

State and Local Government Relations: A Critical Survey of Fiscal and Administrative Issues in Edo State, Nigeria (2014- 2016)

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Abstract

Intergovernmental relations are conceptually based fundamentally on the need for the various tiers of government to effectively and consistently collaborate to ensure development at the central and regional units. The collaboration of state and local government is crucial to this developmental arrangement. However, the extent to which this collaboration is realizable in Nigeria is subject to constant academic debate. Thus, this research examines state and local government relations as the panacea for development in Nigeria; using Edo state as a perspective from 2014– 2016. The study adopts the survey research design; questionnaires were the main instrument of data collection while a simple percentage analytical method was used to analyze the data. The study found that the local government councils are deprived of monthly subventions by the state and as such creates a dependent and exploitative relationship which contravenes the federal arrangement. Also, the study found that one of the effective ways for state and local government to promote development is to have a collaborative synergy between them; therefore, it is suggested that, to put a stop to the causes of conflicts among the levels of government in Nigeria, the tiers of government should provide a strategy for resource distribution, jurisdictional and administrative control to address resource sharing as a necessity for rapid development at the grassroots levels.

Keywords: *Development, governance, fiscal relations, intergovernmental, local government,*

Introduction

The concept of inter-governmental relations (IGR) was introduced in Nigeria in the 1950s. This was necessary because of the copious and multifarious problems facing the three levels of government in our heterogeneous society. This inter-relationship became necessary for the attainment of national integration for a harmonious coexistence of the parts, vis-à-vis the whole for good governance and meaningful improvement. The six patterns of relationships in Nigeria's intergovernmental relations are; federal-state relations, federal-state-local relations, federal-local relations, inter-state relations, state-local relations, and Inter-local relations (Enefiok et al, 2014).

It is difficult for any Central or Federal Government to successfully administer all its functions through the State Government without recourse to, or to the exclusion of the Local Government (Kanyip, 2015). This is because: there must be a local body on the ground that is conversant with the local problems, needs and yearnings of its people and it is the closest tier of government to people. Thus, the Local Government is that tier of Government that is at the doorsteps of the people; that is to say at the grass root level (Kanyip, 2015). The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is the fountain that gives the existential basis for the Local Government system in Nigeria (Kanyip, 2015). Constitutionally, Local Government is deemed as a third tier of government in Nigeria's Federal configuration. Section 7(a) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) provides:

the system of local government by democratically elected local government councils is under this Constitution guaranteed; and accordingly, the government of every State shall subject to section 8 of this Constitution, ensure their existence under a law which provides for the establishment, structure, finance and functions of such governments.

Gboyega *et al* (2002) note that even though the nature of the relationship existing among Federal, State and Local Governments from the constitutional point of view tends to be fiscal, a lot of mechanisms or functions exist among them that tend to overlap, link or enhance the relationship of the three levels of government in Nigeria. Essentially, there exist difficult webs of interactions bordering on participatory and joint management in the areas of funding primary education, poverty alleviation programme, training of local government careers and elected officers among others. In a corroborative view, (Gboyega, 1989) speaks on the present mechanisms of fiscal transfers among the three levels of government. He opined that the mechanism of the State Joint Local Government Account Committee is lopsided and that it is more often being manipulated by most officials in favour of the State Governments (Ekpe, 2002).

Adewale (1995) sees intergovernmental relations as embracing three perspectives: political, social and economic efforts of government and various bodies in the state directed towards the enhancement of its goals and objectives. To him, intergovernmental relations does not refer to an aspect of transferring or distributing grants or funds nor is it only an inter-jurisdictional conflict resolving unit, but as a complex network of transactions among constituents and various bodies in the State. The impact of Military Rule on Nigeria's intergovernmental relations cannot be over-accentuated. With the 1966 Military Coup and subsequent creation of twelve (12) States out of the then three regions in 1967, Local Administration was taken over by the Federal and State Governments. During this period, the use of the term “Native Authority” was changed in most states. Some States called it Local Government Authority while others called it the “Development Council”. In the old Western part of Nigeria, comprising the present States of Oyo, Ondo, Osun, Ogun and Ekiti, the method adopted was the “Council-Manager System” (Akinbosade, 2016).

However, by 1976, the Murtala – Obasanjo Military regime orchestrated a major reform which resulted in making Local Administration a third tier of government. This reform, for the very first time in Nigeria, introduced a Uniform System of administration in the country. In the same vein, provisions were made for the functions, structure, funding and management of Local Government. It was the 1979 Constitution that formally provided for Local Government as a tier of government. 1976 Local Government Reforms has this to say;

Government at Local level exercised through Representatives Council established 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 implement projects so as to ensure, through devolution of functions to these councils and through the active participation of the people and their traditional institutions that local initiative and response to local needs and conditions are maximized.

The development of Local Administration in Nigeria has been different in name and structure and function until 1976 when the Federal Military Government emplaced a Uniform Local Government administration. This uniformity has since 1999 given way to all manner of styles, depending on the whims and caprices of the State's Governor, according to Sections 7 & 8 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) (Kanyip, 2015).

Bello-Imman (1990) holds a broader view of the concept of intergovernmental relations. His point of emphasis is on the three types of intergovernmental relations practised all over the world. He asserted that there are partnership models, principal/agent models and functional dualism models. He maintained that Nigeria's

IGR historically exhibits the characteristic of the principal/agent model during the colonial and first republic eras. This implies that the relationship between the local government and other higher levels, federal and state is not based upon the co-operatives situation, but rather a relationship where the local government takes directives and commands from the higher authority or body. The focal thrust of this paper is to examine the interrelationship between state and local government to expose the challenges which have reduced the constitutional strength of the local government and increased the political dominance of the state government.

Statement of the Problem

To appreciate the depth of crisis inherent in Nigeria's federal system, one has to follow the recent trend of the raging controversy between the Federal and State Governments over the exercise of power or control of revenue resources of the local government. In Nigeria, the three levels of government continue to have the problem of resource sharing due to a lack of acceptable formula. This has generated apprehension and controversies between the tiers of government. Essentially, there exists the burden of tax and revenue collection jurisdiction or boundaries among the tiers in some areas. There is also the problem of the state depriving local governments of their subvention for months. Yet, there is the problem of state government determining local government elections within the time frame that suits them. Another problem is the unconstitutional removal of the elected local council chairman and the subsequent use of civil servants instead or the engagement of a committee, who become ultimately political stooges to the governors thereby obeying their caps and whims which negate the essence of the constitutional foundation for establishing the Local Government. All of these problems bother local government autonomy and sovereignty from the federal and state government in particular.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To determine the extent to which state and local government relations affect good governance in Oredo, Esan Central and Etsako West local Government Area of Edo State;
2. To ascertain the effect of unhealthy rivalry between local government and state government in Nigeria;
3. To determine the kind of relationship that exists between the state and local government;
4. To recommend policies against the backdrop of the findings of the study.

The Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this work are as follows:

1. Do the state and local government relations affect good governance in Oredo, Esan Central and Etsako West Local government Areas of Edo State?
2. Does the unhealthy rivalry between local government and state government affect good governance in Nigeria?
3. What kind of relationship exists between the local and state government in Edo State?
4. In what ways can we enhance good governance in state and local governments in Nigeria?

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Conceptual and Theoretical Perspectives

Inter-governmental Relations

Intergovernmental relations consist of all the actions and transactions of politicians and officials in national, sub-national units of government and organs of the state (Thornhill, 2002). Imuetinyan (2002) view intergovernmental relations as a system of transactions among structures and levels of government in a state. Simply put, it is the pattern of behaviour of high-ranking officials of a pecking order structured organization.

Development

Today (1981) describes the concept of development as both a physical reality

and a state of mind in which society has through some combination of the social, economic and institutional processes, secured the means of obtaining a better life. "Development can be seen as the process through which a society's economic, political and socio-cultural institutions and values are transformed to improve the standard of living and life chances of people within that society" (Todaro, 1981:6). To Dudley Seer, the questions to ask about a country's development are: "What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? What has been happening to poverty? If all these have declined from high levels, then no doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result developments; even if per-capita income doubled" (Seers, 1972:129).

Local Government

According to Clark (1948), local government can be said to be that aspect of the government in the state that deals with matters of concern to the inhabitants of a particular place or district. Rao (1965) asserts that local government is part of government that deals specifically with local affairs, that is, administered by authorities which are subordinated to the state government but elected independently of the state authority by qualified residents. Local self-government is the government which is of a specified locality by the local people through the representatives elected by them (Gokhale, 1972). It is an avenue for local individuals to contribute to their governance. It enables the people to choose their representatives to take care of local affairs on their behalf (Bhagwan and Bhushan, 2005).

The uniqueness and eccentricity of the people differ in various localities across the countries. Thus, there are four indispensable factors of local administration, according to Bhagwan and Bhushan (2005) and they are;

1. The involvement of the people in policy-making, either the executive or legislative process
2. Recruitment and staffing in the Local government should have the majority of indigenes to enhance more residents' participation in administrative functions directly.
3. It is a training ground for indigenes aspiring for higher state or national positions. Consequently, opportunity must be given to the locals to develop their leadership skills and disposition
4. Local government can serve as a link or channel of communication between local communities and central authorities (Bhagwan and Bhushan, 2005).

Theoretical Perspective

System theory has a theoretical explanation that is significant to this research work. Scholars like Ludwig Von Bertalanffy and Ross Ashby were biologists who proposed system theory in the 1940s. Von Bertalanffy (1968) wrote that a system is a

complex interaction element and that they are open to, and interact with their environments. System theory was later adopted in the social science field and popularised by David Easton in 1965 which he utilised in his System Analysis of Political Life. So the main tenet involved in the system theory can be summarised as follows;

- (1) A system can be perceived as a whole with its parts and their interdependent relationships
- (2) A system has its boundary and can be viewed in terms of its relationships with another system
- (3) A system has sub-systems and is also a part of a supra system
- (4) A system interacts with its environment in terms of a process that involves input, conversation and output of energy, introduction and materials
- (5) A system tends to re-energize or modify itself through information feedback from the environment.

As a subsystem within the general system, local governments are created to help, facilitate and accelerate developmental growth, especially at the grassroots level. Hence, functions and responsibilities are assigned to them constitutionally, such functions include; building and maintaining markets, primary health care centres, roads, and abattoirs among others. Local governments are also provided with finances by the central and state government along with their tax-raising power. This finance enables them to perform their basic responsibility effectively. Also, as a creation of the state government after the ratification of the central government, local government formulate policies which must be in line with that of the state government and central government; these policies must be ratified by the state house of assembly before they can be regarded as one. These policies are formulated by local governments to help them work towards the attainment of the general system goal. In situations whereby there is indiscipline or financial misconduct in local government administration, the state government intervenes by dissolving the political structure of the council and setting up a caretaker committee to oversee the affairs of the council. This is done to ensure that every part of the system (local government) is working towards the attainment of the general system goals.

Finally, the relevance of the system theory to the study is the continuous interaction and interrelatedness of the federal, state and local government to achieve a set goal and objective which is primarily to promote political, economic and social development in all spheres of government in the state.

State-Local Relations Debacle: The Edo State Experience (2010–2015)

Since the introduction of local government in Nigeria there have been foundational doubt on its relation with the state. The relations which were supposed to

be symbiotic and co-operational have become parasitic and exploitative, as Governors in states continually manipulate the local government to their advantage. These exploitative relations became eminent since the fourth republic which started in 1999. Besides primary school teachers' salaries which are deducted from local government funds, other deductions that are made include funds for joint state and local government projects, funds for the provision of infrastructural facilities, or collaborative projects that can give room for the mishandling of local government funds (Enefiok and Ekpe, 2014).

Between 2015 and 2016, Bayelsa state was leading in indebtedness to local council workers with between 10 to 16 months, followed by Kogi between 7 to 15 months; Delta State, 8 to 14 months, Kaduna, 12 months; Oyo, 3 to 11 months; Edo, 10 months; Abia 5 to 9 months; Kwara, 2 to 9 months; Benue 9 months and Nasarawa 7 months (Sahara reporters, 2016). This development is a clear indication that local government does not enjoy the constitutional autonomy enshrined in the 1999 constitution as amended.

Fundamentally, the state Governors sometimes abruptly sponsor their stooges often refers to as loyalists Chairman of the Council for the sole purpose of having access to the treasury and more importantly to dictate the pace and way fund in the local government is organized. However, where they are unable to sponsor candidates for the positions of local government chairmen, some state governors would deliberately refuse to conduct local government elections in their states; otherwise, the local governments would be dissolved (Akinbosade, 2016).

More so, the Governor of the state can alternatively appoint a caretaker Chairman to oversee the local government affairs. Thus, the appointee becomes “a boy” whose allegiance is to the Godfather Governor and the interest of the people is suddenly mortgaged. A good example is the indiscriminate sacking of four local government chairmen Tuesday, October 6, 2015. The four chairmen were Emmanuel Momoh, Etsako Central Local Government Area; Victor Enobakhare, Egor Local Government Area; Osaro Obaze, Oredo Local Government Area; and Roland Ibierutomwen, Orhionmwon Local Government Area for non-payment of staff salary and alleged diversion of fund amongst others (the street journal, 2015; Akinbosade, 2016). Part of the underpinning issue of local government autonomy can also birth the indiscriminate and arbitrary power of the local government for the constant embezzlement of state allocation and internally generated revenue. According to the letter addressed to Edo state House of Assembly, the Executive Governor of Edo State through the Secretary to the State Government, SSG, Professor Julius Ihonvbere, decry the corruption at the grassroots level when wrote:

..... Their suspension which is for two months is to pave the way for unhindered investigation into several allegations against the chairmen,

which includes non-payment of staff salaries without satisfactory explanations, inability to account for Internally Generated Revenue, diversion of funds, failure to follow due process in the award of contracts as well as illegal employment of senior officers without going through Local Government Service Commission, which is a violation of laid-down provisions... (2015:12).

The Oredo Local Government Chairman (Mr Osaro Obaze) sought redress in court after Adams Oshiomole, the Governor of Edo State suspended him from office less than two weeks before the expiration of his tenure as Chairman of the Local Government Council. However, a Benin High Court(presided by Justice Esohe Ikpomwen)suspended the decision of the state House of Assembly and held that the suspended chairman remains the democratically elected Chairman of the Council (channels, 2015). Despite the court verdict, the State government used its instrument of state coercion to muscle the suspended Chairman from returning to office as held by the Benin City High Court (Akaeze, 2016)

Methodology

The Survey research method was adopted for this study. A well-standardized structured questionnaire was administered to elicit information from the residents in Oredo, Esan Central and Etsako West Local Government Councils which formed the 3 senatorial districts of Edo State to determine the fiscal and administrative issues in state-local relations. A total of 1058 staff (comprising 317 for Esan Central; 334 for Etsako West; 407 for Oredo LG Council) made up the population. The stratified random sampling technique was utilized in selecting the local governments as well as both senior and junior staff of the local governments concerned. Furthermore, the simple percentages statistical technique was adopted for the analysis of the study phenomenon. Yamane Taro's 95% confidence level formula was applied to get the sample size from the 3 local government Areas as stated below.

To determine the sample size of Esan Central LGA Council

$$\frac{20}{100} \times \frac{317}{1} = 64$$

To determine the sample size of Etsako West LGA Council

$$\frac{20}{100} \times \frac{334}{1} = 66.8 = 67$$

To determine the sample size of Oredo LGA Council

$$\frac{20}{100} \times \frac{407}{1} = 81.5 = 82$$

Figure 1: The total sample size of the local Governments.

L.G.C.	POPULATION	SAMPLE
ESAN CENTRAL	317	64
ETSAKO WEST	334	67
OREDO	407	82
TOTAL	1058	213

Source: Atere, (2017)

From the figure 1 analyses, the sample size of 213 was drawn from the 3 local government council staffs. 64 questionnaires were distributed in Esan Central, 67 in Etsako West and 82 in Oredo Local government Council of

Oredo Local government Council of Edo State.

Results and Discussion

TABLE 1
FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF DEPENDENT
VARIABLES (n = 206)

Keys: Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Undecided (UN); Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD)

S/N	STATEMENT (DEPENDENT VARIABLES)	RESPONSE				
		SA	A	UN	D	SD
1	You have a fair knowledge of inter-government relations	43	76	24	39	24
		20.9	36.9	11.7	18.9	11.7
2	The Constitution made provisions for inter-government relations in Nigeria	48	85	41	27	5
		23.3	41.3	19.9	13.1	2.4
3	Nigeria intergovernmental relation is practiced in accordance with the constitution	12	34	51	72	37
		5.8	16.5	24.8	35.0	18.0
4	Local Government is less relevant amongst the levels of government in Nigeria	16	28	53	78	31
		7.8	13.6	25.7	37.8	15.0
5	Resource control causes conflict among the levels of Government in Nigeria.	54	96	19	26	11
		26.2	46.6	9.2	12.6	5.3
6	Effective Inter-governmental Relations triggers rural development in Local Government Administration	47	82	31	28	18
		22.8	39.8	15.0	13.6	8.7
7	The IGR generated in your local government is used for rural development	23	36	46	81	20
		11.2	17.5	22.3	39.3	9.7

8	There is cordial relationship between your local and state governments	27	37	51	72	19
		13.1	18.0	24.8	35.0	9.2
9	The local government is deprived of monthly subvention by the state	46	74	39	21	26
		22.3	35.9	18.9	10.2	12.6
10	Local government in Nigeria is truly autonomous	18	37	44	77	30
		8.7	18.0	21.4	37.4	14.6
11	When local government have direct account with the federal government it will promote development in the rural areas	36	92	28	34	16
		17.5	44.7	13.6	16.5	7.8
12	The state-local government relation is not favourable to the local government	39	86	41	27	13
		18.9	41.7	19.9	13.1	6.3

Source: Field Survey (2017)

Key: Frequency – up; Percentage – down.

Interpretation:

Item one indicates that 20.9% of the respondents strongly agree that they have a fair knowledge of IGR, 36.9% agreed, 11.7% were indecisive, 18.9% disagreed and 11.7% strongly disagree. It, therefore, means that the majority of the respondents have a fair knowledge of IGR.

Item two indicates that 23.3% of the respondents strongly agree that the Constitution made provision for inter-government relations in Nigeria, 41.3% agree, 19.9% were indecisive, 13.1% disagree, and 2.4% strongly disagree. Thus, the majority of the respondents are of the view that the Constitution made provision for inter-government relations in Nigeria.

Item 3 indicates that 5.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that Nigeria's intergovernmental relations are practised following the constitutional provisions, 16.5% agreed, 24.8% were undecided, 35.0% disagreed and 18.0% strongly disagree. From the responses, the majority of the respondents are opposed to the opinion that Nigeria's intergovernmental relations are practised following the constitution.

Item 4 shows that 7.8% of the respondents strongly agree that Local Government is less relevant among the levels of government in Nigeria, 13.6%

agreed, 25.7% were indecisive, 37.8% disagree and 15.0% strongly disagree. The results show that the majority of the respondents are opposed to the view that Local Government is less relevant among the levels of government in Nigeria.

Item 5 indicates that 26.2% of the respondents strongly agree that resource control causes conflicts among the levels of Government in Nigeria, 46.6% agreed, 9.2% were indecisive, 12.6% disagree and 5.3% strongly disagree. Thus, the majority of the respondents are of the view that resource control causes conflicts among the levels of Government in Nigeria.

Item 6 indicates that 22.8% of the respondents strongly agree that effective Inter-governmental Relations trigger rural development in Local Government Administration, 39.8% agree, 15.0% were indecisive, 13.6% disagree, and 8.7% strongly disagree. From the results, the majority of the respondents think that effective Inter-governmental Relations will trigger rural development in Local Government Administration.

Item 7 shows that 11.2% of the respondents strongly agree that the IGR generated in their local government is utilized for rural development, 17.5% agreed, 22.3% were uncertain over the issue, 39.3% disagree, and 9.7% strongly disagree. Thus, the majority of the respondents are opposed to the view that the IGR generated in their local government is employed for rural development.

Item 8 indicates that 13.1% of the respondents strongly agree that there is a cordial relationship between their local and the state government, 18.0% agree, 24.8% were indecisive, 35.0% disagree and 9.2% strongly disagree. The results show that the majority of the respondents are opposed to the opinion that a cordial relationship exists between their state and local government.

Item 9 shows that 22.3% of the respondents strongly agree that the local government is deprived of monthly subvention by the state, 35.9% agreed, 18.9% were undecided, 10.2% disagree and 12.6% strongly disagree. Thus, the majority of the respondents are of the view that the local government is deprived of monthly subvention by the state.

Item 10 shows that 8.7% of the respondents strongly agree that local government in Nigeria is autonomous, 18.0% agreed, 21.4% were indecisive, 37.4% disagreed and 14.6% strongly disagree. From the results, the majority of the respondents are opposed to the view that the local government in Nigeria is autonomous.

Item 11 shows that 17.5% of the respondents strongly agree that a direct allocation from the federal government to local government will promote development in rural areas, 44.7% agree, 13.6% were indecisive, 16.5%

disagree and 7.8% strongly disagree. Thus, the majority of the respondents think that a direct allocation from the federal government to local government will stimulate development in rural areas.

Item 12 indicates that 18.9% of the respondents strongly agree that the state-local government relations are not favourable to the local government, 41.7% agreed, 19.9% were indecisive, 13.1% disagree and 6.3% strongly disagree. The results show that the majority of the respondents are of the view that the state local- government relation is not favourable to the local government. The state-local government relationship is disadvantaged by the local government hence; the local government is not fairly treated according to the federal arrangement.

Summary of Results

1. Inter-governmental relations practices in Nigeria are not in conformity with the constitutional provisions.
2. Inter-governmental relations in Nigeria: particularly between the State and Local Government, have not been cordial concerning fiscal policies.
3. There is no cordial relationship between the Oredo local government and the Edo State government.
4. Resource control breeds conflicts among the levels of government in Nigeria.
5. The Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) is not effectively employed to engender grass root development.
6. Direct allocation from the Federal Government to the Local Government will ensure more resources for developmental purposes in rural areas.

Conclusion

The study examined the relationship among the tiers of government (particularly between States and Local governments) in Nigeria. The research collects data from three local Government Areas (Oredo, Esan Central and Etsako West Local) across the three senatorial districts of Edo State to determine the fiscal and administrative relations between the States and Local Government in Nigeria. The objectives and research questions were answered as seen from the results of the study discussed above. A cordial fiscal and administrative relationship is essential between the tiers of government to engender cooperation, collaboration and grass root development.

From the above finding, there should be a constitutional amendment to ensure the autonomy of the local government. This means that there should be a constitutional provision for the separation of local power from the state which brings an end to the dependency on the state.

Furthermore, adequate resource allocation should be made to local governments to ensure harmonious administrative and fiscal relations between the tiers of government which would help to engender the development of the grassroots. Efforts should be made to avoid over-concentration of resources mainly at the federal and state levels to maximize short-run capacity to avoid a crisis.

The government also should put in place a strategy for resource distribution, jurisdictional control and administrative control to minimize the causes of conflicts among the levels of government in Nigeria. This strategy may include the federal government sharing treasury with local government to avoid bottleneck bureaucratic delay from the state. Conclusively Special judicial panel of enquiry should be set to facilitate any judicial conflict that may arise between the state and the local government.

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