

THE PARADOX OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORMS IN NIGERIAN FEDERALISM

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Abstract

The paper critically examined the impact of 1976 Local Government Reforms in Nigeria Federalism forty (40) years after the reform was carried out. Giving the pluralistic nature of Nigerian federalism, local government in 1976 became constitutionally recognized and democratically guaranteed as a third tier of government as to enhance good governance and grass root development. The paper a desk research relied mostly on secondary data which were sourced from relevant books, government and institutional publications, scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles and other internet materials. However, personal observations were employed as a primary data. Data collected were presented in themes and analyzed. The paper therefore contends/argues that, although the constitutional recognition giving to local government in Nigeria is unique in nature, this has deepened the number of her pathologies. These include conditions of extreme exploitation, poverty, formation of elitist conflicts and political patronage, underdevelopment and inter-governmental crises among other serious consequences for both human and national security. The paper concludes that the pathologies are pointers to nation's underdevelopment since they affect government's ability to deliver to citizens the cardinal functions of government.

Keywords: Federalism, Local Government, Rural Development, Security, Nigeria

Introduction

The pluralistic nature of Nigerian federalism and the necessary attention given to Local Government Areas since the colonial period as a vital agent/mechanism/instrument capable of transforming/bettering the lives of the people at the grass root as to enhance rural development has attracted both attention and criticisms from the scholars, political leaders and citizens for a very long time.

The upsurge of these interests from the academia, politicians and even the ordinary men in the street became more alarming since the 1976 landmark reform of local government that legalized, recognized and officially democratized local government as a single uniform third tier of government in Nigeria with the sole aim/objective/mandate of promoting good governance and as a strategic instrument/agent for fostering rural development.

Consequent upon this landmark reform in 1976, it has been dogged by a lot of chequered history and controversies. Issues like exalted corruption, problem of governance, urban elite bias, extreme poverty and exploitation of the citizens. Others are inter government rivalries, inter/intra elites strife, political patronages among

other human and national security has arisen. It appears that government stated objectives/goals in this regard are yet to be realized or fully met. It is against this backdrop that the study is embarked upon as to examine the factors responsible for the challenges faced or that hampered the realization of the stated rural development goals of the reforms in Nigeria, and to proffer plausible suggestions that would assist in achieving the objectives. The paper is divided into five sections. The first being introduction followed by conceptual clarification. The third is the nature and dynamics on Nigerian local government. The fourth are the key challenges of local government in Nigerian federalism and, finally, the concluding remarks.

Conceptual Clarification

It would be appropriate that some concepts like federalism, local government and rural development be clarified before we proceed.

Local Government

There is no generally accepted definition of the term globally. Scholars and practitioners themselves are in disagreement over the term hence had variously defined local government because of its nature, scope and definitions of the term. One of the major reasons why there is no generally acceptable and succinct definition of local government according to Mackenze cited in Ajieh (2014:2) is because “there is no normative general theory from which we can device testable hypothesis about what local government is”. Even more blunt was Wickwar cited in Diri (2011:81) when he stated: “No great authors like Austin, Benthan or Mill has thought it fit to determine the principles of local government as distinct from the principles of government in general...”

In spite of how problematic the definition of local government might be, one thing is certain, local government administration is a global/worldwide phenomena that is practice in different form and varyingly in both developed and underdeveloped nations of the globe. Therefore on the basis of its universal acceptability of its existence, we now take a proper look of what local government actually is.

First, it can be defined as an essential instrument of national or state government for the performance of certain basic services, which can best be decided upon and administered locally in the intimate knowledge of the needs, conditions and peculiarities of area concerned. It unites the people in a defined area in a common organization whose functions are essentially complimentary to those of the central government in the interest of the local residents for satisfaction of common community needs...

Consequently, its effectiveness is judged through the developments it generates, social amenities it provides and to what extent it has catered satisfactorily for the happiness and general wellbeing of the communities it has established to serve (Orewa and Adewumi, cited in Okeke and Eme, 2011:135).

Secondly, it is the third tier level of government created for the purpose of efficient and effective administration of localities (Ugwu cited in Anyadike, 2011:391). Meaning from this definition applies to only the rural communities. The

UN Division on Public Administration quoted in Orluwene (2008:65) defines local government as political sub-division of a Nation (Federal System) which is constituted by law and has substantial power to control local affairs, including powers to impose taxes, exact labour for prescribed purposes. The governing body of such an entity is either elected or otherwise locally selected (appointed).

Thirdly, Whalen, in Feldman and Goldrick (eds.) cited in Diri (2011:82) makes some contribution additionally as to territory, population and legal entity, when he stated that,

each unit of local government in any system is assumed to possess the following characteristics, a given territory and population, an institutional structure; a separate legal identity; a range of power and function authorized by delegation from the appropriate central or intermediate legislature and lastly within the ambit of such delegation, autonomy subject always to the test of reasonableness.

A more encompassing definition of local government and one that captures the relevant indices of local government is contained in the guidelines for a reform of local government in Nigeria. According to the Guideline as cited in Orluwene (2008:65),

local government is government at the local level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise specific functions within defined areas. These powers should give the council substantial control over local affairs as well as the staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services and to determine and implement projects so as to complement the activities of the state and federal governments in their areas.

From the variations of definitions above, we can favourably deduce or infer that local government is the lowest level of government in a federal three-level government and lower level of government is a unitary system. It is established by law and has certain responsibilities. It includes a certain population living within the confines of a defined territory. It is a legal entity of its own, can sue and be sued (Diri, 2011:83). It is a sub-system of government playing its part within the larger national political system (Ola, 1984:18)

In contrast to local government, local administration has been defined by Rondinelli quoted in Ezeani (2004:30) as:

a form of deconcentration in which all subordinate levels of government within a country are agents of the central authority, usually the executive branch, regions, Provinces, districts, municipalities and other units of government headed by or are responsible directly to a central government agency... and the heads

of the local administration serve at the pleasure of the nation's chief executive.

Local administration, is therefore, a device established by either the state or federal government for the purpose of administering the localities under its control. It can be established at the federal or central, state or local levels of government. As Ozor quoted in Ezeani (2004:31) rightly stated:

...the central administration set up by the Israeli nation all over the Israeli-occupied territories of the Palestinian state after the Yom Kippur War of 1973, was a local administration. Also the Majekodunmi administration set up by the federal government in the then Western Region of Nigeria after the declaration of a state of emergency over Western Nigeria in 1963, was also a local administration....

Furthermore, the Sole Administrator System and the Caretaker Committee of Management established by both Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha governments are good examples of local administration. The essential features or characteristics of local administration are as follows:

- (i) It lacks substantive autonomy which makes it impossible for local: agents to take any authoritative decisions which are binding on the citizens. It simply complies or acts according to policy guidelines handed down to it by the central authority. The functions of the local body are not provided for in the constitution.
- (ii) Local administration exists mainly to execute policies and programmes formulated by the central authority to which it is directly responsible and accountable.
- (iii) The central or state government directly appoints and controls the staff of the local administration. Thus, the members of the local body are not elected representatives of local people.
- (iv) There exists a defined pattern of hierarchical control of powers and functions and also, of channel of communication from the agents of local administration and vice versa, and which the latter must strictly adhere (Ozor, cited in Ezeani, 2004:32).
- (v) Local administration lacks financial autonomy. The central or state government determines and controls its finances.

Rural Development

Rural development according to Aslam cited in Ezeibe (2011) is the process of developing the rural poor, their economy and institutions from backwardness and low productivity to high productive level and high standard of living. Similarly Nwankwo (2009:5) remarked that rural development is a strategy designed to improve the living standard of a specific group of people- the rural poor. The foregoing definitions, suggest therefore that the rural areas are characterized by low level of infrastructural development (water supply, electricity, pipe borne water,

health care facilities, telecommunication and transportation facilities); massive engagement in subsistence agriculture; poor housing system, under planning or no planning and overall poverty of the mind and material things.

Meanwhile, Ezeani (2003:31) define rural development as,

a series of economic and social development activities directed at a given rural population and whose converging effects indicate, in time, a progressive improvement in the quality of life and a rise in the living standard of the people concerned. Rural development”, does not mean isolated programmes of “community development”, “rural animation”, “mass education”, “agricultural extension” (even though these are part of the rural development exercise); it means rather, a comprehensive development of the rural area.

For the purpose of this study, we adopt rural development as defined by Ezeibe (2011:762) as multi-dimensional, multifaceted and multi-project approach whereby the agricultural, industrial and infrastructural sectors support and reinforce each other for the purpose of improving the living standard of the rural dwellers.

Federalism

The concept of federalism has various/multiples definitions because it has been well discussed by different authorities in several literature. Its simplest definition is the division of political power between central/federal government and the components of a nation state. It specifies who does and has what. But these division are not neat, exclusive or overlapping (Orluwene, 2013:337). That is why Riker cited in Akanji (2015:29) refers to federalism as state in which “two levels of government rule the same land and people; each level has at least one area of action in which it is autonomous; there is some (constitutional) guarantee... of the autonomy of each government in its own sphere”.

Similarly, Alemayehu (2004:10) cited in Akanji (2015:29) considers federal arrangement as “partnership between a territorially based regional unit and a central government whose relationship is regulated by a constitution or covenant. As Dare cited in Orluwene (2013:337) noted “governmental powers are not always clearly divisible”. Further, federalism when practice rigidly is difficult and unreal. Autonomy or even sovereignty within jurisdictional areas is not real as several governments may relate to the some citizenry who are actually best served by support and consultation among constituent governments. More importantly, federalism as a system is characterized with overlaps and sharing of powers. Accordingly, Wheare, one of the greatest authorities on federalism argues that a system can only be said to be federal if there is:

a division of powers between one general and several regional governments each of which in its own sphere is coordinate with the others; each government must act directly on the people, each must be limited to its sphere of action, and each must within that sphere,

be independent of the other (cited in Kolawale, 2008, Orluwene, 2013:338).

Federalism as a system of governance is pragmatic, dynamic, utilitarian and evolving. It can only thrive on consultation, negotiation, compromise, bargaining and agreement between constituent governments. It grows under a system of mutuality and interdependence. Federalism seeks and is built on the need for cooperation and collaboration between governments in a sphere that is essentially characterized by shared functions and powers. Rather than compartmentalize roles and rigid adherence to constitutional stipulations that may promote isolation and solo effort, re-construct a framework and system of joint action, common purposes and harmonized effort through interaction, inter-wined influence and mutual interdependence (Ikelegbe, 2004:427, Orluwene, 2013:338).

Nature and Dynamics of Nigerian Local Government

According to Orluwene (2008), local government known as Native Administration during the colonial rule took so much control of the affairs that they relegated to the background the viability and influence of regional, provincial, and central colonial government. During the first republic, the regional governments then were so fervent in propagating their own idea and convictions about local government such that different systems of local government operated at various regions. The post-civil war military rule brought in the 1976 local government reform that heralded the most notable epoch in the evolution of local government in Nigeria.

It was the inability of the local government system in Nigeria from 1960-1975 to serve as a viable instrument for rural transformation that led to the nationwide local government reform of 1976. Thus, in the “foreword” of the “Guidelines for Local Government Reform” of 1976 cited in Ezeani (2003:36), it was succinctly stated that:

The defects of previous local government systems are too well known to deserve further elaboration here. Local governments have over the years suffered from the continuous witting down of their powers. The state governments have continued to encroach upon what would normally have been the exclusive preserve of local government. Lack of adequate funds and appropriate institutions had continued to make local government ineffective and ineffectual. Moreover, the staffing arrangement to ensure a virile local government system had been inadequate. Excess politicking had made even progress impossible. Consequently, there has been a divorce between the people and government institutions at their most basic level.

Due to this catalogue of problems, the objective of the reform was to establish local government as the third tier of government in the nation so that local government should know precisely what the word ‘government’ implies, that is,

governing at the grass-roots or local level (Guidelines for Local Government Reform cited in Ezeani, 2003:36).

However, the said reform introduced many new features; these include;

1. The adoption of a common (uniform) local government system nationally. This meant all local government had the same structure, sources of finance, function, personnel management system and similar relationship to traditional rulers. Even more significant, for the first time since the adoption of federalism in Nigeria, the federal government made a commitment to statutory transfer of part of the public funds of the federation to local governments. This was a remarkable positive measure for the first time in many respects. First, it was a block grant not tied to any specific objects of expenditure. So it was entirely in the discretion of each local government to decide how to spend it. Secondly, because it was mandatory, it was a reliable source of revenue. Thirdly, the states were also required to make similar fiscal transfers to support their local governments. These transfers from the federal and state governments were appropriated annually in the budgets until the second republic (Onah, 2004:5, Orluwene, 2008:66).
2. The recognition and elevation of local government to a distinct third tier of government.
3. The conferment of autonomy of local governments with specific prescription of exclusive (and concurrent) functions and internal revenue sources (FRN, 1976: 1-3, 54-53). Although the states were allowed to pass their individual edicts or make laws which ushers in the reform in their local government system, once it comes into effect they could not on their own change any part of the reform documents (Onah, 2004:5, Orluwene, 2008:66). The 1979 constitution which ushered in the second republic, translated key provision of the 1976 reform into a constitutional guarantee and mandate. For instance, section (1) of the constitution provided that the system of local government b) democratically elected local government council is under this constitution guarantee and accordingly, the government of every state shall ensure their existence under a law provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance, and functions of such council. This provision attempted somewhat to preserve the traditional constitutional subordination of government to the state rather than the federal government.

All sundry post-1976 local government reform as well as the reform introduced by the Babangida regime were all codified into local government (Basic constitutional and transitional provisions) decree (No. 32 bf 1989). Among many other matters, this decree prescribes the practice of full presidential system in its entire ramification in Nigeria local government (FRN, 1989). Considering these milestones, all successful creation of new local governments in Nigeria's history have been accomplished by different military regimes and considering that an attempted creation of new local governments during the second republic failed and was subsequently abrogated, hence local government since was not different from what

the military left behind. Therefore, hardly would any informed scholar not agree with Nwosu cited in Orluwene (2008:66) that the local government system is easily the most prominent legacy the military has bequeathed Nigeria.

Besides, the Abacha administration was transient in nature. In 1996 took its main action of creation of more local government in October 1996, increased the number of local governments From 589 to 774 and states from 30 to 36. It also took the decision that all local governments should set aside 5% of their statutory allocation from federation account for the upkeep of traditional rulers (Onah, 2004:7, Orluwene, 2008:66).

At the threshold of the fourth republic, Nigeria has some other equally significant mindsets. These include among other; Nigerians are already accustomed to autonomous local governments focused on grassroots development with an opportunity for unfettered popular political participation. Furthermore, Nigerians were indoctrinated with the euphoria that the incoming fourth republic democracy would herald new dawn of the reign of constitutionality and rule of law that will soothe the instability, rapid regression and unsustainable development military regimes had inflicted on Nigeria. In this regard therefore, Nigerians are expectant of a more stable, more effective, and more efficient local government system that will address the dear needs of accelerated and sustainable grassroots development in the fourth republic.

Key Challenges of Local Government in Nigerian Federalism

Making progress in any endeavour requires that a number of major challenges be confronted. It is therefore pertinent that we examine and explain the failure of the local government system in Nigerian federalism forty years since the major uniform reform was carried out.

The ineffectiveness of the local governments in Nigeria stems from the nature and structure of Nigeria federalism since independence and after the 1976 reform has been such that the federal (central) government sees itself as a “superior” to the states and the states on the other hand assume a “senior prefect” status to the local governments. This “big brother” mentality not only contradicts the essence, essentials and purpose of federalism, it retards its development and places the other two tiers of government at the operational mercy and benevolence of the central government (Kolawale, 2008:454). An interesting but unfortunate scenario is that the state tend to replicate to the local governments the behavioural arrogance they suffer from the central/federal government while the local government having no other tier of government below it; visit their own arrogance on the people they are expected to serve. These aforementioned scenarios not only promote but also facilitate corruption at the local government level through the instrument of intergovernmental institutions (FRN, 1999).

The constitutional provision in section 7(6) states that subject to the provision of the constitution:

- (a) The National Assembly shall make provision for statutory allocation of the public revenue to the local government councils in the federation and

- (b) The House of Assembly of state shall make provisions for statutory allocation of public revenue to local government council within the state.

The provisions of this section place the bulk of the financial burden of the local government on both the federal and state governments since he Who pays the piper dictates the tune it stands to reasons that both government exercises some measures of control over local governments. However, the Chairman of Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) had since 2003 alleged that more than N35 billion of local government kinds were diverted by states. The state governments have also been accused by the RMAFC of misappropriating allocations to the local government from the Federation Account and VAT (Ikelegbe, 2004:148, Orluwene, 2013:342). The state governments are said to divert local government funds to other uses and to make all kinds of deductions (Ogbu and Onuwa, 2003, Orluwene, 2013:342). Sometimes, the states withhold the funds or simply delay them, thereby causing distortions in the operations of the local governments. As a consequence, actual funds released to the local governments are much less.

Corroborating the aforementioned factor back to back according to Ezeani (2003:40) is the socio-economic structure of the Nigerian society which exalts corruption and nurtures an urban oriented development strategy inherited by the colonial master. Foreign experts praise the development strategy. Smock and Smock cited in Ezeani (2003:40) rightly point out,

to assert that the lack of attention to the rural sector has been merely because of the short-sightedness of African leaders would be to overlook the urban and industrial bias of the majority of foreign economists and technicians who have advised African governments and institutions over the past decades.

Chisiza also states that the neglect of rural areas stems mainly from the fact that modern African political leaders are creatures of the towns. Lack of development and strategic planning in local government administration assert Kolawale (2011:90) is a key challenge to local government administration. According to him, in order to make the goal of public policy meaningful, effective and attainable desirable target of achievement, there is no way optimum service delivery can be attained unless there is such a plan that serves as a compass guiding and directing local authorities. The economic planning of the local government is dependent on such blueprint. It is sad commentary on our public policy at the local level that many leaders at that level do not have theoretical and intellectual base for administration. The resultant effect is that public policy therefore flows from a “fire brigade approach” with “with fire brigade” results.

This lack of development strategy has certain consequences, which impede the ability of local governments to perform their functions. First, because the rural inhabitants are neglected, most of them live below the subsistence level and,

therefore, cannot afford to pay rates. Consequently, the ability of the local governments to maximize their internal sources of revenue is minimized. They are therefore not in a position to carry out any meaningful development projects. This is more so when the banks are reluctant to loan money to local governments, since they are known to be in perpetual financial crisis (Ezeani, 2003:40).

Power elite collaboration for exploitation and coercion of rural inhabitants is another factor. Local political leaders who should serve and act as regulatory mechanism on the excesses of the political office holder collaborate to filter away public resources for as long as their palms are greased. In this respect, according to Kolawole (2011) self-aggrandizement replaces public service. Consequently the concern is no more for public good but the fulfillment of individual interest and need by coercion. Evidence are abound therefore, that the powerful political elite use the positions of local governments as an instrument of primitive accumulation of wealth and resources, political patronage and politicization of the system that makes it not conducive for rural development.

They converted local government areas into battle fields as a result of warring and bickering amongst them. As Orewa and Adewumi cited in Ezeani (2004:183) rightly stated, recruitment practices based on patronage, have created problems of redundancy in local governments where stern measures like termination of appointment and suspension of staff are rarely contemplated. Furthermore, most Chairmen, Caretaker Committee members and Sole Administrators recruit and place their relations, friends and political sympathizers or party members without due regard to rules and regulations or in keeping with manpower requirement.

The arrogance of power among the elected/appointed local government administrators who do not always see themselves as serving the people, instead of behaving as leaders, they acts as rulers, hence local governments are yet to make any significant impact in the area of rural development. They have continued to act as instrument for the impoverishment of the rural inhabitants. Pfiffners and Presthus cited in Kolawale (2011:92) refer to leadership "as the act of coordinating and motivating individual to achieve the desired ends". Local government administrators do not motivate to achieve any desired end rather, many of them negates such purpose by arrogance of power. The most depressing aspect of it is that most of them do not have any antecedent of achievement or attainment until the occupation of such elective or appointive office (Kolawale, 2011).

Constitutional provision is another key challenge that led to the failure of local government system in Nigeria. According to Orluwene (2008:67), a thorough examination of 1999 constitution of federal republic of Nigeria by any reasonable man as relating to local government matters as well as the accompanying remarks and indications of the contending paradigms apparently favoured by such provision provides enough prima-facie evidence to the effect that the said constitution prevaricates on and in fact oscillates between autonomous local governments and local administration. Accordingly in the final analysis, it does not clearly prescribe any contending paradigm. However, some very important provisions of the said

constitution that serves and still serves as an impediment (problems) of service delivery in Nigeria local government system merits further examination.

No section of the 1999 constitution of federal republic of Nigeria conveys lack of vision and tact in constitution making/drafting than section 7(1). All things being equal, the letters and spirit of this section imply that, subject only to section 8, the government of every state is constitutionally empowered to make law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and function of local government councils. The main error lies in the clause "subject to section 8 of this constitution". By the former clause, a state is empowered to make laws to regulate local government within the state in all ramifications since the subject area of "establishment, structure, composition, finance and function" covers all aspects of the existence and operations of local government. Such laws made by the states would immediately come into direct conflict with provision already made by the constitution for local governments in the said subject areas, especially Section 7(1) first stanza; 7(2), 7(5); 162(57) and 222; whereas the "clause subject to the provision of this constitution" would prevent such conflicts.

The effect of poverty and level of illiteracy are impediments to the effectiveness of local governments in Nigeria. In that in developed world the citizens ask questions from those placed in positions of authority. They question their motive and even criticize their policies. This often leads to improved and sanitized for service delivery. The opposite is the case in the developing countries like Nigeria. They tend to keep quiet as not to "rock the boat" and incur the wrath of the political leaders. Due to the level of poverty in the society they fear that the little that flows from the master's table may be denied them since the leaders employ the "carrot and stick" method/approach as an instrument of public policy (Kolowale, 2011). While the level of illiteracy does not equip or give the citizenry with the necessary discerning and probing mind to question the behaviour of public office holders, the citizenry do not even know that the public office holders are holding the public positions in trust. Consequently they see any positive performance as act of good gesture/benevolence hence deserve condemnation (Kolowale, 2011). It is on this note that they (citizenry) are unable to questions why the state governments have the instrument of inter-governmental relation (IGR) to impinge on local government funds.

The state governments have used the instrument of IGR to impinge on local government funds by directives or orders to contribute specific sums to state agencies, activities, joint programmes, celebrations and pet projects. For example, local governments have been directed to contribute to state independent electoral commissions, state elections, and inauguration ceremonies. The local governments have also contributed to the sustenance of the police, state security services, immigration, National Directorate of Employment and other federal government agencies in their localities. Thus, local governments were compelled to buy 1000 Prado Jeeps in the year 2001 for the police through the cost of ₦4.4 billion which has deducted from their allocation by the federal government. The local governments were also made to contribute compulsorily to funding of national elections (Ikelegbe cited in Orluwene, 2013:343).

Another financial problem of local government system emanate from personal observation is the way and manner elected councils are dissolved by the state governors and caretaker committee appointed. Such committees are in place in most states of the federation. In Rivers State, it has been in place since 2014 to date where it is subjected to greater control and manipulation, being usually party men and lackeys appointed to rewards rather than competence hence accountability to patrons not the masses.

Moreso, Ezeani (2004:187) assert that the financial crisis of most local government in developing countries Nigeria inclusive is worsened by the fact that they are located in the rural areas. Thus unable to generate enough internal revenue because of rural poverty, hence they therefore rely solely on federal government on statutory allocation which is usually inadequate for any meaningful development activity.

In the light of the above factors, we need not to wonder/ponder why local governments are always in financial crisis to the extent that they find it difficult to pay their workers and to attract high-level manpower and this eventually affects their ability to execute any meaningful rural development project.

Therefore, local government cannot exist with ease as a viable instrument for rural transformation and development in as much as and the fact that the image and the impression of the local government system since the colonial time as an agent and instrument of exploitation persist and endures. It is in this light that Gorvine cited in Ezeani (2003:41) rightly observes with regard to developing countries thus:

To the village peasant, local government has never been an institution of much significance nor one which he could distinguish in his own mind from the provincial or central governments. The traditional image of government, whether local or central, in developing countries has been made the products of two officials; the police officer and the tax/rate collector. To the village peasant, the police came either to punish him or to jail him, the tax/rate collector came to take his money away and he saw nothing tangible in return.

Gorvine's assertion therefore shows vividly and clarify that the fact that local government in Nigeria are mainly the instrument that solely serve the dominant classes that exists at both national/state levels, therefore, it is a paradox for rural development in Nigeria federation.

Concluding Remarks

In this paper we examined some concepts like federalism, rural development and local government. We equally made a brief review of the nature and dynamics of local government systems in Nigeria, certain facts emerged that are the major/key challenges that hampered the effective performance of local governments as an instrument for rural transformation and development in Nigeria.

We therefore adapt the suggestions earlier made in Orluwene (2006, 2008 and 2013) respectively to move the system forward. The first line of charge in this regard is a comprehensive review of the constitution through a national conference. This will answer several other national questions including the character of the Nigerian state and whether, in this particular instance, we want local governments, who has power to create them and who funds them?

Secondly, the current leaders, the President, the Governors and the Legislators, all of whom are in custody of the symbol of authority to calm down and allow the local government system, being the third-tier of government to take shape, thrive and survive, in line with what is the desire of Nigerians that they be autonomous.

The nature of our federalism, constitutional provision and primitive capital accumulation are the reason for amplified corruption in Nigeria local government system. Corruption is clearly an absence of accountability, law and order and widespread corruption is a symptom of a poorly functioning state and a poorly functioning state can undermine economic growth but good governance are measured by accountability, order and capacity. From the foregoing various cases of corruption are still prevalent in our IGR and proper IGR culture is yet to be established. It is our opinion that to allow corruption to persist in our country is to allow social decay which also signals an enfeeblement of a people's culture animating principle and departure from the highest ideals of collective life.

To avoid the nation sinking deeper into the mesh of political decay, the government should evolve an accountability system that will evolve from a legal and moral liability for ensuring that public funds are used for public good, end or purposes. For it ensures that the best value is obtained for money spent. Nwankwo cited in Orluwene (2013:345) advised that to enhance accountability for the action of the local government, the citizens and resident should be enlighten to take greater interest in the way their collective resources are being utilized. Thus, the primordial sentiments in them should be constantly re-awakened so that they can realize that each act of misappropriation or embezzlement of funds by public officers retards the progress and general well being of the area concerned.

The judiciary should also ensure that it enforces diligently the provision of the relevant laws that have been put in place to check corruption. It is important however, to point out that the fight for public accountability is a challenge to every citizen of this country, unless it is won, our quest for development may well be in danger. Additionally, structure such as special corruption bureau/courts should be set up to handle corruption cases. The normal court processes is overcrowded and therefore, slow in dispensation of corruption cases.

There should be proper constitutional recognized autonomy for local government system in Nigeria as to avoid undue and unnecessary interference in the affairs of local government in Nigeria or in alternative the idea of constitutional recognition of local governments should be discarded and local government made a creation of states.

It is our contention that for the system of local government is to serve as a veritable instrument for transforming our rural society, the debilitating effect of misallocation, misapplication or misappropriation of resources must be tackled with great vigour in order to ensure total eradication or reduction of corrupt practices.

The elitist urban-bias development strategy should be reversed immediately for the transformation of the rural economy and this will in turn enable local government generate funds internally that it needs to operate. Ezeani (2003:41) asserts thus: It will be absurd to expect local government system in Nigeria to perform effectively as a third tier of government without a complete transformation of the depressed state of the rural areas.

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