



Refocusing the *Modus Vivendi and Modus Operandi* of Local Government System in Nigeria: The Antigen and Antibody.

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Abstract

Local government system and councils in Nigeria are bedeviled by a myriad of some seemingly intractable challenges. Notwithstanding the hues and cries of council managers and academics, the situation has maintained the 'southward trajectory'. This study reexamined the root cause of the challenges, using a purposively drawn sample of selected rural-based local government councils, in the descriptive survey. Salient among the critical findings was the culpability of the 1999 Constitution, as amended, which totally mortgaged and assigned the existence, livelihood and survival of local government councils to state governments. The study, therefore, concluded that for a meaningful improvement, the fundamental constitutional lacunae must be filled. Accordingly, the study recommended that the Nigerian legislature, the National Assembly, should consider a radical amendment of section 7(1) and (6a and b), which ceded the survival and strength of the local governments to the whims and caprices of the state governments and the political apparatchiks.

Keywords: Modus Vivendi, Modus Operandi, Local Government System, Antigen, Antibody.

Citation of article: Adetunji, A., *et al* (2022). Refocusing the *Modus Vivendi and Modus Operandi* of Local Government System in Nigeria: The Antigen and Antibody. *African Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies (AJPAS)*, 15(1):193-213.

Date Submitted: 30/04/2022 **Date Accepted:** 03/06/2022 **Date Published:** June, 2022

Introduction

In a federal system of government, as Nigeria's, local government is a political division "which is constituted by law, and has substantial control of local affairs, including the powers to impose taxes or to exact labour for prescribed purposes. The governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected (the United Nations Division of Public Administration, in Adamolekun, (1988.).

Implicit in the definition is the need to decentralize and devolve political powers and responsibilities across the tiers of government, in order to, among others, decongest decision making process, promote accountability, achieve rapid response, and encourage self-reliance and rural development (Shaibu, Akowe & Onamah, 2001). When weighed against the shortcomings: duplication of efforts, promotion of redundancy and fragmentation of control, among others, decentralization has the capacity to more effectively promote development, particularly in the rural areas of an emerging nation, as Nigeria (Shaibu, et.al, 2001).

In 'Path to Nigerian Greatness' Obafemi Awolowo, noted that one of the most potent instruments for transforming Nigeria into a developed nation is integrated rural development, besides others: free education at all levels, free healthcare and full employment (Awolowo, 1981). In this regard, Awolowo (1981:63) wrote that under the integrated rural development programme, "We intend to transform the rural areas so that those who inhabit therein may enjoy a new lease of life". To achieve the lofty objective of leapfrogging the rural areas in Nigeria over the underdevelopment doldrums, therefore, a structure with the requisite efficiency and potency is a *sine qua non*. This structure is the local government council. The importance and imperative of an effective and efficient local government system in Nigeria can therefore, not be overstressed. For sure, the need to cascade democratic principles and benefits down to the grassroots is fundamental in the advent of local government system (Toluhi, 2010).

The critical role of the local government system notwithstanding, the poor performance has been variously regretted by scholars in diverse positions: Yakub (2004), Ofuebe (2005), Ugwu (2000) and Ejimofor (1986), among others. Worried by the deplorable conditions of the local government system, this study was initiated, to reexamine the antigen, which has eaten deep into

the fabrics of the local government system in Nigeria, in order to prescribe efficacious policy, set of antibodies, necessary for countering the damage and resultant performance quagmire.

Statement of the Problem

The centrality and imperative of an efficient local government system in realizing government's desired objective of integrated rural development in Nigeria has been tritely acknowledged by the political class and the bureaucratic top brass. Nevertheless, there appears to be a deficit in the political will or commitment to the ideals of the standard of capacitation and empowerment of the system, as a result of which attaining the desired level of service delivery has remained illusory, resulting in pervasive immiseration, particularly for the rural populace.

Available literature and empirical studies provide adequate evidence to surmise that the weak and suboptimal performance status of local government authorities in Nigeria is a carryover of the colonial neglect and the concomitant weak foundation. In Colombia, where the local government system has experienced improvement in service delivery, sustained advocacy was instrumental in protecting the authorities from the influence of clientele politics (Merat, 2004). Elsewhere, in the advanced democracies as the United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, and France, the systems are committed to the enthronement of local government efficiency and accountability, through inexorable professional and intellectual advocacy at the political and bureaucratic echelons (Toluhin, 2010). In Nigeria however, in spite of the acknowledgement of the deplorable situation by successive government administrations and the political class, efforts at revamping the system have remained shambolic, vicious and retrograde; more often, the blue-prints have served the purpose of official rhetorics.

To complement the desire of well-meaning patriots and polity for the revitalization of the local government system, complementary advocacy in the realm of intellectual research and policy is required. Unfortunately, these ingredients and tonic have been in high deficit in Nigeria. The core research problem of this study therefore, is the gap created by the deficit.

Research Questions

Flowing from the problem statement, the following salient questions posed and addressed include:

1. whether the major problems of the local government in Nigeria are attributable to a fundamental lacunae in the establishment authorities, that is, constitutional-legal instruments;
2. whether the core of the problems is ascribable to managerial or administrative deficit; and
3. whether antidotes are available for addressing the major problems, and for repositioning the system.

While the first question attempted to re-examine issues in the *modus vivendi* of the system, the second question focused on the *modus operandi*. The third question is directed at suggesting an effective panacea for re-focusing the local government system in the desired direction, for the attainment of the desired level of efficiency in service delivery and governance.

Objectives of the Study

Arising from the research problem statement and questions, the key objective of this analysis is to re-examine the critical challenges of the local government system in Nigeria, vis-à-vis, the inability to deliver on the constitutional mandate of service delivery, particularly to the teeming rural populace, through an expostulation of extant positions in the dialectics. The specific objectives however, include, to: re-examine the fundamentals of the *modus Vivendi* in relation to, and effect on, the installed capacity and performance of local governments councils in Nigeria; and to proffer strategies for exorcising the problems, for the overall improvement of the system.

Conceptual Clarifications and Empirical Review

Several concepts were employed in the analysis. A clarification of the salient concepts is provided, in order to focus the context in which the concepts had been used, Accordingly, a review of each of the concepts of local government, integrated rural development, federalism, fiscal federalism, and taxing capacity, is undertaken.

Local Government is a political subdivision of a federalist-nation established by a legal instrument, having considerable control over its affairs, including powers to impose taxes and

levies and to exact labour for prescribed purposes, in the interest of the area of jurisdiction of the local government.

In a democratic system, as Nigeria, the governing body of a local territory is elected by the local electorate (UN Division of Public Administration in Adamolekun, 1988: 58).As a corollary to the foregoing, section 7 (1) of the 1999 Constitution, as amended, states inter alia:

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, composition, finance and functions of such councils.

In section 7 (6) (b), the House of Assembly of a State shall make provisions for statutory allocation of public revenue to local government councils within the state. With respect to the functions assigned to local government councils, the Fourth Schedule of the 1999 Constitution provides a plethora of the responsibilities, as prescribed in section I (a) – (VI), more succinctly, the councils are enjoined to:

- a) provide and maintain primary, adult and vocational education;
- b) develop agriculture and natural resources, other than exploiting minerals;
- c) provide and maintain health services; and
- d) execute other functions as may be conferred on the local government councils by the House of Assembly of the State.

Integrated Rural Development

Integrated rural development is a strategic approach designed to substantially improve the quality of life of rural dwellers or local populace (i.e, the inhabitants of the “local” or rural areas) which the local councils administer. Central in the approach is the view that the traditional rural system had become outmoded; and therefore, required more modern strategies, in order to promote the desired changes, as noted by Nweze (1995).With respect to the strategic focus, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN listed many attributes, namely, improvement in the standard of living of rural dwellers; greater participation in the development of rural areas by the dwellers; and involvement of communities with programmes for agricultural production, to be executed in comprehensive phases.

Development in education, that brings about socio-economic, industrial and technological changes for the ultimate improvement in the well-being and standard of living of the rural people, is also a target of integrated rural development. The utility of the approach is the conflation of several factors in designing and executing economic development programmes, as against the fragmented approach in which respective sectors are taken in isolation, while holding other sectors constant during any material period. For this reason, isolated development in agriculture in Nigeria had remained ineffective (Hinzen, 2000).

Federalism

Appadorai (2004) noted that federalism or federation is the coming together of a number of states to establish a common government for certain common purpose, such as defence and foreign affairs, over which a common administration will best serve the interest of the union members; while the federating units retain local independence in areas not commonly desirable. Several conditions: the desire for union, the desire for local independence, geographical contiguity, defence of marked inequality and political education and legalism can facilitate the establishment of a federation.

Interesting as federalism may be, the major challenges in the smooth operation of the system, as identified by Appadorai, (2004) include: satisfactory division of powers, protection of the smaller units against the dominance by the larger ones, organization of the relations between the centre and the federating units, organization of the relations between the units, a satisfactory method of amendment and succession.

Fiscal Federalism

Given that federalism entails the existence of national and sub-national governments, a necessary complementary arrangement is fiscal federalism. Thus, Okigbo (1980) wrote that fiscal federalism is the existence in one country of more than one level of government, each with a different expenditure responsibility and taxing powers. Put precisely, it is the division of fiscal powers between or among several levels of government in a federation (Herber, 1979; Boadway, 1979).

Taxing Capacity

Taxing capacity refers to the assignment of tax and revenue powers to the different tiers of the federating units in a fiscal federalist-state or nation. In Nigeria, the constitution and legislation assigned different taxes and tax jurisdictions to the Federal, State and Local Governments. Generally, the enormity of expenditure responsibility, factor mobility and tax administration ability are among the factors to consider when assignment and taxing powers or capacity are contemplated (Anyawu, 1997).

Function of Local Government Councils in Nigeria

The Fourth Schedule of the 1999 Constitution, as amended, listed the main functions of local government council (LGCs) in Nigeria, inter alia, as including economic planning in their areas of authority; collection of rates, radio and television license, establishment and maintenance of cemeteries, burial grounds and homes for the destitute or infirm; licensing of bicycles, trucks (excluding mechanically propelled trucks), canoes, wheel barrows and carts; establishment, maintenance and regulation of slaughter houses, slabs, markets, motor park and public conveniences; construction and maintenance of roads, streets, street lightings, drains and other public highways, parks, gardens, open spaces, or such public facilities as may be prescribed from time to time by the House of Assembly of a State; naming of roads and streets and numbering of houses; provision and maintenance of public sewages and refuse disposal; registration of births, marriages and deaths; assessment of privately owned houses or tenements for the purpose of levying such rates as may be prescribed by the House of Assembly of a State; control of outdoor advertising and hoarding; movement and keeping of pets of all types; shops and kiosks, restaurants, bakeries and other places of sale of food to the public; laundries; and licensing, regulation and control of sale of liquor.

The functions also include the provision of primary, adult and vocational education; development of agriculture and natural resources, other than the exploitation of minerals and provision and maintenance of healthcare services; and other functions assigned by a State House of Assembly.

Assignment of Fiscal Responsibilities in Nigeria

The 1999 Constitution, as amended, also provides for the allocation of responsibilities among the three tiers of government. The responsibilities assigned to the Federal Government under the Exclusive List include foreign affairs, international trade, currency, banking, exchange control, insurance, use of water resources, shipping, elections, aviation, police and armed forces, mines and minerals, regulation of labour, social security, telecommunications, immigration, national statistics (census, etc), citizenship and naturalization, business regulations and price control, among others. Health, social welfare, education (post primary and technology), culture, antiquities, monuments, archives, statistics, stamp duties, commerce, industry, research and surveys are assigned to the Federal and State Governments under the Concurrent List. Any subject not assigned to the Federal or State Government is conceded to local governments, under Residual Powers.

As a corollary to the assignment of responsibilities, the various tiers of government should be assigned revenue and tax jurisdictions commensurate with the responsibilities. While the Revenue Allocation Formula prescribes the proportional distribution of federally collected revenues from diverse sources among governmental tiers, the Constitution provides the schedule of assignment of tax powers in the fiscal-federalist framework. A cursory perusal of the Schedule reveals that all the major sources of tax revenue: petroleum profit tax, import duties, excise duties, mining rents and royalties, and companies income tax (CIT), are within the jurisdiction of the Federal Government. To the contrariwise, the Local Governments are confined to sundry and poor-yielding revenue sources such as football pools, television, radio and bicycle licenses, and market stall fees. Property tax, (tenement rates) which should have been a major source, harbours huge revenue potentials that may be difficult to realize, particularly at the low level of the local government. To expect a local government councils to impose and collect property rent from land lords in Asokoro, Maitama, Victoria Island, Ikoyi, Port Harcourt GRA, etc, is a relatively Herculean task, given the caliber of the highly placed and untouchable landlords. It may therefore, be surmised that the assignment of property tax to the Local Governments was a deliberate ploy to incapacitate the effort, given that the election of the Chairmen were sponsored and secured by the landlords.

Review of Empirical Studies

Ani and Omouamaka (2019) conducted a study on the prospects and challenges of local government administration in Nigeria, with focus on Igbo-Ekiti Local Government Area in Enugu State, with the central objective to analyze the multiple challenges which local government areas in Nigeria had grappled with. Employing descriptive analysis, the study identified the basic challenges of Igbo-Ekiti to include paucity of funds, financial mismanagement, over bloated workforce populated by unskilled employees, gross indiscipline and over politicization, among many others. The study concluded that in the presence of the problems, efficiency and good governance was improbable. The study therefore recommended for greater autonomy for local government councils, capacity building across the hierarchy of the councils, drastic reduction in the overbearing political influence of party top hierarchy and adequate funding, among many other policy options.

In a related study, Agbodike, Igbokwe-Ibeto and Nkah (2014) examined the challenges of local government administration and sustainable development in Nigeria. Arising from the analysis, the study argued that local government administration in Nigeria was confronted with many issues, very serious of which included state and federal government's interference in the constitutionally assigned responsibilities of the local governments councils and political patronage, the study concluded that under such impediments, the local government system in Nigeria was incapable of delivering the assigned services to the citizens. Consequently, the study recommended the immediate enthronement of true democracy where the constitutional spheres of each of the tiers of government are respected.

Akhakpe, Fatile and Igbokwe-Ibeto(2012), in a study on the challenges of local government and community development in Nigeria, appropriated the blame for the challenges of the local government system on the ill wind which the colonial overlords' bastardization brought to rubbish the existing and well-functioning local administration. The aftermath was that the once vibrant and dominant level of government is presently seen as an appendage of the State and Federal Governments. To cure the defect, several policies have been pursued among which are the 1976 Local Government Reforms, and the various Local Government Decrees of 1989, 1990 and 1992. All the Decrees were promulgated to elevate the status of the local government system

as a distinct tier of government, with the desired level of autonomy and fiscal capacity; and to enable the system perform effectively and efficiently under the constitutional mandate.

Anazodo, Igbokwe-Ibeto, Osawe and Nkah (2014) highlighted a plethora of problems militating against the efficiency of local government in Nigeria, in a study on the impediments of grass root leadership and sustainable socio-economic development in Nigeria. Salient among the problems identified were “poverty of leadership at the local government level” (Anazodo, et al, 2014: 101), autonomy, funding and managerial incapacity. The study therefore recommended policies aimed at capacity building, improved funding, efficient and prudent financial management, greater autonomy and reduced politicization of developmental programmes and policies.

Bolatito and Ibrahim (2012) examined the challenges of local government administration in a study conducted in Nigeria. The researchers, with respective bases at Sudan University of Science and Technology and Arab Open University, reported challenges similar to those reviewed: corruption, lack of autonomy, poor leadership, unskilled workforce, weak administration and poor funding. The study advocated that the local government system in Nigeria should be overhauled, in other to improve the outlook and capacity to efficiently perform the constitutional role. Towards this imperative, policies aimed at decentralizing the relationship with state governments, demanding for greater transparency by the civil society, improved human development and the inclusion of the locals in decision-making, should be evolved.

In the respective studies conducted by Lawal and Onohoebi (2010) and Igbokwe-Ibeto (2014) on the issues challenging local government project monitoring and evaluation in Nigeria, it was reported that all identified problems of local government administration: poor manpower, corruption, poor attitude of employees to work, defective contract bidding and award process, favouritism, nepotism and outright disregard for financial management rules and regulations had remained central among the impediments of project monitoring and evaluation by local government councils. The studies therefore recommended various options, including enhanced democratic governance and greater autonomy, greater community participation in project planning and execution, capacity development to upgrade the weak personnel, strict observance of financial regulations, stemming of corruption among stakeholders and strict adherence to contract terms and conditions at the implementation, monitoring, evaluation, audit and reporting

stages, so that the true situations could be exposed, for timely control and remediation. From the reviews, it is discernable that local government administration in Nigeria has been challenged by numerous and diverse problems. Some of the challenges are fundamental; but have been exacerbated by the unwilling attitude of the ruling elite class that has remained unreceptive to early resolution.

Theoretical Underpinning

For analytical purposes, this study is anchored on dependency theory. Jhingan (2006) provided a lucid statement of dependency theory, that: “the dependence of less developed countries (LDCs) on the developed countries (DCs) is the main cause for underdevelopment of the former”. Expositions on dependency theory dated back to the mid-1960s and early 1970s, when some Latin American economist: Frank, Sunkel, Furtardo, Santos, Emmanuel and Arnin made useful contributions that were then translated into English. Although there are varieties of the explanation of dependency theory, the sum is that the underdevelopment of LDCs is as a result of the interplay between internal and external structures.

Dependency economists view the world as containing two sets of countries: DCs and LDCs. While DCs constitute the centre, LDCs are at the periphery. In the nomenclature of Frankk (1979), DCs are the metropolis, while LDCs are the satellite. Other pairs of names used variously to refer to dependence relationship include “dominant” and “dependent” countries for DCs and LDCs respectively (Jhingan, 2006:210(ii)).

Dos Santos in Jhingan (2006:210(ii)) wrote that: dependency is a situation in which the economy of a certain country is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected.

Thus, a dependent relationship between two countries is one which, to Dos Santos, applies: when some countries (the dominant ones) can expand and be self-containing while other countries (the dependent ones) can do this only as reflection of that expansion, which can have either a positive or negative effect on the immediate development (Jhingan, 2006:210 (ii)).

To Frank (1979), the whole implication of dependency is the development of underdevelopment, which is the result of the world capitalist system that produced under development in the past

and generates underdevelopment in the present. Since development at the centre is at the expense of underdevelopment at the periphery, underdevelopment (at the satellite) and development (at the metropolis) are inseparable. Otherwise put, Lall (1975) posited that: dependence is meant to describe certain characteristics (economic as well as social and political) of the economy as a whole and is intended to trace certain processes which are causally linked to its underdevelopment and which are expected to adversely affect its development in the future.

Frank (1979) further posited that the fundamental in the process of dependency of one country on another is the economic relations, in which the “wealthier” nation dominates the “poorer” nation, and in which the former country assumes the commanding height.

Although dependency theory has the origin in political economy, its applicability has been widely extended to other subject in which a dominant-dependent relation is prevalent, as the case in the relations between the federal or state government and local government councils in Nigeria. It is surmised that the “strangulation” of local government councils perpetrated by the ‘superior’ federal and state governments, through debilitating constitutional-legal-administrative provisions, are the sources and causes of the dependent relationship between the councils and the other tiers of government.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative survey method in which 10 Local Government Councils (LGCs) were selected from each of Nigeria’s geopolitical zones. Six of each Council was located in the rural areas; while four had urban and semi-urban characteristics. The mix was aimed at moderating the “undue advantage” conferred on the latter set of Councils over the typical Councils in terms of availability of social amenities, physical infrastructure, revenue potentials and ease of generation, etc.

Council Chairman of the Local Government Areas (LGAs) was requested to provide responses to the questions posed in a questionnaire that was employed as the major source of data collection instrument. To retest the consistency and reliability of the responses, oral interviews were conducted with some Council Chairman who craved anonymity. In all, 60 Council Chairmen were randomly selected and contacted for responses via an electronic mail

questionnaire in the interviews. The names and addresses of the Chairmen were obtained from the directory available on-line.

All the completed copies of the questionnaire (100%) were validated against accuracy and comprehension of the contents and were therefore employed. The responses were presented in frequency tables and analyzed using a simple percentage statistical tool. The tool is useful when a simple trend analysis is required. Percentage tool is also useful when “common-sizing” data or information will ease comparison, representation of information, and simplicity. The method is commonly adopted in management and social science research; and was engaged by Adebisi (2015), Dung (2015) and Mahmud and Ogwuzebe (2020) respectively.

Data Analysis and Findings

Responses excerpted from the questionnaire are presented in the various Tables and analysed in this section. Table 1 highlights the summary of the responses on some background information about the respondent council chairmen.

Table 1: Background Information on Local Government Chairmen.

Parameter	Response frequency	Percentage(%)
Length of stay in office (years) as Local Government Council Chairman:		
Less than 1	4	6.70
1 – 2	53	88.30
2 – 3	3	5.00
3 – More	0	0.00

A perusal of Table 1 indicated that 88.30 per cent of the Chairmen had spent between 1 and 2 years in office; while only 5 per cent had stayed for longer than two years. However, no Chairman had remained in office for longer than three years.

On service delivery arrangement, respondents were requested to provide information on the extent of achievement, vis-à-vis expectations based on electioneering promises or mandate.

Table 2 presents data on the responses culled from the questionnaire.

Table 2: Extent of Service Delivery Achievement

Existence of and availability of service delivery charter:	Frequency	Percentages
Blueprint or manifesto or character.	20	33.33
Non existence of charter	40	66.67
Estimate of percentage (%) of service delivery achievement vis-à-vis plan:		
1 – 30	35	58.34
31 – 40	14	33.33
41 – 50	9	15.00
51 – Above	2	3.33

From Table 2, it is discernable that service delivery to the electorate was, on the average, 35 per cent. Only 35 respondents attained 58 per cent of the planned target. Respondents were requested to indicate the major constraints, on an open-ended comment basis, to adequate and efficient service delivery. Table 3 presents a summary of the common obstacles extracted from the responses.

Table 3: Common Major Impediments to LGC Management

Parameter	Response Frequency	Percentage (%)
Inadequate constitutional or statutory funding	60	100
Weak internally generated (IGR) base	60	100
Lack of autonomy/excessive State Government control	60	100
Over politicization/Overburdened influence of the political class in financial matters, recruitment, project and contract decisions/execution (location, awardees, amount, etc)	60	100
Tenure insecurity/threat of council Dissolution by State Governments corruption favouritism, nepotism and mismanagement	53	83.33
Unethical conduct of local government Officials(political and bureaucratic)	60	100

From Table 3, it is observable that apart from the problems of corruption, favouritism, nepotism and mismanagement of Councils' resources on which 7 respondents were of the view that the vices posed no challenges' in their councils, all respondent Council Chairmen reported that other identified challenges: inadequate statutory funding, weak IGR base, excessive state governments' control, lack of autonomy, inordinate political interference by the parties' high echelons, threat to tenure security and unethical conduct of council officials (elected, appointed and bureaucratic) posed debilitating obstacles to efficient and goal oriented council management.

Oral telephone interviewed held with some of the respondents-Chairmen largely confirmed the veracity of the responses. Interviewees lamented the deplorable situation of the prevailing local government system in Nigeria, particularly in Councils located in the remote areas. Central in their yearnings is a rework of the existing system in order to guarantee a well-functioning mechanism capable of evolving efficient and effective governance at the grassroots.

Summary of Findings

The salient findings from the analysis include, although not limited to the following challenges of the local government system in Nigeria:

1. inadequate funding (from statutory and IGR sources), leading to financial dependence on State Governments;
2. defective constitutional, legal and administrative control-provisions, giving rise to systemic muscling;
3. corruption in various ramifications, culminating in depletion of resources and “dehydration” of the local government system; and
4. insecurity of tenure of political official, whether elected or appointed; fuelling the pervasive corruption propensity and exacerbating the unethical behavioural tendencies. A discussion of the findings as undertaken will provide further elucidation of the mechanics and implications of the challenges.

Discussion and Recommendations

Whether in literature or empirical studies; evidence abounds on the problems or challenges which have bedeviled the local government system in Nigeria. Not even the critical Local Government Reforms of 1976 availed the needed opportunity to rescue the system from the

abyss. The commonality of the findings of the various empirical studies on the challenges of the local government system in Nigeria as reviewed sufficed to surmise that the various efforts at redeeming the system have yielded inadequate cure for the malignant problems facing the councils. Thus, Adeniyi (2010), in alignment with the findings of previous studies by Ani and Omouamaka (2019), Agbodike, et al. (2014), Anazodo, et al. (2014) and Bolatito and Ibrahim (2012), among others, identified a range of challenges which traversed deficiencies in staffing, finances, expenditure profile, and governance, all of which impede the efficiency and effectiveness of local government councils. Based on the identified obstacles, Adeniyi (2010) proffered many policy options aimed at refocusing the local government system and authorities, for efficient service delivery.

The findings of this study do not exhibit a far departure from the extant problems; however, the major advancement may be ascribable to the causation between the nature and implications of the obstacles facing local government councils. The problems of the local government system and councils are traceable to the constitutional lacunae inherent in Section (1) aforesaid, which “assigned” the existence of the councils to state governments.

In the ordinary and grammatical construction of the provision of section 7 (1) of the 1999 Constitution, as amended, the State Government is the giver and taker of the existence of local government councils in Nigeria. By deciding the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of local government councils, the Constitution placed the existence of councils at the whims and caprices and, indeed, mercy of state governments. For this reason, all legal or administrative reform efforts contemplated subsequently have remained futile, for reason that

such attempts were to the contravention of the constitutional provisions regarding the *modus Vivendi* and *modus operandi* of the councils.

Accordingly, all identified problems bedeviling Nigerian local government are merely symptomatic of the constitutional lacunae; and the defective *modus videndi*(or initial arrangement or agreement), which could only have produced a defective operationalization of the arrangement; and the system conceptualized to run on the defects.

In conclusion, the local government system in Nigeria is faced with strangulating challenges in almost every ramification. The origin and nature of the problems are fundamentally rooted in the sweeping provisions in the 1999 Constitution which, through arm-twisting antics, reduced councils to inert appendages of state governments. The manifest implication is councils' inability to deliver the expected services, with the consequent immiseration of the citizenry, particularly at the rural areas.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made, to engender improvement in local government management in Nigeria:

1. A radical amendment to section 7 (1) of the 1999 constitution, as amended, which fundamentally robs the local government system in Nigeria of the much needed existential autonomy and the derivative capacity.
2. Furthermore, any amendment contemplated should limit the inter-governmental relationship between the state governments and local government councils to one of mutual co-existence, devoid of the existing master-servant nature, as is enshrined in the

extant arrangement. Thus, the role of state governments should be limited to oversight, guidance and counseling.

3. As a corollary, an independent reporting institution which can effectively monitor and advise on the activities and performance of councils should be established in the constitutional reform; and such report should be submitted to the State House of Assembly with requisite powers to sanction erring councils.
4. The statutory allocations of public revenue by the National Assembly and Houses of Assembly of States, as provided for in section 7 (6a and 6b), should be channeled direct to councils, without a joint management arrangement with state governments.

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