

## Local Government Administration in Nigeria: A Critical Evaluation

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**Abstract.** Local government administration (LGA) is germane to the dividend as well as development of democracy and democratic values. This tier is the closest government to the people in any democratic country of the world. In Nigeria, a number of issues have been raised to challenge the administration process of this tier of government. This paper is aimed to examine LGA in Nigeria by looking at various issues that have contributed to its development. The conceptualization of LGA is looked into in order to have offered an insight and to distinguish it from other forms of government. The study employed participatory theory to analyzed issues in LGA process. The theoretical framework helps to grasp the understanding of the principles of LGA procedure. The research has made commendable effort in discussing in details, the evolution of local government in Nigeria from colonial rule to major landmark reforms of 1976, 1988 and 2003 respectively. In the final analysis of the study, it offers the functions and challenges of LGA. The study recommends workable solutions that will improve the administration and functions of local governments in Nigeria. One of such recommendations is the granting of full autonomy to local government. Local government autonomy is in line with the practice of true federalism which promotes socio-political equity and justice. The study recommends the promotion of grassroots' democracy through "bottom-up" approach and not "top-down" exercise as it is presently practiced in most states of the federation, the practice of appointment of sole administrator local authorities.

**Keywords:** Bottom-up approach, Federalism, Local government administration.

### 1. Introduction

The system of local government administration in Nigeria today has its origin in the early colonial period. Basically, the evolution of local government system in Nigeria could be traceable to Great Britain municipality's form of local government. This system introduced in Lagos, Port Harcourt, Enugu etc. had similar responsibilities with what is obtainable in Britain. This is a multiple system of local government that operated before the 1976 local government reform. After the creation of Nigeria 1914, the British colonial officials came to realize that there were wide disparities between the Northern and Southern Protectorates. Lamenting this situation before his departure from Nigeria might be described as mature policy whose aim was purely administrative while that of Southern Nigeria was commercial and directed primarily on the development of natural resources and trade (The Guardian, August 2003).

Thus, Laggard and the British colonial officials realized quite early enough that unification in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria could not, only own, and bring out the described results. As a result, a system of government that would take account of the diversities of the country had to be evolved so the colonial officials agreed that the uniform development of the country had to be based on a system of local administration which would reflect the local needs of the people. There was also a consensus that this

system of local administration had to be based on the indirect rule system which was already in existence in the Northern Protectorate (Oyediran, 1984).

In short, the local government system in Nigeria has its root in the indirect rule policy which was designed to share power between the colonial government and powerful Northern emirs who initially resisted the imposition of British rule on the area. The success of the indirect rule policy in the Northern Protectorate encouraged the colonial government to extend it to the southern protectorate after the amalgamation of 1914. So the colonial government used the indirect rule policy, through the native Authorities to administer the local areas. As it was noted by OluOkotoni, Nigeria local government system has passed through a series of metamorphosis. It has moved from the rudimentary Native, Authority system which was established by the erst while British colonial administration to its present status as the third tier of government within the Nigeria federal structure (OluOkotoni 2006). Most of the changes came through series of administrative reforms. The most important of these reforms were 1976 and 1988 reforms. The two reforms were constitutionally recognized by 1979 and 1989 constitutions. The two reforms were aimed at democratizing the local government system, serving as platform a return to civil rule, and constituting a virile instrument for national development.

Local government in Nigeria from the advent of the British and the creation of the future state of Nigeria to the present day has been a continuous search for the best machinery for providing government at the local level. The basic aim of local government legislation in Nigeria has been to provide for the government of the people at the most intimate level such that governing may be responsive to local interest and pressure and that it may conform with and help in carrying out, the politics of the government both in maintain laws and order and in providing welfare services and promoting general development. (Olaleye)

For effective administration and achieving the aims set for itself, local government in Nigeria

must be organized on a more sophisticated level and adapted to perform the functions that will help to improve the quality of life in such a more complex society like ours. With this introductory remarks this study will therefore examines many issues in local government administration in Nigeria, among these issues are the concepts of local government, the history of local government in Nigeria, functions of local government, local governments reforms and problems of local government and conclusion with recommendations. At this juncture, it is very important to begin with examination of the concept of Local Government.

## **2. Conceptualization of Local Government**

Local government is a government at the grass root level of administration meant for meeting specific grass root needs of the people. It is formed by the need to decentralize power. Many scholars are also defining it in different perspective. Appadorai defines it as “Government by popularly elected bodies charged with administration and executive duties in matters concerning the inhabitants of a particular district or place (Appadorai 1975: 287). Tair describes it as “part of government which has the highest profile to the man on the street.

Rao (1965:1) sees local government as “that part of the government which deals mainly with local affairs, administered by authorities subordinate to the state Government but elected independently of the state authority by the qualified residents. William A. Robson, in a lengthy definition, says that “Local Government may be said to involve the conception of territorial, non-sovereign community possessing the legal right and the necessary organization to regulate its own affairs. This in turn pre-supposes the existence of a local authority with power to act independently external control as well as the participation of the local community in the administration of its own affairs. The extent to which these elements are present must in all case be a question of degree.

Gokhale (1972: 12) defines government as the government of a specified locality by the local people through the representatives elected by them. Venkatarangaiya and Pattabhiram also define local government as the administration of a locality, a village, a town, a city or any other area smaller than the state by a body representing local inhabitants, possessing a fairly large amount of authority, raising at least a part of its revenue through local and therefore, as distinct from state and central services (Venkatarangaiya & Pattabhiram, 1969).

The guidelines for Local Government Reforms of 1976, defined Local Government as government at local level exercised, through representative councils established by law to exercise specific powers should give the council substantial control over local affairs as well as the staff and institution 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 government, in their areas, and to ensure through devolution of function to these councils and through the active participation of the people and their traditional institution, that local initiative and response to local needs and conditions are maximized.

Three Salient points emphasized in above definitions are that:

- a local government is at a comparatively lower level than a national government;
- it is established by law and has certain responsibilities and;
- it is normally elected or selected the function of election being to promote a sense of political efficacy and to serve local interests and sensitivities.

Hugh Whalwn, has added a fourth set of characteristics when he affirms thus “A Local Government Unit must have a population, a given territory, and institutional structure and autonomy”. To Adamolekun, “the three most distinguishing characteristics of local government are their legality, functions and autonomy”.

Local government is also seen as phenomenon of differentiation of individualization of separation. It represents and strengthens separate social groups enjoying a relative dependence, sometimes autonomous, constituting part of the public power. Keith Panter-Brick, C.H. Wilson, Jeremy Beentham, W.J.M., Mackenzie and Harold Laski all conceptualize local government as a training ground of national politicians – an institution for receiving politicians and institution for receiving political education, learning”, the art of weighing and choosing between competing claims and justifying the choice as a just one, and the art of winning consent.

Gboyega asserts that a great number of local government councilors end up winning election to their countries National Assemblies as legislators, for instance, that many members of the British Parliament has served their apprenticeship as local government councilors. According to Ola in Italy, more than half of deputies (members of the lower house) and about the same proportion as senators had their political education in local government. Finally on the concept of local government, local government is the government of lower level purposely established to meet the needs of the people. And it is also formed by the need to decentralize power.

## **2.1 Democratic Participatory Theory**

This school of thought is of the opinion that local government exists basically for the purpose of promoting democracy and participation at grassroots level, therefore, bringing government nearer to the people. By emphasizing the principles of devolution and representatives, local governments, thus seek to involve local people in the management of their affairs by providing them access to local representative institutions. According to Lord Bryce who represents this school, the best school of democracy and the best guarantee for its success is self-government. Panter (1953: 23) also argues that participation is vital to democracy since it is in the community that people appreciate and tolerate each other’s views and learn the art of governance.

The theory believes that the local government serves as a training ground for political leaders. It observes that most national politicians use local government as a lever for acquiring political training and leadership qualities by first contesting as councilors at the local government level (Ajayi, 2000: 34) Example of this as it was stated in the introductory remarks of this paper is the Senator Ganiyu Solomon, from Mushin local government who started as chairman of local government before moving to the lower house and later to the upper house as senator.

Gboyega (1981: 6) also asserts that a great number of local government councilors end up winning election to their countries national assembly's as legislators for instance, that many members of the British parliament had served their apprenticeship as local government councilors. According to Ola, in Italy, more than half of deputies (members of the lower house) and about the same proportion as Senators had their political education in local government of 1947 Britain had contemplated using local government as a training basis for parliamentary democracy in Nigeria. Proponents of the Democracy participatory school of thought identified such political activities as holding political parties, pressure groups and interest groups attending party rallies/conventions, electioneering campaigns, voting in election, appointment or selection into local government committees and Boards of parastatals discussing local political issues etc has inculcated political education in the citizen.

During the 1979 political transition in Nigeria members of the constituent Assembly that scrutinized the Draft constitution produced by the constitution drafting committee (CDC) were elected by the newly elected local government councils in 1976. By making such apprenticeship possible, local governments provide political education to parliamentarians, party leadership and citizenry as a whole.

## 2.2 Evolution of Local Government in Nigeria

It is very difficult to trace the evolution of local government, in Nigerian. As it is observed and noted by scholar that historically, local

government is older than other levels of government because governance began with the organization of peoples into small communities in a limited area. Since there is administration or governance before the coming of colonial rule, what is important to do at this juncture is to examine local government origin from British era. Therefore has it had said in the introductory remarks, the system of local government administration in Nigeria had its origin in the early colonial period. After the birth of Nigeria in 1914, the British colonial officials came to understand that, there were wide disparities between the Northern and Southern protectorates. Lord Laggard, the architect of modern Nigeria observed, before leaving Nigeria in 1919, that "The policy of Northern Nigeria might be described as mature policy whose aim was purely administrative while that of Southern Nigeria was commercial and directed primarily to the development of natural resources and trade (The Guardians, August 7, 2003)

As it was noted by Oyediran, Lugard and the British colonial officials realized quite early enough that unification in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria could not, on its own, bring out the desired results. As a result, a system of government that would take account of the diversities of the country had to be evolved. So the colonial official agreed that the Uniform development of the country had to be based on a system of local administration, which would reflect the local needs of the people. There was also consensus that this system of local administration had to be based on the indirect rule system, which was already in existence in the Northern Protectorate (Oyediran, 1984: 19).

The Local Government system in Nigeria had its root in the indirect rule policy, which was designed to share power between the colonial government and the powerful Northern emirs who initially resisted the imposition of British rule on the area. The success of the indirect rule policy in the Northern Protectorate encouraged the colonial governments to introduce it to the Western and Eastern parts of Nigeria. It was partially successful in the West and absolutely failed on the East. The colonial government used

the indirect rule policy, through the Native Authorities to administer the local areas.

Having traced the historical origin of local government, it is also imperative to briefly look at the development of local government in Nigeria from colonial era to the present day. As it is observed that, the primary objective of any local government system is to bring the government nearer to the people and to promote development in areas that are remote from the centre. The local governments in Nigeria did not measure up to this expectation during the colonial period.

According to Akinbade, the poor performance of local governments was intertwined with the pattern of development of the local council in the three regions. In the North, the Native authorities operated under the supervision of the District Officer (DO) who was usually a European. The Native Authorities prepared their budgets under the guidance of the District officers who submitted these proposals to the government for approval. Taxation was the major source of revenue for running the Native Authorities. The success of Native Administration in the Northern Protectorate however depended on the support which it received from the powerful Emirs. The Emirs and the traditional institutions, in general were central to the local government system in the area (Akinbade, 2008: 34)

The introduction of the Native Authorities in the south was not as successful as in the North partly because the Southern traditional rulers lacked the pedigree of the Northern Emirs and partly because there was no efficient machinery for the collection of taxes in the Southern Protectorates. Because the North had the resources to support the operation of the Native Authorities, the local government system emphasized service delivery. On the other hand, the Western and Eastern Region tended to promote popular participation. In the same vein, while the Native Authorities in the North were mere instruments in the hands of powerful Emirs, the system in the South was dominated by supporters in the ruling parties. In other words, politicians were dominant in running the local councils in the Southern part of the country. But in all cases, the councils were far

removed from the local people in both the North and South, there was a genuine demand to reform the local government system to make it relevant to the needs of the people. Indirect rule and native administration continued in force till 1950. The 1950 year saw the beginning of a new phase in the development of Nigerian local government. The lower tier of Nigeria government began to be reorganized into units now called local government council in parts of the country in the place of the existing titles of native administrations.

The Local Government law passed for the Eastern Region in 1950 established the model for Nigerian Local Government. The region repealed the Native Authority Ordinance and replaced it with the Local Government Ordinance. Under the reform, the following changes were introduced. More than 80 percent of the councilors were directly elected. Power was vested in the councils as the District officers were stripped of some of their powers a three-tier local government structure comprising country, district and local councils was established. The country was the largest unit and performed major functions and services in the urban areas. The district and local councils followed in that order and operated in the small towns and rural areas respectively. It was observed that, the reform was not a success for several reasons. The first, the councils were too small to be viable. Second the competition between the country and district councils over local resources and prestige usually resulted in conflict between the two levels of local government. Finally, there was poor supervision of local councils by the regional government and this led to widespread corruption at the local level.

To correct those anomalies in the system a number of new laws were introduced by the government. The new legislation included the 1955 Local Government Law which gave power to the Minister for Local Government to ensure close scrutiny and supervision of local government; the 1958 Local Government Law which abolished the country council and the Local Government Law of 1960 which redesignated the Urban and rural district councils (Oyediran, 1984: 21)

In 1952, the Western Region and in 1954 the Northern Region passed Local Government Laws under which elective element was introduced and the local government authorities were accorded greater independence from Central Control. That membership of the local government council was partly by election and partly by appointment enabled the traditional leaders to maintain tolerable presence in local government, especially in the North, most of the nominated seats were meant for and in fact went to them. In the Western and Eastern Regions the majority must be elected. In the North it was possible and in fact it often happened that no member of a council was elected. In the North it was possible, and in fact it often happened, that no member of a council was elected. The change in the west fell in line with the new democratic mood and the technical need in local government although; the Region continued to pay respect to traditional leadership. The 1952 Western Region law resulted in the following: (i) not less than 75 percent of the councilors were elected; (ii) the powers of the District officers were reduced and; (iii) a three-tier local government structure comprising divisional, district and local councils was introduced. They were similar to the county, district and local councils of the Eastern Region in terms of size and functions.

Several other reforms were also carried out by the region e.g. the 1957 Local Government Law increased the autonomy of authorities and replaced the District officers with three inspectors who were appointed to supervise local councils throughout the region. The two regions (Eastern and Western Nigeria) developed local government systems which were similar in terms of structure, functions and philosophy. The two regions accorded more importance to issues of democratization and political participation than the delivery of service to the people (Oyediran, 1984: 23).

As it has been said above, that the first major attempt to reform the local government system in the region was made in 1954. The Local Government law of 1954 introduced some moderate changes including the following: (a) it retained the term 'native authority' to describe the local government; (b) traditional rulers and

Emirs would continue to provide leadership for the native authorities and; (c) it created five types of native authorities, namely: a chief or other person in council; a chief or other person and council; any council; any group of person and any chief or other person.

The first type which was built around an emir was the most powerful. The others were arranged in descending order of importance. The Premier of the region had power to appoint people to these native authorities but, such person who was closely associated to a traditional ruler. But in all cases such appointment must conform to the native law or custom of the affected area (Oyediran, 1984: 25). This reform essentially consolidated the powers of the emirs and traditional rulers and made no serious attempt to democratize the local government system and transfer power to the elected representatives of the people. It did not change the system of local administration and, continued to use the term 'Native Authority' to describe the local government system. This was a name which had been dropped much earlier in the Eastern and Western regions. The government of the region simply saw the Native Authority as an agent of socio-economic development and, the maintenance of law and order, and less as an instrument of popular participation and expression of popular will.

Oyediran (1984: 27) also observed that, there was no marked development in the local government system in the First Republic. The structure, functions and powers of local government remained essentially unchanged. This was partly due to several factors according to him, they are: (i) the internal crises within the ruling political parties in some of the regions; (b) the need to nurture the nascent democratic system and; (c) the restraining influence of the inherited colonial institutions.

The major characteristics of the local government system in the country during the First Republic were summarized as follows:

- The regions continued to pursue only reforms and policies that were suitable to their local needs and circumstances;

- The local government enjoyed relative financial autonomy;
- The role of the local government in local and community development and maintenance of law and order was increased. In the administration of justice, for example the local governments controlled the local police, prison and courts and;
- Traditional rulers were assigned greater roles although a more elaborate system was introduced to ensure accountability and a more efficient use of resources.

Development of the local government under the military Reignite intervention of the military in Nigerian politics in January 1966 brought drastic changes to the structure of local governments in the country. The military institution was characterized but a highly centralized and unitary structure imposed a system of local administration that was generally remote to the local people (Akinbade, 2008: 34). Also, the creation of twelve states on May 27, 1967 implied a further diffusion of power, and invariably a greater variation in the system of local governance in different parts of the country. As it was observed, by different scholars, under military administration and during the Gowon regime which lasted from 1967 to 1975, different states operate different systems of local government. In the Northern states, the Emirs retained some of their powers and influence because the councilors appointed by the military governors were traditionally and spiritually expected to defer to the authority of the Emir. The Eastern states and the Mid-West abandoned the councilor system adopted in the 1950s for development administration, modeled after the French system of ‘deconcentration’ (Onyishi, 2012). The 1976 Local Government Reforms was regarded as one of the major reform in the history of local government in Nigeria. The 1976 reform has been identified as the reference point for any meaningful discussion of local government system as avenue for participatory democracy (Aina, 2006: 287). The massive recommendations were presaged but the reconitions of the public service Review commission of 1974. The 1974 commissions has reported two basic types of

local administration, the councilor and the Divisional systems. The councilor system consists of representative councils, which take decisions by majority vote which the Divisional administration was a form of local administration runs through decentralized machinery of the state government (Aina, 2006: 288).

The coming of the 1976 Reforms naturally terminated the divisional administrative system and replaced it with the local government administration. He also stated as it was noted by both Adamolekun and Gboyega “what distinguishes the 1976 local government reforms from all previous reform exercise in Nigeria is its formal and unequivocal recognition a distinct level of government with definite boundaries, clearly stated functions, and provisions for ensuring adequate human and financial resources.

The 1976 local government Reforms were therefore meant to correct some of the problems that hampered the performance of government at the local level. In other words, the reforms were designed to stimulate democratic self-government and to encourage initiative and leadership at the local level. The 1976 local government reforms under the Murtala-Obasanjo regime. 1988 Local Government Reforms:- Administrative reforms are normally introduced when governmental machineries find it difficult to deliver; or when organizational and administrative instruments find it impossible to cope with the new burdens imposed on them (Olaleye, 2008: 21)

The Federal Military Government of General Ibrahim Babangida inaugurated the Dasuki Committee in 1986 to review the problems of local governments in Nigeria and make recommendations on how to further deal with them. The chairman of the committee was Alhaji Ibrahim Dasuki, the then Sultan of Sokoto. The recommendations of the committee as well as the government’s white paper on its Report constituted the main provisions of the 1988 Local Government Reforms. All these were later incorporated into the 1989 constitution.

However, the Obasanjo government inaugurated the Technical Committee on Local Government Reforms on June 25, 2003. The chairman of the committee was the Etsu, Nupe, Alhaji Sanda Umaru Ndayako. Following the death of Alhaji Ndayako on September 1, 2003, the Deputy Chairman of the committee, Alhaji Adamu Liman Ciroma, who was a former secretary to the Federal Government, was made the new chairman of the committee. The committee submitted its report to government in October 2003 (Akinbade, 2008: 11)

The 2003 local government reforms was basically set up to look into two major problems – the constitutional problem and poor performance of local government in Nigeria.

### 3. Recommendation of the Technical Committee on Local Government Reforms

The above mentioned problems and challenges, which the Technical committee on local government Reforms was required to address. It was observed, that, the committee did not rise up to the expectation of Nigeria. Its major recommendation was that the parliamentary system of government should replace the presidential system at the local level. Although a parliamentary system might give the people more control over the elected local council officials, yet it would appear that the committee did not think a parliamentary system would create conflicts between the local government (federal and state) which continued to operate the presidential system (Akinbade, 2008: 13).

### 4. Functions of Local Government

Whether developed or developing nations, local government performs crucial functions in development of the society. Among these functions are:

**Provision and Maintenance of Market:-** One of the functions of the local government authorities is the construction or provision and maintenance of markets in their areas of jurisdiction.

**Collection of Taxes and Rates:-** Local government collect taxes and rates at their

locality like direct and indirect taxes, markets stall rates etc.

**Construction and Maintenance of Roads:-** It is the function of the local government authorities to construct and maintain the feeder roads, streets, drains etc in their localities.

**Issuance of Licenses:-** Local government issues licenses for bicycles, dogs, vehicles, hawkers, television, roads etc.

**Registration:** Another important function of local governments is the registration of births, deaths and marriages that occur within their areas of authority.

**Construction and Maintenance of Motor Parks:-** It is the function of local government to construct and maintain motor parks in their location.

**Health Facilities:-** Provision and maintenance of health centers, maternity homes and sanitation facilities are the responsibilities of the local government authorities.

**Provision of Recreational Facilities:-** Local government authorities also perform the functions of providing and maintaining recreational facilities such as stadium, amusement parks and open places where people can go and exercise their bodies as all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

**Provision of schools and Libraries:-** It is some of the primary functions of the local government authorities to build and maintain schools educational facilities like public libraries. The responsibilities of equipping these educational institutions and paying salaries to teachers and other workers in them especially primary schools fall squarely on the shoulders of the local government authorities.

**Public Conveniences:-** Other useful functions performed by local government authorities include the provision and maintenance of public conveniences like slaughter house (Abbateus) burial grounds (Cemetery) refuse disposal spaces and containers etc.

### 5. Problems of the Local Government

While working or researching on local governments one cannot ignore the problems and challenges with which local government are faced. First and foremost, local governments being small may not be able to attract competent

and efficient persons to perform the services they render to the public. Since the area of their jurisdiction is small and their capacity.

To pay Personnel is limited by their limited resources; they may find it difficult to hire specialists. This will naturally affect their efficiency. Secondly, as it's observes since these governments are concerned with their respective local communities, they may degenerate into myopic, narrow-minded, selfish and ignorant institutions. They are considered closed to new ideas and change. They may develop parish pump attitudes and policies. Thirdly, they cannot provide services of a uniform standard. Local governments are bound to differ in resources, efficiency etc so that will be reflected in the local services. That is unfair and inequitable in age of equality (Sharma & Saduna, 2011: 23). Fourthly, they are to work and survive in the face of centralizing tendencies. Modern technological revolution has led to speedy communications, industrializations, urbanization, information technology etc. speedy communications like telephone, fax, cell-phone, computer have reduced distances," what were once local affairs may now be reported to a distant central or state Government and decisions on these be flashed back incredibly fast. "Local initiative and the independence of action have been undermined by the ease and quickness with which the State Government and the town government may talk over the telephone and settle the matter. (Shriman Maheshwari, 1999: 22).

The Guardian newspaper report that the poor performance of local governments in Nigeria is caused by these problems which are ideological, political, constitutional, administrative and financial in nature. The poor performance of local government councils may be traced to the lack of ideological clarity about the role which they are supposed to play or perform in the political system should the local government; for example, emphasize service delivery or political participation? Both issues are very important but, the achievement of one may conflict with the achievement of the other. Development or service delivery in a highly authoritarian neo-capitalist environment may lead to less popular

participation. Similarly the active involvement of the people in running their own affairs, though desirably may conflict with the interest of the ruling class and this may retard development at the local level.

The political problems which hinder the performance of local government include the following – arbitrary creation of local government areas. Local government areas are often created without much concern for their viability and usefulness for development at the local level. In other words, political considerations outweigh development concerns in the creation of local governments.

Unpopular leadership of local councils – the local governments are only local in name as their leaders are either imposed by state governments or are products of fraudulent elections.

Interference in affairs of councils by federal and state governments tends to cripple councils

Also, constitutional challenges are another problem facing local government in Nigeria. The administrative problems such as: shortage of personnel, imposition of uniform structure and weak institutional mechanisms.

Finally, the financial problem is the greatest problem facing local government in Nigeria. Most local government cannot pay staff salaries regularly or embark on development projects. The major causes of the financial problem of local government are: (a) the diversion of federal governments allocations to local governments (b) the deductions and levies (statutory and non-statutory) made from the subventions of local governments.

Local government in Nigeria has undergone a lot of metamorphosis. The critic also observes other problem which is the increasing dominance of the federal government and consequent decline or erosion of autonomy of local government. The critic argued that, democratic ideas cannot be adequately promoted from above. If local government will constitute an agent for promotion genuine local self-government and indeed democracy, a lot have to be done to have

a virile local government in Nigeria. Some scholars have postulated that local government is antithetical to democracy. To this, it has been discovered that no problem exists except a purely verbal one. Since there are many traditions of democracy and local self-government each conditioned by peculiar circumstance of history and geography, the justification for local government, therefore, must rest upon practical advantages or values rather than abstract.

## 6. Recommendations

For effective local government administration, most especially, an administration that will further strengthen Nigeria's democracy, the following are thereby recommended:

For Nigeria's federalism to have better impact on its citizens, it is better to align our federal practice with the best federal practices across the globe. Ethnic and sectional agitations that have bedeviled this democratic dispensation will not be necessary if our federal practice tallies with ideal federal structure seen from where we "supposedly" copied our federalism. Quasi-federalism as it is presently practiced in Nigeria cannot make local government administration effective as it is being envisaged.

This study will better recommend full local government autonomy in the administration and functions of local government in Nigeria. The problems of funding, inappropriate resources to hire sound personnel will not be a problem if the local government is given full autonomy. Local government autonomy is in the spirit of true federalism which the constitution of the country projects.

Modern state governance is an important administration that must be all inclusive. The traditional institutions need to be incorporated more into the local government administration. Elective principle must be introduced into this institution in order to improve their administrative performance. The present system of non-elective principle makes them "demi-gods" of their respective local areas of jurisdiction.

We need to fashion an efficient and effective financial system for our local government administration is key. The financial cost of our local government administration in the present way it is run is expensive. We run local government administration as if we are competing with developed countries or advanced economies.

The financial emoluments of our elected representatives at the local level e.g. councilors hinder good local economic development. Most local revenues are used to service these public office holders. In order to beat down this financial cost we need to review downwards the ratio of elected representatives per county/ward/local area. Counties delimitation needs to be worked on to reduce the number of elected representatives and save cost to address more developmental projects in the local governments.

Accountability is key to democratic governance and administration. We need easier processes of holding elected officials more accountable to the people. The principle of accountability needs to be more enshrined in local administration. Governments at the local levels need to be felt more by majority of the citizens (in that locality), if accountability processes and procedures are to be pursued it will keep the elected representatives on their toes regularly e.g. a councilor should be able to be recalled with minimal signatures of registered voters in a county and the legal process of verification and time band should be simpler and shorter. This, makes the people feel the effect of government faster and better and at a considerable and within a measurable time

## 7. Conclusion

This paper examined local government administration in Nigeria. Among those issues that this paper discussed are: conceptualization of local government, characteristics of local government, importance of local government, theories of local government, evolution of local government in Nigeria, local government reforms and the problems of local government. For local government to work effectively and

efficiently in Nigeria, there is need for genuine local self-government capable of promoting democratic ideas and ensuring full autonomy especially with regard to staff, institutional and financial power by local government themselves rather than relying on higher level of governments on such issues. And also, it is pertinent to encourage the development and promotion of democracy from the grassroots level and not top-down. The former promotes participatory governance that is capable of enhancing peaceful coexistence, while the latter encourages superiority as against inferiority which is capable of breeding crisis of some sort.

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