory for justification for the existence of local government on the basis of its being essential to such democratic ethos as responsiveness and accountability (Gboyega, 1987). Buttressing this view, Olowu and Ayo (1985) opined that the rationale for LG creation are: felt needs, local initiatives, participation and an integrated community approach to development in concert with higher levels of government. Just as local government is charged with the responsibility of improving the living standards of the people of the grassroots, it assumes that political empowerment is a necessary prerequisite in development. However, the practice of fiscal federalism typified by too much concentration of resources at the federal centre (Gboyega, 2003) relegates credible sources of revenue for efficient service delivery to the people at the grassroots (Mabounje, 2016; Sagay, 2016), has been disastrous from the point of view of development and public administration. To aggravate the situation, activities at local level are unduly manipulated by the state government. No doubt, this was reflected in the responses of the sampled population.

IV. CONCLUSION

The local government, being the government nearest to the rural populace, is one of the best institutions for encouraging mobilization for self-help, as well as inducing the much needed wider participation of the rural dwellers in the decision making process at the local level. Public opinion indicates that empowerment can boost development by providing capacities, values and avenues for local people to fully participate in decision making and any meaningful efforts towards improving their lives. What operates in intergovernmental relations is decentralization without empowerment. In line with David Truman's idea of democratic fair dealing, the Oyo state government created additional LCDAs to enable local people decides their own affairs. However, it was gathered from the field that the new LCDAs, especially Ifelolu LCDA lack sufficient resources that could speed up development at the grassroots. Some of the respondents perceived it as a misplacement of priorities since government cannot fulfill financial obligations of workers and contractors in the state. This validates the position of the committee on political restructuring and forms of government at the last national conference which recommended the scrapping of the 774 existing LG councils from the constitution as a result of their perceived failure (Afe Babalola, 2016).

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Only viable states with abundant resources should be allowed by the federal government to create local council development areas.
- Local council requires a good measure of autonomy and substantial powers to ensure that the basic needs at the grassroots are met.
- There is need for adequate supervision of LCDA not only for effective performance, but to block leakages.
- Local resources, both human and material, should be effectively mobilized and utilized for the interests of rural dwellers.
- Through local initiatives, LCDA should determine and implement projects so as to complement the activities of the state and federal governments in the area.

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