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INSTITUTING GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

Good governance is essentially lacking at the grassroots level. This has compounded the crisis of development facing Africa. Good governance is all about facilitating development, creating economic opportunities, and instituting credible accountability frameworks to govern the development process. With the population of Nigeria at over 160 million, the need to bring government nearer to the people, through good governance cannot be over-emphasised. Constitutionally, local government is charged with the statutory responsibility of bringing development nearer to the people in terms of efficient service delivery and the mobilization of the people for political development. To achieve their statutory mandate, the local governments were granted some measure of autonomy; they are entitled to 20% statutory allocation from the federal revenue, and also allowed to generate their own internal revenue. How far the local government has gone in meeting these statutory obligations is a matter of conjecture. Good governance is synonymous with accountability, and is a sine qua non for efficient service delivery. The objective of this paper is to elucidate the fact that without the institutionalization of accountability at the grassroots level where about 70% of Nigerians live, the prospects for development remain in jeopardy. The paper adopted a Methodology which relied on the critical (qualitative) analysis of secondary data in order to arrive at the findings. The paper recommends constitutional reforms and the institutionalization of accountability frameworks at the local government.

Keywords: Good Governance, Local Government System, Accountability, Efficient Service Delivery, Statutory Obligations, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

Nations all over the world create some form of government that will decentralise authority and bring governance closer to the people. This is because, most times, the presence of the central government is unable to be felt by the local people who are separated from the central government by some barriers like distance, communication and central government's insensitivity. A major problem of development in most countries of the third world is the over-centralization of the process of administration- the top-down approach. Because the

result from this approach was unsuccessful, it created the need for a rethinking which crystallised in the decentralization of both structures and the processes of government. Thus, in spite of the differences in structure, composition, legal/constitutional status, historical evolution, and scope of functions (sometimes within the same political entity), local government is regarded as a veritable agent of development and enhanced political participation. As a result of developments from the socialist countries of Europe and Asia and as well as rigorous activism independent of government initially, the belief began to gain ground in Africa that economic and social development can be better handled by local government institutions (Olowu, 1988). Olowu further states that these ideas were focussed on the relatively minor complimentary contributions of local governments to the development programmes and efforts of the central government Many African countries have adopted decentralization as the central plank of transforming the lives of rural dwellers. The local government system in Nigeria has evolved over the years. Prior to 1967, local governments were referred to as Native Authorities which were used by the colonial administration as a form of indirect rule to maintain peace, law and order. Since then, local government has undergone some reforms. The most fundamental reform on local government was carried out in 1976. The reforms imposed uniformity on the operations of local government, and created a single-tier structure with specific functions assigned to local government. All local governments in the country have common features- a common structure, sources of revenue and personnel management system. A major feature of the reform was the restructuring of the financial system of local government with the local government statutorily allocated 20% of all federal revenues, and 10% of state government's internally generated revenue within the jurisdiction of the local government. With persistent agitation for grassroots development, the federal government increased the number of local governments from 300 to 448 in 1989: and from 593 in 1991 to 774 in 1997.

Methodology

The research was conducted using descriptive research survey which involved descriptive analysis. The main source of data is from secondary sources which included books, journals, government reports, and bulletin. The data was critically analysed using content analysis in order to arrive at findings that could be generalised. To arrest the problem of paucity of data, I relied on multiple sourcing of data and correlating them to avoid errors that arise from the analysis.

Conceptual clarification

There is apparent lack of consensus, among scholars and practitioners of public administration, on the meaning of local government. Its lack of conceptual precision emanates from the fact that it means different things to different people despite its connotation with the activities of government, exercising authority within a certain jurisdiction, and mobilizing men and resources for the realization of stated goals. Succinctly put, the term local government poses some problems of definition due to the lack of precision in the use of the term "local government" and "local administration" (Eme and Okeke quoted in Okoli, 1985; Orewa, 1991; and Ofuebe, 2005). Consequently, from diverse perspectives, local government is defined by different authors. A local government could be defined as government at any level lower than the central authority in a given state (EUNO, 1961; Alder Far, 1964; Wraith, 1984; and Olisa et al, 1990). Aside from this, the United Nations (1961) defines local government as a political sub-division of a nation (or in a federal system or state) which is

constituted by law and her substantial control of local affairs including the power to impose taxes, or exert labour for prescribed purposes. The governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected. In a federal system like Nigeria, this definition is obviously problematic because not all sub-national governments are local governments. State governments are sub-national governments, yet, they are higher than local government and lower than the central government. Another problem with this definition is that it fails to differentiate between devolution and de-concentration. While devolution refers to the transfer of substantial decision-making powers and responsibilities to legally independent units outside the control of national or state government, de-concentration is used to describe the transfer of administrative responsibilities to field administrative units of the federal government. Local government provides good example of the devolution of powers and responsibilities just as in field administration where statutory bodies provide vivid example of de-concentration (Eme and Okeke, 2011).

Furthermore, Olisa et al (1990) define local government as a unit of government below the central, regional or state government established by law to exercise political authority, through a representative council within a defined area. Furthermore, in a document titled "Guidelines for a Reform of Local Government in Nigeria, local government is defined as government at the local level exercised through representative council established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. These powers should give the councils substantial control over local affairs as well as the staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services and to determine and implement projects so as to compliment the activities of the state and federal government in their areas, and to ensure, through active participation of the people and their traditional institutions that local initiatives and response to local needs are maximised.

In his definition of the concept, Ugwu (2000) sees local government as the third tier level of government created for the purpose of efficient and effective administration of localities. On the other hand, Okoli (2005) refers to local government as a unit of government established by act of law to administer the functions of government and see to the welfare and interest of the local dwellers under the local government system. From the foregoing, our operational definition of local government is as follows: a tier of government that is established by law and charged with the responsibility of accomplishing specific goals and objectives as it concerns the needs of the people within a certain locality. It, therefore, follows that the local government has the following features which make them a distinct tier of government: it is a government that operates within a certain geographical locality to serve the interest of the people; established by statute and its existence is constitutionally recognised; it is vested with political authority and specific powers and has substantial autonomy. Although these features are enshrined in the 1979, 1989 and 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, empirically, local government lacks autonomy.

Table 1: The defining characteristics of local government

	De Tocqueville	**Whalen**	**Mawhood**
(i)	Localness	Given territory and population	Representative of locality
(ii)	Participative	Institutional structure for legislative, and administrative purposes	Authority to allocate substantial resources

(iii)	Relative Independence	Autonomy, subject to the limitations of common law and test of reasonableness	Authority to administer a range of functions
(iv)	Authority- especially effectively influence community affairs to raise resources	Separate legal identity	Separate legal existence

Source: Olowu, D.(1988) African Local Government as Instruments of Economic and Social Development

Reasons for the existence of local government- statutory provisions

The 1976 Guideline for Local Government reform in Nigeria brought out in clear perspective the reasons for the existence of local governments which include: To make appropriate services and development activities responsive to local wishes and initiatives by developing or delegating them to local representative bodies; and Mobilization of human and material resources through the involvement of members of the public in development. Olowu (1988) provides further elucidation: Helping to inculcate in people positive citizenship attitudes, such as consideration, self-control, community responsibility and identity; Providing basic community services which both improve the quality of peoples' lives and enable the community to generate and attract economic activities; and Helping people, especially in the rural areas, to organise themselves for the mobilization and effective management of community resources and central governments respectively.

Ezeani (2008) outlines three essentials upon which the existence of local governments could be justified. These include: a) the promotion of democracy at the grassroots level. This conforms to the views of the democratic-participatory school which believes that local government functions to institute democracy and to afford opportunities for political participation to the citizen as well as to educate and socialise him politically. The view of this school is in line with the 1976 Guideline for Local Government which states that one of the main objectives of local governments is to facilitate the exercise of democratic self-government close to the grassroots of our society and to encourage initiative and leadership potential (b) Local government is justified on the basis of the fact that it is an effective agent for providing services that are local in character. Mackenze (1954) posits that local governments exist to provide services and it must be judged... by its success in providing services up to a standard measured by a national inspectorate. The closeness of local government to the grassroots presupposes that it can provide certain basic services more efficiently than the federal and state governments (c) Local government is a veritable tool for development. Thus, the existence of local governments should not just be for payment of salaries only but to carry the people along in development.

The 1999 constitution recognized the importance of local government in development when it assigned specific functions to local governments to ensure that Nigeria attains economic development by 20:2020. Specifically, Section 7 of the Fourth Schedule of Nigerian Constitution assigned some functions to local governments, among others: Making

recommendations to the state economic development commission; Collection of taxes and licences; Establish and maintain cemeteries, Construct and maintain roads, street lights and drainage systems as may be prescribed by the House of assembly; Register birth and death; Provision and maintenance of primary and adult education; Development of agriculture; Provision and maintenance of health services and any other functions that may be prescribed by the State House of Assembly.

Similarly, the Federal Government's 5th National Development Plan (1981-85) recognised the important role of local government when it stated that the surest way to get to the grassroots through planning is via the local government authority. Thus, from the foregoing, we realise the justification for the existence of local governments, and that local governments can service as a veritable agent of grassroots mobilization and development due to the exigency of development, which ordinarily, the federal and state governments are not best suited to handle.

Table 2: **Possible contribution of local government to the development process**

	Political Integration/Nation Building	Social Development	Economic Growth
1	Unity through opportunity for political participation	Better access to and use of information in respect of service location and effective maintenance capabilities	Local institutions to a bottom-up strategy
2	Training in citizenship and political leadership	Easier to tap the people's knowledge, initiatives and enthusiasm for service delivery	Local institutions historically played a critical role in the agricultural and overall transformation of today's developed countries
3	Promotion of accountable governance	Integration of the development activities of central and local governments at planning and execution stages make more feasible by responsible local governments	Local governments are today still playing very important roles in the economic development of both socialist and capitalist countries
4	Promotion claim-making on central government	Enable individuals and communities to make choices about social services they are willing to pay for	Local governments have a great potential in raising agricultural and industrial productivity in LDCs in the following areas: (a) Collective Action in

			managing scarce resources-land, oil, water, etc; (b) Assisting cooperatives in the rural areas and in the informal sector in the urban areas to organise themselves for effective economic and political action (c) Reduction of waste by central government-dominated projects (d) Presenting a wide opportunity for experimentation/innovation with diverse project/management possibilities (e) Promoting healthy competition for cooperation among communities
5	Reduce social discrimination through the empowerment of minorities		

Sources: Leemans (1970); Esman and Uphoff (1984); Olowu (1988)

Conceptual explication: Good governance explained

The global trend in development literature today is on how to improve governance. The governance issue cannot be adequately answered without addressing the concept of good governance. There is, however, lack of consensus on the meaning of good governance. While good governance is an indeterminate term used in international development literature to describe how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources, governance refers to the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented (UNESCAP, 2009). Development institutions like the World Bank, IMF, etc, concur that good governance is an important part of their development agenda. That is why good governance has become an indispensable part of governance, and is being used as a parameter to measure the performance of other state institutions against Western liberal democratic states which are regarded as successful. The lack of consensus notwithstanding, good governance is a subset of governance which refers to how public resources and problems are managed effectively, efficiently and in response to critical needs of society. This is because effective forms of governance rely on public participation, accountability and transparency. The concept of good governance centres on the responsibility of governments and governing bodies to meet the needs of the masses as against select groups in society (UNESCAP, 2009). In defining good governance, concepts such as civil liberty, decentralization, peaceful conflict management and accountability are used; thus the definition of good governance promotes many ideas that closely align with effective democratic governance (Rocha, 2011). It is in the light of this that the World Bank explains that democratic governance in a country is exercised for the common good which must

include: The process by which those in authority are selected, monitored and replaced; The capacity of the government to effectively manage its resources and implement sound policies; and The respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them (UNDP, 2005).

Thus, governance issues have become not only primary in the development discourse, but are also considered crucial elements to be incorporated into the development strategy. Governance is not only about the organs or actors but it is also about the quality of governance. The most appropriate definition of governance is expressed by UNDP (2012) as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. Accordingly, the key dimensions of governance identified by the World Bank are public sector management, accountability, legal framework for development and transparency and information.

Good governance is further explained by linking it to democratic governance. The Centre for International Private Enterprises believes that democratic governance is vital for development. It refers to democratic governance as comprising the traditions, institutions and processes that determine how government decisions are made on a daily basis, and addresses the following questions: How and to what extent are citizens given a voice in day to day policy making; How are abuses of governmental power prevented?; How governmental officials are held accountable for their actions; and How are grievances redressed? (Anyadike, 2011) When the underlisted characteristics of good governance are elucidated, its meaning becomes clearer

Accountability- Government, private sector and civil society organizations must be accountable to the public. Stewardship must be rendered and how financial resources were expended must be explained to the people. The accountability differs with respect to the organization and whether the decision is internal or external to the organization.

Transparency- Good governance requires that information should be flow freely and that the activities of government is conducted in an open and fair manner. Information concerning the decisions taken must be available so that citizens and groups can understand and monitor them.

Rule of Law- Good governance requires that the rule of law (legal framework) as against arbitrariness should be followed. In other words, the rules should be impartially enforced, particularly the laws on human rights.
Responsiveness- Good governance must ensure that government responds to the needs of the people while balancing competing interests in a timely, appropriate and responsive manner.

Equitable and Inclusive- Good governance guarantees that decisions are fair and reasonable, and that everyone is treated in an equal manner. It also ensures that the interests of the poor and vulnerable are protected

Effective and Efficient- This ensures that processes and institutions produce results that meet needs and that the best use is made of resources

Participatory-Opportunities should be created for the public to participate in how they are governed; that the people are provided with the relevant information for decision making; are given the opportunity to express their opinion, as well as make input/ recommendations as part of the decision-making process. This makes it possible for decisions regarding the allocation of development resources, political, social and economic priorities, are based on broad consensus, among the different stakeholders: the state, private sector and civil society groups.

Good Governance and National Development

One of the greatest problems facing Nigeria today is how to institutionalize good governance as a parameter for promoting national development at the grassroots level. The absence of good governance at the grassroots level is responsible for heightened unemployment, rural/urban migration, inadequate food production, and insecurity such as kidnapping and armed robbery. Insecurity and unemployment are the two most critical problems facing Nigeria today. For instance, the hydra-headed problem of Boko Haram is as result of lack of development and poor governance at the grassroots level. The problem of Nigeria is not that she does not have resources. Nigeria has an abundance of natural and human resources. It is also a multicultural and multi-ethnic society, and its population today stands at over 170 million. The ever increasing population of Nigeria has implications for national development and good governance. This, in itself, means that available resources must be distributed equitably, and that the institutions of government must be strengthened to ensure that development programmes are implemented in such a way that the common good reaches the greatest number who are located in the rural areas. Suffice it to say that government must not only be responsive, but must also be equitable and inclusive to reflect the multi-ethnic character of the nation and also reach the vulnerable groups who should be carried along in decision making. Financial resources are scarce whereas the needs and aspirations of the people keep on increasing at a disproportionate rate that outstretches available resources. This presupposes that available resources should be transparently managed, and that due process is followed in the allocation of resources in order to achieve efficiency in service delivery, and that the people get optimal satisfaction from the existence of public institutions created to serve them. However, while emphasis was hurriedly placed on the creation of states and local governments ostensibly in an attempt to find solution to the lingering problem of development, little or no attention was paid to the institutionalization of good governance-an ingredient of governance that is necessary to ensure that the people get value for money in the budgetary and governance process. This is because good governance is about the processes for making and implementing decisions. Development programmes that are collectively determined and are pro-people are more likely to serve the interest of the people than that determined by a few. Such decisions are likely to make more impact when implemented. In the approach to development today, the global trend is to ensure greater inclusiveness in development efforts. Greater attention is focussed on the poor and marginalized. This cannot be achieved without good governance. The fact that about 70% of Nigerians are living in the rural areas makes good governance an imperative. This is where the youths, women, and vulnerable persons including vulnerable children, the poor, elderly and physically challenged who constitute majority of the population, reside. According to

Idode (quoted in Ezeibe, 2011), about 70% of the Nigerian population live in the rural areas and have benefited relatively little from the rapid economic growth of the past few years. Because of lack of good governance, there are no safety nets to reach them and cushion them from the hardship imposed on them by the neoliberal economic policies instituted by the federal government. According to Mbah (2011), one of the greatest problems of the local government system especially in Nigeria is the issue of accountability, transparency and good governance at the local government level as a third tier of government, and an important tier for that matter.

It was believed that with the inception of civilian democracy in Nigeria in 1999, the democratic rights of the people would have been institutionalised, especially at the local government: the development prospects of the country will brighten; the citizens will begin to enjoy the dividends of democracy, the quality and standard of life of the people will improve through a better Human Development Index (HDI). It was also expected that the right institutions to drive development would have been established and made stronger. The contrary is the case today where individuals are stronger than the nation, leading to gross violation of human rights. According to President Obama, "what Africa needs is not strong men, it needs more strong democratic institutions that will stand the test of time. Without good governance, no amount of oil or no amount of aid, no amount of effort can guarantee Nigeria's success. But with good governance, nothing can stop Nigeria". It is shameful that despite the abundance of natural resources which Nigeria has, the nation's level of development is abysmally low. The HDI for Nigeria is low, at 0.470, which places Nigeria at 158th position out of 177. It should be noted that good and democratic politics that conforms with the western model of democracy is a sine qua non for instituting good governance. The politics of underdevelopment instituted by politicians has not allowed the nation to experience development in terms of the transformation of the lives of the people exemplified in robust socio-economic policies that will improve the citizens access to wealth creation and poverty alleviation, education, health, food, as well as rural development. Politics is no longer a call to service but has become a vocation for looters and ten percenters as revealed by Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu during the 1966 coup. Besides, inequality and poverty are endemic, depicting the low level of investment on human capital.

Since 1960, Nigeria has enunciated dozens of development programmes to bring development to the people. In particular, the programmes were targeted at poverty reduction, creating economic opportunities through job creation, agriculture and industrialization. In spite of the huge sums of money invested in these programmes, the impact of these programmes has not been felt by the rural population. It is believed that if rural poverty is tackled, the government would have succeeded in tackling majority of the problems bedevilling rural dwellers. This is where the local government has a vital role to play. The First National Development Plan (1962-1968) placed emphasis on agriculture, and about 42% was invested in agriculture. Similarly, the Second National Development Plan (1970-1974) placed emphasis on reversing rural-urban migration by providing rural infrastructure and developmental facilities. The Third National Development Plan was aimed at agricultural development sponsored by the World Bank. Other development programmes aimed at instituting rural development include: Operation Feed the Nation; The Universal Primary Education Scheme; The Low Cost Housing Scheme; Adult Education Scheme; Rural Electrification Scheme; Rural Banking Scheme; Agricultural Development Authority; Rural Water Supply Scheme; Credit Scheme to

Small Holder Farmer; Transport Scheme; Health Scheme etc. In recent times, programmes such as The MDGS, Vision 20:2020 and Seven Point Agenda were enunciated to promote national development. These programmes have had little or no impact at all on Nigerians. Despite the delineation of authority between the federal, state and local governments, local government was not given specific roles to play in the implementation of these programmes. There is over-concentration of authority at the federal level that even local government is not carried along in the monitoring and evaluation of projects. At the state level, development is circumscribed because the local government remains an appendage of the state governor which must dance to his whims and caprices. It is ironical that despite the fact that the local government is in a better position to implement these developmental programmes, local government is starved of fund by the state government. As if this is not enough, funds meant for rural development are embezzled by corrupt local government officials.

Development requires a high level of accountability. Right from colonial times to 1960 when Nigeria gained political independence to the present democratic dispensation, Nigeria's development efforts have been truncated by the problem of corruption and lack of accountability. With the discovery of oil and the allure of petro-dollar, the propensity of public officials to misuse public financial resources was heightened. It is however, regrettable that adequate institutional and constitutional measures were not instituted to check the excesses of public officials with regard to the management of public financial resources. Profligacy was allowed to fester at the federal and state government level, and this was carried over into the local government. Every organization that must fulfil its statutory mandate must imbibe the ethical responsibility of integrity and accountability. The local government cannot be an exception. It was said by a former Nigerian Head of State that the problem with Nigeria was how to spend money and not money itself. For the over 30 years that the military held sway, what was achieved was the institutionalization of rent seeking, in which the Nigeria state became enmeshed in a client-patron relationship, with Nigerian leaders and their clients, apologists and praise singers plundering the commonwealth. This led to the failure of development policies and programmes with the concomitant effect of: escalation of poverty and widespread inequality, debt overhang, unemployment, insecurity, and lack of rural development. The local government system was worst affected by these problems as evidenced by lack of amenities and industrialization at the grassroots level.

What then is accountability?

Accountability demands that public officers must be held responsible for their action. Based on this premise, Olowu (2002) posits that accountability refers to answerability for one's action or behaviour. He explains that accountability involves the development of objective standards of evaluation to assist the owners of an organization to evaluate the performance of duties by individuals and units within the organization. Accountability must, therefore, have the following features: a clear definition of responsibility, reporting mechanisms, and a system of review, rewards, and sanctions. Accountability flows in different directions: upward, downward between subordinates and superiors, and laterally among professional groups (Adamolekun, 2011). Accordingly, accountability means that: every action is transparent, that it is open to law; regulation and prudent judgement; All participants are responsible for their own actions; and every act or action is subject to independent, professional unbiased review (audit), and the results made available to all concerned.

Accountability lies in the public domain of scrutiny, which demands that a public officer, whether a president, governor, legislator, permanent secretary or local government chairman, is responsible for his actions, emanating from the exercise of power. Accountability connotes that a public official must take responsibility for the success or failure of his/her action. In other words, the buck must stop on his desk. Boven (2005) submits that public accountability is a rather elusive concept. Despite being an elusive concept, accountability constitutes an indispensable feature of modern democratic governance, because of its broad implication for public management. If public officers cannot be held accountable for their acts of commission and omission, it is an invitation to recklessness and arbitrariness. Therefore, accountability is a basic requirement for all positions of authority.

According to Akinseye-George (2010), accountability refers to the obligation of public officers and institutions to submit their activities to scrutiny by the members of the public, and by the organs and institutions of government authorised by the constitution to carry out such scrutiny. That is, a person is held responsible for whatever he does in a position he occupies, be it public or private and from the public realm, it is the responsibility of rulers to the governed based on definite procedures, which are broadly accepted by those rulers, and which can be enforced on them, should they dissent.

Accountability, in the sense of transparency, responsiveness, and answerability, is meant to instil public confidence in government, and to bridge the gap between citizens and representatives and between governed and government (Aucoin and Heintzman, 2012). Accountability ensures that governments are responsible for their actions; that rulers at all levels report to the ruled. Thus, government consistently informs the people about its actions, generates confidence in the polity, and through this way, a favourable and conducive environment for the implementation of its programmes are created. Thus, accountability is the soul of good governance as well as defines good governance to the core. Again, a fundamental characteristic of the effectiveness of governance is public accountability. Accountability is a necessary ingredient for strengthening public policy implementation and the procurement process by ensuring that public officials give account of how resources, whether financial, administrative, legal or political, committed to their trust, are expended for the intended purpose. As a prerequisite for promoting good governance, accountability becomes a sine qua for achieving developmental goals. In this regard, the accountability of the organs and institutions of governance becomes imperative, towards developing strong governance systems necessary for legitimizing the conduct of government business. In contemporary times, the search for accountability and good governance has occupied the centre stage in the quest for development as governmental and non-governmental organizations have stressed their importance. The DFID strategy papers on realizing Human Rights for Poor People (2012), the UNDP Human Development Report (2012) and the UN (2012) Declaration on the Right to Development- recognise the need for accountability to be approached from the perspective of citizens right, which in a developmental conceptualization, extends the rights of citizens beyond being mere beneficiaries of development to being its rightful and legitimate claimants (Cornwall, 2010). Consequent upon this is the fact that accountability demands citizens' participation in the monitoring of the rights of the people, and in demanding public scrutiny and transparency in affairs that concern them.

Since the governed have transferred their rights to be governed to the sovereign who exercises such powers on their behalf, the representatives of the people either as president, governor, or minister are under obligation to ensure that their conduct meet the highest standard of public morality and expectation. Accountability is therefore an institutional arrangement meant to impose integrity and legitimize the conduct of government business that are in consonance with public aspirations; while at the same time ensuring that sanctions are meted out to culprits, who subvert national interests by voting them out in the case of political appointees, or in the case of bureaucrats, the full weight of the law is brought to bear on them. Ackerman (2006) asserts that it is a safeguard against corruption, nepotism, abuse of power and other forms of inappropriate behaviour. There are three dimensions of public accountability: Political accountability, Administrative accountability and Fiscal accountability.

Accountability and Good Governance

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria did not provide elaborate provision governing the administration of the local government, despite being the third tier of government and the nearest to the people. As it were, the local government is subordinated to the state government. For instance, the 1999 Constitution stipulates that one of the main functions of a local government is the consideration and the making of recommendation to a State Commission on economic planning or a similar body. This cripples the initiative of local government, delays project execution and creates uncertainty. Again, the Constitution provided for other functions and concluded with "such other functions as may be conferred on a local government council by the House of Assembly of the State". While the Constitution provided for a bicameral federal and unicameral state legislature, the Constitution was silent on the status of a local government legislature and executive. This, ipso, means that local government is subjected to the control of the state government. This subordination has implication for accountability. It means that in actual fact, local government is not autonomous. The lack of autonomy circumscribes its accountability to the people. And because it is not accountable to the people, it cannot fulfil its role of promoting democracy, creating awareness and political mobilization, educating the people on their rights at the grassroots, and cannot act as an agent of economic and political development. Accountability involves scheduling regular consultation/town hall meetings with the people, local government/ community agreement on projects to be executed, release of official reports/information about the local government/ information dissemination and feedbacks, settlement/ mediation of inter/ intra community disputes etc. All these cannot be achieved by a local government which is removed from local realities as a result of the constitutional lacuna in its institutional structure and composition, which makes it an appendage of the state government.

The lack of provision for an executive and legislature is another lacuna that impedes development at the grassroots level. Effective leadership is very important in visioning and collective leadership (leadership by consensus) is a veritable tool of realising better goal attainment. It is an antidote to arbitrariness, ineffectiveness and misplaced priorities. It is no wonder then that local government is lacking in fulfilling its mandate. The state government cashes in on this lacuna to undermine the effectiveness of local government, because of the arbitrary powers which state governments exercise over local government. For instance, the Ondo State House of Assembly recently passed a bill which sought to amend the laws

establishing local councils in the state. Again, the Ekiti State Government reduced the tenure of elected local government officials to two years while some state governments left it at three years. In the South-west zone, except for Lagos, a Caretaker Committee was constituted to take over the local government administration. Similarly, in June 2007, some state governments dissolved their local governments and appointed Caretaker Committees to overseer the affairs of the councils, pending the time that elections would be conducted. According to Nnaemeka (2011), these changes were not without social consequences. In 1997, the relocation of local government resulted in large scale destruction of lives and property in Ondo, Osun, Delta, Rivers and Cross-River States. The relocation of the headquarter of the newly created Akoko South East local government from Oba Akoko to Isua Akoko in Ondo State resulted in the destruction of lives and property..

Conclusion

What we have done in this paper is to stress the importance of good governance as a pre-requisite for achieving development in the local government. In line with the foregoing, the paper recommends more constitutional reforms and the enforcement of accountability frameworks at the local government. The paper further advocates the rule of law and due process which are features of good governance. For the umpteenth time, it is important to stress that due process and accountability are two critical ingredients for the management of human and material resources, without which no government on earth can achieve its statutory obligation.

Recommendations

The paper is simply calling for a *paradigm shift* in the governance architecture at the grassroots where majority of the people live. The principles of governance have gone global, and so, the local government should not be an exception. And that is to say that, Nigeria cannot overcome the challenges of development if it does not get it right at the local government. The idea of looking at development only from the federal and state perspective is wrong. Nigeria must carry the local government along and institute measures through constitutional and institutional reforms in order to create a conducive environment for development to take place at the grassroots. We had noted that resources are scarce in relation to demand. Checks and balances must be instituted to check the excesses of leaders, especially those occupying public office. That is why public officers must apply prudence and accountability in the management of resources in order to avoid waste and selfishness. The people must also be carried along in decision making. This is because development is a two-way phenomenon where the government rolls out a policy decision, implements it while it should, in return, receive feedback from the people on the effectiveness or otherwise of its policy, in order to create room for policy evaluation. There is no governance paradigm that ensures this other than good governance.

Specifically, instituting good governance at the grassroots will help in checking corruption, a bane that has truncated Nigeria's development. The local government is a breeding ground for corruption, and one of the most important places to fight corruption is to start at the local government.

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