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## CONTENTS

About the Journal  
Editorial Board

v  
ix

### VOLUME 6 NO 1, 2016

QUESTIONING THE SAFE SCHOOL  
INITIATIVE AND MAKING A CASE  
FOR A SAFE NIGERIA MODEL:  
THE MEDIA AS THE NUCLEUS  
*Celestine Verlunum GEVER*

3

INFLUENCE OF BROADCAST MEDIA  
AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS ON EBOLA  
VIRUS DISEASE ON AUDIENCE  
ALERTNESS AMONG RESIDENCE OF  
LOKOJA, KOGI STATE  
*Ruth Ache OKPANACHI*

16

PREVALENCE, CAUSES AND IMPLICATIONS  
OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE/RAPE IN SOME  
COMMUNITIES IN EDO STATE OF NIGERIA  
<sup>1</sup>Barr. Emmanuel Imuetinyan OBARISIAGBON  
and <sup>2</sup>Mr. Alenkhe Odianonsen AUGUSTINE

29

IMPACT OF ACCOUNTING INFORMATION  
ON MANAGERIAL DECISION MAKING IN  
NIGERIAN MANUFACTURING SECTOR  
YAHAYA, Khadijat Adenola Ph.D., OSEMENE,  
Olubunmi Florence Ph.D. and SALMAN,  
Ramat Titi Ph.D.

39

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ACADEMIC  
PERFORMANCE OF FIRST YEAR  
ACCOUNTING STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN  
UNIVERSITIES  
<sup>1</sup>Odia J.O. (PhD), <sup>2</sup>Odia A.A.

49

FEDERALISM AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA: A DISCOURSE  
OF CORE ISSUES  
*Solomon I. IFEJKA and Fatima O. ALIU*

61

ANTI WESTERN LIBERALISM AND THE  
EVOLUTION OF GLOBAL TERRORISM:  
RE-EXAMINING THE CONTENDING ISSUES  
*Ayuba, Caleb and Okafor, Gerald*

84

OUTSOURCING OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
FUNCTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONAL  
COMPETITIVENESS IN NIGERIA  
*Henry Inegbedion*

99

STRATEGIES FOR ENCOURAGING  
STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN SCIENCE  
IN RURAL AREAS IN NIGERIA  
*DR Olasehinde, Kayode John*

112

THE CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRATIC  
GOVERNANCE AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
LEVEL IN NIGERIA  
*Musa Abutudu*

122

THE NATIONAL QUESTION AND  
NIGERIA'S INTEGRATION AFTER THE CIVIL  
WAR, 1970-1975  
*ENIBOKUN UZEBU*

137

INFLUENCE OF BRAIN DRAIN SYNDROME  
ON LEARNING OUTCOME AMONG  
UNDERGRADUATES IN NIGERIAN  
UNIVERSITIES: A CASE STUDY OF  
OLABISI ONABANJO UNIVERSITY  
*Emeka Paul Okeke*

148

DOES AUDITOR'S TRUST IN CLIENT'S  
MANAGEMENT IMPAIR HIS INDEPENDENCE?  
(AN EMPIRICAL STUDY)  
*Nasiru Abdulslam KAOJE and Musa Yelwa  
ABUBAKAR*

160

CREDIT CONSTRAINT AND AGRICULTURAL  
OUTPUT IN NIGERIA  
*OMOROKUNWA OSAZEE G,  
OBADIARU ESEOSA D*

172

UNDERSTANDING POVERTY FROM  
WITHIN: APPROACHING COMPLICATIONS  
THROUGH IMPLICATING POLICIES IN  
NIGERIA  
*Saliman T.S, Olowookere, A.O, &  
Abdullahi, A.A*

186

# FEDERALISM AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA: A DISCOURSE OF CORE ISSUES

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## ABSTRACT

Nigeria operates pseudo federalism where the three tiers of government are theoretically acclaimed independent and co-ordinate, but in practice they are not. Against this background, this paper specifically examines the Nigerian local government administration within the country's federal structure. To adequately achieve this, the paper interrogates the salient issues bothering on federalism and local government administration in Nigeria, including; the evolution of modern local government administration system in Nigeria, the 1976 local government reforms, the 1988 local government reforms, the justification for the local government in Nigeria's federal structure, the statutory position and nature of the functions of local government in Nigeria, local government finance and autonomy in Nigeria; federal, state and local governments relations in Nigeria; and fiscal federalism - formula for revenue allocation and resource control in Nigeria. In the whole, the paper finds that local government administration in Nigeria suffers from a myriad of problems in the country's federal system. Despite the various reforms and constitutional provisions to guarantee its existence and survival, the government at the grassroots remains susceptible to a plethora of manipulations. This inhibits its capacity for immense and impressive contribution to the development of the country. To this end the paper concludes that the system of local government in Nigeria needs to be adequately strengthened and revamped. In view of this, the paper thus recommends effective strategies for repositioning the local government in order to enable it actualize the basic rationale for its continuing existence in the Nigerian federal structure. In doing this, this paper employs the Institutional Theory as framework of analysis. It relies heavily on data from secondary sources. Essentially, the secondary data were sourced from relevant books, related journal articles, government publications and extant local government documents. The data collected were qualitatively analyzed using the descriptive analytical method of qualitative reporting and critical argument in order to achieve the primary objective of the study.

**Key Words:** Federalism, Local Government, Autonomy, Development, Nigeria.

## INTRODUCTION

The local government institution overtime has become increasingly popular and is found in most countries of the world. This increasing recognition of the local government in the governmental administration of modern societies obviously explains its relevance and indispensability as an institution for governance at grassroots level, a vehicle for national development, and an integral part of the entire

political system of any country. The acknowledgment of the need for its existence within the political structure or arrangement of governments of modern times is premised on the ground that it reduces the concentration of governmental power or authority in the central government, provides basic social services to local communities, enables more people participate in politics and leadership, promotes

political responsibilities and accountability, promotes democracy, generates information and data about localities for higher levels of governments, and makes development plans and policies more realistic to local needs and initiatives (Gboyega, 1987:2).

To this extent, Nigeria with its deep-rooted heterogeneous society, has recognized the strategic and pivotal role of local government in the economic and political development of the country and has given it constitutional recognition as a level of government and as a permanent feature of its public administration (Gboyega, 1987:2). However, despite the guarantee of the third-tier status of local government by the constitution and the political (administrative) and financial devolution that accompany this, the performance of the level of government in the country has overtime remained highly unimpressive and abysmal owing to certain developments that inhibit its smooth and effective operation in system. As an upshot, many have continued to question the primary relevance and justification for the existence of the tier of government in the nation's federal administrative system, as a result of its failure to contribute appreciably to the overall effort of the higher levels of government (State and Federal Governments) in actualizing the development dreams and aspiration of the country.

It is in the light of this, therefore, that this paper primarily concerns itself with examining the Nigerian local government system or administration within the country's federal framework. As way of ensuring adequate achievement of the above objective, the paper takes a cursory look at the major issues or developments within the nation's entire federal administrative system that would enable us appreciate the reasons for the poor performance and ineffective functioning of the tier of government in the country. These include: the evolution of modern local government administration system in Nigeria,

the 1976 local government reforms, the 1988 local government reforms, justification for the local government in Nigeria's federal structure, statutory position and nature of the functions of local government in Nigeria, local government finance and autonomy in Nigeria; federal, state and local governments relations in Nigeria, and fiscal federalism - formula for revenue allocation and resource control in Nigeria. The paper explores these issues in order to achieve the objective of the study.

### CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

In a bid to enhance adequate understanding of the issue or subject matter being examined in this paper, it is pertinent to embark on brief but meaningful clarification or analysis of the concepts or terms that are central to the topic of this discourse. On this note, the concepts that demand proper definition or clarification in this paper are; federalism, local government, and administration. The paper shall briefly consider these important terms one after the other.

**FEDERALISM:** The concept of federalism, like other terms in the social sciences, lacks precise generally acceptable meaning as it has been defined in different ways by different authors and scholars. However, some of the popular definitions offered in favour of the term agree on certain salient features regarding the concept. K. C. Wheare, in his most popular work in the field of federalism offers a definition that remains one of the most relevant and long-lasting of all definitions offered in the attempt to explain the meaning of the word. According to Wheare (1964), federalism is a constitutional arrangement which divides law-making powers and functions of the states between two levels of government which are co-ordinate in status<sup>1</sup>. He posits that each of these levels of government should have enough resources and wherewithal to perform its

constitutionally assigned responsibilities independent of the other level. Similarly, Shafritz (1932:213) perceives federalism as a system of governance in which a national, overarching government shares power with sub-national or state governments. In support of the foregoing views, Ailoje (1979) opined that federalism is a decentralized administrative system designed to cope with size, differences, and peculiarities of the regions or ethnics group. According to him, federalism essentially connotes discrete territorial division of the various units such that they are organically related. For him, that they are organically related means that they are stated in the constitution. What this means is that the powers of each of the units originates from the same source as those of the centre, therefore they have equal powers with the centre.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** Like federalism, the concept of local government is not also left out of the problems of imprecision in terms of its definition as a result of the vague nature of the term. To this end, the term "local government" equally attracts different definitions by various scholars, authors and institutions in the field. In the words of Bello-Imam (1996:2), local government is a unit of administration with constitutionally defined territory and powers as well as administrative authority with relative autonomy. And such, administrative authority could be but not always elected. In the same vein, the Guidelines to National Local Government Reforms (1976) defined it, as a government at the local level exercised by law to exercise specific powers 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 implements projects so as to compliment the activities of the state and

federal governments in their areas, and ensure through the active participation of people and their traditional institutions, that local initiatives and response to local needs and conditions are maximized (FRN, 1976). These views, whatever minor differences that may be observed in them, are in agreement on important aspects of the theory and practice of local government. They consensually conceive of local government as a government at distinct level saddled with a clearly defined jurisdiction in terms of responsibilities as other tiers of government, and deriving its powers from the same source as government in the centre.

**ADMINISTRATION:** Waldo (1953) conceives of administration as "a type of cooperative human effort that has a high degree of rationality". For Adebayo (1981:1), term implies "the organization and direction of persons in order to accomplish a specific end." Supporting the foregoing views, the concept of administration can be broadly used to refer to the whole process of organizing, harnessing and directing human and material resources in any setting with the aim of accomplishing certain goals and objectives.

Based on the analysis of the above critical concepts to this present discourse, certain basic facts are explicit about federalism and local government administration in Nigeria and elsewhere. It is to be observed that in a federation, the local government is ultimately a government at a distinct level, depending on the realities and peculiarities of any country as determined by the constitution. In other words, as an indispensable feature of a federal state vis-à-vis other systems of government, the local government is apparently one major constituent or subordinate units that make up the entire administrative machinery of any modern state. In Nigeria for instance, local government enjoys a constitutional status as the third-tier or the last level of government

within Nigeria's federal structure. Thus, as a government, the local is imbued with a set of constitutional powers to carry out administrative and governmental activities or functions at the grassroots, owing to the long-time recognition of the role the level of government can play in making the attainment of the nation's development agenda easily and rapidly achievable.

It is upon this premise that one can rightly affirm that without the local government governmental administration and functions would be enormously cumbersome at the higher levels. It is primarily for this sole reason that the tier of government is found in the administrative framework of most countries of the world. Indeed, it is a fact, for instance, that the existence of local government in a polity lessens the burden of administration at federal and state government levels, brings government closer to the people thereby initiating political recruitment process by encouraging the people at the grassroots to participate in making decisions about their own affairs. This way, local government administration stimulates the development of democratic values and process at the grassroots, and with its proximity to the local people, local government is in a position that enables it mobilize both human and material resources at the grassroots, and channel them not only towards the local developmental needs, but also towards the country's overall social, political and economic developmental needs.

On the basis of these facts, this paper, hereby submit that there cannot be a purposeful and comprehensive governmental administration and authentic development in any political system without a government constitutionally empowered and designated to administer the affairs of the people at the grassroots.

#### Evolution of Modern Local Government Administration System in Nigeria

Local government in Nigeria developed within the framework of the country's political and constitutional history (Okunade, 1993), and one major characteristics of local government in Nigeria from inception has been the fact that the designers or reformers have other interests outside the desire to evolve an enduring political system (Aina, 2005). According to Anthony Kirk Green (1965), the guideline for Indirect Rule was laid down by Sir George Goldie, the Director of the Royal Niger Company in 1886. In doing this, Goldie was of the opinion that Nigerians would "rather be misgoverned by their leaders than governed by the best of British Officials (Green, 1965). It is however a fact that the Indirect Rule principle which formed a platform for the introduction of the Native Administration System was merely "the most convenient form of administration" (Gboyega, 1974), in view of shortage of personnel and cost of an alternative, which could have been direct British rule (Aina, 2005). It was therefore convenient to posit as Lord Lugard did in 1914 that "there was no desire (on the part of the British Colonial government) to impose on the (Nigerian) people any theoretical suitable form of government, but rather to evolve from their own institutions based on their own habit of thought, prejudices and customs, the forms of rule best suited to them and adapted to meet the new conditions (Orewa, 1978).

The convenient factor in the introduction of the Native Administration System (Indirect Rule) was that it was thought that that was the best option, given Northern Nigeria's land mass and population put at 32, 000 square miles and 20 million people. The same indirect rule system was later introduced in the Western and Eastern parts of Nigeria. However, whereas it was successful in the North while it lasted, it was fairly applicable in the West and totally incompatible with the

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communities of the East (Aina, 2005). Thus, before the period, after 1956 when modern local government emerged in the defunct Eastern and Western Nigeria, there was a system of native administration in each of the various parts of the country. The system of native administration was modified or modernized and expanded to other parts of the country. It formed the bedrock upon which the 'Indirect Rule' was established (Okunade, 1993). The native administration rested mainly on the traditional institutions - Obas, Chiefs of Emirs as the case may be. They were also assisted by chiefs that constitute what could be termed the Council of Elders, a Judiciary, that is, a Native Court system and a Native Treasury. Under this system, each of the provinces to which Nigeria was divided was headed by a Resident who was charged with the co-ordination of the area on behalf of the British administration (Okunade, 1993).

The system was to a large extent considered undemocratic as native administrations were not made of elected membership and were under the firm control of traditional rulers who were autocratic. In this sense, the system was in no way representative of the people. In the Eastern and Western Provinces of Nigeria, the system was considered retrogressive (backward and incompatible with the ultimate goal of self-government) (Okunade, 1993). Consequently, in the late 1940s, it became obvious that the native authority system had lost national appeal. Educated Nigerians and some of the traditional ruling elites started pushing for a more participatory system of local administration (Aina, 2005). As Alex Gboyga observed, the native authorities gave way to representative local authorities, first in the Eastern Region in 1950 and then in the Western Region in 1952 as a result of their inadequacies of response to the demands for wider participation and development. As he puts it, "perhaps more crucial, if not the more

clamant, of these demands was for the provision of public social infrastructure". He states further that the native, it was alleged were neither equipped nor encouraged to ascertain public needs, nor indeed were capable of meeting them, even if they knew what they were (Gboyega, 1987). Educated elites like Chief Obafemi Awolowo in the Western region saw the native authority system as an unacceptable modification of the monarchical system of government of the pre-colonial era. Their counterparts in the eastern region also stepped up their efforts by preparing a memorandum for study by the unofficial members of the Eastern House of Assembly (Aina, 2005).

These efforts articulated certain (critical) defects in the native authority system. One, it decried the non-representativeness of the existing arrangement. Two, the government was adjudged not responsive. Three, the councils were seen to have lacked effective revenue base for meaningful development. Finally, there were acute shortages of required personnel for effective local administration. The wave of reform crystallized first into the Local Government Ordinance of 1950 in the Eastern Region and the 1952 Western Regional Local Government Law (Aina, 2005). According to Oyewo (1987), the Local Government Ordinance in the East was conceived to give democracy and representativeness to local government. It had three tiers, namely; The County Council, The District Council, and The Local Council. Whereas the County Councils were responsible for roads and customary courts, the District Councils provided for health and sanitation while the Local Councils were saddled with other petty services (Oyewo, 1987). A major problem of this reform was the tendency towards abuse of autonomy. This manifested in forms corruption, mismanagement of funds, nepotism and conflict of authority and severe inert-

governmental relations problems. There was also disparate agitation for local councils leading to mushrooming and creation of unviable councils (Aina, 2005).

The Western Regional experiment in reforms which came with the 1952 Local Government Law also provided for three local authorities. These were the Divisional, District and Local Councils. This arrangement was similar to the one in the Eastern region except that the communities were allowed to remain together in the councils so created. It was reasoned that the togetherness of the communities must be preserved. The councils so created also suffered similar problems like their Eastern counterparts and efforts to repackage the reforms, by way of the introduction of field administration hardly made any useful impact (Aina, 2005). However, as Oyeleye Oyediran and Alex Gboyega noted, the two systems aimed at the provision of social services, implementation of development projects, providing political education for local and national leadership and the promotion of local self-determination protection, protection of minority rights and integrity, 'all' of which were considered essential to the evolution of a liberal democratic society. In other words, the philosophical conception of local government under the two systems was that of an institution with higher ultimate political purposes than the mere delivery of social services and implementation of development projects (Oyediran and Gboyega, 1979).

The development of local government in the case of the North was different from that of the South (East and West). Despite the realization for the need to democratize local government because of its advantages, no attempt was made to alter the Native Authority system in any meaningful way. The Native Authority Law of 1954 in the Northern part of Nigeria merely consolidated the Native Authority system. Although, the Law did not bring about a break from the former system, it however conferred legal recognition on Native

Authority like in the South (Okunade, 1993). This does not imply, however, that no changes were introduced in the Northern Region. Although the Native Authority system was not dismantled, minor reforms were contemplated. The Emirs were still in charge but had to operate through either the Chief-in-Council or Chief-and-Council. Whereas in the Chief-in-Council model, the traditional ruler retained his full authority; in the Chief-and-Council, the traditional (paramount) ruler must recognize the collective desire of other chiefs (Aina, 2005). In sum, these reforms in both the Southern and Northern parts of Nigeria certainly weakened the power of traditional rulers who were the central figures in native administration before its democratization (Okunade, 1993). These changes and transformations in the local administration continued prior to 1966 when the country experienced the first military incursion into politics.

#### The 1976 Local Government Reforms

The 1976 local government reforms remain unarguably remarkable in the making of the history of local government in the Nigerian political context. Indeed, the 1976 local government reforms have come to be identified as the reference point for any meaningful discussion of local government system as avenue for participatory democracy (Aina, 2005). Three developments could be offered as the background to the 1976 reform. The first was the recurring problems facing local government since independence. Therefore, the 1976 reforms were to solve the various problems plaguing the country's local government system and usher in an efficient and effective system of local government (Okunade, 1993). The various problems to which the reforms were to serve as a panacea or solution have been aptly highlighted by the then Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters Brigadier (then) Sheu Musa Yar'Adua in the

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Foreword to the Guidelines for Local Government Reform, the official document that had the foundation for this system (Okunade, 1993). These problems were: continuous whittling down of their powers by the State Government; continuous encroachment on what normally would have been exclusive powers of local government; lack of adequate finance; inadequate staffing; excessive politicking; and lastly, there was a divorce between the people and the government at basic level (FRN, 1976):

The second reason is that, since the Federal Government Supremacy and Enforcement Powers Decree (Decree No. 28) of 1970, the Federal Government has been playing a predominant role in the nation's political, economic and social settings. The Decree formally conferred privacy on the Federal Government and arrogated to it functions which were not essentially its concern. The involvement of the Federal Government in local government is therefore an exercise of such (Okunade, 1993). The third which happens to be the immediate cause of the reform was the fact that the Federal Military Government recognized the importance of local government in national development and political stability. It thereby thought it fit to embark on a re-organization of local government as part of its five-stage programmes designed to ensure a smooth transition to Civil Rule on October 1, 1970 (Okunade, 1993). As Brigadier Yar' Adua stated, "If stability at the national level is to be guaranteed, a firm foundation for a rational government at local level is imperative" (FRN, 1976). These were the propelling factors for the 1976 reforms.

More critical to the reforms was that, as Ayo (1995:2) observed, the reforms drew from "...the recommendations provided in the Udoji public service commission's report on local governments". The 1974 commission had reported two basic types of local administration

namely the Conciliar and the Divisional systems. The Conciliar system consists of the representative councils, which take decisions by majority vote while the Divisional administration was a form of local administration run through decentralized machinery of the state government (Aina, 2005). Riding on the crest of the numerous recommendations, the 1976 attempted to redefine the military junta's perception of the best way to lay solid foundation for democratic rule. This was seen to be in consonance with the new regime of General Murtala Mohammed, having overthrown the government of Gowon, noted for its lack of direction (Aina, 2005). It would be recalled that prior to the 1976 reforms, while the Eastern Region (1950), Western Region (1952) and Northern States (1968) took their turns in embracing the conciliar system; Cross-Rivers, Rivers, East Central and Bendel States adopted the development (divisional) local administration system. However, the coming of the 1976 reforms naturally terminated the divisional administrative system and replaced it with the local government administration (Aina, 2005).

Adamolekun (1979) and Gboyega (1987), have noted that what distinguishes the 1976 local government reforms from all previous reform exercises in Nigeria is its formal and unequivocal recognition of local government as constituting a distinct level of government with defined boundaries, clearly stated functions, and provisions for ensuring adequate human and financial resources. Importantly, according to Ola and Olowu (1977), the highlights of the reform as set out in a blue-print titled, "The Guidelines to Reform of Local Government" can be stated as follows (FRN, 1976):

One, the reform provided for a single-tier structure for each local government with a minimum population range of 150,000 and a maximum of 800,000. The only exception was the Ibadan Municipal Government with over one million population.

Two, with a maximum of 25 per cent nomination membership structure, the rest were to be elected. The chairman and at least two or three councilors, to be designated supervisory councilor were to be engaged full-time. The number of council members was pegged between 10 and 30 depending on population of the local area.

Also, the role of traditional rulers was clearly spelt out. They were to serve in advisory capacity through the traditional councils.

Another major feature was the provision for a steady financial base through grants. This comes in forms of federal and state grants. There was also provision for increased internally generated revenue.

Also worthy of note is the provision that the Chief Executive of the council was not expected to be an officer with less than Grade Level 13. In the same vein, other heads of department are expected to be on Grade Level 10 and above. This is to guarantee highly skilled work force.

Howbeit, in the observation of Aina (2005), "The 1976 comprehensive reforms were given practical application when in December 1976, nine of the nineteen states (Bendel, Imo, Benue, Rivers, Kwara, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, and Oyo States) conducted direct elections into the councils. Though, the council elections were marred with low turnout, it was generally agreed that it was a good beginning. The absence of partisan politicking was also addressed as part of the problems". Be it as it may, three years after the 1976 reforms were introduced and 13 years after military rule held sway, Nigeria had a transition to civil rule on October 1, 1979. For the first time in the history of the country, the constitution recognized the local government as the third tier of government (Aina, 2005) in the country. According to Oyewo (1987), it also recognized democratically elected local government

councils. Section 7 (1) of the 1979 Constitution states thus:

*The system of local government by democratically elected local Government council is under this constitution guaranteed; and accordingly, the Government of every state shall ensure their existence under a law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils (FRN, 1979).*

Thus, the 1979 Constitution was very significant in the history of local government in Nigeria as it contained for the first time provisions in respect of local government in the country. Nevertheless, with the above provision, the responsibility for creating local government was on the State government (Okunade, 1993). Therefore, there seems to be no consensus as to whether the spirit and letters of the Guidelines or the reforms of 1976 were adequately guaranteed (Okunade, 1988). For, in as much as the 1976 reform had a lot of bright hopes, its successes and democratic affinities were largely hampered by the hamstrung attitude of government. The regime that initiated the 1976 reform had already announced a date for a return to a democratic rule (Mukoro, 2003). It was therefore only proper according to Gboyega (1987) "...to institutionalize a system of power sharing before handing over political power back to politicians...". As the 1976 reform clearly stated amongst some of the aims and functions of local government was "to facilitate the exercise of democratic self-government close to the local levels of our society and to encourage initiative and leadership potential" (FRN, 1976).

So long as it can be argued that the 1979 Constitution gave local governments constitutional guarantees, the actors of the second republic "...exploited, compounded and dramatized the shortcomings and

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loopholes in the system" (Gboyega, 1987: 75). Local governments under politicians of the second republic suffered a lot of debasement. Instead for the politicians to play the veritable bastions of democracy at all levels, they became the harbingers of death for the councils (Mukoro, 2003). Ultimately, instead of guaranteeing a system of democratically elected people, most state governments opted for the management committee system based largely on appointment rather than election. The federal government through the 1982 Electoral Act moved to redress the anti-democratic posturing by legislating on the time elections must compulsorily be held in all the councils. All these were, however, cut short the following year, precisely on December 31, 1983 when the military struck and sacked the politicians (Aina, 2005), consequently leading to the eventual collapse of the fledgling Second Republic.

#### **The 1988 Local Government Reforms**

As observed earlier, certain inherent problems attended the practice of local government in the second republic such as the contradictions and ambiguities with respect to the provisions relating to the local government in the 1979 Constitution. For instance, Section 7(1) of the constitution subordinates the local government under the State Government; the failure on the part of most of the State Governments to entrench democracy at the grassroots by conducting councils elections as recommended by the 1976 reforms; the exclusion of the local government when presidentialism was being introduced at the Federal and State government levels. Based on these and among other developments during the Second Republic, it is not difficult to comprehend the problems of local government as at 1983 when the Second Republic collapsed (Okunade, 1993). So, less than ten years after the 1976 Reforms, Nigeria was yet to arrive at a virile system. Thus in a

statement by Group Captain Ugbana in 1984 when addressing the Conference of Commissioners of Local Government in the Federation (Okunade, 1993), he noted that:

*What is germane is to come up with the basic principles that would facilitate evolution of better and more meaningful art of local government with its attendant impact on the lives of the generality of the people and the need for evolving a virile and result oriented local Government (The Guardian, 20 November, 1984).*

The Conference was to consider the Report of the National Review Committee on Local Government in Nigeria popularly referred to as Dasuki Report. The Committee which was inaugurated by the then Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, Major General (Late) Tunde Idiagbon was to among others, evolve the most suitable mode of managing the local Government within the context of the Present (then) Military Administration (Okunade, 1993). Since the White Paper on the Report was published in 1985, aspects of the accepted recommendations had been implemented. These, however, did not bring any significant changes in local government administration. It was not until 1987 that there were indicators that the local government system in Nigeria was due for some radical transformations (Okunade, 1993). One of the earliest indications was on January 4, 1988 when President Ibrahim Babangida was swearing in elected Chairmen of local Government Councils in Nigeria (The Guardian, 5 January, 1988).

Based on the government conviction that the 'problems of the past were occasioned by the non-observance of the constitutional provisions of local government' the President reiterated that local councils be administered as a third tier of government (Okunade, 1993). He thus urged the Chairmen to see themselves

as, "elements of a major social force that must bring into function the requirements of the 1979 Constitution and the desire and determination of the people to be governed democratically (The Guardian, 5 January, 1988). Furthermore, the regime's point of emphasis was well articulated by Babangida in his independence speech of 1988 when he said that "Local Governments are no longer there to just pay salaries. They are there to ensure collective participation in governance" (Babangida, 1988:22). Continuing in the same vein, he went on to say that "We intend to consolidate the achievements made so far by devolving more responsibilities to the local governments and allowing them some autonomy to function effectively as the third tier of government" (Mukoro, 2003). To this end therefore, he stated that the local government "must be properly funded and endowed with constitutional responsibilities and personnel".

Hence, since January 1988, a lot of reforms had taken place that moved local governments closer to its prescribed third tier status with requisite level of autonomy. These changes which transformed local governments culminated in local governments having institutional arrangements comparable to what operated at state and federal levels during the Second Republic, presidentialism was eventually extended to local government level in 1991. These changes or reforms came mainly as a result of policy pronouncements and not as a result of constitutional provisions (Okunade, 1993). In that same 1988 Independence Day Broadcast, the President formally conferred some autonomy on local governments and made some public measures aimed at strengthening local governments as a tier of government. These include (Okunade, 1993):

1. The abolition of the Ministries of Local Government in the states: With this, the

Federal Government gave in to the position of radical local government intellectuals, as against the position of the 'father of local government' that the Ministries were irrelevant and inhibitive of proper functioning of local government. These decision was to, "Liberate local government from unwholesome bureaucratic constraints; enhance their spread of action" and put them in firm control over local affairs and encourage the emergence of local solutions to local problems (The Guardian, 1 January, 1988).

2. Direct funding of local governments by the Federal Government: This which was one of the recommendations by the Political Bureau (1987) was to stop the reported diversion or withholding of local government funds by the states governments.

As appropriate as these policy measures seemed to be, some other provisions and government actions subverted the changes. The 1988 pronouncements meant little. Apart from the fact that the Local Government Service Commission remained intact (the Commission was eventually abolished in 1992-see 1992 Budget Speech by the President in The Guardian January, 1992), the 1988 pronouncement also created the Department of Local Government in the Office of the Governor. This department at least until recently is not less meddlesome as the ministry (Okunade, 1993). Also, the direct funding did not make much difference as the state governments continued until recently to exert a lot of control and pressure on local government finances. Although in theory, local governments were to derive their funds directly from the federal Government, in practice, state government did not change the practice of making financial demands from local government, who did not have freedom over their expenditures. For example,

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spending limits which made it impossible for local governments to spend above certain amounts without state government approval were imposed (Okunade, 1993). The question that readily comes to mind here is: What then is the proof of the said political and financial autonomy granted to local government by the regime?

An interesting phenomenon about the Babangida regime is that it erected the best structures about anything that had semblance to true democracy. But only little respect was given to this national objective (Mukoro, 2003). One could not have spoken of autonomy and separation of powers (Presidentialization) at the local government level when the councils themselves are literally tied to the paltry fiscal allocation from the federation account. Democracy could not also have thrived in a situation where duties and responsibilities are statutorily prescribed for the local governments. Example is the 1988 reform which categorically stated that "No local government is allowed to have more than six (6) departments in all" (Mukoro, 2003). It becomes clear, therefore, that despite 1988 Reforms, the problems of local government were not in any way different from those that have trailed the level of government from inception. Although, in theory, the Babangida regime demonstrated what seemed like strong commitment to evolving a virile system of local government administration in the country, the theoretical suppositions lacked practical applicability in the long run, thereby leaving no significant impact on the operations of the government at the grassroots.

#### **Justification for the Local Government in Nigeria's Federal Structure**

Generally, the increased popularity and widespread acknowledgment of the essential role and relevance of local government administration is the basis for its incorporation

and establishment in the administrative structure or system of most countries in the world. In Nigeria, precisely, the Guidelines to the 1976 National Local Government Reforms systematically spells out the rationale for the existence of local government in the country. These include: to make appropriate services and development activities responsive to the local wishes and initiatives by developing them or delegating them to local representative bodies; to facilitate the exercise of democratic self-government close to the local levels; to mobilize human and material resources through the involvement of members of the public in their local development; and to provide a two-way channel of communication between the local communities and government (both state and Federal) (Okunade, 1993:83).

The above objectives largely remain the basis for local government in Nigeria to date and these justifications in Nigeria are similar to those obtained elsewhere in the world especially in federal and democratic states (Okunade, 1993:83). It becomes highly imperative, therefore, to rightly mention in the light of the above, that the existence of local self-governing units in Nigeria and elsewhere around the world is firmly justified based on its strategic importance in stimulating political, economic and socio-cultural development in the country.

Generally, local government is undoubtedly indispensable in Nigeria because it provides some form of developmental services to the local people that could not be ordinarily undertaken by the higher levels of government. Economically, the level of government explores and harnesses human and material resources at the local level and channels them towards the overall development of both the localities and the nation at large. Furthermore, no level of government in Nigeria and elsewhere encourages the promotion and sustenance of

the cultural heritage of the country more than the local government.

On the political front, the local government provides an important training ground for democratic citizenship, equips future political leaders with necessary training in democratic leadership, and brings government closer to the people at grassroots level through decentralization of governmental powers and functions to local self-governing units. The presence of these local self-governing institutions physically and psychologically near the people ultimately makes them more potentially accountable and responsible to their citizens, as well as involving them in making decision about their affairs. In this way, the local government contributes greatly in promoting the essential democratic values of holding the political leaders at all levels accountable and responsible regarding their policies and decisions as they affect the masses of the public.

#### **Statutory Position and Nature of the Functions of Local Government in Nigeria**

Before 1976, the federal and state governments were the only tiers or levels of government in Nigeria (Eminue, 1995:27). However, since 1976, Nigeria started to toil with the notion of uniquely according its local governments the status of a third-tier of government in its federal arrangement. The 1979 Constitution gave legal backing to the actualization of this dream. (Bello-Imam and Uga, 2004:453). Until 1976 Local Government Reforms and the Constitution of 1979, Local Governments in Nigeria were treated not as a distinct tier of government but as a responsibility of state government (Eninue, 1995:27). Prior to this time, local government was a creature of state government, lacking its own autonomy, direction and derives and could at will be dissolved by state government (Popoola, 1995). This was the situation before

the Local Government Reforms of 1976, which brought about remarkable changes in the history of local government in Nigeria. The Reforms was a departure from local administration to local government system.

Thus, the 1976 reform was particularly innovative in the sense that it recognized local government as "the third-tier of governmental activity in the country" and that "local government should do precisely what the word government implies, i.e, governing at the grassroots" (FRN, 1976). Moreover, for the first time, the reform introduced fiscal transfer from the Federation Account to local government units (Ayoade, 1995:22). Hence, 1976 automatically became the first time in the history of Nigeria that local government units were collectively regarded as a separate tier of government with constitutional status, power and financial standing irrespective of the fact that the state governments were to ensure their existence and provide for their structure, composition, finance and functions (Bello-Imam and Uga, 2004:453).

The 1976 reform also prescribed the nature of functions to be carried out by local governments in Nigeria. These include those: which require detailed local knowledge for efficient performance; in which success depends on community responsiveness and participation; and which are of personal nature requiring provision close to where the individuals affected live, and in which significant use of discretion or understanding of the individuals is needed (Olalekan, 2000:93). These features could be seen in the constitutional roles of local governments in Nigeria, as spelt out under the Fourth Schedule of the 1979 Constitution. The Fourth Schedule provided for two categories of functions of local government. These include the "main functions" and what could be called "the participatory functions" (FRN, 1979). The two categories of functions generally

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constitute the mandated functions of local government in Nigeria.

#### **Local Government Finance and Autonomy in Nigeria**

Issues related to the finance and autonomy of local government in Nigeria have remained a major source of controversies trailing the level of government in the country. Fundamentally, local government in Nigeria depends heavily on the statutory allocations from higher levels of government (state and federal). This has been the major reason for the continued control of the local government by the higher levels of government, and lack of autonomy for smooth and effective functioning of the tier of government in the country. This is apparently because the constitution appears to have over-empowered the state and federal government over the local government in matters affecting its funding. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria contains the key provisions pertaining to the finance of local government in Nigeria.

The section 7 (5b) of the Constitution provides that each State House of Assembly shall make provisions for statutory allocation of public revenue to local government councils within the state (FRN, 1999). Section 16.2(b) mandates each state to maintain a special State Joint Local Government Accounts, and the State Government to the Local Government councils of the State (FRN, 1999). Similarly Section 162 (8) empowers the State House of Assembly to decide the formula for allocating funds from the State Joint Local Government Account to the Local Government (FRN, 1999). Notwithstanding, the Constitution also clearly spells out the sources of local government internal revenue to avoid there being encroached upon by the state (Erero et al, 2004:2). These sources include the following: rates, local license fees and fines, earnings from commercial undertaken, rent on local

government properties, interest payments and dividends, grants, and Miscellaneous.

Regardless of these important constitutional provisions, the local government in Nigeria relies heavily on the Federation Account for huge proportion of its funds or finance than the internal sources of revenue. This reliance on the Federation Account for the greater per centage of its operational funds places the local government at the mercy of the state and federal governments. The effect of this trend on both the administrative and financial autonomy of the local government could not be measured in accurate terms. Despite the fact that local government derives its financial allocation from the Federation Account as a way of ensuring financial freedom, the higher levels of government, especially the State Government is to moderate the entire process.

All these constitutional provisions virtually strengthen the State Government over local governments both at the institutional and operational levels (Odoh, 2004). Dependence for subventions on higher levels of government ultimately reduces the administrative and financial autonomy of local governments in Nigeria. According to (Onah, 1992), "When a central source gives money, it also controls. In the foreseeable future, I don't see much independent of local governments". In the right sense, local autonomy eschews the control and supervision of local activities by other levels of Governments Federal and State (Eminue, 1995). Therefore, it is crystal clear that the fact that local government rests heavily on State and Federal Governments for subvention is the main reason for the persistent lack of both political and financial autonomy by the level of governments in Nigeria. Over dependence on State and Federal Government for funds is also the result of the reluctance on the part of local governments to harness own sources of

revenues, thereby contributing to its own financial predicaments.

As Gboyega (1987: 172) rightly observed, in Nigeria, the history of federal and state statutory revenue allocations to the LGAs has resulted in less effort to collect local sources of revenue. As an upshot of the ready availability of oil revenues nationally and the apparent willingness to distribute them as subventions, many LGAs lost the political and/or management capacity to collect their own revenues. It becomes apparent, therefore, that the dispersal of powers of control over local government between the state and federal government is partially responsible for the low level of performance of the local government in the country. Some of the ways in which the autonomy of the local government is circumscribed include: state government influence in staff matters e.g. recruitment, promotion, discipline and employment of local government staff; use of the "power of the purse" to control local government revenue especially by unnecessary delays in granting approval for plans and budgets, or outright withholding of such approval, non-release of statutory grants, encroachment on local services or revenues, etc; direct state intervention in the administration of local government; arbitrary imposition of programmes and projects from above (Adeyemo, 1991:38). Until these issues are constitutionally resolved, the local government would continue to suffer from the crises of autonomy, a desirable instrument for its optimal operation and performance.

#### **Federal, State and Local Governments Relations in Nigeria (Intergovernmental Relations)**

Intergovernmental relations refer to the interaction between levels of government in a state system. Intergovernmental relations is particularly important in a federation because its condition reflects the health of a country's

federal structure. Indeed, it is through the mechanisms of intergovernmental relations that the federation's functions and jobs get done (Aiyede, 2005). One of the most contentious and provocative issues in Nigeria is the one that revolves around the relationship between the three tiers of government - federal, state and local government. In the interaction between these three levels of government, the local government suffers a lot of asymmetrical treatments that have contributed to its abysmal performance in the country's federal structure. Unarguably, under a perfect system, local governments should be autonomous of State and Federal Government as State Governments are free from Federal Government (Okunade, 1993). But reverse is the case about the situation in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, local governments exist at the mercy of the State Governments that create them. Expectedly, therefore, the State Governments also has the power to dissolve the local government councils. More importantly, the state governments exercise some controls through the Local Government Service Commission Boards, the ministries of Local Government and the Zonal Inspectorate of Local Governments specifically, through the Local Government Service Commission, the appointment, promotion, discipline and transfer of Local Government staff especially at the higher levels are carried out. The various Local Government councils do not even have powers to discipline their junior staff. Such disciplinary measures to become effective have to be approved by the Commission (Okunade, 1993).

The Ministry in its own case controls the local government in the exercise of their power of delegation, for example, bye-laws etc. Also, the Ministry's approval is necessary for the Local Government budget to be implemented. In a situation where local governments are truly governments at the grassroots levels, it does no meant that local

governments have to be sovereign, they are expected to conform within the requirements of national standards. This should not however affect their control over local affairs in terms of policy formulation and implementation (Okunade, 1993). The same pattern of dependent relationship also plays out in terms of local finance. In an ideal federal system, local governments being governments at a distinct level should be treated like the State and Federal Governments in issues relating to funding. Local governments in Nigeria are supposed to be paid their allocations directly from the Federation Account and not through the State Government nor from the State/Local Governments Joint Account as the case at the current time in Nigeria. The dependence of the local governments on the higher levels of government for virtually everything thing including their survival has been the major reason for the subordination and lack of autonomy and independence for the level of government in Nigeria. Local governments in Nigeria have currently been reduced to mere appendages of higher levels of government, especially the State Government that have the constitutional powers to create and ensure their existence. Not only this, state governments also encroach on the constitutionally designated functions of the councils.

**Fiscal Federalism - Formula for Revenue Allocation and Resource Control in Nigeria**  
Understandably, "fiscal federalism" – the whole question of "how national revenues are generated, allocated, and spent" (FRN, 1983) – is usually one of the most contentious issues associated with intergovernmental relations in all federations because availability of funds is a fulcrum around which governmental activity at any level revolves (Eminue, 1995). Nigeria's present states, unlike the old regions, do not have robust diversified productive agricultural

economic base or their own constitutions or local-level forces, cannot effectively restrain the centre from regulating the conduct of local government affairs, and must operate within a centralized federal constitutional framework in which the federal government can legitimately intervene in practically every matter of public importance (Suberu, 2004). The dependence of the Nigerian states and localities, since the seventies, on central (oil revenue) transfers for an average 80 percent of their budgets is particularly striking indication of the over-centralization of Nigeria federalism. Nigerian federalism plays an important, albeit deeply contradictory and contested, role in disseminating national economic and political opportunities to diverse territorial communities. This distributive process is undertaken largely through the revenue allocation process and the implementation of the "federal character" principle (Suberu, 2004).

Federally collected revenues from oil (and associated gas) exploration in the Niger Delta account for about 80 percent of all government finances and over 90 percent of all export revenues in Nigeria. A minimum thirteen percent of the oil revenues, to reiterate, are constitutionally assigned to the oil-bearing states on the basis of derivation. The bulk of the remaining oil revenues, along with revenues from other national tax bases like company, import, export and exercise taxes, are paid into a Federation Account that is allocated, according to a national revenue distribution law, vertically between the center, the states and the localities, and, then, horizontally among the states and among the localities (Suberu, 2004). Vertically, the centre is currently assigned 56 percent of Federation Account revenues, including 7.5 percent of the Account originally earmarked for "special" projects like the development of the federal capital territory of Abuja and the amelioration of national ecological emergencies. The states

and the localities, on the other hand, get 24 and 20 percent of the Federation Account revenues respectively (Suberu, 2004). Specifically, the statutory allocation to local government increased from 10% to 15% in 1991, and 20% in 1992, not directly from the Federation Account through the Federation Account Allocation Committee which was to operate "a local branch of a federal or state bank or use the Federal Pay Offices in the States" as was envisaged, but from State/Local Government Joint Accounts Committee which any state government rarely dissolved as was expected and indeed directed (Eminue, 1995).

As it is, however, horizontally, Federation Account revenues assigned to the states are shared among these units on the basis of the following five indicators, with weights shown in parentheses: inter-unit equality or equal shares to each state (40%), relative population (30%), social development factor (10%), internal revenue generation effort (10%), landmass and terrain (10%). The same indicators and accompanying weights are used for the inter-unit distribution of the Federation Account revenues assigned to the localities (Suberu, 2004). Because the equality and population factors favour the non-oil producing sections (including the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo major ethnic states), the Nigerian revenues allocation process functions as a massive system of resource redistribution from the oil-rich states of the Niger Delta, on the one hand, to the Federal Government and the rest of the federation, on the other (Suberu, 2004). This, among other issues underpin the agitation by the oil producing states of the Niger Delta for resource control on the basis of the spirit and letters of true federalism.

Unarguably, in Nigeria, the sharing, control and management of resource power are, presently, very contentious. Since May 29, 1999, when a democratic regime was inaugurated after 15 years of authoritarian

rule, Nigeria has been buffeted by a simmering conflict over the control of natural resources in the nation. The resource control palaver in Nigeria is an historical phenomenon. The struggle for resource control in the oil and gas-producing region has taken several forms over the years (Roberts and Oladeji, 2005). The political leaders of the six minority-populated states in the oil-rich Niger Delta or south-south zone, have been an important and irresistible lobby for true fiscal federalism, a region-of-origin or derivation-based on national revenues allocation system, and the adequate compensation of the Niger Delta communities for the ecological and economic costs of oil exploration and exploitation. Their unrelenting agitation for sub-federal resource control informed both the codification in the 1999 Constitution of the principle that at least 13 percent of centrally collected resource revenues should be returned to the states of derivation, and the statutory inclusion of offshore oil revenues (about 40% of total oil revenues) in the derivation rule in February 2004 (Suberu, 2004).

In 1966, Isaac Jasper Boro, a scion of the Nigerian Army who hails from the oil producing Niger Delta, declared the area 'the Niger Delta People's Republic' in a revolt meant to end the situation in which petroleum was ruthlessly expropriated from the area with little concern for local welfare. The revolt was quashed with federal might within twelve days. Thereafter, agitation for a better share of national resources from the Federation Account for the Niger Delta in particular and states in general became muted under the military regimes. However, pockets of protests were kept in check by the complete control of state resources by the Federal Military Government in consonance with the principle of absolutism and centralism around which military rule habitually revolves (Roberts and Oladeji, 2005). Nonetheless, the agitation for resource control became very prominent in the last two decades.

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Its contemporary origin is associated with the agitation of the Ogoni, a minority ethnic group in Rivers State, which articulated its demands in a Bill of Rights (Gboyega, 2002). The Ogoni struggle for 'social justice' adopted sundry approaches, including advocacy, protest marches, civil disobedience, sabotage, and blockade of oil installation. The campaign later assumed a violent turn when the Nigerian state responded with coercive measures (Roberts, 1999a).

The Ogoni Bill of Rights provides the model for other oil producing communities in the Niger Delta area. Numerous pressure groups advocating equity, adequate compensation, and political and economic empowerment in the oil producing areas were floated, including the Ijaw Youths Council (IYC). Many prototype agitations in the oil communities followed, ultimately resulting in the Kaiama Declaration of December 11, 1998 spearheaded by the IYC. Thereafter, militant wings of the pressure groups populated mainly by unemployed youths and 'declassé' elements were established, including the dreaded Egbesu Boys of Africa. The kaiama Declaration was a mandate for immediate action on the issues of preparation and amelioration of the consequences of oil exploration and production. Accordingly, many groups like Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) and the Supreme Egbesu Assembly (ESA) favoured the militant approach. The result was widespread insecurity in the entire oil-producing region (Nigeria, 2002:13). Intractable patterns of conflicts and lawlessness continued to prevail in the Niger Delta until 2009, when the government of late President Umaru Musa Yar' Adua, granted unconditional amnesty to the aggrieved Niger Delta people. This gesture marked the end of large scale militancy and violent agitation for true federalism by the communities in the oil-producing Niger Delta states.

### Constraints of Local Government Administration in Nigeria's Federal Arrangement

Despite the various reforms and restructuring that have been carried-out by successive civilian and military governments in Nigeria to reinvigorate and reposition the local government to serve as real vehicle for social, political and economic transformation in the country, the level of government is still besieged by a number of factors, which hinder its smooth operation and effective performance in the nation's political system. Some of these hindrances include the:

Whittling down of local government functions and powers by State and Federal Government by their encroachment on what should normally be exclusive to local governments;

Excessive external interference and control especially by the State Government. For example, the existence of Local Government Commission, the Ministry of Local Government and Zonal Inspectorate of Local Government affects local government autonomy;

Inadequate funding due to insufficient internally generated funding and withholding of local government funds by the central (State and/or Federal) governments;

Structural discontinuity which makes for frequent changes in the structure or/and system of local government (Okunade, 1993).

Local governments make minimal input into the decisions on resource allocations at both the federal and state levels;

Another issue militating against local governments' performance has to do with corruption. As in all levels and institutions of government in Nigeria, corruption is unambiguous in the local government. It is a statement of fact that in the local government system, corruption has become all pervading, unabated, uncontrolled and persistent. This perhaps explains the inefficiency and ineffectiveness in local government

administration in Nigeria. The system has virtually become superfluous and redundant (Oviasuyi, Idada and Isiraojie, 2010).

Furthermore, the problems of nepotism, tribalism and ethnicism are also very common features of our local governments. These vices give rise to favouritism, blackmail, bitterness, and undue rivalry among the officials and retard the progress of the local government administration. Indeed, bitterness and hatred as a result of tribal and ethnic factors or forces tend to polarize the local government officials along ethnic and tribal lines, and this brings about decline in the cooperative spirit among them. As a result, they find it very difficult to reach substantial consensus on the cogent issues relating to how progress could be made at the grassroots level. This therefore, in return, contributes more to the national development dilemma of the country.

Also, local system in Nigeria is still grappling with the problem of inadequate skilled manpower to run the affairs of local self-governing units.

The level of government lacks the will and appropriate strategy or mechanism to harness own sources of revenues, hence its overdependence on higher levels of government for much of its funds. More critical to this is also the fact that most local government units in Nigeria are relatively too small in size in terms of population and territorial jurisdiction. This reduces their ability to generate funds internally.

These and host of other problems constitute the major barriers or reasons for the general decline in the role of the local government in the Nigerian federal system of public administration.

#### **How to Strengthen the Nigerian Local Government System for Improved Performance**

In order to strengthen local government in Nigeria to actualize the basic rationale for its

establishment and continued existence in the nation's federal administrative structure, this paper recommends the following fundamental strategies:

The higher levels of government, especially the State Government should shun every sort of interference in the affairs of local government. And local government functional jurisdiction should be accorded necessary recognition and respect.

Being a government at the grassroots level, whose existence is provided for in the Constitution, every undue re-organization and tampering which adversely affects the formal structure of the local government should be ceased. Where it is needful, it should be done in line with the constitution which establishes it.

The government must restructure the local government and assign it with specific functions that are sufficiently local and personal to the entire community it is designed for. The new administrative structure to emerge should be the modified cabinet system. Such a model would certainly leave substantial resources for development from below, and the State and Federal Government should resist from the temptation of allocating ad-hoc functions and responsibilities to local government without adequate resource to execute them (Bello-Ikham and Uga, 2004).

Integrative programs capable of eliminating ethnic and tribal consciousness and fostering unity and cooperation among the staff of local governments should be initiated and implemented. This would help to awaken the "esprit de corps" among them in order to work towards achieving the set goals and objectives of the system. Importantly, recruitment and promotion of local government personnel should not be based on ethnic or tribal grounds, but on merit. In this wise, the disciplining of staff members should be devoid of all sentiments.

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embezzlement of funds at the local level there is the need to look into the management of local government own sources of revenues. Ultimately, there is a need to apply procedure to both collection and documentation of these sources of revenue (Odoh, 2004:66). Moreover, the habit of budget discipline should be instilled in local governments and by extension, accountability should be ensured at every level of the administrative hierarchy.

Necessary measures should be employed to ensure that local government units in the country are sizeable enough in terms of territorial jurisdiction and human population, especially in the case of creation of new units as that would boost their financial viability through robust sources of internal revenues.

The State Joint Local Government Account should be abolished and local government should be paid its Statutory Allocation directly through the Central Bank nearest to them and no longer through the State Government to them (Bello-Imam and Uga, 2004). This would not only guarantee the relative autonomy of the level of government but also put an end to the various unauthorized deductions which the State Governments make from the local governments' monthly statutory allocations. This would also bring to an end the operation of the controversial joint account with state governments.

All serving and in-coming local government staff should be made to undergo adequate and effective training programmes on local government administration so as to equip them with necessary professional skills and orientation needed to make the level of government effective and pro-active in delivering on its mandates.

Local government units in the country should muster and demonstrate strong will to harness its constitutionally defined sources of revenue in order to minimize its overdependence on the higher levels of government, which usually reduces its

autonomy to act as a government at its own levels. Moreover, better and improved mechanism for revenue generation or mobilization should be evolved in order to make for proper maximization of own revenue generation potential or capability.

The following strategies if properly adopted and effectively applied would reinvigorate and reposition the third-tier of government in Nigeria to achieve its constitutionally set goals and objectives and complement the efforts of the State and Federal Governments in attaining the overall development of the country.

### CONCLUSION

Federalism presupposes a governmental arrangement where there are distinct levels of government that operate independently and co-ordinate in the system. In a true federal system, the local government in its own right is indeed a distinct level of government as the State and Federal Governments, and possesses a measure of constitutional powers to do at the local levels what the State and Federal Governments do at their respective levels. Thus the local government in all federal systems (including unitary arrangement) remains an integral and indispensable part of the public administrative system. This has become increasingly important due to the widespread recognition of the essential role it plays in actualizing the social, economic and political development of a nation. Thus, the local government both in Nigeria and everywhere in the world came into the scheme of governance because without it governmental administration would be much more difficult.

Despite these facts about the essentiality of the local government in the governance structure of a nation, the level of government in Nigeria is faced with many challenges, which inhibit its potentials to contribute to the attainment of the country's growth and development. As

highlighted in the main body of this paper, some of these hindrances include; interference by higher levels of government, discontinuity in the structure of the local government, inadequate funding, lack of financial and political autonomy, inability to deliver on the shared responsibilities between it and other tiers of government, preponderance of corruption, nepotism, tribalism and/or ethnicity; lack of skilled manpower, unwillingness and inability to harness constitutionally designated sources

of internal revenue, small size of local government units in the country.

These and many more are the major challenges of local government administration in Nigeria's federal political arrangement. However, this paper is optimistic that with careful adoption and application of the recommendation put forward above, the local government would be strengthened to discharge its highly important role effectively in the interest of the growth and development of the grassroots and the nation as a whole.

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